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World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1937-1938.

WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM.

Hon. Secretary: THE HON. LILY H. MONTAGU, O.B.E., J.P.

THE RED LODGE, 51, PALACE COURT, LONDON, W.2.

15th July 1937

Dear Rabbi Silver,

I am very glad to tell you that at the meeting of the Governing Body held in connection with the Conference in Amsterdam on Tuesday, July 6th, you were re-elected a member of the Palestine Committee. You will shortly be hearing from the Chairman, Professor Elbogen.



Yours sincerely,

L. H. Montagu

Baden-Baden, den 2.9.37.
Waldpark

Sehr verehrter Dr. Silver,

hätte ich geahnt, dass Sie in Zürich sind, so hätte ich Ihnen dorthin geschrieben, wo Sie gleich mit Dr. Ehrenpreis das Problem hätten besprechen können. Es handelt sich um die seltsame Erscheinung, dass die zionist. Reformrabbinen in der Frage des religiösen Aufbaus Palästinas völlig versagen und so wenig Interesse dafür zeigen, dass sie nicht einmal Briefe beantworten.

Dass die religiösen Zustände in Palästina höchst ungünstig sind und dass die Orthodoxie, die zum grössten Teil an diesem Verfall Schuld trägt, nicht im Stande ist, Abhilfe zu schaffen, darüber sind alle Beobachter einig. Neues fruchtbares religiöses Leben kann nur auf fortschrittlichen Grundlagen geschaffen werden - nicht etwa mit dem alten Reformprogramm, aber auf der Grundlage einer modernen Auffassung vom Judentum. Auch darüber sind sich die weitesten Kreise bis zu den rechtsstehenden einig. Die World Union hat ~~sich~~ mit ihrer Arbeit in Haifa und Jerusalem sehr günstige Erfolge; ausführliche Berichte der beiden Rabbinen Elk und Wilhelm liegen bei Miss Montag², die Ihnen gern jederzeit Abschriften senden wird. Jetzt wurde beschlossen, auch in Tel Aviv die Arbeit aufzunehmen.

Aber die Arbeit leidet darunter, dass sie nur provisorisch und in beschränktem Umfang geleistet werden kann. Die beiden genannten Herren erhalten für ihre Arbeit kein Gehalt und

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müssen für ihre Familien durch anderweitige Tätigkeit sorgen, sie können ferner keine anziehenden Lokale für Gottesdienst, Versammlungen usw. beziehen, weil die Mittel fehlen. Elk z.B. hätte ein wunderbares Schulgebäude haben und damit einen festen Boden für seine Organisation schaffen können, wenn ihm das Geld zur Verfügung gestanden hätte.

Bisher aber stehen der World Union nur ganz geringe Mittel zur Verfügung, und die kommen meist von Nichtzionisten. Dr. Morgenstern z.B. hielt es, als die Arbeit angekündigt wurde, sofort für seine Pflicht zu helfen, während die zionistischen Mitglieder der Kommission sich völlig passiv verhielten. Das ist für die Dauer ein unmöglicher Zustand und könnte zur Folge haben, dass die religiöse Aufbauarbeit in Palästina eingestellt wird. Ich kann mir nicht denken, dass Sie und Ihre zionistischen Herren Kollegen diese Verantwortung übernehmen wollen. Eine offene Kritik könnte nützlich sein, aber diese passive Resistenz nur schaden.

Es handelt sich nicht um grosse Beiträge; wenn aus U.S.A. mit einem festen jährlichen Beitrag von 5000 \$ gerechnet werden könnte, würde das zunächst ausreichen. Die Arbeit würde stabil und allmählich eine feste Gemeinde im Lande gewonnen werden. Aber für dieses Minimum muss Sorge getragen werden.

Es kann nicht schwer sein, diese kleine Summe in U.S.A. aufzubringen. Ein Mann von Ihrer suggestiven Kraft und Begeisterung für Zion könnte sicher in wenigen Stunden

diesen Betrag allein aufbringen, aber wenn Sie Ihre Gesinnungsgenossen ebenfalls dafür erwärmen, dann kann der Erfolg unmöglich ausbleiben.

Es hat ungeheure Schwierigkeiten gekostet, die Nichtzionisten in der World Union für die Arbeit in Palästina zu gewinnen. Soll diese jetzt daran scheitern, dass die Zionisten und zwar in erster Reihe die Rabbinen, diese im Stich lassen? Das kann und darf nicht sein. Ich habe daher die Leitung der Palästina-Kommission übernommen, um alle Kräfte zu vereinigen, und werde nicht ruhen, bis es mir gelingt. *נרצח נל פרס פרס.*

Dieser Brief erreicht Sie zwar zu den Feiertagen, wo Sie sehr beschäftigt sind, aber ich bitte Sie, ihn nicht ad acta zu legen, sondern so bald es Ihre Zeit erlaubt, auf ihn zurückzukommen und die Sammlung für die religiöse Arbeit in Palästina aufzunehmen.

Mit herzlichen *שלום* Wünschen
der Ihre

J. E. Meyer

WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM.

Hon. Secretary: THE HON. LILY H. MONTAGU, O.B.E., J.P.

THE RED LODGE, 51, PALACE COURT, LONDON, W.2.

10th October 1937

Dear Rabbi Silver,

I am wondering whether my letter to you written in July has been lost. In it I asked you if acting on the recommendation of the Governing Body to dissolve the existing Authority Committee, and to appoint in its stead three representatives of high moral ^{and intellectual} standing in America, England and Germany, you would agree to be one of the American representatives, the other two being Dr. Morgenstern and Rabbi Schulman. These three committees would consult together, and from time to time produce papers or books for the guidance of progressive thinking people.

I have heard that the two other American representatives have accepted, and I should like to know if we may count on your co-operation also.

Yours sincerely,

Lily Montagu

World Union for Progressive
Judaism

October 19, 1937

The Hon. Lily H. Montagu,
The Red Lodge, 51, Palace Court,
London, W.2.
England.

My dear Miss Montagu:

Permit me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of October 10. I shall be pleased to serve on the committee as an American representative together with Dr. Morgenstern and Rabbi Schulman. I think, however, that I should make my position clear. I received, a few weeks ago, a letter from Dr. Elbogen, in which he rather chides me for not raising money for the work of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in Palestine. To my best knowledge, I never undertook to raise any money in the United States for this cause. I am already committed to so many money-raising projects in behalf of local and foreign relief institutions, movements, etc. that I simply cannot take on any additional fund-raising obligations. I am chairman of the local Cleveland Jewish Welfare Fund and co-chairman of the National United Palestine Appeal. I am helping to raise money for the Joint Distribution Committee, the ORT, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, etc. etc. and there is, of course, a limit. If my appointment on this committee implies an obligation to raise money, you will have to excuse me from serving.

With all good wishes, I remain

Very cordially yours,

AHS:BK

October 20, 1937

Dr. Ismar Elbogen,
Hochschule fur die Wissenschaft des Judentums,
Berlin, Germany.

My dear Elbogen:

Let me thank you for your kind letter of July 2 with reference to the work of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. I appreciate your frankness and I shall be equally frank.

I have at no time undertaken any financial responsibilities in connection with the World Union for Progressive Judaism. I am simply overwhelmed with the number of fund-raising projects in which I am already involved for local relief, for the Joint Distribution Committee, the ORT, the United Palestine Appeal, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, etc. etc. I travel all over the country from one end of the year to the next organizing campaigns and raising money for Jews in Germany, Poland, Roumania, Palestine and elsewhere. You must realize that there is a limit to what one can do. There are altogether too many worthy causes in the world today and I cannot be expected to raise money for all of them. I wrote to Miss Montagu, of London, to the same effect. I know that the cause of establishing centers of Jewish liberal religious thought in Palestine is important but other people who are less burdened with financial obligations than I am must undertake the financing of this work.

I trust that you are well. With all good wishes to you, permit me to remain

Very cordially yours,

AHS:BK

WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM.

Hon. Secretary: THE HON. LILY H. MONTAGU, O.B.E., J.P.

THE RED LODGE, 51, PALACE COURT, LONDON, W.2.

3rd November 1937

Dear Rabbi Silver,

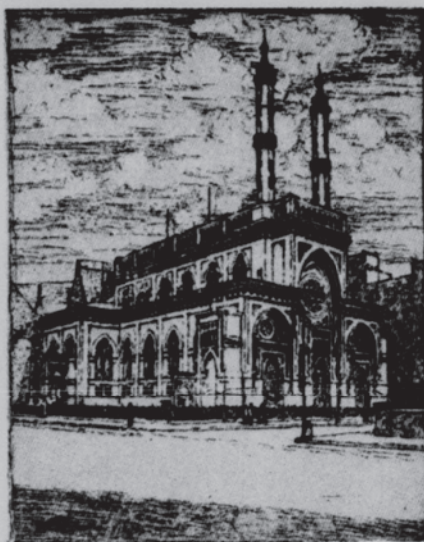
I am glad to hear that you are prepared to join our new Committee as one of the three representatives for the U.S.A. with Dr. Morgenstern and Rabbi Schulman. There will be no request for money in connection with this work.

Yours sincerely,

WRHS




Lily Montagu



THE ISAAC M. WISE TEMPLE

K.K.B'nai Yeshurun

Cincinnati, Ohio

OFFICE - READING ROAD AND NORTH CRESCENT AVENUE
TELEPHONES - AVON 0334 - AVON 0335

RABBIS

James G. Heller

Samuel Wohl

March 15th

1 9 3 8

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
E. 105th Street and Ansel Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Rabbi Silver:

I have been requested by the Honorable Lily Montagu of the World Union for Liberal Judaism to ask you to sponsor an appeal for the World Union's work in Palestine.

The appeal has the approval of the Executive Board of the Conference, and it is necessary that steps be taken at once to render the necessary assistance to the three Congregations that are already in existence now. One in Jerusalem with Dr. Wilhelm, one in Haifa with Dr. Elk, and a third group in Tel Aviv with Dr. Rosenberg, son-in-law of Professor Elbogen.

From reports received from Palestine and London we can learn that much has already been accomplished, that services are being held and educational work is being done. The World Union Committee is anxious to enlarge the scope of its work and to make possible for thousands of people in Palestine who are interested in Liberal Judaism to become associated in its religious activities.

There are excellent opportunities in Palestine for this work, and I am sure that many laymen would like to support the religious work in Palestine. I hope that your participation will give encouragement and support to this important undertaking.

With warmest regards, I am,

Yours most sincerely,

Samuel Wohl
SAMUEL WOHL, CHAIRMAN
CENTRAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE
FOR WORLD UNION IN PALESTINE

SW:HR



THE ISAAC M. WISE TEMPLE
K.K.B'nai Yeshurun
Cincinnati, Ohio

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RABBIS

James G. Heller

Samuel Wohl

March 24
1938

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
E. 105th St. & Ansel Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

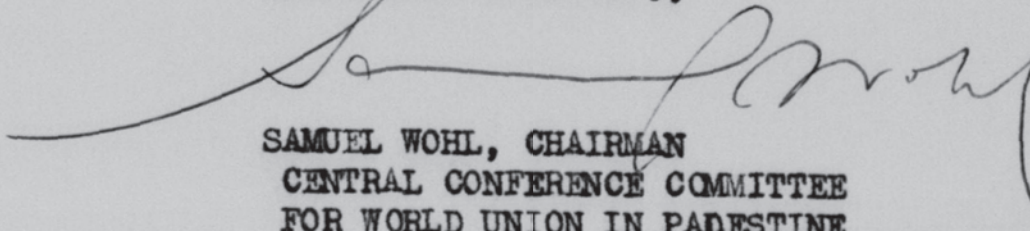
Please read carefully the letter which I addressed today to the President of your congregation. Your active participation is indispensable in order to obtain the necessary response to the appeal.

I trust that you will urge your president and other people that you think can handle this matter successfully to take action immediately.

Miss Montagu has written several times and has cabled that the need is most urgent.

With very best wishes, I am,

Yours most sincerely,


SAMUEL WOHL, CHAIRMAN
CENTRAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE
FOR WORLD UNION IN PALESTINE

SW:HR

March 24th
1 9 3 8

Mr. Eugene E. Wolf
1910 Union Trust Bldg.
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Mr. Wolf:

Upon the request of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the Executive Board of the Central Conference of American Rabbis has authorized an appeal on behalf of the Liberal Congregations now in Palestine and the extension of religious work there.

In cables and letters received from the Honorable Lily Montagu, the World Union declares that at this time, it is most essential to advance the cause of Liberal Judaism in Palestine. Three congregations are already in existence, one in Jerusalem under Dr. Kurt Wilhelm, one in Haifa under Dr. Elk and the third group in Tel Aviv under Dr. Rosenberg, the son-in-law of Professor Elbogen.

Much can be accomplished to make possible the religious affiliations of thousands of young Jews in Palestine with our Liberal movement. Those who know the situation in Palestine will testify that Orthodoxy has lost its appeal for countless thousands and no new forms of worship and religious education have taken their place, and the result is that so many have no spiritual home.

Given the necessary funds for a wider scope, our cause could be immeasurably advanced. The World Union and the Executive Board of the Central Conference appeal to you to accept membership on the Palestine Council of the World Union and to raise the sum of \$300 for the year 1938.

The method in which the appeal can be best devised by yourself, either by a letter to be sent to the members of your congregation or by a special committee of the Board, or by a letter to names selected to be sponsored by a national group of distinguished laymen and rabbis.

Miss Montagu has cabled that funds are necessary immediately, and I hope that you will consider this appeal most vital and will proceed energetically with your response.

With best wishes, I am,

Yours most sincerely,

SAMUEL WOHL, CHAIRMAN
CENTRAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE
FOR WORLD UNION IN PALESTINE

SW:HR

WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM.

Hon. Secretary: THE HON. LILY H. MONTAGU, O.B.E., J.P.

THE RED LODGE, 51, PALACE COURT, LONDON, W.2.

5th April 1938

Dear Rabbi Silver,

I enclose a copy of the German contribution of the Commission on Present Thought and Feeling in Progressive Judaism. Dr. Dienemann has now got the paper produced by Dr. Morgenstern produced by the English group. Rabbi Reinhart does not feel that he can subscribe to this paper, and we have asked him if he can produce a minority report. When the American contribution is received, Dr. Dienemann will be able to make suggestions for producing a comprehensive pamphlet.

Yours sincerely,

Lily Montagu

DR. DIENEMANN'S AUTHORITY COMMITTEE REPORT
FOR MEMBERS

As the Authority Committee was newly constituted at the meeting of July 1937, it is necessary to outline what the Committee has done so far, in order to give to the new members a knowledge of the previous work done.

At the Hague Conference in July 1935 a discussion took place principally on the possibility of the regularising of personal and communal piety. Out of a debate in which only the contrasts were brought to the surface developed the Conference of 1936 in London, when the subject: "Authority and Freedom" was the theme of discussion. Dr. Dienemann's report has been published in full. It is advisable to make this, Dr. Rauch's paper and the debates accessible to the present members of the Committee. For the following year the Committee had to bring forward the question of the relation between Tradition and Authority. At the beginning this was done in writing when naturally there were only individual expressions and no opportunity for opposing ideas. There were long papers by Dr. Vogelstein, Dr. Dienemann and Mr. Edgar, and also remarks by Dr. Schulman and Dr. Kellermann. These were mainly theoretical, only Dr. Dienemann and Mr. Edgar treated the subject from the practical point of view. The undersigned hopes that these papers will again be submitted to the members of the Authority Committee.

On July 2nd, 1937, a meeting of the Committee took place in Amsterdam under the chairmanship of Dr. Dienemann, when a number of members and Conference delegates, mostly young people, were present. Of the old Committee Dr. Edgar, Dr. Kellermann and Dr. Dienemann were there. At the outset the theoretical discussion was limited to a short time. Its form was definitely dialogical - question and answer, and it showed real, living interest. The attempt was to establish what Tradition really meant and in the end the following formula was found:

Tradition is the concrete formation and representation of the spiritual basis of the community.

Then the discussion turned to how we were to define the reason of or the call to obligation and the limits of obligation. For the first the following formula was laid down:

The reason of or call to obligation lies in the recognition of the God-related existence and history of Israel, and in the acknowledgement of the metaphysical law of life of the people.

As to the limit of obligation no clear understanding could be reached, because it is here that considerable differences of opinion exist. There are some who understand Liberal or Progressive Judaism to mean that absolute freedom belongs to its essence, and that there must be no limitation to it, and who apprehend a kind of Shulchan Aruch in any limitation. There are others who think that even in Liberalism Authority and limitation are possible and desirable.

We then turned to the practical side, to consider what were the ~~xxxxx~~ conclusions to be drawn. Contrasts appeared here quickly. One of the debaters tried to distinguish between the tradition of content and the tradition of form, only to discover that the two cannot be separated. As tradition of content, he indicated: the will to be a Jew, the acknowledgement of the covenant between God and Israel, the handing on from father to son, the willingness to learn and to embody in one's life a definite moral attitude, the absolute historical consciousness, horizontal and vertical, ending in the traditional demand that the home should be the religious centre corresponding to this historic consciousness, expressing itself particularly in the celebration and consecration of the festivals, the form of which should not be strictly fixed. Others again found that some direction as to form was necessary and expected by such as were unable to form a judgement of their own. It is clear that the authority giving a direction as to form can only be a moral one.

It was agreed that such a task could only be approached by a Committee to be nominated by the World Union consisting of a number of men of ripe experience whose names carried a certain moral authority. They should thoroughly consider this problem and then, at our next meeting, bring forward if possible propositions aiming at an ordering of a personal and communal life of piety.

The present circular is intended to open the discussion. We ask for expressions of opinion and propositions which should reach not later than the middle of September the Hon. Secretary or the undersigned:

Max Dienemann

Suggested Members for Authority
Committee

Germany: Rabbi Dr. M. Dienemann
Dr. Leo Baeck
Dr. Hermann Vogelstein

America: Dr. Morgenstern
Dr. Schulman
Rabbi Silver

England: Dr. C. G. Montefiore
Rabbi Dr. Wattuck
Rabbi Reinhardt
The Hon. L. H. Montagu
(Secretary)

WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM.

Hon. Secretary: THE HON. LILY H. MONTAGU, O.B.E., J.P.

THE RED LODGE, 51, PALACE COURT, LONDON, W.2.

24th April 1938

Dear Rabbi Silver,

I am sending you a copy of the suggested article which has been produced by the English group for the Commission on Present Thought and Practice in Progressive Judaism. It is mainly the work of Dr. Montefiore. Dr. Mattuck is away, and Mr. Edgar who has been taking his place and I have helped a little in the drawing up.

Rabbi Reinhart does not feel that he can subscribe to the paper as it stands, and we are hoping that he will produce another version himself.

Would you be good enough after reading this paper to write to Dr. Dienemann any views that you may have about the contribution, and its place in the general work of the Commission.

We are hoping very much to receive the American contribution before very long.

Yours sincerely,

Lily Montagu

Dr. M. Dienemann,
12, Kornerstrasse,
Offenbach-a-Main,
Germany.



THE ISAAC M. WISE TEMPLE
K.K.B'nai Yeshurun
Cincinnati, Ohio

OFFICE - READING ROAD AND NORTH CRESCENT AVENUE
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RABBIS

James G. Heller

Samuel Wohl

May 5th

1938

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
E. 105th St. & Ansel Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

I received today a four page letter from Professor Elbogen and a report which he forwarded to Miss Montagu. He was in Jerusalem and writes of the fine work that has already been done by Rabbi Wilhelm. He tells how tremendously important it is to continue and extend the work of the Liberal Movement.

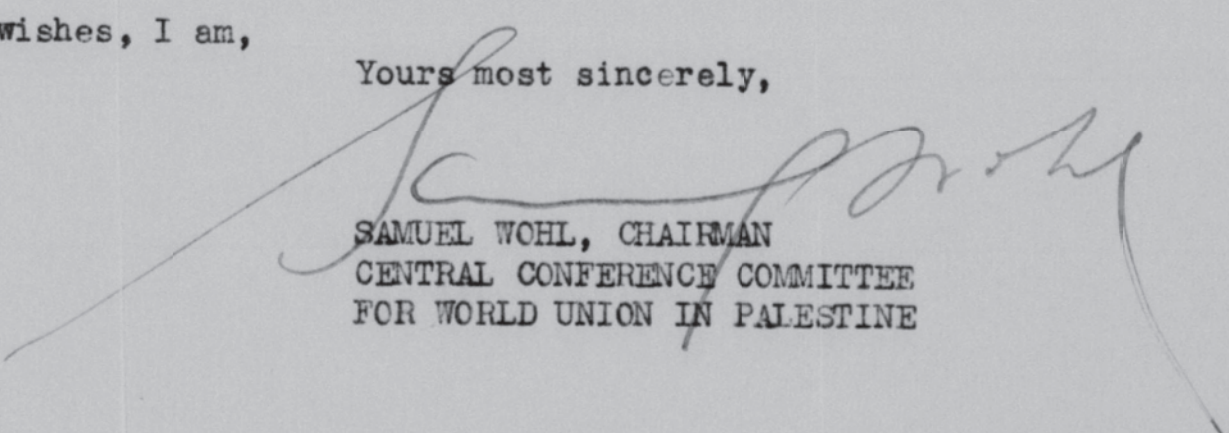
He ends up by saying, "Sie werden daraus sehen, wie dringend die leidige Geldfrage ist. Wenn nicht sofort neue Subventionen eintreffen, droht alles zusammenzuberechen!"

Since the Conference has asked me to do this work, I must do everything possible to obtain the necessary funds, and I feel that we must keep faith with the work and promises made by the World Union.

I know that Professor Elbogen and Miss Montagu will be happy to hear that you have responded. Please let me know whether I can tell them that funds will be coming within the next week or two. They expect to hear from me by cable.

With best wishes, I am,

Yours most sincerely,


SAMUEL WOHL, CHAIRMAN
CENTRAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE
FOR WORLD UNION IN PALESTINE

SW:HR

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Send the following message, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER

THE TEMPLE

CLEVELAND OHIO

RESPONDING TO THE URGENT MESSAGE OF PROFESSOR ELBOGEN OF GERMANY AND HON. LILY MONTAGU OF THE WORLD UNION IN ENGLAND, MR. ROGER W. STRAUS, MR. ALFRED M. COHEN, MR. ALFRED M. BENESH, DR. JULIAN MORGENSTERN, DR. DAVID PHILIPSON, DR. SAMUEL H. GOLDENSON AND DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER, APPEAL TO YOU FOR PARTICIPATION IN OBTAINING NECESSARY FUNDS FOR LIBERAL RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT IN PALESTINE. RELIGIOUS NEEDS OF THOUSANDS IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE IN THE PRESENT SITUATION AND FOR THE FUTURE OF JUDAISM. IF POSSIBLE TRY TO OBTAIN SUBSCRIPTIONS FROM A GROUP OF FRIENDS RATHER THAN FROM CONGREGATIONAL TREASURY. WILL APPRECIATE IMMEDIATE ACTION. WOULD LIKE TO INFORM LONDON OF YOUR PARTICIPATION. PLEASE WRITE.

SAMUEL WOHL, CHAIRMAN
CENTRAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE
FOR WORLD UNION IN PALESTINE