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For release on delivery  
8 a.m., Eastern Daylight Time  
Monday, July 6, 1970

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Dedication and Hope

Commencement Address by

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at Hebrew University

Jerusalem

July 6, 1970

## Dedication and Hope

This is my third visit to Israel. I remember, just before my first visit here in 1958, being admonished not to come by several United States Ambassadors.

The reason for the warning was plain. Israel was then in the midst of the Lebanon crisis. With tension mounting by the hour, even a professor ought to have enough sense to stay away from a country about to become involved in war. The men who told me this were seasoned diplomats; they were gravely alarmed by the state of affairs.

But when I came here, I was struck by just the opposite--not by the tension, not by the alarm, but by the coolness of the Israeli people in the midst of international anxiety.

There is an ironic saying we have in America, paraphrasing a line in a Kipling poem: "If you can keep your head, while all about you are losing theirs, perhaps you do not understand the gravity of the situation."

But the fact was that the Israelis I met here--some of whom had been my students at Columbia University in years past--fully understood the gravity of the international situation. They kept the calm that is found in the eye of a hurricane.

I was struck then, as I am struck now, by what Ernest Hemingway defined as the essence of courage--"grace under pressure."

That quality of calm courage is found only in a people with a clear sense of purpose and a firm sense of duty. This simple fact must weigh heavily in every assessment by outsiders of the future of Israel.

On another visit, I asked David Ben Gurion how the Israelis were able to achieve so rapidly their advances in industry and commerce. As you know, many economists associate economic growth with a nation's endowment of natural resources. England's early progress was attributed to her coal, America's to her abundant minerals and vast agricultural resources. But Israel was not blessed with large mineral deposits, much of its land was barren, and even water was in short supply.

How, I therefore asked the Prime Minister, was Israel able to build such a strong economy in such a short time? He answered: "We did it first by dreaming, then by doing what the economists said was impossible."

Keeping in mind that gentle reminder of fallibility, I would like to speak to you today about three discoveries in seemingly different fields--in the management of economic affairs, in the management of power, and in the achievement of ideals.

You are a part of those discoveries, and the way the young people of Israel govern their lives will have an important impact on the use of those discoveries in the years ahead.

The first discovery, in the field of economic management, is this: the human element is basic in the creation of an economy that combines full employment with high productivity and relative price stability.

The great debate you read about in economics today is between those who feel that fiscal policy is all-important, and those who believe that monetary policy is all-important. The two schools joust in learned

debate, but both are also beginning to take account of the human element in economic affairs--that is, the dreams, fears, and hopes that so often upset the most expert calculations.

And so we are gradually discovering--or perhaps I should say rediscovering--that there is more to economic policy than the established principles of economics. When the older writers on economics entitled their treatises "political arithmetic" or "political economy" they were telling us something we have forgotten: that man's hope is a crucial element in man's fate.

What is your role in this discovery? Right now, right here in Israel, you are proving that hope is perhaps the most powerful of all economic forces. You are proving that a spirit of purpose can give meaning to human energy and overcome a lack of material resources. In this, you are not breaking any rules of economics; but you are developing new rules of political economy.

A generation ago, the only thing we had to fear was fear itself; today, the only thing we should despair of is despair. In nations all around the world, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, an enervating mood of despair is becoming fashionable, especially on the part of some young people. The cultivation of despair can do as much to undermine the strength of some economies as the cultivation of hope can do to overcome the apparent weaknesses of other economies.

This brings me to a second discovery that is being made, in a related but different field--in the exercise of power in the world.

Power traditionally has been thought of in military terms. And, of course, as you know better than most, the survival of freedom in the world as it is today would be impossible without military power.

But I do not hold with those who say that power corrupts men. Rather it is the other way around; men without morality corrupt power. And the world is making a remarkable discovery about the exercise of power: With nations, as with individual men, the most effective application of power is the power of moral example.

This, I submit, is what has made and continues to make America great. We have a dream of freedom, of equal opportunity, and of human dignity. It is true, of course, that our reach exceeds our grasp, but by striving to make our way of life better and to help other nations enrich their freedom, we set a moral example that is one of the greatest sources of our power. We are criticized so much around the world because people expect so much of America; I would never trade away those high expectations for mere approval.

And this, too, is what makes Israel a "great power" in her own right. The power of her example in dignifying life, in conquering disease, and in extending technical assistance to other poor nations, can never be underestimated. I know that President Nixon feels this deeply. Not long ago, in discussing why America supports Israel, he put it this way: "Americans admire a people who can scratch a desert and produce a garden. The Israelis have shown qualities that Americans identify with: guts, patriotism, idealism, a passion for freedom. I have seen it. I know."

The young people of Israel, born to this noble example, have a special responsibility both to their own nation and to the world to preserve and enhance those qualities. You must continue to show the world that you know the difference between bravery and bravado. You must continue to show the world how dearly you hold the moral precepts of brotherhood. You must continue to show the world your readiness to seek peace and progress for yourselves and for your neighbors.

The example of Israel is nowhere more vivid than in the field of education. You have the privilege of being graduated today from one of the great universities of the world. But what impresses the world is not so much your fine educational facilities or the magnificence of Mount Scopus where you began to build this university, but the fact that education in Israel permeates the very existence of her people.

You do not "go to school" in Israel; in a sense, this whole land--every home, factory, kibbutz, or even army camp--is a school. Education is an exciting part of life. The mistake that others sometimes make, and that I trust you will never make, is to treat education as a chore instead of a joy; to treat graduation as an end of education rather than as a beginning.

You consider yourselves pioneers in many things, and rightly so, but I suggest that there is a discovery you are making that you may not be aware of: That a passion for learning diffused throughout a society is the surest road to the achievement of its ideals.

The President of the United States likes to say: "When you're through learning, you're through." And he's right--the strength of a nation, like the strength of an individual, depends on its ability to learn how to change and to grow.

Perhaps the greatest thing that can be said about the people of Israel is that in fighting for the life of your nation, you have stimulated the life of the mind.

Today I have been speaking of three discoveries that are being made in the world, and of your part in them in the years ahead.

In creating a lasting prosperity, the human element is at last being recognized as of fundamental importance.

In exercising power in the world, the power of moral example can be far greater than material riches or equipment.

In achieving ideals, a reverence for learning and education is indispensable.

As you take leave of the university, as you graduate into a new life of the mind, may each of you ask yourself this: What am I doing to increase the sum of hope in this world? What am I doing to nourish the sense of purpose that founded this nation and made it strong? What am I doing to teach someone else what I have learned?

In asking questions like these, you will come to new discoveries, you will rise to new challenges, and you will justify the faith of your fathers and the admiration of millions of free men all around the world.

I am deeply honored to join the fellowship of this graduating class and I salute you: Shalom.