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### **MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.**

Series I: General Correspondence, 1914-1969, undated.

Sub-series A: Alphabetical, 1914-1965, undated.

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American Council for Judaism, 1945-1946.

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# *The American Council for Judaism, Inc.*

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August 8, 1945

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver  
19810 Shaker Blvd.  
Cleveland, O.

Dear Rabbi Silver:

A United Press dispatch in the Cleveland Press for August 4, 1945, headed "SILVER HITS BRITISH PALESTINE POLICY", contained the following words from a statement issued by Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, to the World Zionist Conference in London:

"If our rights are denied us, we shall fight for them with whatever weapons are at our disposal..."

Zionist-nationalist strategy is becoming transparent. It speaks in terms of "Jewish" national rights in Palestine. It is afraid that "refugeeism" may destroy "Zionism".

What do you propose to do about this talk of militarism in behalf of a "Jewish people's" national rights in the face of a world's desperate striving for peace?

Thus far, there is only one thing you can do. You can identify yourself with the only organization in America that speaks in terms of American Jews as integrated Americans and not as members of a "Jewish" nationality, threatening force for "Jewish" national rights in Palestine.

That this whole issue is fraught with grave consequences must now be obvious.

Please read the enclosed literature. If you agree to the Council's premise of a democratic Palestine and an active program of integration for Jews everywhere, we will welcome you to membership.

Very sincerely,

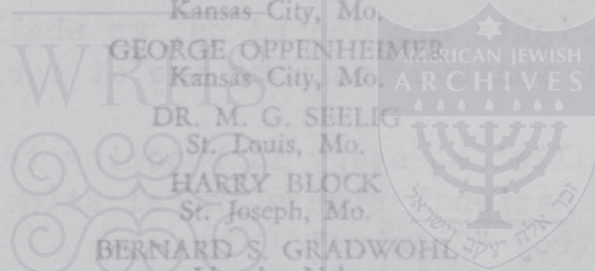
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AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE ESTABLISHES HEADQUARTERS IN EUROPE TO AID JEWS THERE

NEW YORK, Sept. 5. (JTA) -- The American Jewish Committee today announced the departure for Europe of Max Gottschalk, director of its Foreign Affairs Department, who will establish permanent headquarters of the Committee on the European continent.

In making this announcement, Dr. John Slawson, executive vice-president of the Committee, revealed that Mr. Gottschalk will be aided by a group of experts in various fields who will leave for Europe shortly. "The American Jewish Committee desires to place its facilities at the disposal of the Jewish communities of Europe and to help them in the solution of such problems as the restoration of their rights, the restitution of property and indemnification among others," Dr. Slawson stated.

After consulting with Jewish leaders in London on current Jewish affairs, Mr. Gottschalk will proceed to the continent to visit France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland and other western European countries. He will confer with the leaders of Jewish communities in these countries and cooperate with them, on behalf of the Committee, in their efforts to expedite the rehabilitation and resettlement process. He also plans to visit Germany and to work with the occupation authorities in alleviating the tragic situation of approximately 100,000 displaced Jews there, the announcement said.

COUNCIL FOR JUDAISM SAYS TRUMAN'S STATEMENT ON PALESTINE IS "MOST DAMAGING" TO ZIONISM

NEW YORK, Sept. 5. (JTA) -- The American Council for Judaism today issued a statement declaring that President Truman's recent statement on Palestine is "the most realistic statement to have issued from the White House and the most damaging to Zionist objectives."

Declaring that "Zionists and non-Zionists would do well to ponder the significance of President Truman's statement," the Council says that this statement "led to innumerable interpretations from many sources, Jewish and non-Jewish."

"It is a matter of considerable regret," the Council states, "that these interpretations should in so many instances distort the meaning of the President's utterance beyond recognition. The headlines that have appeared in the Jewish and Yiddish press as to an 'endorsement' by the United States of a Jewish state have, as appears from the text, no basis in fact. The Jewish Agency spoke politically not interpretively, when it expressed its gratification at this statement as a proposal 'to re-establish a national state.'"

The Council makes the following points which, it says, substantiate its assertion that the President's statement has been misinterpreted:

1. The statement indicated the President had "discussed" the subject, but did not indicate that he had voiced his approval;
- 2 - His statement about America wanting to let as many Jews as possible into Palestine is only a reiteration of the U.S. Government's support for a more liberal immigration policy for Palestine;
- 3 - His further remarks about "maintaining the civil peace" indicate that his position on the Zionist aims is similar to the British White Paper since he implies that further immigration must depend on agreement of the Arabs from whom the threat to "civil peace" would come; and
- 4 - The President's reference to working out the matter "with the British and Arabs for a Jewish state" may mean that agreement on a Jewish state is dependent upon the Palestine Arabs and the neighboring Arab states.



AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR JUDAISM  
ISRAEL FRIEDLANDER CHAPTER

SENT TO A GREAT NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS

Houston, Texas  
February 9, 1946

Dear.....

You probably have noticed in the newspaper and elsewhere of the forthcoming "South Central Christian Conference on Palestine." Perhaps you have, personally, received an invitation to attend.

Knowing of your humanitarian interest and the humanitarian impulses which motivated the organization of this conference by some of our CHRISTIAN BRETHREN, we wish to express an appreciation for this spirit of cooperation for the poor unfortunate persons who have suffered cruel hardship and displacement due to the ravages of war and the maniacal race hatreds of the Nazis.

I share in these feelings which have prompted some to lend their name and effort to the "Christian Friends of Palestine," but am afraid that both sides have not been heard and few know what has prompted the Zionist Organization of America to ask NON-JEWS to lend their name and support to the Zionist cause.

Humanitarianism and the saving of lives is not the primary purpose of the Zionist cause. The formation of a Jewish state in Palestine is the paramount reason behind the enlistment of non-Jews in this movement.

There is a well known group of AMERICANS in Houston and throughout the country, of the Jewish faith who are opposed to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, whose sole desire for statehood and citizenship is that which attaches to them by virtue of their residing in the various countries of the world which they call home.

I happen to be the president of the Israel Friedlander Chapter of the American Council for Judaism, which is the Houston chapter of a national organization which opposes the Jewish state, and I enclose herewith some literature regarding our stand in this matter for your edification.

I am enclosing one of the latest bulletins issued by the American Council for Judaism. It explains a "Plan for Palestine" which was presented by Mr. Lessing Rosenwald, who is president of the Council, to President Truman. We also ask you to note in this bulletin, the announcement of President Truman's opposition to a Jewish state.

The American Council for Judaism has always indicated a willingness and a desire to help all Jewish refugees that voluntarily wanted to go to Palestine. The Council has repeatedly stated that it would lend its entire support to helping Jewish refugees in all parts of the world and also, support wholeheartedly the plan of helping all refugees of every denomination.



A major point on which the Council differs with the Zionist movement is that they are against the setting up of a separate Jewish state in Palestine.

We ask for a democratic commonwealth in Palestine, in which all Palestinians, be they Moslems, Jews, or Christians, may be free and equal.

Most cordially yours,

Irvin Shlenker  
Chairman





Silver

Minutes - meeting of American Council for Judaism - New York Chapter -  
held Monday evening, February 18th 1946 at Hotel Biltmore, New York City

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The meeting was held in the ballroom on the 19th floor of the Biltmore, and it seemed ironic that it was held in the exact room in which the Extraordinary Zionist Conference, which passed the Biltmore Resolution of 1942, was held. In the lobby were two tables, stacked with pamphlets and literature with people behind them. At the entrance to the hall, there was a young lady who asked for tickets of admission. Since we had no tickets, we told them we were interested in attending as we had heard of the meeting, and after being turned over to a woman who was apparently the Secretary, we were admitted with a cordial smile. The meeting was scheduled to start at 8:00 o'clock. We arrived at 8:10 and the hall was only half filled. It filled by 8:30 and the meeting started soon after. The audience consisted of the "wealthier classes" of New York Jewry, and any woman wearing less than a mink coat was in a class by herself. On every side there were diamonds and other jewels.

The meeting was called to order and began with the singing of the Star Spangled Banner. A large American flag was draped on the platform behind the speakers table. An invocation was delivered by Rabbi Perilman, who also read a message from Dr. Goldenson of Congregation Emanuel, who was ill and could not be present.

Dr. Goldenson's message began by sympathizing with the plight of European Jewry and the importance of finding for them a haven of refuge. He implied that the Zionists were making this job very difficult by confusing the issue with the political problem of nationalist Zionism. Rabbi Goldenson's message then proceeded to outline the "mission of Israel" theory and the unique



message of the Jewish religion which should spread its doctrines throughout the world. He went on to develop his ideas and said that until the time when the "mission of Israel" will be accomplished and the world will live by the principles which are inherent in the religion of Israel, it is our duty to keep alive those principles and live by them in whatever countries we reside.

*He said that Palestine is too difficult to secure and would be inadequate even if secured and added that the Jewish problem could be solved only by the conscience of mankind.*

The next speaker was the Chairman of the evening, Mr. Ralph Wolf, Vice-

Chairman of the New York Chapter, who made a few announcements before he began - most important of which was the following: The Philadelphia office is moving to New York very soon, and he hoped this would make more people active in the organization.

Mr. Wolf further went on to say that the subject which would be discussed was a very controversial one, and therefore, caution would have to be exercised so that the meeting would be orderly. Mr. Wolf then proceeded to read a statement of what he believed to be the purposes and the principles of the Council. He began by denying that the Council for Judaism was negative and explained that every "anti" movement was constructive in that it had to be against something in order to be for something, and illustrated by pointing to the Bill of Rights. He concluded this explanation of the word "negative" by pointing out that anything that is restraining and limiting is negative.

Mr. Wolf went on to say that the Council believed that Palestine and any other country had their endorsement as a haven of refuge, but Palestine, in his opinion, is not the solution to the Jewish problem. The Council wants Jews to be at home everywhere in the world--and there are many countries, in fact that there should be no country, in which Jews do not feel at home. *He denied that Jews are homeless* Mr. Wolf further pointed out that the Council does have a positive



program in that it advocates integration in the countries in which Jews live. In the process of pointing this out, he explained how the Zionists, by their campaign, were making it difficult for the Jews of Europe to integrate and were making the whole refugee problem difficult. He concluded his statement with the firm belief that the Council does have a positive program--to vigorously encourage integration and that the Council would make progress in New York City.

Mr. Wolf then introduced Dr. Van Dusen, President of Union Theological Seminary. Dr. Van Dusen began by stating that he sympathized with Dr. Goldenson's message, and that he declared his whole-hearted support of the American Council for Judaism. He felt that he was speaking for large numbers of Christians who also shared his viewpoint and are unable to support political Zionism.

Dr. Van Dusen went on to say that the plight of the European Jews was a very tragic one, and dwelt on the fate that had overtaken so many of them and the fact that this was a challenge to Christianity and to his Christian colleagues who "are put to shame". Despite all this, and despite the fact that he had looked into the matter very carefully and that he had many good friends, both Christian and Jewish, who would be very disappointed with him for taking this stand, he felt it was the only honest thing to do.

Palestine, he felt, was not the solution to the Jewish problem, for it could take only a fraction of the Jews into the country which he termed an "ill-fated" country. In addition, he felt that there is the problem of the Arabs and were the Zionist movement to attain its goal, it would be a great ethical and moral wrong. He then made the point that Jews (Zionists) always forget that Palestine is the cradle of three great faiths. He explained, at this point, that of course, the Christians, in their deep sympathy of the problems of the Jews, overlook this attitude of the Jews towards Palestine;



nevertheless, he felt that a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine would not be fair, in view of the fact that two other great faiths look for their inspiration and spiritual succor to Palestine. *Respecting the Arabs, he added, Zionism would displace them. Zionism is ethically wrong, therefore, because two wrongs do not make a right.*

Dr. Van Dusen, then went on, with a good deal of apology for even raising the point, to explain very exhaustively why Americans of other faiths will tend to view Zionists as having a "double loyalty" and being disloyal to America. He raised the point of "segregation or integration" and said that no other faith in America had another political homeland but Zionists. He was careful not to say that Zionists now living in America are disloyal, but that if the idea succeeds, that is what might happen in the popular mind. Dr. Van Dusen also stressed the point that Anti-Semites like Rankin, Bilbo, who joined the bandwagon on the recent Congressional resolutions, were anxious to get rid of the Jews and therefore welcomed a Jewish homeland in Palestine or anywhere else. In speaking of "Zionist tactics" being harmful to the Jews all over the world, he expressed regret at the fact that the Jews of Europe (refugees) were being "deluded" into thinking that there was no place for them at all, save Palestine, as witness the article of the report in the New York Times of Monday, February 18th of the Inquiry Commission reception in the Displaced Persons Camps.

Dr. Van Dusen offered as alternatives to the Zionist program, and as a program for the American Council for Judaism, an effort by the United Nations to get countries to accept Jews "in reasonable numbers" - and a program to help integrate Jews into the countries in which they will live. Dr. Van Dusen concluded with the announcement that a group of Christian leaders, whose names would carry weight, would soon issue a statement of their views which should help in this regard.



Dr. William Fineshriber of Philadelphia then spoke. He pointed to the Society of friends and expressed great admiration for them. He said, "They pursue their way in dignity and silence, never pointing to their martyrs." He advised that "true Jews" might profitably accept such a procedure instead of clamoring for a Jewish State.

Mr. Jack Altman, who spoke last, is the President of the New York Joint Council of Wholesale, Retail and Department Store Employees, C.I.O. Correspondence between us and the National Headquarters of the C.I.O. brought forth a letter from Mr. Allan S. Haywood, Vice-President of the C.I.O., disavowing Mr. Altman's appearance as a representative of the C.I.O.

Altman said that workers generally opposed nationalism as a breeder of wars. He added that workers, therefore, oppose a Jewish State in Palestine as an instance of nationalism.





LETTERS FROM AN  
AMERICAN SOLDIER  
ON THE PROGRAM OF  
JEWISH NATIONALISM

AS VIEWED AGAINST THE AMERICAN  
COUNCIL FOR JUDAISM PROGRAM  
OF EMANCIPATION AND INTEGRATION





We are privileged to publish letters that came into the office of the American Council for Judaism from an officer in the United States Army, stationed at the time on the Italian battlefield. We have secured his permission to publish the letters which, we believe, reveal the thinking of young intelligent Americans of the Jewish faith once they undertake to appraise the program of Jewish nationalism as advocated by the Zionist organizations against the program of emancipation and integration as put forth by the American Council for Judaism.

The writer of these letters has since become a member of the American Council for Judaism.



27 October 1944  
In Italy

American Council for Judaism, Inc.

Gentlemen:

Some months ago, after speaking with several Yugoslav and Hungarian Jews who had come to Italy for refuge, I snapped out of a lethargic attitude and determined to do something active—rather than simply feel sorry for the pathetic plight of my co-religionists in Europe.

These refugees asked me why it was not possible for them to go to Palestine and what was America doing to obtain their free entry? I was totally ignorant of the world politics concerning Palestine and I felt an immense shame because I, an American of their religious faith, was unable to tell these refugees what my country was thinking and doing about their heart-rending problem.

I wrote to a man I know in Massachusetts, my home state. He is a prominent Zionist there and a busy orator on the subject. I told him of my desire to know more about Zionism—and he very generously sent me two books. One is the Congressional Records of the hearings before the Committee on



Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives on H. Res 418 and 419. The other book is "Harvest in the Desert" by Maurice Samuel.

I read with much interest the statements of Mr. Lessing J. Rosenwald and the American Council for Judaism, Inc. It is my endorsement of this Council that prompts me to write to you—because I want to become a member of it. I would like to receive the literature published by you. Do you have representative organizations in other cities? If you have in Boston—I would like to identify myself with it—for now and after the war.

Because I think you might be interested in my letter to my Zionist friend—I am enclosing a copy of it.

Very truly yours,



LT. GEORGE SHAPIRO



25 October 1944  
Italy

Dear Mr. -----

I have just finished reading Samuel's graphic, beautiful story of the return and rebuilding of Palestine. I have spent many hours reading the Congressional Record of the discussion of HR 418 and 419 by the Foreign Affairs Committee. I have not read every word of it—that would be a tedious task but I have read in their entirety—the statements of every Rabbi. Many of them I read more than once. In addition I have read the statements of Judge Louis E. Levinthal, Attorney Emanuel Neumann, agriculture expert Dr. Lowdermilk, Harvard professor of Government Carl Friedrich; articles and letters by Justice Brandeis, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, Justice Felix Frankfurter. I have read most of the opposing statements too—the most notable being those by Lessing J. Rosenwald and Rabbi Wm. H. Fineshriber. Also—I am now familiar with the Balfour Declaration, subsequent resolutions and endorsements, and the 1939 British White Paper. I unhesitatingly approve of America's interest and concern in this problem. With all this brand new



knowledge—I find that the problem is more complex than I imagined—yet I think I understand it clearly enough now to form an intelligent opinion.

It is ironic—and a disappointment to me—that I cannot share the opinion of the man who was so generous as to provide me with so much of his time and effort.

I told you in a previous letter that I had been emotionally moved by the eloquent appeals of Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver and Dr. Chaim Weizmann. I said to you, “How could anyone *not* be a Zionist?” But then I had not distinguished between homeland and state—between necessity and desire.

I think I should tell you now just what I think on the subject of “conduct of government.” I want a democratic way of life economically and politically and religiously. I want the kind of political system that will permit this. I want whatever political system will allow free enterprise—that will protect the right of the people to select their own governors—and impeach them when they fail to be servants of the people. If America’s political and economic doctrines have not been perfect (and indeed they are not as long as serious unemployment can exist and as long as Negroes are not allowed their birth-right as American citizens) then they more nearly approach the ultimate than any other country. I am not one of those soldiers who will return from the war a left-wing radical. Most of us will want only to preserve what we have and make some social improvements.

I want all people and all nations to be free: Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Moslems and Jehovah’s Witnesses; Czechoslovakia, Poland, Austria, China. I believe in justice and the brotherhood of man.



That the Jews once had a nation 2000 years ago is not to me, a sufficient argument for their claim to one today—any more than England has a claim to the U. S. because we were once English colonies. Biblical reference to the Promised Land of Israel will never be a basis for its restoration—because the world has never accepted the Bible as an interpretation of international law—even if most man-made laws were borrowed from the Bible.

Surely no one realizes more than I the need for refuge or homeless Jews. I've *seen* their desperation. Surely I realize the menace of anti-Semitism and no one wishes more earnestly for its eradication. If I thought Zionism was the answer to anti-Semitism I would endorse it wholeheartedly for that reason alone. But certainly a Jewish autonomous state will add no dignity to a people and will not prevent indignities to Jews in or out of Palestine.

I don't know how to solve anti-Semitism but I don't see how Zionism can. I only hope that as our civilization grows older and gains additional wisdom—and attains freedom from fear—anti-Semitism and race prejudice will disappear. We have already made progress.

You might say that the Jews have a religious consciousness of Palestine. That is so but I don't know any who want to go there except as a haven of refuge—and when a man needs a haven, almost any place will do. I have spoken to many French Jews who fled from France to North Africa. I have spoken to Yugoslav and Hungarian Jews who escaped to Italy and we have all spoken to German Jews who found refuge in America. They want to return to their homelands—the lands of their birth. If that isn't possible — then Palestine will be satisfactory — but



America would be preferred. Not one seemed to possess a nationalistic impulse—other than his original nationalism. I realize, of course, that my few interrogations do not represent the voice of a whole people. By the same token neither do the Zionists represent the desires of a whole people.

Yes, I think that all American Jews desire the free entry of Jews into Palestine—and, judging from my own thoughts which I think are typical of young American Jews, these people are under the impression that this is the fundamental and only doctrine of the Zionist program. I think the uninformed Jews do not realize that Zionism is political in addition to culturo-religious. Even after I read Rabbi Silver's statement and Dr. Weizmann's article—I did not realize the political desires of Zionism and its implications. I think, therefore, that it is not accurate to say that most American Jews look with favor upon Zionism.

I have not the slightest doubt about the sincerity of Zionist's popular protagonists but I don't agree that a Jewish State is necessary for the accomplishment of their genuine desires. The Jews admittedly have performed a miracle of colonization in Palestine. They did it without autonomy—why do they need it now?

I most certainly want the White Paper abrogated. I want to abolish all such discriminatory, unfair, unjust treatment of the Jews. You cannot question my loyalty to and compassion for Jews and Jewish problems because I am obviously of the school that does not consider the Jews a race or a nation. Anthropologists have proved to my satisfaction that the Jews are not a race separate from any other white people of the world. Any Jew, like any non-



Jew, becomes a citizen, a national, of the country in which he is born—or legally adopts.

I believe Judaism and Zionism are separate and distinct—as I believe nationalism and religion are equally unrelated. One emotion does not strengthen the other. Consequently, I don't think that Zionism is necessary for the survival of Judaism.

I know you will look with disfavor on my opinion—and frankly that bothers me because I would like to agree with you because of my respect for you. But I know you do not expect me to compromise with my intellectual integrity. Incidentally—I take especial exception to some remarks made by Dr. Israel Goldstein. He says in effect, that the Jewish people are not supposed to decide for themselves whether they are a race, religion or nation — that only their spiritual leaders know the answer. He says, “unfortunately perhaps not all the laity defer to the authority of the rabbinate.” (*Page 166—Congressional Hearings*). Also (*on page 165*) when discussing the differences of opinion on our exact status, he says, “it is a source of embarrassment to me as a Rabbi, ladies and gentlemen, that questions of this kind should be subjects for lay testimony.” That is an exact repudiation of the tenets of democratic Judaism! Why should the Rabbi expect me to defer to his authority on such a controversial argument—and why should he be embarrassed because I ask myself and other laymen, “Is Judaism a nation or a religion?”

I would say of Judaism what Judge Learned Hand so eloquently said of Liberty. “(It) lies in the hearts of men and women. When it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it. While it lies



there—it needs no constitution, no law, no court to save it.”

I know Judaism is in my heart—even if it is only recently discovered there. I keenly feel the desire to do all I can to correct wrong opinions of us. To this end I am educating myself in Jewish religion and history. I will try to awaken lethargic, marginal Jews.

I lean strongly toward anti-Zionism because I agree with the proponents of the thesis that a Jewish State would cause greater unrest in the Near East and that it also establishes a dangerous precedent for all the world's minorities.

On this important subject—I have written as I thought. For a person of my young age and new acquaintance with Zionism perhaps I should have been more modest in my opinions. However, if I discover by further reading and discussion—that I have been wrong in these opinions—I shall unhesitatingly abandon them.

Sincerely,

G. S.



## DIGEST OF PRINCIPLES

### We Believe That:

1. The basis of unity among Jews is Religion.
2. Jews consider themselves nationals of those countries in which they live and those lands their homelands.
3. The present tragic plight of our fellow Jews can be remedied only through ultimate victory for and a beneficent program of reconstruction and rehabilitation for men of all faiths, undertaken by the United Nations.
4. The United Nations should attempt to provide the earliest feasible repatriation or resettlement under the best possible conditions of all uprooted victims of Axis aggression.
5. Numerous localities must be found throughout the world where resettlement can be effected under favorable auspices. Palestine, due to its splendid accomplishments, should continue to be ONE of the places where resettlement should be fostered.
6. Any hopeful future for Jews in Palestine depends upon the ultimate establishment of a democratic government there, in which Jews, Moslems and Christians shall be justly represented.

### We Oppose:

7. The effort to establish a Jewish National State in Palestine or elsewhere, and its corollary, a Jewish Army, as a project that has been and will be deleterious to the welfare of Jews in Palestine and throughout the world.
8. All philosophies that stress the racialism, the nationalism and homelessness of the Jews as injurious to their interests.



## STAND UP AND BE COUNTED!

If you are an American of the Jewish faith and agree with the viewpoint expressed in this pamphlet, we urge you to join the American Council for Judaism, Inc.

Your enlistment will add strength to the expression of the principles of the American Council, which appear on the other side of this page.

The American Council for Judaism, Inc.  
1321 Arch Street  
Philadelphia 7, Pa.

Date.....

As an American of Jewish faith, I subscribe to the principles of the American Council for Judaism, Inc.

I herewith enclose \$2.00 as my annual membership dues.

(Optional) I herewith contribute \$.....in addition.

I authorize the Council to bill me at the beginning of the fiscal year for dues, each June 15th, until such time as I may, in writing, inform its Secretary to the contrary.

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### THE AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR JUDAISM, INC.

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