



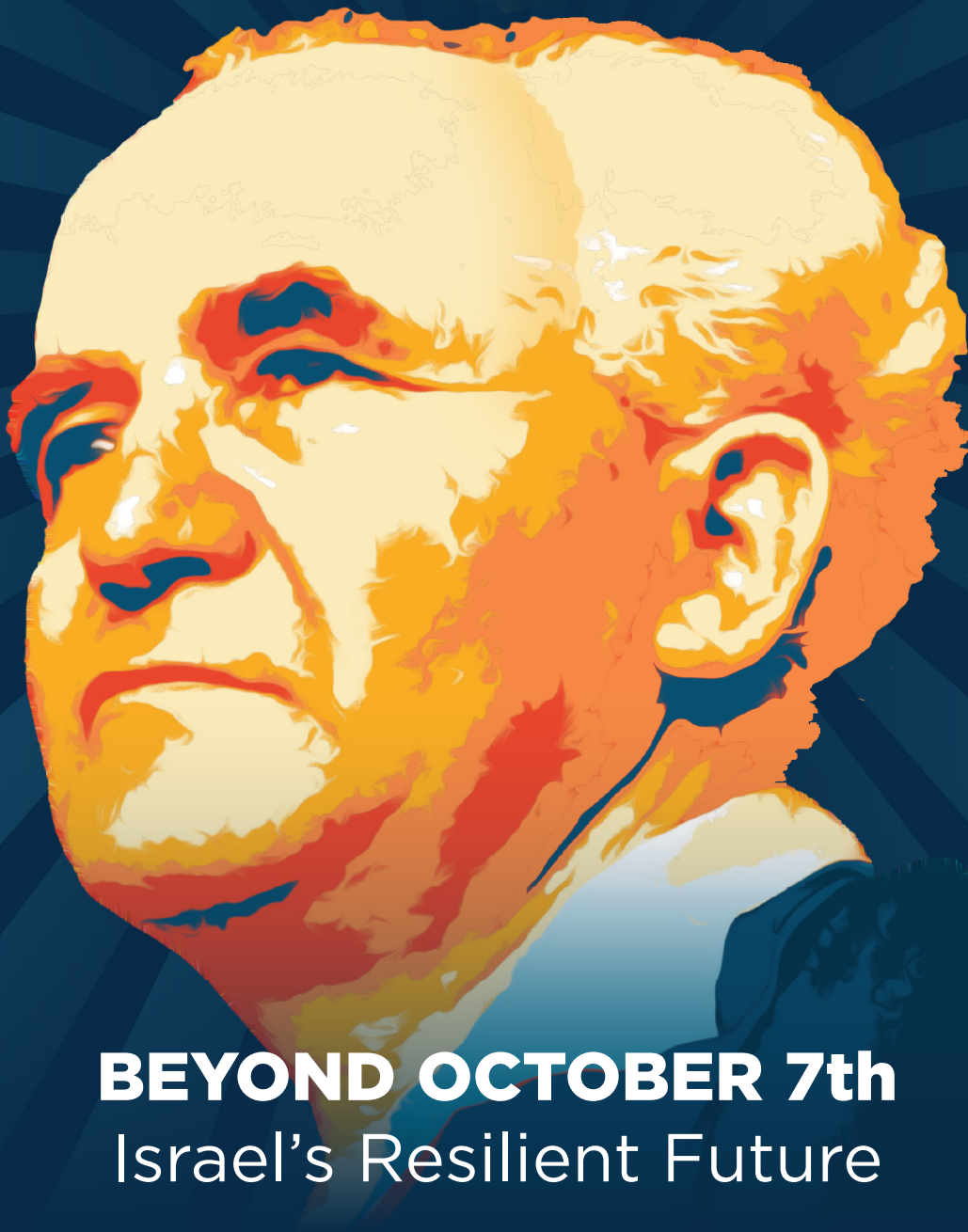
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# BEN-GURION DAY IN THE USA

**Talking Points on Resilience**

**DEC 8, 2024**



**BEYOND OCTOBER 7th**  
Israel's Resilient Future

# Introduction

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**These talking points and quotes are designed to help guide your reflections, sermons, or community discussions on Ben-Gurion Day. They offer a framework for exploring the theme of resilience through the words and legacy of David Ben-Gurion, connecting past lessons with the challenges and hopes of today.**

As we commemorate Ben-Gurion Day this year, we are reminded of the resilience that has always been at the heart of Israel's story—a resilience that was tested once again on October 7, 2023, when Israel faced one of its darkest days. The impact on Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, situated just 22 miles from the Gaza Envelope, highlights the enduring spirit that Ben-Gurion himself championed—a spirit of unity, hope, and unyielding strength.

Through the lens of David Ben-Gurion's life and the continued challenges faced by Israel, let us draw inspiration from his vision and the resilience that defines our people. Most quotes in this guide are drawn from David Ben-Gurion's profound work, *The Call of Spirit in Israel* (1951), published in the *Government Yearbook 1951/52* by the State of Israel, Jerusalem Government Printer. Today, as we look to the future, may we honor Ben-Gurion's legacy by upholding the values he cherished—resilience in adversity, moral and spiritual strength, and the belief that, together, we can overcome even the greatest of challenges.

## 01 | Resilience in the Face of Adversity

Ben-Gurion was acutely aware of the paradox that Israel faced—a deep yearning for peace juxtaposed with constant threats to its security. This reality demanded a unique form of resilience, where hope had to coexist with vigilance. Ben-Gurion's leadership was marked by his ability to navigate this tension, ensuring that the dream of peace did not wane even in the face of relentless adversity.

**• Quote:**

**“There is no nation like Israel where the contrast between the desire for peace and the lack of security is so acute.”**

– Ben-Gurion, David. *The Call of Spirit in Israel. Government Yearbook 1951/52*, State of Israel, Government Printer, 1951.


## 02 | The Role of Jewish Unity in Building Resilience

Ben-Gurion understood that the survival of Israel and the Jewish people depended on more than just military might or political strategy—it required a deep and abiding sense of unity. This unity, he believed, was the foundation of resilience, allowing the Jewish people to stand strong in the face of external threats. By fostering a shared Jewish consciousness and passing it on to future generations, Ben-Gurion sought to ensure that this unity would endure.

**• Quote:**

**“Jewish unity, the essential condition for the dual survival of Israel and of the Jewish people, can only be guaranteed through the fostering of a Jewish consciousness common to all sectors of the people and its transmission to the young generation.”**

–Ben-Gurion, David. *The Call of Spirit in Israel. Government Yearbook 1951/52*, State of Israel, Government Printer, 1951.



## 03 | Knowing Oneself and One's Place

For Ben-Gurion, resilience was not just about external strength but also about self-awareness. He believed that understanding one's own strengths and limitations was crucial for navigating the complexities of both political and military struggles. This introspective approach allowed Israel to make informed decisions, rooted in a clear understanding of its unique position in the world.

• **Quote:**

**“An essential condition to our success in the struggle, whether political or military, is to know ourselves and our position, to know the circumstances and conditions of our existence, the factors that are basic and enduring and the factors of time and place which, by their constant change, condition our existence and our historic work.”**

- David Ben-Gurion, Lecture on the education of the Army and the people, 1959.

## 04 | The Small but Strong Nation

Israel's small size had the potential to pose challenges, but Ben-Gurion saw it as a source of strength rather than a weakness. He recognized that being a small nation meant facing certain disadvantages, but it also fueled a sense of determination and ingenuity that allowed Israel to punch above its weight on the global stage. This resilience, born out of necessity, has driven the Jewish people to achieve remarkable feats throughout history.

• **Quote:**

**“We were always a numerically small nation and such we have remained. Apparently it is our fate to remain a small nation, small in comparison with our neighbors and in comparison with the nations we encounter in the world. This physical, mathematical fact has profoundly influenced our destiny, to both our disadvantage and our gain.”**

- Ben-Gurion, David. *The Call of Spirit in Israel. Government Yearbook 1951/52*, State of Israel, Government Printer, 1951.

## 05 | The Miraculous Vitamin of Survival

Ben-Gurion often spoke of an indefinable strength within the Jewish people—a “miraculous vitamin” that allowed them to survive and thrive against all odds. This resilience, he believed, was not just about physical survival but also about maintaining a strong moral and national identity in the face of external pressures. It was this inner strength that sustained the Jewish people through centuries of hardship.

• **Quote:**

**“There is a miraculous vitamin stored in this nation which safeguards its existence and independence and gives indomitable strength to withstand all foreign influences hostile to its national and moral being.”**

- Ben-Gurion, David. *The Call of Spirit in Israel. Government Yearbook 1951/52*, State of Israel, Government Printer, 1951.

## 06 | Resilience as a Continuous Struggle

Ben-Gurion warned against complacency in the wake of Israel's establishment, recognizing that the struggle for the nation's survival was far from over. He believed that resilience was not a one-time achievement but an ongoing effort, particularly in the realm of ideology and moral independence. This continuous struggle, he argued, was essential for ensuring that Israel remained true to its founding principles.

• **Quote:**

**“When the State of Israel came into being, it seemed as if the prolonged struggle of the Jewish people had at length been crowned with final victory. But this is a false and dangerous illusion, not only because the work of building is not finished and the ingathering of the exiles only at its beginning, not only because the struggle of the Jewish people for their political and economic independence is not yet over, but because the ideological struggle, the struggle for our moral independence, has become more acute.”**

- Ben-Gurion, David. *The Call of Spirit in Israel. Government Yearbook 1951/52*, State of Israel, Government Printer, 1951.

## 07 | Moral and Spiritual Strength

For Ben-Gurion, Israel's true strength lay not in its military capabilities but in its moral and spiritual foundations. He believed that the resilience of the Jewish people was rooted in these intangible qualities, which provided the moral clarity and resolve needed to overcome challenges. This perspective emphasizes that resilience is as much about inner strength as it is about physical endurance.

• **Quote:**

**“The victory of Jewish arms over Arab played a decisive part in the establishment of the Jewish State. The root and source of this victory are in the moral and spiritual superiority of the Jewish nation; and it was the Jewish spirit that endowed our arms with victory. Faith and belief in the supremacy of the spirit have accompanied the Jewish people throughout its long journey down the years, from the revelation on Sinai to our own War of Liberation.”**

- Ben-Gurion, David. *The Call of Spirit in Israel. Government Yearbook 1951/52*, State of Israel, Government Printer, 1951.

## 08 | The Role of the Army in Cultivating Resilience

Ben-Gurion saw the Israeli Army as more than just a defense force—it was also an institution that cultivated the resilience of the nation through ethical and intellectual development. He believed that the army's mission extended beyond military defense to include the nurturing of pioneering values that would strengthen Israel's societal fabric. This holistic approach to resilience ensured that the nation's security was grounded in strong moral and intellectual foundations.

• **Quote:**

**“It is imperative that the Army should add an important element of its own—the element of pioneering. Only by the maximum development of our ethical and intellectual qualities will the Army be enabled to carry out its mission of preserving the safety of the State.”**

- Ben-Gurion, David. *The Call of Spirit in Israel. Government Yearbook 1951/52*, State of Israel, Government Printer, 1951.

## 09 | A Vision of Moral Independence

Ben-Gurion believed that true resilience required moral independence—the ability to think and act according to one's own principles rather than being swayed by external pressures. This freedom of judgment and conscience, he argued, was essential for maintaining the integrity and independence of the Jewish state. Resilience, in this sense, was about upholding one's moral compass in the face of external influences.

• **Quote:**

**“The criterion of spiritual and moral independence is freedom of judgment and conscience. Only if we use our own judgment to determine for ourselves what is good or bad in itself, and what is good or bad for us, are we free men acting of our own accord.”**

- Ben-Gurion, David. *The Call of Spirit in Israel. Government Yearbook 1951/52*, State of Israel, Government Printer, 1951.

