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Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1947-1948.

UNION OF AMERICAN

HEBREW CONGREGATIONS / RABBI MAURICE N. EISENDRATH, PRESIDENT

THIRTY-FOUR WEST SIXTH STREET · CINCINNATI 2, OHIO

October 22, 1947

Personal

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Friend:

I imagine that you are now busier than ever due to the not too happy conclusions arrived at yesterday at Lake Success. It is for that reason that I am even more hesitant to impose anything upon you, but I believe that the matter of the future of the American Jewish Conference merits a lengthy conversation between us. For this reason I am hopeful that on one of your frequent trips to New York you will give me a ring, so that we may get together for at least an hour or so. I am flying to the Coast Friday, but I will be back in New York November 3 for some time.

My concern is aggravated by the attached telegram which I received recently in New York in response to my inquiry regarding your term on the Executive Board of the Union. I had hoped that I could rely upon the clarity and vigor of your presentation to prevent any isolationist move on the part of our Union Executive Board which is meeting November 22-23. The fact that your term as ex-officio member has expired distresses me tremendously, as I do not know of anyone who can do the job in any fashion approximating your capacity to do so, and this is another reason why it is imperative that I should speak to you soon.

Likewise, the Executive Board of the Central Conference of American Rabbis yesterday passed an exceedingly ambiguous resolution in this regard. I was unable to attend the meeting due to the fact that we had called another meeting here in Cincinnati. I was told, however, that part of the conclusion arrived by the CCAR was based on a statement that most of the organizations at present in the American Jewish Conference, including the Zionist Organization, are prepared to scuttle it. This gives even more reason for my meeting with you soon.

Trusting that you will get in touch with me at your earliest possible opportunity, and with warmest personal greetings, I am,

MNE:SG

Yours most cordially,

Maurice N. Eisendrath
(S. S.)

Dictated by Rabbi Eisendrath but signed for him after he had left the office to attend a meeting of the Board of Governors of HUC.

Union of American

HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

RABBI MAURICE N. EISENDRATH, PRESIDENT

THIRTY-FOUR WEST SIXTH STREET • CINCINNATI 2, OHIO

November 14, 1947

Dr. Abba H. Silver
The Temple
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

I know that you will be elated to learn that the Union has succeeded in persuading Dr. Leo Baeck to come to America under our auspices. There can be no doubt that Dr. Baeck will bring to us his rare religious inspiration. Though not a young man, he has accepted our invitation to come to the United States for a series of addresses. We have promised not to overwork him, and we are therefore limiting the number of cities that he will visit in the period he has graciously allotted to us.

Before World War II, Dr. Baeck was the most prominent rabbi in Germany and a leader in the World Union for Progressive Judaism. Though many opportunities were afforded him to leave Hitler's decadent Germany, he chose to stay on with his brethren and miraculously escaped the fate of millions of our co-religionists in Europe. He can truly say retrospectively in the words of Jeremiah: "I am the man who has seen the affliction of my people."

Despite that sorrowing reflection, Dr. Baeck has not lost hope. On the contrary, he is full of enthusiasm for the future of Liberal Judaism. And we have invited him to infuse that enthusiasm into our American Reform Jewry.

It is our desire to bring Dr. Baeck to your city in connection with our American Jewish Cavalcade. A representative of the Union will come to your city shortly for the purpose of assisting you in making the necessary arrangements for Dr. Baeck's visit to your city.

Dr. Baeck will be the guest of the Union and the expenses incidental to his visit will be borne out of a special fund set aside for that purpose.

With warm personal regards, and bespeaking your wholehearted cooperation in this project to strengthen Reform Judaism, I am

Sincerely yours,

Maurice N. Eisenkrath

President

MNE:MR

UNION OF AMERICAN

HEBREW CONGREGATIONS ▸ RABBI MAURICE N. EISENDRATH, PRESIDENT

New York Office: 3 EAST 65TH STREET, NEW YORK 21, N. Y.

December 17, 1947

Dr. Abba H. Silver
19810 Shaker Boulevard
Cleveland, Ohio.

Dear Friend:

It was a great pleasure to have had even a few moments conversation with you over the phone the other day, and I was especially pleased to learn that Virginia is recuperating from her recent illness and I trust that she will very soon be herself again.

I am also glad to learn that you may at the moment be able to enjoy just the least bit of comparative relaxation after the almost inhumanly strenuous and tense months that have been yours. I know that grave responsibilities still rest upon your shoulders, but I hope that the tempo has been decreased and that with your departure soon for Palestine you may be able to procure some bit of long overdue respite from your most arduous efforts.

You should likewise be greatly sustained by the great moral and political triumph which has just been won so largely through your own indefatigable and inspired efforts. The Jewish world today and through all the future will be profoundly indebted to you for your vision, your courage, your statesmanship and your strength.

I must admit that I was greatly distressed by your indication that Cleveland would be unable to participate in the national program to which other communities are enthusiastically responding in relation to the visit to this country of Dr. Leo Baeck. I was especially disturbed by your intimation that our constituent congregations "cannot be held responsible for increasing national budgets". This might be true in certain communities which have no representation whatsoever on the Executive Board of the Union, although even in this regard I wish to underscore the fact that the Union has not undertaken any projects that have not been specifically authorized - and unanimously so - by the Biennial Council of the Union. We have not even as yet begun to implement the ^{whole} far-reaching program mandated by the Biennial Council, but have made only a modest beginning which has, however, involved us in decidedly increasing financial obligations. Since this program was enthusiastically and unanimously endorsed by the Biennial, I feel we have justification in asking our congregations to bear their just and equitable responsibility therein.

Dr. Abba H. Silver

December 17, 1947

If this is true -- and I feel it is -- with regard to congregations which do not even have representation on the Executive Board, it is that much truer of those congregations and communities which are represented by both their lay and rabbinic leaders. This has been true of both congregations in Cleveland, at least during the past couple of years when this expanded program was initiated. We have had four Cleveland members on our Executive Board, all of whom have concurred in the budgets that have been adopted -- budgets which, as has been repeatedly pointed out, cannot be met unless we obtain throughout the country an average per capita giving of a minimum of from \$10. to \$12. While Cleveland has done better than many congregations, I wish to point out that we are now securing in most communities an acceptance of the above mentioned goal, which is considerably beyond Cleveland's present contribution.

That is why I am particularly anxious that Cleveland, like so many other cities, should take advantage of Dr. Baeck's presence in the United States to enable us to bring to the attention of our constituency in Cleveland the program and problems of Liberal Judaism in America.

I do hope that you and your Board will reconsider this problem in the light of the above and likewise in view of the following two special considerations.

In the first place we are for the first time engendering real enthusiasm, not only for Dr. Baeck's visit, but likewise for actual large-scale fund raising for the Union and the College in a number of cities where we have scheduled Dr. Baeck.

In Chicago, for example, we had originally set a quota of \$100,000; of their own volition our Chicago leadership increased their goal to \$125,000. and are determined to reach that objective. Temple Sholom pledged itself to raise \$25,000. in its own congregation; Temple Sinai, \$20,000., etc.

Detroit also, where never before have the two congregations pulled together in any joint undertaking, has agreed to go forward with a great deal of fervor for the Baeck meeting and fund raising.

In St. Louis we have a similar situation where a very extensive program is being sponsored by our four Reform congregations there.

The three congregations in Boston are also pursuing an energetic program. A similar situation maintains in Philadelphia, and I know that on the Pacific Coast the answer is going to be the same.

Dr. Abba H. Silver

December 17, 1947

Now in view of this active participation on the part of the leading Jewish communities in America, I feel that it would be a conspicuous omission if Cleveland did not fall in line.

My second reason is that we just must find some means - - and surely the Baeck visit offers us the best possible opportunity - - to acquaint as large a portion of our constituency as possible with the increased and inescapable needs of the College and the Union for a far larger maintenance fund than has thus far been available.

I am hopeful that you will do everything in your power to alter the previous conclusions of your representatives in Cleveland so that we may have in Cleveland, as now appears will be the case in virtually every other major city, a proper function for Dr. Baeck.

I need not tell you how deeply I will appreciate your efforts in this direction, and how grateful I am for your spirit of understanding and cooperation.

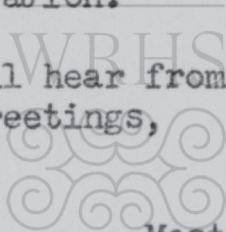
Trusting that I will hear from you in the near future, I am, with warmest personal greetings,

Most cordially yours,

Maurice

Maurice N. Eisendrath

mne/em



December 24, 1947

Dr. Maurice N. Eisendrath, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
3 East 65th St.
New York 21, N.Y.

My dear Maurice:

Thank you for your letter of December 17 which I read with much interest. Let me assure you of my continued interest both in the work of the Union and the Hebrew Union College. I regret that terrific pressure of work in recent years in connection with the establishment of the Jewish state has kept me from doing all that I should have liked to do both for the Union and for the College. I hope that things will ease up a bit from here on.

Virginia and I are leaving for Europe next Tuesday and we will probably be gone for about four months, D.V., returning in time for the Passover holidays.

In connection with the contribution of Cleveland to the Union -- I tried to explain to you why I did not regard it as desirable to pressure this year for larger contributions from Cleveland. Actually there are three projects in which the Union is interested and for which it is now soliciting money in Cleveland -- the Union itself, the Hebrew Union College Endowment Fund and the House for Living Judaism. As far as the Union is concerned, the Temple will be contributing this year the sum of \$10,000 which is considerably more than it contributed in previous years. As far as the Hebrew Union College Fund is concerned, we are obligated to complete the campaign which we inaugurated a little over a year ago, and the Temple members will have to contribute a considerable sum. On top of that is the campaign for the House of Living Judaism for which the National Federations of Temple Sisterhoods has asked The Temple Women's Association to contribute \$10,000. In view of these circumstances, I do not believe that another campaign for increasing contributions to the Union would be welcomed here, or would be successful.

I am only giving you my personal opinion. I believe that

Dr. Eisendrath

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it is shared by Mr. Weitz, the President of The Temple. Use your own judgment in deciding what you want to do.

I send you all my good wishes.

Most cordially yours,

AHS:BK



UNION OF AMERICAN

HEBREW CONGREGATIONS / RABBI MAURICE N. EISENDRATH, PRESIDENT

THIRTY-FOUR WEST SIXTH STREET · CINCINNATI 2, OHIO

June 21, 1948

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
E. 105th Street at Ansel Road
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Friend:

I have been hesitant to intrude amidst the most trying and turbulent days and months which have been yours during the past year. I have refrained even from taking enough of your invaluable time to felicitate you upon the creation of the State of Israel and its recognition by the President of the United States for which you yourself, by your particularly heroic efforts, have been so largely responsible. Precarious as the situation yet remains, I do hope that the burdens upon yourself will gradually be lessened and that you will be able to get away this summer for a much needed and deserved rest.

I am sure that you will be interested in the enclosed resolution which our Executive Board adopted at its last meeting held in Chicago, June 5-6, 1948, and the acknowledgment which we have received from Mr. Eliahu Epstein, Special Representative for the State of Israel.

Because of my hesitancy in taking up your time during these crowded months, I have neglected discussing with you a number of important Union matters that may be before us at the forthcoming Biennial Assembly concerning which I would very much like your counsel.

At present I plan to pass through Cleveland in the morning of Wednesday, July 7. I will only be there between planes for an hour or so. I am wondering whether it would be possible either for me to see you for about an hour in the early morning or perhaps if this is absolutely impossible, if I can telephone you and have a very lengthy telephone conversation with you.

I would be pleased if you could just drop me a note as to whether you will be in Cleveland that morning.

With warmest personal greetings, I am,

Yours most sincerely,

Maurice N. Eisenrath

MNE:SG
Encls.

COPY

STATE OF ISRAEL

PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

Office of the Representative

2210 Massachusetts Avenue

Washington 8, D. C.

June 16, 1948

Gentlemen:

Thank you for your letter of June 7 and for the good wishes you express for the future of Israel.

I have noted with great interest the resolution adopted on June 5, 1948 by the Executive Board of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. On behalf of my Government I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the salutations to the State of Israel, its officers and citizens, which the resolution conveys from the constituency of your Union.

Very sincerely yours,

E. EPSTEIN

Eliahu Epstein
Special Representative

Dr. Maurice N. Eisendrath, President
Mr. Jacob Aronson, Chairman, Executive Board
The Union of American Hebrew Congregations
34 West Sixth Street
Cincinnati 2, Ohio

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
OF THE UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
MEETING AT CHICAGO, SATURDAY EVENING, JUNE 5, 1948

The Executive Board of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations has taken no stand on the problems of political Zionism, nor does it intend to cancel or to minimize this attitude.

Nonetheless, this Executive Board feels that it represents the sentiment of its constituents in sending its heartfelt salutations to the new State of Israel, to its officers and citizens, and the prayer that God may send it and them peace and tranquility.

We have always felt a deep and sincere interest in our brothers, in their struggles and achievements. We follow their efforts now, to defend themselves, to build up their life, and to bring in the maximum number of Jews from the DP camps and from lands of hatred and discrimination as quickly as possible.

We express our thanks to the President of the United States for prompt recognition of the de facto government of Israel.

Be it resolved that these resolutions be spread on our minutes, transmitted to the President of the United States, to the Government of Israel, and published.

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≡ STATEMENT of
THE UNION OF AMERICAN
HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
on the American Jewish Conference

THE Executive Board of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, at its meeting in Chicago on June 3, 1945, again considered its relationship to the American Jewish Conference. This was necessitated by the receipt of an official resolution from one of our constituent congregations "calling upon the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to withdraw from the American Jewish Conference," which was moved for adoption. After a considerable discussion, the Executive Board defeated the motion without a dissenting vote. The mover of the motion himself refrained from voting.

Four times, within the course of the past two years, the Executive Board, composed as it is of an overwhelming majority of non-Zionists, has come to the same conclusion. These repeated actions on the part of the Executive Board should put an end to all agitation to have the Executive Board do anything other than to place this whole issue squarely before the Biennial Council which will be held just as soon as the ODT regulations will permit. We believe in co-operating with the government in its war effort by our strict adherence to its regulations. We urge those pressing for immediate action, as good Americans, to have patience until the Biennial can assemble. This is good democratic procedure.

At the Executive Board meeting held in Chicago, June 3, 1945, the report of the Director, relating to the future program of the Union, was ordered sent to the same list to which this letter is addressed and is being enclosed herewith. The Director's report indicates the need for putting behind this comprehensive and constructive program all of our resources and energy. The Union has important work to do now and in the immediate future, which cannot be impeded or

bogged down by the continued agitation concerning this single controversial issue which is really not central to our far-reaching program. Never more than now has it been so important to emphasize and develop the religious life of the Jew in America. It would be the height of folly to divert our energies by constantly debating a question which is scheduled for presentation at the Biennial Council. However, for the sake of the record, the following must be said:

It must be remembered that the call for the American Jewish Conference was issued in the year 1943, a time of tragic emergency for world Israel, an hour when Jews were being murdered by the wholesale in Hitler's slaughter-houses of Europe. It was deemed essential for all parties and groups in American Jewry to meet in order to find a way to express the united demands of American Israel for the rescue and rehabilitation of our stricken brethren all over the world. The Union, representing as it does the voice of Liberal Judaism in America, felt a strong moral imperative to unite in this great endeavor, even though it was well aware that its own point of view on certain controversial questions might in such a conference prove to be a minority viewpoint. We, therefore, reserved the right to review the decisions of the Conference, as far as we ourselves were concerned, but our primary purpose in entering the Conference was to unite with all our fellow Jews for the benefit of world Israel.

Consequently, the Executive Board at its pre-Biennial Council meeting on April 1, 1943, decided by an overwhelming majority to

adhere to the American Jewish Assembly with the reservation that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations shall not be bound by the conclusions of the American Jewish Assembly without ratification by the Executive Board of the Union. A special meeting of the Executive Board for such purpose shall be called as soon as possible after the adjournment of the American Jewish Assembly.

This action of the Executive Board was reported to the Biennial Council on the following day in the report of the President of the Union. *There was no voice raised* by the Council in opposition to this action of the Executive Board.

Immediately following the first session of the American Jewish Conference, the Executive Board of the Union met on October 3, 1943, and again by an overwhelming majority decided to remain in the Conference, to ratify most of its findings, and to refer the Palestine Resolution to the next meeting of the Biennial Council. We had hoped that this formula would satisfy the members and congregations within the Union and that we could continue with our constructive tasks without being handicapped by a continuation of the Zionist-anti-Zionist controversy. Unfortunately, this hope proved too sanguine, and immediately following the meeting of October 3, the Union began to receive many suggestions from both sides indicating that the next date of the Council meeting was too far distant and that in the meantime our congregations would be threatened with inner strife due to this controversy.

Consequently, the Executive Board once again reviewed this entire matter at its meeting on January 18, 1944, and by a vote of 22 to 2, resolved:

The Union declares that its function is to interpret, maintain and promote Reform Judaism and reaffirms its loyalty to its spiritual purposes.

The Union, continuing as a member of the American Jewish Conference, declares its sense of fellowship with all Israel and will associate itself with all worthy and practical efforts designed to ameliorate the tragic plight of world Jewry and to assist in reconstructing those communities that have suffered from the ravages of Nazi tyranny.

Because in the congregations of the Union there are divergent opinions on the question of Zionism, the Union recognizes the right of each individual to determine his own attitude on this controversial question and therefore the Union refrains from taking any action on the Palestine Resolution adopted by the American Jewish Conference.

We call upon our congregations and their members to rally loyally to the support of the Union so that its great and noble work may continue to enrich the spiritual life of American Israel.

This resolution which met with such hearty favor on the part of all elements within our Executive Board should have satisfied our constituency as a whole, in view especially of the fact that, as we have indicated above, all viewpoints are so definitely represented on the Executive Board of the Union. On each occasion that the Executive Board has considered this matter, the overwhelming majority has come to the selfsame conclusion that the best interests of the Union are to be served by its continued adherence to the Conference and that the non-Zionist viewpoint is adequately safeguarded by the publicly pronounced and widely acknowledged reservation of the Union on the Palestine question.

At its meeting on November 26, 1944, the question of withdrawal from the Conference was again raised by one member of the Executive Board, but was subsequently withdrawn when it was pointed out that the Union had a very definite part to play in the forthcoming second session of the American Jewish Conference which was scheduled to meet in Pittsburgh, December 3-5, 1944. This decisive role that the Union played is described in the Director's Report on page 17 where there will likewise be found the details concerning the persistent pains which the Union has continuously taken to safeguard the opinions of its constituency. All this is recorded on pages 17 through 20 of the Director's Report enclosed herewith.

Notwithstanding all this, as indicated above, the Executive Board was once again compelled to deal with this question at its meeting of June 3, 1945. We hope that the action so decisively taken by the Executive Board—*without a dissenting vote*—at its most recent meeting—will be the final consideration that the Executive Board will be constrained to give to this matter until it places its record before the next Biennial Council.

It must be further pointed out that the Conference itself has important work to do for the Jews of the world, and incidentally of America, although much of this work has been completely obscured by the controversy over the Palestine issue. One of the important purposes for which the Conference was called into being and on

which it took unanimous action, concerns the rights of the Jews in the post-war world.

Next, there is the question of rescue, which was taken up at the first sessions of the Conference by unanimous agreement. That has been a great and pressing problem during the past two years and will continue so until more normal conditions are restored in Europe. While most of the practical work is being done by other agencies, the Conference, as the result of unanimous American Jewish opinion on this subject, is assisting in many important ways. The work on these two vital questions should not be impeded and we have a moral obligation to share in it.

On the Palestine Resolution, the area of controversy is far less than most people imagine. At the meeting of the Council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations held in New Orleans in January, 1937, the following resolution on the subject was unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in Council assembled expresses its satisfaction with the progress made by the Jewish Agency in the upbuilding of Palestine. We see the hand of Providence in the opening of the Gates of Palestine for the Jewish people at a time when a large portion of Jewry is so desperately in need of a friendly shelter and a home where a spiritual, cultural center may be developed in accordance with Jewish ideals. The time has now come for all Jews, irrespective of ideological differences, to unite in the activities leading to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and we urge our constituency to give their financial and moral support to the work of rebuilding Palestine.

This resolution was recommended for adoption by the unanimous vote of a resolutions committee which had on it a majority of non or anti-Zionists. Thus there is no disagreement whatsoever as to a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. Furthermore, there never has been and is not now any disagreement on the proposition that the British White Paper of 1939 should never have been issued and should be withdrawn at the earliest possible date. We are

all agreed that the maximum possible Jewish immigration into Palestine should take place.

It is hard for some of us, whose families have been in this country for one or more generations, to realize the feelings of the great masses of Jews, who have members of their immediate families or close relatives still in the war-torn sections of Europe. The natural feeling of these persons creates an emotionalism which no amount of reasoning can control. We must understand these people. We must not reject them. We must bring them into our fold and influence them. We are in a position where they and their children may be much more ready to accept our Liberal Jewish principles than they ever were before. Are we to give up all this good will that we have created and become a mere isolated sect in Judaism?

If Judaism is to remain vital and to become a growing force for good in America, it must not disassociate itself from the main stream of Jewish life here in America, as well as throughout the world.

These and other questions will have to be debated and resolved at the next Biennial. This is the democratic way to settle our differences. In the meantime, without abating one jot or tittle of our oft-repeated reservation, we must all unite upon implementing the far-visioned plans and purposes of our Union. We are prepared and eager to launch ever more ambitious programs of spiritual significance which can only redound to the benefit of our constituent synagogues and to our status as Jews in America. We call upon all our individual members and their congregations to join us in these pressing and sacred tasks.

For the Executive Board of the
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

ADOLPH ROSENBERG, *President*

MAURICE N. EISENDRATH, *Director*

ROBERT P. GOLDMAN,
Immediate Past President

July 12, 1945.