

Need for a Jewish State - Rosh Hashana Text Study

As Good as Golda : The Warmth and Wisdom of Israel's Prime Minister (1970) edited by Israel Shenker and Mary Shenker, p. 28

In 1948, Golda Meir, newly arrived in Moscow as Israel's first ambassador to the Soviet Union, showed up at the capital's Choral Synagogue on the first day of Rosh Hashana. The State of Israel had been declared less than five months earlier, and the government of Joseph Stalin had been the second country to officially recognize the new nation. Yet, local Jews were warned to keep their distance from the Israeli delegation, and the Israelis were apprehensive about making contact even with their own personal relations in the Soviet Union.

Writing in Pravda at the time, Ilya Ehrenburg claimed, "the State of Israel has nothing to do with the Jews of the Soviet Union, where there is no Jewish problem, and therefore no need for Israel." Golda Meir's appearance, however, brought tens of thousands of Jewish Muscovites to the synagogue - the city's largest public gathering in two decades.

"Instead of the 2,000-odd Jews who usually came to synagogue on the holidays, a crowd of close to 50,000 was waiting for us," she recalled in her memoirs. "For a minute I couldn't grasp what had happened - or even who they were. And then it dawned on me. They had come - those good, brave Jews - in order to demonstrate their sense of kinship and to celebrate the establishment of the State of Israel."

We owe a responsibility not only to those who are in Israel but also to those generations that are no more, to those millions who have died within our lifetime, to Jews all over the world, and to generations of Jews to come. We hate war. We do not rejoice in victories. We rejoice when a new kind of cotton is grown, and when strawberries bloom in Israel.