

Israel Issues David Ben-Gurion Centennial Commemoratives



leaders gathered in the auditorium of the Tel Aviv Museum to declare the independence of the State of Israel. After reading 14 short paragraphs, David Ben-Gurion was the first to sign the Declaration. He went on to serve as the first Prime Minister and Minister of Defense. This was the crowning achievement in the career of one of the Twentieth Century's most important world leaders.

David Ben-Gurion was born David Gruen on October 10, 1886 in Plonsk, Poland. At fourteen he and some friends founded a Zionist youth group, the Ezra Society, with the objective of returning to the "Promised Land." He did this at the age of 20, shortly after writing "We, a group of young men and students, wish to immigrate to the land of Israel ... to create a fresh national foundation in the land of our forefathers upon which to build the great structure of national revival." He settled in Petach Tikvah, the oldest colony in the country, and worked in nearby vineyards.

In 1910, he adopted the pseudonym Ben-Gurion (son of the young lion) and soon after left for Turkey to study law, as his means to deal with the occupying power of the Holy Land. Upon the outbreak of World War I, he returned home, but was soon arrested as a subversive and was forced to leave the country. Ben-Gurion had "never to return" stamped on his passport and left for America. He quickly taught himself English - his seventh language - and lectured in behalf of Zionism and the Allied cause in the war. Ben-Gurion later volunteered for the British Army. After the war had ended, Ben-Gurion helped build the Histadrut (the General Federation of Labor) into the largest and most powerful organization in Eretz Israel.

From 1935 until the establishment of the State of Israel, he served as Chairman of the Jewish Agency, dealt with matters concerning State policies, and stood at the head of those in favor of an agreement to divide the country into two states - one Jewish, the other Arab. During the 1930's, Ben-Gurion had numerous talks with the Arab leaders in Palestine in an attempt to coordinate the aspirations of both peoples. While a

consensus was arrived at, the talks had no practical results since none of the Arabs concerned - including the Lebanese Premier, Deputy Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, and members of the Syrio-Palestine Delegation in the League of Nations - had the power to implement any promises made.

Ben-Gurion's greatest challenge as Prime Minister was the ingathering of the exiles. He insisted that every Jew had the right to become an Israeli citizen, and hundreds of thousands of immigrants were absorbed from the displaced persons' camps, Eastern Europe, Iraq, Yemen and North Africa. In 1970, the elder statesman retired from government and devoted his time to writing at his small home in Sde Boker, in a kibbutz located in the middle of the Negev desert. David Ben-Gurion died at the age of 87, and has been called "one of the four or five most important people of the Twentieth Century."

To celebrate the hundredth birthday of "The Father of Israel," David Ben-Gurion, Israel has issued official State Medals in bronze, silver and gold. All feature a profile portrait sculptured by Duda Idelstein; on the reverse there is a menorah surrounded by these historic words in English and Hebrew: "We hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel to be known as the State of Israel."

Only 1000 22 karat gold medals will be struck, weighing nearly an ounce, priced at \$755 each; 1500 14 karat gold medals, weighing almost a quarter ounce, at \$110; 2400 Sterling Silver Dollar-size commemoratives at \$33; and an unlimited issue of large 2 3/4 inch diameter bronze versions are available for only \$12.50 each. These Ben-Gurion commemoratives can be ordered now from the Israel Government Coins and Medals Corporation, 350 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10118. Profits from the sale of these medals are earmarked for nature preservation and improvement of the landscape of Israel.

On May 14, 1948, while Jerusalem was under seige by the Arabs, a small group of Jewish

B'nai B'rith Commends Shultz For Stressing Arms-Human Rights Tie

WASHINGTON — B'nai B'rith commended U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz for making it clear to the Soviets that arms control and human rights are linked.

In a telegram to Shultz, Seymour D. Reich, international president of B'nai B'rith, said any agreement on arms "must be based on trust."

"Until the Soviets show that they can honor the human rights provisions of the Helsinki accords -- provisions that touch their vital interests far less than arms -- they most certainly cannot be trusted to keep their commitment on arms," said Reich.

The B'nai B'rith leader said the Jewish service organization thanks Shultz for his commitment to high ideals and his directness on "this important aspect" of Soviet-American relations.

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