



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and  
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

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

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

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

---

Reel  
86

Box  
30

Folder  
1895

Zionist Organization of America, "D" and "E", 1947-1948.

AMERICAN ZIONISTS AND THE YISHUV

By Elias M. Epstein

The writer of the following article, now on a visit to this country is a well-known Palestine publicist. Residing in Palestine since 1919, Elias Epstein is the editor of the English language periodical, Palestine Review published in Jerusalem. He is also a prominent contributor to newspapers and magazines in Palestine and abroad.

-- The Editor

A glance today at the hierarchy of the Yishuv's self-governing administration would not reveal any overt American Zionist influence. Curiously enough at this stage of our progress in Palestine -- when we have reached the milestone of the Declaration of the Jewish State -- there are not to be found on the Jewish Agency Executive in Palestine, the Vaad Leumi, the Keren Hayesod or the Keren Kayemeth Boards of Directors, or even the American sponsored Hadassah Medical Organization, any American members. The University may claim the exception of Dr. J. Magnes. This dearth of American personalities does not reflect a dearth of American Zionist influence, which is indeed the strongest force which operates upon the Yishuv, however, from outside Palestine.

It was not always thus. There have served on the Palestine Executive such American Zionists as the late Henrietta Szold, Emanuel Neumann, Mrs. Rose Jacobs, and Bernard Rosenblatt. At one time, Israel Matz and Dr. Abba Silver were members of the World Keren Kayemeth Board. When I settled in Palestine in 1919, the Yishuv's affairs were in the hands of what was known as the "American" Zionist Commission. Its members, under the chairmanship of Dr. Harry Friedenwald, of Baltimore, were all American Zionists who had succeeded the mixed international membership of that body, appointed to study the implementation of the Balfour Declaration.

An Abnormal Situation

Why in the course of the years has an all-American Zionist Executive disappeared from Palestine, and the Yishuv institutions been deprived of the leadership which outstanding American Zionist personalities could surely give it? Can only Russian, Polish, German, Czech, and other East and Central European Communities provide the men to direct our activities in Palestine? Is there no balm in Gilead?

The cause of this abnormal situation is not fortuitous -- but it is not always comprehended by critics unfamiliar with the American scene. As the burdens of Zionism grew, the leaders of the movement in U.S.A. were faced by a dilemma.

The increasing responsibilities to provide the financial sinews of the enterprise fell upon America. It was natural to expect that American Jewry, better situated than any other -- should make the biggest contribution in money to the upbuilding of the Yishuv. The generosity of American Jewry, and especially towards Palestine, is famous -- but it should not be overlooked that the evocation of that generosity depended upon much laborious effort. The establishment of the Keren Hayesod in 1920, of which the present President of the ZOA was the first secretary, was a new departure in the scale of giving, and its successor, the UPA, combined with the Jewish National Fund, has been the media of enormous resources for developing Palestine -- the first requirement for all our needs, material, cultural and political.

Moreover, since the setting up of the Zionist Provisional Council during the first World War, American Zionists have been charged with the task of maintaining and pursuing our national political interest at the Government of the mightiest of all states.

#### American Personnel

The number of active workers in these arduous fields of endeavor was never large, and it was also necessary to serve the local needs of the Zionist movement in America itself. And so in the tug-of-war between the demands for financial and political activity in America, which obviously had to be imposed upon American Zionists, and the need for personnel in Palestine itself, the American operations secured priority. This is not surprising. It was argued that Americans must do the job needed in U.S.A. while others were available for the work in Palestine and indeed could not serve anywhere else. And thus the vineyard which American Zionists undertook to tend was America, and Palestine was inevitably neglected.

Today we hail one of the results of this choice -- the triumph of our cause in the Assembly of the Nations. That victory was undoubtedly due first and foremost to the support of the Jewish plea for a Jewish State on the part of the U.S.A. Had the American Government not backed the Jewish case, we could not possibly have won the approval of the Assembly. The steady dissemination of enlightenment on Zionism -- its ideal and achievement -- on the part of the Zionist Organization here (plus the huge job of money-raising) yielded fruit. The mobilization of political support among all ranks and circles of American public life which was effected so efficiently proved decisive. Although there were hesitations and doubts up till the last moment, due to considerable pressure from hostile elements, the task of making American Zionist-conscious was so well done that it was possible for President Truman to follow the Zionist line, conscious of the approbation which his action would arouse. We owe much to the U.S.A. for its stand which miraculously secured Soviet Russian assent and also the support of the British Dominions, and

other states which looked to the U.S.A. for guidance.

#### Look To American Participation

We may today consider the heavy investment of time and effort by the American Zionists in America itself well rewarded. No doubt it will be necessary to maintain the political vantage points already won here. But the Yishuv hopes that now that the Jewish State is to be erected, and so very much will depend upon how we build it, American Zionists will also be able to share in the Palestine theatre of operations. There too, the same qualities of enterprise and devotion, energy and imagination, technique and faith, are required, which distinguishes those who achieved our objective in the U.S.A. We hope that leaders of American Zionism will be able to come to Palestine -- some to settle and others possibly to spend a substantial part of the year there. They are needed and will be welcome. The Yishuv looks forward to such cooperation: indeed it was disappointed that after the last Congress in which American Zionists took so conspicuous a part, it was not possible for any of them to serve in Jerusalem.

There is, besides the general advantage to the Yishuv of the participation of Zionist leaders of all Jewries, a special consideration involving the ZOA and Hadassah. These two big organizations follow General Zionist principles -- they are not Left and they are not Right wing. They wish to see a democratic Yishuv free of reaction and free of totalitarianism of any brand. They want the national interest to be uppermost -- not the partisan. But unless their representatives join the Yishuv and within its autonomous framework play their part in behalf of those principles, there is a danger that they will not be applied. There is a fear that the new State may split into two camps based on class interests, as we have seen in other countries. The General Zionists can, we hope, avoid this happening, but they must be strong not only in U.S.A. but also in Palestine.

So far American General Zionists have been preoccupied with the national interests rather than the particular outlook which they represent. Hence we hope that some of the Zionists who have brilliantly led our cause in the U.S.A. may now be able to give of themselves to the Yishuv directly, to be in and of the Yishuv. For the State will arise on the foundations which we lay for it in Eretz Israel. It will long need the friendly support of the U.S.A., which in turn means powerful cooperation from the American public which the ZOA must cultivate. But Palestine also desires, indeed demands, the rich benefits which American Zionists can also render to it in the Jewish State itself.

#####

12/18/47  
47/37AD

C O P Y

6940 FIFTY-SIXTH SOUTH - SEATTLE 8, WASHINGTON

February 11, 1948

Zionist Organization of America,  
41 East 42nd Street,  
New York 17, New York.

Dear Sirs:

I have the greatest respect for Mr. Moshe Shertok, and as a Zionist of long standing I fully appreciate his talents and service to the movement, but please do persuade him not to publicly debate our cause. My friends and I who listened to him on the Town Meeting Of The Air radio program on February 10 were greatly distressed at his incapacity to debate in a calm and collected manner. Senator Magnuson's technique was a shining example of the right way to make friends and influence people.

Speaking at public discussions over the radio and before public gatherings requires a high degree of skill and poise. The Arabs use excellent men, who are specialists in this field of public relations and who are doing too good a job. We Jews are bungling miserably.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Very truly yours,

(SIGNED) MRS. NORMAN DAVIS

Mrs. Norman Davis,  
(First President, Tacoma Wn.,  
Chapter of Hadassah.)

ZIONIST ORGANISATION OF AMERICA  
NEW YORK, U.S.A.

ELIAS M. EPSTEIN,  
PALESTINE CORRESPONDENT  
TEL. 2697

34, Alfasi St.,

~~PO BOX 1159~~  
JERUSALEM 18th May, 48

Ref. No. 184

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver,  
New - York.

Dear Dr. Silver,

You may think it strange that in these days of strife and struggle and hardship in Jerusalem, which seems to have been hit more than other places, I should write to you in regard to far-reaching projects. However, it's just because in these times one is unable to pursue constructive work - we are living somewhat from hand to mouth, deprived of fuel, short of water and many foodstuffs, as well as light - that one seeks to plan for the future.

I should like to submit for your consideration, to the extent that your urgent duties permit, two subjects.

The first is with reference to the future of the World Zionist Organisation. I think it will be natural and proper that the Zionist movement will detach itself organisationally from the Jewish Agency which has evolved into the Jewish State. Close as the moral tie between the two will be, they will function separately or ought to do so. The main forces in the Jewish Agency, particularly in Palestine, will be devoted to the considerable tasks of the State. On the other hand, some of our Zionist leaders, living abroad, will be relieved of certain functions which they will be unable to fulfil, because they will not be subjects of the Jewish State.

The Zionist Organisation will also be relieved of certain responsibilities which the Jewish State as such will have to assume. The Z.O. will have for its constituency the Zionists and Jews of the world outside Palestine. It will have before it a great cultural programme which however will involve close connections with the Jews in the Jewish State. However these connections will not be of a political character and therefore will be sharply differentiated from the activities performed by the Jewish State. Even though they may include economic and social projects as well as purely cultural undertakings, they will be initiated, directed and fostered by the World Zionist Organisation, and not by the machinery of the Jewish State representing its own territorial subjects, including Arabs as well as Jews.

To perform this enhanced function of the W.Z.O., it will be necessary to strengthen it very considerably. It will have to develop a character and momentum of its own. The greater membership in the W.Z.O. will derive from the U.S.A., and the total English-speaking Jewries will be the predominant element. Hence I think it only natural that American Zionists should take the lead in preparing the Z.O. for its new role.

./.

18th May, 1948

I think that a very important new factor will arise also in respect to the large funds raised abroad for Palestine. Neither the Jewish National Fund nor the Keren Hayesod will apparently be part of the machinery of the Jewish State. It is not clear to me whether or how the contributions raised abroad can be donated to the treasury of the Jewish State. I think that in due course we shall have to devise an arrangement whereby these monies, raised by foreign citizens, will be earmarked for specific projects. Arising therefrom the control of such projects will have to reside at least to some extent in the hands of the bodies responsible for raising these funds, bodies which will be affiliated to the Zionist Organisation, and not to the Jewish State. Of course the National Funds will cooperate in economic projects with the Jewish State. I anticipate that they should receive concessions and (special/other) rights. But I think it will be found, both from a legal and practical viewpoint, to be best if these funds are controlled by their donors who live abroad.

Hence I think that the Z.O. will become a much more important and decisive element in our movement than hitherto. I think therefore that we should prepare our plans accordingly. The organisation of the W.Z.O. would have to be brought into line with the actual prevailing conditions abroad and thoroughly modernised. While working out these reforms, I think we should prepare to enlist suitable competent personnel to serve the organisation in its new tasks. My mind naturally runs upon the fact that the association between the W.Z.O. and Eretz Israel will become much more important. The contact will have to be much stronger if the W.Z.O. is to carry out its programme adequately. It will need an Office or rather an administration in Eretz Israel, distinct from the departments of the Jewish State. The relations between the two will be close and cordial, but there will be a distinct difference in function and competence. I hope that particularly in respect to this latter part of the new arrangements, I may be able to be of service. In any case, I would submit that the subject be explored. I think that the Jewish State is interested in the existence of a strong World Zionist Organisation, but I do not think that the W.Z.O. can or should be controlled, even vicariously, by the Jewish State or its officials.

2. The second subject which has given me food for thought is in respect to Jerusalem. The city will be outside the confines or jurisdiction of the Jewish State. I understand that there is a proposal to enable Jewish citizens of the international zone of Jerusalem to be citizens, either alternately or concurrently, of the Jewish State. But it seems clear that the Jewish State will not be able to make Jerusalem its responsibility. I need not stress the stake which we have in Jerusalem. I have been thinking of the lines on which we can both aggrandize Jerusalem and at the same time fasten upon it Jewish stamp and influence. Jerusalem has been the object of many declarations of love and admiration, but such sentiments alone will not build it up. The city must have its economic basis and as you know, it is very poorly off in respect to its own economic resources. We do not seek to create an artificial prosperity for Jerusalem.

In thinking of the various possibilities of strengthening Jewish Jerusalem, I see only one main opportunity. There is little doubt that with the migration to the ~~city~~<sup>seat</sup> of the capital of the Jewish State of many

./.

18th May, 1948

departments of the Jewish Agency, a substantial part of the administrative and professional population will also move there, and with them a number of tradespeople and merchants, so that in the early future I anticipate a decline of Jewish Jerusalem.

The future of the city as I see it, is in its relationship to the Jewish world abroad as a cultural centre. If I might put it that way, the economic asset of Jerusalem is its spiritual asset. Beyond its natural beauty, Jerusalem has no other assets but its historic position as the centre and fount of our religion and culture. Hence it should be our purpose to make the town once again a great and vital force in Jewish life. Curiously enough in these past twenty-eight years during which we have intensified our development of Palestine, we have neglected very lamentably Jerusalem itself. Besides having our National Offices there (which will now mostly leave), one other thing was done in Jerusalem, namely the building of the Hebrew University. This of course is in direct harmony with my conception of the future of Jerusalem as what one might call "The University City of World Jewry". Unfortunately the University has not become the responsibility of the Zionist Organisation, or the Jewish Agency, or the Yishuv. For reasons with which you are quite familiar, the University has been allowed to be isolated to a substantial extent from the Jewish national movement. Dr. Magnes has expressed gratification that the University has retained its independence, but I do not think that freedom of opinion on the part of any important institution, need necessarily be purchased at the cost of divorce from the movement of which it should be naturally and integrated part.

I have written an article on this subject which I hope to send you, but would like in this letter merely to indicate my line of thought. It embraces a twofold conception. On the one hand, I suggest that the City of Jerusalem (really the Jewish city) should incorporate the University, should build its future around the University, ~~on the one hand~~ facilitating its growth, and, ~~on the other hand~~, benefitting as a city from that growth. At the same time I would like to see the Jews of the world contributing to the re-building of Jerusalem and its University as one harmonious community. The University should not be detached from the city in which it is found, and the University-City should be the centre of a circumference surrounding World Jewry. The first part would be implemented through practical economic and constitutional measures on the spot - mutual obligations would be assumed by the City and the University; the second part I foresee through the creation of a "Jerusalem Civic Association" which would have members wherever Jews reside. This Association would rally ~~the~~ support, sentimentally and practically, both for Jerusalem the city and its university. I keep stressing the link between the two, because I see frankly a very poor future for Jerusalem, in spite of the greatest effort to introduce some industry and crafts, except in connection with the growth and activities of the University. On the other hand, I do not think that the University should grow on its own, isolated on Mount Scopus, though naturally it is bound to enjoy the proper authority and autonomy of every great college.

This approach to the future of Jerusalem and the University will naturally involve a distinct change towards the latter on the part of the World Zionist Organisation. Certain members of the University may not accept this approach, but I think that others would be prepared to give it favourable

./.

18th May, 1948

consideration. I certainly foresee substantial benefit to the University from such a plan, and I believe that the Zionist Organisation in its future programme cannot ignore the existence and future of the University, while at the same time it certainly will have a definite obligation to Jerusalem the City.

I hope that the coming days will restore the atmosphere and the opportunity for discussing these proposals.

With kind regards,

Sincerely yours, *Shas M. Epstein*



MAX ENGELBERG  
250 MAGEE BUILDING  
336 FOURTH AVE.  
PITTSBURGH 22, PA.  
GRANT 6390

June 27, 1948

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver  
c/o The Temple  
East 105th Street and Ansel Road  
Cleveland, Ohio

My dear Dr. Silver:

I have been approached by representatives of the Irgun and also by Mr. Elizer Shostak of the World Zionist Actions Committee, for my personal contribution, as well as my assistance in raising some funds here for the Irgun. My answer to them was that I have read in the Jewish press that the Irgun is now united with Hagana and receives the necessary means from them.

The representatives of Irgun who have visited me state that this is not so. They have shown me copies of cables from Palestine dated May 20 and June 3rd, showing that the Irgun does not get any financial or material assistance from the Hagana, the Jewish Agency, or the provisional government of Israel. In addition to this, I have been shown a copy of a letter dated May 5th, signed by you, addressed to Dr. I. Lifshitz, Executive Director of the Palestine Emergency Fund, in which you state, "the agreement, however, does not provide for any financial and material assistance to the Irgun, either from the Hagana, the Jewish Agency, or any of the other general funds outside of Palestine such as the United Palestine Appeal, which is incorporated in the U.J.A. It was further agreed that the official Zionist institutions, both inside and outside of Palestine, should confirm that the Irgun does not receive any allotments from the campaigns carried out for the general purpose of Hagana."

As a disciplined Zionist, I want to follow in this matter the directions of my organization. However, I want to express my personal opinion that if the Irgun is now united with Hagana in a joint defense of Israel, I believe that the Irgun is entitled to the financial support it needs for materials, etc. May I therefore ask you to give me an official answer as head of the American Section of the Jewish Agency for Palestine?

1. Does the Irgun get the fighting and other necessary material, or must it get its materials with funds raised by its own strength or representatives?

2. As a disciplined Zionist, can I extend my cooperation to the Irgun committee?

I sincerely hope that your answer will be forthcoming at your earliest convenience.

Thanking you for your kind and prompt attention to my request, and with warmest personal regards and Israel's greetings, I am

Sincerely,

*Max Engelberg*

ME/ml

July 9, 1948

Mr. Max Engelberg  
336 Fourth Avenue  
Pittsburgh 22, Pa.

My dear Mr. Engelberg:

Please pardon the delay in replying to your letter. I have been away from the city. I am sure that you have followed the deliberations of the Zionist Convention which took place in your city over the weekend, the discussions which took place about the Irgun and the resolutions which were adopted by the Z.O.A. Convention.

My own position has been made clear in the public press. Since the establishment of the state of Israel and the creation of the single unified Army of Defense, no contributions to the support of independent military organizations are desirable or necessary. The state of Israel regards it as a distinct disservice to it and as undermining its authority as well as the effectiveness of its military operations. And as far as disciplined Zionists in the United States are concerned, the wishes of the constituted authorities of Israel should be final.

With all good wishes, I remain

Very cordially yours,

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

AHS:er