

ПОЛИТИКА

Retired Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion and His Views on the Negev Region Development

Kornilov A. A.

*Doctor of Sciences (World History), Professor
Head, Chair of Foreign Region Studies and Local History,
National Research Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod, Russia
kornilov@imomi.unn.ru*

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Իսրայելի պաշտոնաթող վարչապետ Դավիթ Բեն-Գուրիոնը և նրա տեսակետները Նեգևի շրջանի զարգացման վերաբերյալ

Կորնիլով Ա. Ա.

*պ.գ.դ., պրոֆեսոր, Ն.Ռ. Լոբաչևսկու անվան Նիժնի Նովգորոդի ազգային հետազոտական պետական համալսարան (Նիժնի Նովգորոդ, Ռուսաստան)
kornilov@imomi.unn.ru*

Ամփոփում: Հոդվածում ուսումնասիրվում են Իսրայելի պետության առաջին վարչապետ Դավիթ Բեն-Գուրիոնի տեսակետները երկրի հարավում Նեգևի անապատային շրջանի զարգացման վերաբերյալ: Նշվում է, որ 1963 թ.-ին կառավարության ղեկավարի պաշտոնից հրաժարական տված Բեն-Գուրիոնը շարունակում էր անդրադառնալ երկրի ապագային, Իսրայելի ազգային անվտանգության և արտաքին քաղաքականության ամրապնդմանը: Իր գրավոր աշխատություններում Դ. Բեն-Գուրիոնը հիմնավորեց Նեգևի շրջանի կարևորությունը Իսրայել պետության տնտեսության, ծովային առևտրի, արտաքին և պաշտպանական քաղաքականության համար: Պաշտոնաթող վարչապետը, ով ապրում էր Կիբուց Սդե Բոքերում, առաջ քաշեց մի շարք գործնական նախաձեռնություններ՝ օգտագործելու Նեգևի ռեսուրսները, մասնավորապես. Տարածքի կարգավորումը տարբեր երկրներից հրեա ներգաղթյալների ներգրավմամբ, ներդրումներ ներգրավելով, գիտնականների թիմեր՝ նորագույն տեխնոլոգիաներ մշակելու համար, ներառյալ երկրի միջուկային արդյունաբերության ծրագրերի մշակումը Դ. Բեն-Գուրիոնը համատեղեց գործնական առաջարկությունների մշակումը Հին Կտակարանի (Տանախ) աստվածաշնչյան տեքստերի փիլիսոփայական վերլուծության հետ: Տանախի տեքստերում նա տեսնում էր Նեգևի մարգարեական ցուցումը՝ որպես հրեական պետության բաղկացուցիչ մաս և իսրայելական հասարակության զարգացման ռեսուրս: Իսրայել պետության հիմնադիր հայրերից մեկը կարծում էր, որ ոչ միայն հնարավոր է, այլ նաև նպատակահարմար է համատեղել միստիկան և իրականությունը, համատեղել Պաղեստինում հին հրեաների պատմական հուշարձանների ժառանգությունը, ներառյալ Թանախի գրավոր ցուցումները Նեգևի տարածքի ռազմավարական նշանակության վերաբերյալ, գիտական գիտությունը փոխելու նպատակաուղղված քաղաքականության հետ: արդյունաբերական և մշակութային լանդշաֆտը անապատի տարածաշրջանում: Դ. Բեն-Գուրիոնի պլանները Նեգևի վերաբերյալ այժմ հարմարեցված կերպով իրականացվում են Բ. Նեթանյահուի կառավարության կողմից:

Վճռորոշ բառեր՝ Բեն-Գուրիոն, Նեգև, կարգավորում, զարգացում, անապատ, տարածաշրջան, Իսրայել, արտաքին քաղաքականություն

Израильский премьер-министр Давид Бен-Гурион в отставке и его взгляды на развитие региона Негев

Корнилов А. А.

*доктор исторических наук, профессор
Заведующий кафедрой зарубежного регионоведения и локальной истории
Национальный исследовательский Нижегородский государственный университет им. Н.И. Лобачевского, (Нижний Новгород, Россия)
kornilov@imomi.unn.ru*

Аннотация. В статье изучаются взгляды первого премьер-министра Государства Израиль Давида Бен-Гуриона на освоение пустынного региона Негев на юге страны. Отмечается, что ушедший в отставку в 1963 г. с поста главы правительства Д. Бен-Гурион продолжал размышлять о будущем страны, об укреплении национальной безопасности и внешней политики Израиля. В своих письменных трудах Д. Бен-Гурион обосновал значение региона Негев для экономики, морской торговли, внешней и оборонной политики Государства Израиль. Проживавший в кибуце Сде Бокер отставной премьер-министр выдвинул целый ряд практических инициатив

по использованию ресурсов Негева, а именно: заселение района еврейскими иммигрантами из разных стран, привлечение инвестиций, коллективов ученых для разработки новейших технологий, включая разработку программ атомной промышленности страны. Выработку практических рекомендаций Д. Бен-Гурион сочетал с философским анализом библейских текстов Ветхого Завета (Танах). В текстах Танаха он видел пророческое указание на Неgev как интегральную часть еврейского государства и ресурс развития израильского общества. Один из отцов-основателей Государства Израиль полагал, что не только возможно, но и целесообразно сочетать мистику и реальность, соединять наследие исторических памятников древних евреев в Палестине, в том числе письменные указания Танаха на стратегическое значение территории Неgev, с целенаправленной политикой по изменению научного, промышленного и культурного ландшафта пустынного региона. Планы Д. Бен-Гуриона в отношении Негева сегодня адаптивно реализуются правительством Б. Нетаньяху.

Ключевые слова: Бен-Гурион, Неgev, заселение, развитие, пустыня, регион, Израиль, внешняя политика.

In 1963, David Ben Gurion resigned from the post of Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of the State of Israel. The years from the formation of the state to his retirement, 1948-1963, were the most striking in political biography of the founding father of Israel. 15 years became the peak not only in the sense of the fullness of power and authority that Ben Gurion possessed and used, but also in the sense of confirming the correctness of the main conclusions he made in his concept of national security of Israel. These years were also the peak in the sense that he succeeded to implement the strategic priorities of the country's foreign policy.

Ben Gurion resigned not in an atmosphere of absolute political triumph and unconditional recognition by all the Israel's parties. Frequent internal party feuds, exhausting parliamentary debates, political scandals such as the sensational "Lavon affair"¹ have continuously shaken the reputation of a politician-creator of the state. However, too much was done by the outgoing Prime Minister, and, in particular, his foreign policy legacy seemed so much promising that it was impossible to simply abandon what had already been done by Ben-Gurion.

The Sinai campaign of 1956 forced the Israeli government to make a choice in terms of foreign policy orientation. As it was known Ben Gurion warned about the need for this choice and pointed to NATO countries as potential allies of Israel. During the period of Ben Gurion's Prime Ministry, Israeli diplomacy made efforts to develop all-round ties with the Western states, as well as with those Middle Eastern countries that were hostile to Israel's Arab neighbors. The escalation of the Cold War definitely led to the weakening of Soviet-Israeli ties. Not without problems, but relations of Israel with Jewish Diaspora developed very dynamically [3, p.

¹ The Lavon affair was a failed Israeli covert operation, code-named Operation Susannah, conducted in Egypt in the summer of 1954. The operation ultimately became known as the Lavon affair after the Israeli defense minister Pinhas Lavon, who was forced to resign as a consequence of the incident. The affair reshuffled security and military echelons of power in Israel and Ben Gurion had to deal with all of that after his coming to Prime Ministry in 1956.

120-180; 5, p. 201-348; 6, p. 1-212; 7; 8; 9; 16, p. 3-126; 17; 19, p. 7-281]. The potential of the Israel Defense Forces confidently grew in the context of the "competitive" arms race in the Middle East [1; 4; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15; 20; 23].

Retired Ben Gurion did not leave the sphere of social and political life. He believed that he could still make a feasible contribution to the development of the country. Obviously, his past biography, his always energetic and active spirit did not give an opportunity to come to terms with the idea of aging and the need to retire. In 1965, Ben Gurion remembered his ambitions and founded a new political party, RAFI ("Israel's Workers List" or Reshimat Poalei Israel'). Together with his younger associates Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres Ben Gurion fought for seats in the Knesset in the parliamentary elections. RAFI received 10 seats in the Knesset but was not able to become a ruling party. In 1970, Ben Gurion resigned from his post as a member of the Knesset and finally retired from public life, indulging in memories at his beloved kibbutz² Sdeh Boker in the Negev. It is interesting to note that a founding father of Israel decided to spend final years of his life in the desert region of Negev in the south of Israel and not anywhere else. Like, for example, in a Mediterranean coastal town or in the green Galilee.

"Since the battles ended, offensive arguments and merciless skirmishes have stopped, the whole image of Ben Gurion has gradually changed. In the last years of his life in Sdeh Boker, Ben Gurion was no longer perceived by anyone as a captive lion, an angry prophet and warrior. He was a good-looking old man, good-natured and condescending, who, it seems, had no enmity towards anyone. He turned into a patriarch, the father of the fatherland, a seer of the future exploits of his followers, who inspires and encourages them, while avoiding reproaches and criticism". That was what Ben Gurion's biographer Michael Bar Zohar wrote about the image of resigned Prime Minister [19, p. 294].

² Kibbutz is a collective community in contemporary Israel. Usually it is based on agriculture. Kibbutz played significant role in the Jewish settlement in Palestine of the British Mandate period.

It would be incorrect for an Israeli researcher to ignore the period of Ben-Gurion's life from 1963 to 1973, the year of his death. During these "quiet" years, the founding father continued to work vigorously. Due to that his foreign policy concept partly analyzed in some issues of this *Region and the World* [10; 21; 22] journal was improved and completed.

As we already mentioned, in the last years of his life, Ben Gurion devoted a significant part of his time to recollections, analysis of personal experience of state leadership, deep reflections on how the further development of the State of Israel will go, which from the very beginning was closely associated with the ups and downs of the Middle East events as well as reflected the global confrontation between the two socio-political systems of capitalism and socialism in the region. The age of the founding father matched the new occupation: recollections and reflections. On the threshold of his 80th birthday, Ben Gurion tried to convey to the thoughtful reader - who could be his ideological and political successor - the accumulated wisdom of the statesman and the experience of foreign policy. Resigned statesman of Sdeh Boker wanted to leave the Israelis with reliable guidelines with which the country could prosper regardless of global and regional political cataclysms.

The final period of Ben Gurion's life includes several of his written works. Among them we should name the memoirs *Israel: Years of Challenge* (1963) and his conversations with his former public relations advisor Moshe Pearlman, published in 1965 in the book, *Ben Gurion Remembers in Conversations with Moshe Pearlman*.

One of the ideas of Ben Gurion during this period is the passionate appeal of the Israeli society and the state to actively settle and develop the desert regions of the Negev in the south of the country. The title of the 12th chapter of his work "Israel: Years of Challenge" sounds like an appeal: "Southwards!". [2, p. 188-211]. In the emotional narrative, however, one could find the pragmatic reflections and directions that were well familiar to the former prime minister and contained a foreign policy contents. This special interest of Ben Gurion to the Negev development deserves an explanation.

When Ben Gurion headed the Cabinet of Ministers, the state was already making efforts to populate the Negev. The official "Statistical Abstract of Israel" testified to a steady, albeit less dynamic, growth in the population of Negev. In 1948, 14.2 thousand people or 1.7% of the country's population lived in the regions of Beer Sheba (i.e., the center of the Negev and settlements to the south up to the Eilat Red Sea), in 1961 the population numbered 97, 2 thousand people (4.5%), in 1967 -

164.5 thousand people. (5.9%), in 1968 - 172.4 thousand people. (6.1%). [17, p. 23].

In Beer Sheba itself, the growth in the number of inhabitants was 35,216 people. (from 8300 people in 1950 to 43516 people in 1961) [17, p. 34] provided that the Negev was the most difficult territory for industrial and agricultural colonization, not to mention its debilitating climate. Back in the 1944, the Jewish Agency cited at aridity of the Negev as an obstacle to agricultural development. [18, p. 2]. Along with that in the southern regions of the State of Israel, manufacturing enterprises were gradually established, not to mention associations for the cultivation of land.

Several important considerations prompted Ben Gurion to pay close attention to the desert areas of the Negev.

First, Ben Gurion discovered the spiritual and historical prerequisites for the colonization of the Negev in the books of the Old Testament. He believed that the Pentateuch of Moses and the Prophets unequivocally pointed out the need to make the desert bloom and saw in this indication the spiritual basis of the movement of Israeli society to the south.

The forefather of the Jews (and not only the Jews) Abraham constantly happened to be in the south of the land promised to him by God. Book of Genesis describes the agreement that righteous Abraham made in the Negev with the Philistines in the person of their leader Abimelech. In this historical event, mysticism was combined with real politics. As evidence of his loyalty to the Covenant, Abraham gave Abimelech, among other things, seven lambs - a symbol of purity and purity of thoughts. In exchange, Abimelech swore and admitted that the well dug by Abraham belonged to the latter. "For this reason [Abraham] gave the name of the place, a well of oath: as there both swear there. And Abraham plant a field at the well of the oath and call that name of the Lord, God Eternal".³

The first Israel's Prime Minister also wished to connect mysticism and reality of the XX century. The planting of a tree and the creation of a well were commented on by Ben Gurion as evidence of the "ancient Jewish genius" capable of combining mystical and earthly principles: survival in the wild desert was possible only with the hope of help from above. [2, p. 190].

It was this combination of mysticism and political calculation that allowed the Jews to conclude the Beersheba treaty with the Philistines. A historian can quite legitimately pose the question: did not Ben Gurion draw a prototype of the future Palestinian-Israeli agreement in his discourses on

³ Torah, Neviyim v-Ketuvim. Breshit 21, 22-33.

biblical verses (in the Hebrew language the word "Philistines" is read as "Palestinians")? The search for water in the desert is a prototype of the soul's search for Living Water - Eternal Life in God, and planting a tree in the sand is a symbol of the fruit of a righteous life. Could the active industrial activity of the mighty Israelis, trusting in their own strength and the mercy of God, induce the Arabs of Palestine and other countries of the Middle Eastern region to seek ways to reconcile with the Jewish state?

The Book of Genesis recorded the activity of Isaac, the son of Abraham, in the Negev. Isaac also had problems of co-existence with neighboring tribes. The first two wells of water contested by the Philistines he called "Resentment" and "Enmity". Only the third source of water did not arouse objections from the neighbors and Isaac called it "Space" ("Rehoboth"). Like the book says: "and his name was called Space, saying: as if the Lord now extend to us and grow us on the earth." Isaac established an altar and offered prayers to God there.⁴

Beer Sheva is today's center of southern Israel, center of Negev. Beer Sheva just means in translation "Well of the oath" or "Well of seven", those seven sheeps, transferred by Abraham to Abimelech. For Ben Gurion who lived not far from this biblical place, the Old Testament events were supposed to serve as a reminder and justification for the development of the Negev by Israel in the 20th century. The former prime minister took the prophecies of Isaiah, the son of Amos, literally. The prophet Isaiah's words "*Hail, thirsty desert, let the desert rejoice and bloom like the crocus*"⁵ he perceived as a sacred indication of the need for the revival of the Negev, the transformation of the wild desert into a flourishing region and a fertile land.

The biblical texts also reported on the importance of Eilat, the only Israeli port in the south, for maritime trade⁶, as well as the large reserves of minerals in the Negev: asphalt, copper, iron⁷. In biblical times, a large civilization of cities inhabited by the tribe of Judah grew in the south.⁸

After careful analysis of the Old Testament texts Ben Gurion came to conclusion about the great importance of Negev for the modern maritime trade and economic development of the State of Israel. This was the second reason for his attention to the Negev.

"From the point of view of world shipping, Ben Gurion wrote, the Negev reminds the Suez Canal; it served as a bridge between two international

shipping regions: the Mediterranean route to the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea route to the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The Negev has access to the Dead Sea with the richest deposits of mineral salts". The Dead Sea contains huge reserves of potash, various chlorides, bromides and sources of healing waters, a potential that Ben Gurion considered an impermissible waste not to use. [2, p. 190].

Significant deposits of phosphate have also been found in the desert, from which uranium can be obtained. Israeli scientists found gypsum, granite and other building materials. [2, p. 198]. The studies of flora and fauna, geological structure, climate, the search for fresh water in the Negev were considered by Ben Gurion as a promising area of scientific research in Israel.

The third consideration of the significance of the southern desert was associated with the military-strategic aspect. Military power, as Ben Gurion wrote in his earlier articles, depended not only on weapons, military equipment and the spirit of the armed forces, but also on the solution of the country's internal problems, in particular, the correct distribution of the population and enterprises in the undeveloped Negev. The South in general and the Negev region in particular are "Israel's weak points and danger zones," the former prime minister argued, "but they are also his greatest hope" [2, p. 189]. The security of the state required the transformation of the Negev into an industrially developed region of the country with a well-equipped infrastructure and favorable access to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean through the rapidly growing port of Eilat. In this case, the Arab enemy, be it the Egyptian or the Jordanian army, would have to develop a very costly invasion operation through the south of Israel, formerly the desert, because a developed and populated southern Israel would have the ability to defend and counter-attack from land and sea.

Arab countries can afford the luxury of being empty, Ben Gurion concluded, but small Israel, half of whose territory is occupied by the Negev, cannot allow this. [2, p. 99].

In forward-looking reflections on the Negev, Ben Gurion again showed himself to be an ardent supporter (if not a fan) of the scientific and technological revolution. His almost fantastic plans for the development of the desert show an unshakable faith in the human mind and in the ability of science to transform nature. The movement of Israel to the south was explained not only by the above-mentioned reasons. It was designed to solve the fateful question: can man conquer nature? Will the State of Israel and its science be able to overcome the "hostility" of nature: desert and drought? Can Israel set an

⁴ Torah, Neviyim v-Ketuvim. Breshit 26, 19-25.

⁵ Isaiah, 35, 11.

⁶ Ala a-Dbarim 2,8; Mlakhim Alef 9, 26.

⁷ Ala a-Dbarim 8,9; Zechariya 6,1; Breshit 14, 10.

⁸ Yehoshuah 15, 21-32.

example to the world and be a model for a community that transforms nature?

The question of the Negev led Ben Gurion to deep philosophical conclusions, raised his analysis from purely practical and Israeli to spiritual-mystical and global ones. "The human mind has not yet reached - and it is doubtful whether in the future it will achieve - an understanding of the mystery of creation and the solution of the riddle of life and eternal renewal, Ben Gurion wrote. The more human experience and reason learn about the world around us and the world within us, the deeper the mystery becomes, and the further we stand from understanding the mystery of eternity. But human experience is constantly being enriched; man's power over the environment and himself is constantly increasing; the tools that he creates to enhance the ability to study and understand nature, and in part to achieve dominance over it, are increasingly being improved; and the human horizon does not stop expanding" [2, p. 202]. Ben Gurion's sense of the modern history of mankind is also closely related to achievements of the human mind. Modern history is "nothing more than a deep faith of man in his willpower and ability, as well as an ardent spiritual need to transform the natural order of things and the way of his own life in the name of the task of redemption". [2, p. 203].

This thesis shows that the Israeli statesman in his political deliberations relied on the spiritual books of the Old Testament. However, step by step he actually left the latter and decisively evolved into the position of a convinced anthropocentric researcher. Belief in the limitless possibilities of modern science led the founding father of Israel to the proposal to implement the idea of human transformation of the order of things set in nature, using the example of the revival of the Negev. Therefore, the "movement to the south" was not the usual movement of material, financial and human resources of the state. This "Movement" assumed a scientific experiment of international significance: a set of efforts for the rational use of minerals, water resources and energy of the sun, landscaping and actual change in the climatic order of the Negev. The success of the Negev experiment could probably become one of the rays of the very Israeli "light to the nations" (compare with the Isaiah prophecies in the Old Testament) that Ben Gurion spoke of while still in his Prime Minister office.

The development of the desert, according to Ben Gurion, was possible only if the Israeli scientists, settlers, soldiers perceived the spirit of the halutzim⁹, i.e. intuitive understanding, awareness of

human capabilities and faith in these endless possibilities [2, p. 202-203]. Here the former prime minister hardly had the right to speak of the same spiritual superiority of the Jews as in biblical times. The spirit of the halutzim (halutsiyut), as Ben-Gurion explained it, was the spirit of the times, the spirit of the society believed in science, almost departed from God of the 20th century. The spirit of the ancient Jews, at least of their pious part, was nourished by the grace of God, according to the testimony of the texts of the Torah themselves, Neviim and Ketuvim, and grew on the basis of righteousness and striving for a pure, immaculate life. However, the spirit of the XX century could hardly give the former holiness. Ben Gurion, undoubtedly, responded to the spirit of the times and offered Israel to serve the needs of the 20th century.

The measures for the development of the Negev, proposed in the book by the first Prime Minister of Israel, responded to the above-mentioned global ideas. First of all, Israel had to successfully solve the problem of water resources in the desert. Scientists were invited to implement projects on the use of rain and ground waters, desalination of sea water. Many countries in Asia and Africa with desert regions would be interested in the success of Israeli projects.

The problem of acquiring additional energy sources was seen as no less urgent. Ben Gurion called on talented Israeli scientists to follow the example of Albert Einstein, Garry Oppenheimer and Edward Teller and to develop technologies available to Israel for obtaining uranium, and, ultimately, atomic energy. [2, p. 204-206]. Ben Gurion was generally quite familiar with the development of nuclear research in Israel: within the Prime Minister's Office the Council for Scientific Research worked in the 1950s. Under the aegis of the council, the Atomic Energy Commission operated, whose task was to search for radioactive sources on the territory of the country, develop methods for their operation, organize research and training in the disciplines of nuclear physics. [9, 5717 (1956). P.63; 9, 5718 (1956). P.73]. Nuclear energy could now facilitate the operation of agricultural and industrial enterprises, various types of communications and infrastructure of the Negev. Israeli scientists were called for the development of methods to accumulate solar energy, which the southern desert of Negev possessed in abundance. [2, p. 208-209].

The development of the Negev region seemed so important to Ben-Gurion that in the conclusion of

⁹ Hebrew word designating "pioneers," or the first Jews who immigrated to and settled in Palestine in the 1880s and

afterwards. The Halutzim spirit relates to dare and brave people wishing to develop sphere where they work or do research on regardless of the difficulties and risks they could face with.

his reflections he wrote: “The greatest test for the modern generation of Israel is not in the struggle with external enemies, but to get their dominance through science and halutsiut, over the empty lands of the country in the south and in the Negev” (25). Obviously, the retired head of government considered the task of strengthening the country's military security dependent among other things on the magnificent project for the settlement and development of the Negev.

The relevance of the research topic is increasing if we take into account the incredibly active effort of the Israeli governmental institutions to develop the Negev region under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 2009-2020. We can see how Premier Netanyahu has followed the footsteps of Ben Gurion and has accelerated development of Negev. For example, the State Cyber-Park was established in Beer Sheba in 2014. IBM decided to open there a Center to protect infrastructure and information¹⁰. It was Beer Sheba to where the Israel National Cyber Directorate, a branch of the Prime Minister's Office was re-moved in the mid-2010s¹¹. The Directorate is the national security and technological agency responsible for defending Israel's national cyberspace and for establishing and advancing Israel's cyber power. These facts which witness the accelerated development of Negev as a high tech research region of Israel can be listed further. With other cultural, economic and military developments in this region these facts say that David Ben Gurion had a strategic vision and could look far ahead. The horizons what Ben Gurion had dreamed of in the 1960s have become a reality in the 2010s.

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¹¹ Israel National Cyber Directorate/ Prime Minister's Office// URL: https://www.gov.il/en/departments/israel_national_cyber_directorate (Date of access: 03.01.2021)

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