



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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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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Central Conference of American Rabbis, Synagogue Council of  
America, 1947.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Rabbis Uri Miller, Israel Goldman and  
Abba Hillel Silver

February 10, 1947

FROM: Rabbi Ahron Opher  
Synagogue Council of America  
91 Ft. Washington Ave., NYC

About two years ago, at the request of the B'nai B'rith, which runs the hospital in Denver, the Synagogue Council of America undertook to prepare a compendium of prayers to be used by and for Jewish patients in hospitals. This action was unanimously approved by the delegates and the material was collected and prepared under the editorship of a Committee appointed by the Synagogue Council and consisting of Rabbi Max Arzt, Chairman and Rabbis David de Sola Pool and Bernard Bamberger.

This book, for which there is an increasing demand, particularly in veterans hospitals, is now ready for publication and the text has been approved by the Synagogue Council.

At the last meeting of the Synagogue Council, the Executive Committee was authorized to proceed with the publication of the book after receiving the approval for publication of the presidents of our rabbinic constituencies.

Unless we hear from you to the contrary by March 1st, we shall assume that you approve this project.

February 27, 1947

Rabbi Ahron Opher,  
Synagogue Council of America,  
91 Ft. Washington Ave.,  
New York, N.Y.

My dear Rabbi Opher:

Replying to your letter of February 10 -- the Liturgical Committee of the CCAR considered the contents of your memorandum requesting permission for the Synagogue Council to issue a book of devotion for use in hospitals etc. The Committee voted to approve this specific service, with the definite understanding that this approval does not mean approval to the Synagogue Council to issue liturgical services in the future. The members of the committee hold strong reservations on the subject.

With best wishes, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

AHS:BK

MEMORANDUM

TO: Presidents of the six constituencies of  
the Synagogue Council of America

June 19, 1947

FROM: Rabbi Ahron Opher  
91 Ft. Washington Ave.,  
New York 32, N. Y.

I am sending you herewith the statement of principles on Religion and the Public Schools adopted at the last joint conference of the Synagogue Council and the NCRAC.

This statement is of course only a recommendation by the conference to the constituencies of the two sponsoring agencies and only when the constituencies adopt it may the statement be regarded as the position of the Synagogue Council and the NCRAC.

Since many of our constituencies are holding conventions in the next couple of weeks, I am sending the statement to you now so that you may present it to the appropriate committee of your organization for discussion and action.

I would appreciate it very much if you will advise me of the action of your organization as soon as action is taken in order that the Synagogue Council may know of the position to take.

In acting upon the statement, it is not necessary to discuss the phraseology or the details. All we need is the approval of each of the principles enunciated.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES ON RELIGION AND THE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1. The American democratic system is founded upon ethical and moral concepts derived from the great religions of mankind. The preservation and fostering of these concepts are essential to the fullest realization of the American ideal; and the growth and development of religion as a major force in American life can contribute the most to that realization. However, the American ideal in its broadest sense requires that the maintenance and furtherance of religion be the responsibility of the church, the synagogue, and the home, and not of the public school system.
2. Religion has always been and continues to be the central core of Jewish life. The Jewish community of America, in its concern over certain secularistic tendencies in American life, calls upon the leading religious organizations of all faiths to begin at once to plan for a national program of religious re-awakening.
3. At the same time, this conference reaffirms the position enunciated in the joint resolution on religious instruction and the public schools of the Synagogue Council of America and the NCRAC against the utilization in any manner, of the time, facilities, personnel, or the funds of the public-school system for religious purposes. Therefore, we oppose all religious manifestations and forms in the public elementary and high schools including (Note: Changes made

b by the Conference were to eliminate the words "sectarian practice" and to substitute "religious forms and manifestations." The words "forms and manifestations" were suggestions made at the Conference and are not necessarily final. Choice of final words was left to the Resolutions Committee):

- a) The reading or recitation of prayers generally  
(Note: Changes made by the Conference were to broaden this item to include all prayers. It is for the Resolutions Committee to decide if the "Lord's Prayer" shall be mentioned in this item.)
- b) The reading of the Bible (no change)
- c) The distribution of Bibles or religious tracts  
(no change)
- d) The singing of religious hymns (no change)
- e) The granting of school credits for religious study  
(no change)
- f) The wearing of any type of clerical garb by public-school teachers on school premises (no change)
- g) The holding of public school classes on the premises of religious institutions (no change)

The two "safeguards" incorporated in the first draft were eliminated by the Conference after a full discussion and a vote.

On a motion by Arthur Rosenbaum, on the basis of the close vote, the Conference approved the inclusion in the statement of principles of the statement of position on the "safeguards" by the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress.

4. The Conference voted authority to the Joint Advisory Committee to consult with local communities on local problems in this field, including "safeguards." (The draft of the Resolutions Committee did not contain a specific provision to this effect, although it was provided for indirectly by the principle to broaden the scope of the Joint Advisory Committee to include all matters dealt with by this Conference.)
5. Under no circumstances shall public school premises be made available during school hours for religious worship, meetings, or education. In communities where public school premises are made available to civic groups outside the school system after school hours, they shall be made available to religious groups on the same basis as to other groups. (In the draft of the Resolutions Committee, the two sentences of this resolution were transposed. Other revisions made by the Conference were the addition of the words "after school hours" and a substitution of the words "religious groups" which read "denominational groups" in the original draft.
6. We oppose all governmental aid to parochial or other private schools, whether Jewish, Protestant or Catholic, such as:
  - a) Outright subsidies
  - b) Bus transportation
  - c) Text books and other supplies

(Changes from the original draft are the addition of the words "and other supplies" after "text books", and the addition of the words "and other private schools" after the word "parochial".)

7. The Joint Advisory Committee shall include in its program of study a continuing examination into the problems of religion in publicly supported institutions of higher education. (In the original draft the statement read "public institutions of higher education.")
8. We look with concern upon proposals for the integration of religion into the public school program. The Joint Advisory Committee will continue to study all programs and proposals in this regard. (no change)
9. We oppose the observance of religious festivals in the public schools. We recommend further consideration and study of the presentation of the religious practices of the various groups as part of the program of intercultural education. (The Resolutions Committee had suggested 3 alternative proposals: a) in opposition to religious festivals b) in opposition to religious festivals, but calling for the inclusion of seasonal festivals of other faiths where the practice of holding observances is firmly established c) opposing sectarian observances, but looking with favor upon joint observances as part of the intercultural education program.

10. The scope of the Joint Advisory Committee shall be broadened to include all matters dealt with in the course of this conference. (It was the clear understanding that the Joint Advisory Committee is to have the same authority in the broadened areas which was granted to it in the matter of religious instruction.)

