



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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Harold P. Manson, Abba Hillel Silver: An Appreciation, undated.

Abba Hillel Silver—An Appreciation

HAROLD P. MANSON

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A REMARKABLE UNITY pervades the still-incomplete lifework of Abba Hillel Silver. His entire career runs in a straight line toward an almost inevitable meeting with an exacting assignment from history.

The nature of that assignment was decreed by "the inescapable logic of events" (a phrase that would figure prominently in his public utterances). His historic task was to realize the revolutionary program which had been set in motion by Theodore Herzl in 1897—to secure international recognition for the reconstitution of an independent Jewish State.

An American rabbi, preeminent as a leader of Reform Judaism, but nurtured by East European Jewish traditions and folkways, and bound in love to the masses of his people; undeviatingly committed from early childhood to the Herzlian concept of political Zionism; schooled in the processes of political action in a democratic society; endowed with a powerful intellect, a commanding personality, and oratorical skills that could persuade masses and move them to action, Dr. Silver was perfectly cast for his role by life itself.

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The S. S. *Kœln*, out of Bremen, reached New York harbor on a June day in 1902. Among the new immigrants whom it brought to Ellis Island was a thin, dark, curly-haired, nine-year-old boy, decked out in a sailor suit for the occasion. Abba Silver, held in tow by his mother, Dinah, had arrived together with his older brother and a sister to rejoin their father, Rabbi Moses Silver, in the new home which he had established in America. Behind them was the Lithuanian town of Neinstadt-Schirwindt where the six Silver children were born—and also a tradition of learning and scholarship which they would transplant in the exciting new land that welcomed them.

One of the dominant themes of Abba Hillel Silver's later life and action was born on that day: belief in America as a force for good in the world. He would come to know America intimately—her vastness and diversity, but mostly her power to achieve a better life—and would eagerly make his own contribution to her civilization.

The America he first encountered was New York's lower East Side. His childhood in the family's tenement on Madison Street was altogether happy. The drabness of tenement life at the turn of the century seems to have been shut out. Here, as in Neinstadt, his home was a place of scholarship, tolerantly administered by Rabbi Moses Silver.

The third in a succession of ordained rabbis, Moses Silver did not make the rabbinate his profession. In Neinstadt he had earned a modest livelihood in the soap business, but learning was the essence of his life. In New York he taught in a Hebrew school and also gave free instruction to many gifted youngsters. He remained dedicated to scholarship until his death at the age of eighty-seven at his home in Jerusalem, where he and his wife settled in 1924. Shortly before his eightieth birthday Moses Silver published two volumes of a Biblical commentary, *Hishukei Kessef (Filigree of Silver)*, which were well received by both scholars and laymen and which reflect his learning and his piety. The range of his intellectual interests was wide and included not only traditional Biblical and Talmudic studies, but modern Hebrew literature and the secular humanities as well.

There were not many Jewish homes at the turn of the century in which such coexistence was actively encouraged or even acceptable. Traditional Jewish learning and "secularism" were generally in conflict, giving rise to fanaticism and intolerance on both sides. Moses Silver taught his children to view Judaism in its entirety and to reconcile, rather than accentuate, apparent diversities.

Zionist thought was, inevitably, a central influence in such a home. Heroic Biblical figures inspired visions of a reborn Jewish nation. The essays of Ahad Ha-Am, the philosopher of cultural Zionism, were read and discussed in Hebrew. The lifework of Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, was followed avidly by the entire family.

In 1904, the year of Herzl's untimely death, the two Silver boys formed the Dr. Herzl Zion Club. It was the very first Zionist Hebrew-speaking group in America and was to serve as a training ground for the future leadership of the movement. Its first president was thirteen-year-old Maxwell Silver, who was succeeded two years later by Abba Hillel Silver. The club held debates and performed plays in the

Hebrew language. A half-century later one of the group reminisced: "Abba always played the young hero, with flashing eyes and sword-play. He was built for the role. He looked the part."

The club's membership included Emanuel Neumann, who would later head the Zionist Organization of America and be Silver's closest associate in the political leadership of United States Zionism; the future Hebrew educator Israel Chipkin; a number of subsequent leaders of the rabbinate, including Barnett R. Brickner, Abraham Feldman, Benjamin Friedman, Jesse Schwartz, as well as many others who were destined to make significant contributions to American Jewish life. Of this élite group and its meetings on the lower East Side, Neumann wrote in 1953: "I joined . . . on a wintry Saturday evening, when the club was celebrating the Bar Mitzvah of the president. Its president then and its natural leader for years thereafter was Abba Hillel Silver. His was a firm rule, tempered always with a saving sense of humor. He was loved, admired and obeyed. His word at the end of a long debate had the ring of finality and was accepted without demur. The very quality of his voice brought conviction."

One of the recorded incidents in the history of the Dr. Herzl Zion Club is prophetic. The club had been plunged into ideological controversy almost from its inception. At first, the anti-Zionist views of the rigidly Orthodox left it without a meeting place, but for the home of Rabbi Moses Silver, to whom the boys turned for guidance and support. Finally, the group received permission to meet in the nonsectarian Educational Alliance. With the advent of a new director of that institution, the club was again facing homelessness. Its name was considered too "political." One day the director was making the rounds with one of the benefactresses of the Educational Alliance. On entering the room where the Dr. Herzl Zion Club boys met, they were astonished to find the meeting being conducted in Hebrew. The director and the good lady lectured the group severely on their poor display of "Americanism" in choosing to speak an alien tongue. When they finished, a tall boy in his early teens stood up and announced calmly that the Dr. Herzl Zion Club identified itself with the Zionist movement, that it would continue to use the language which David had found suitable for the composition of the Psalms, and through which Isaiah had expressed his vision of universal peace and justice. Quite speechless, the director and the lady withdrew. The Dr. Herzl Zion Club continued to conduct meetings in Hebrew at the Educational Alliance—and Abba Hillel Silver had won his first ideological battle against an attitude which he would encounter and best time and again in his career.

In 1911, after graduating from Townsend Harris High School, where he was one of the top students, Abba Hillel Silver took a step which must have been anathema to some of his neighbors and also worried a number of his young Zionist comrades. Like Maxwell a few years earlier, he decided to enter the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati—the center and stronghold of Reform Judaism. To the ultra-Orthodox this was a few steps short of apostasy. To some of the Herzl Zion boys, mindful of the anti-Zionist attitude which then permeated Reform Jewry, it represented a threat that their leader might be taken over by the “enemy.” He, however, was certain that he and other friends who were to accompany or follow him to Cincinnati would ultimately occupy and dominate the citadel of Liberal Judaism. Interestingly enough—perhaps typically—the Silver boys’ decision received warm encouragement and support from their father.

Accepted by the Hebrew Union College, he also enrolled in the University of Cincinnati with the intention of completing his rabbinical studies simultaneously with his general college education. He carried this off with resounding success, accomplishing nine years’ work at the College in four years and graduating from both institutions in 1915.

The motif of leadership runs throughout his college years and is fresh in the memory of fellow students.

Young Rabbi Silver’s first pulpit was in Wheeling, West Virginia, at the Eoff Street Temple. Wheeling was chiefly significant in his life for the presence of Virginia Horkheimer, daughter of a leader of the community, and the product of five generations on American soil. The courtship outlasted his stay in that city and was continued from Cleveland until their marriage in 1923.

This wonderfully happy union must occupy a central place in any evaluation of Rabbi Silver’s career. Virginia Silver, a personality in her own right, has been content to realize herself as wife to a remarkable man and mother to two fine sons. Living in the atmosphere of love and support which she created, Rabbi Silver received an added measure of confidence and strength for his career. He also received valuable counsel—for Virginia Silver proved to be very astute in taking the measure of a person.

Silver was all of twenty-four when, after two years in Wheeling, he received a call to one of the most important pulpits in America—Cleveland’s Tifereth Israel (The Temple). From 1917, the year of his arrival in Cleveland, it has been his beloved spiritual home and the workshop of his creative spiritual life.

There were, of course, doubts about his maturity. He was, after

all, succeeding the venerable Rabbi Moses J. Gries, and skeptics anticipated a fiasco. His first sermon, which has become something of a legend, swept away all reservations. An electrified congregation came away with the proud knowledge that they had chosen as their spiritual leader a most extraordinary man.

Not that it was all smooth sailing thereafter. The words which rang out from Rabbi Silver's pulpit were not designed to please, but to summon to moral and social action. His uncompromising Zionism, his internationalism in a Midwest stronghold of isolationism, his espousal of the cause of organized labor long before labor became a major force in American society, his attacks against some of the most powerful economic and political interests in the state and nation—these and other views were extremely distasteful to some leaders of the city. Conflict and controversy were inevitable, as were victory and vindication for the unyielding rabbi who had won the hearts and minds of the congregation and large sections of the community. It became clear at the very outset that Abba Hillel Silver could be held only on his own terms.

The beginnings of his work in Cleveland were interrupted by the First World War. He served in France where his ministry to the Allied troops won him the Academic Palms as Officier de l'Instruction Publique.

Upon his return he plunged into the work of making The Temple not only the largest, but perhaps the most progressive and educationally creative Liberal Jewish congregation in America. Two years after his arrival the membership had risen from 725 families to 916. Five years later, in 1922, Rabbi Silver laid the cornerstone for the inspiring edifice where the congregation has worshiped since 1924. In 1959 a great new wing was added to The Temple, which today boasts a large school, a fine library, and an exceptional museum of Jewish religious and ceremonial art, among the many other educational and cultural facilities available to its membership of 2,400 families. This many-faceted institution is now jointly administered by Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver and his son, Daniel Jeremy Silver, the fifth in the family's unbroken chain of rabbis and scholars—a moving and poetic culmination of one of the senior rabbi's most cherished dreams.

An achievement like The Temple would for most men represent total fulfillment, leaving little time or inclination for other endeavors. The very process of building and physical expansion can become an all-absorbing occupation. Spiritual and moral purposes have too often been trapped and entombed in the cornerstones of magnificent edifices. Their size and complexity impose heavy administrative de-

mands on the spiritual leader, who is in constant danger of being transformed into a corporation executive or professional fund raiser. But Rabbi Silver has kept the emphasis where it belongs: on Jewish teaching and worship.

Moreover, the daily tasks of the rabbinate, however significant and rewarding in themselves, could not contain his searching mind. He heard other voices. The love of scholarship could not be stilled and he somehow found time to study and to write—though never to the extent that he wished.

In 1925 he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Hebrew Union College. His thesis was later expanded into his first published book, *Messianic Speculations in Israel* (1927)—regarded by scholars as a classic contribution to the study of Messianic concepts. The subject matter is highly illuminating in relation to Silver's total personality. Superficially it would appear that nothing could be more alien to the spirit of one who is so totally committed to action in the modern world than the mystical quest for the Messianic era and its meaning. Nevertheless, it is precisely this subject which absorbed him as a young scholar and which has recurred frequently in his writings. He applied his keen intelligence to gain a fuller understanding of the Messianic motif which is unmistakable in Jewish experience over the centuries. The qualities of Jewish mystical thought—its fervor and scope—appealed to him, though he firmly rejected mystical solutions to man's problems. He brought these qualities to his work in the rabbinate and the Zionist movement.

In attempting to define the unique nature of Silver's leadership of the Zionist movement, the author wrote in 1949: "No real understanding of Dr. Silver—the man and the leader—is possible without an appreciation of the fact that he is first and foremost *Rabbi* Silver, a person of deep spiritual convictions and a profound scholar. . . . He regards his pulpit in Cleveland, Ohio, with the reverence and devotion of one for whom there can be no greater calling in life. If we bear this fact in mind, many things which at first glance appear mystifying become crystal clear: why he underwent the physical discomfort of spending many days of each week on trains and planes, commuting between New York and Cleveland or Washington and Cleveland—this over a period of six years—in order to be back in his pulpit on the Sabbath; why, even in the midst of the most severe crises in his political life, he could be found at The Temple happily engaged in teaching a class of children; why, surrounded by admiring multitudes in New York, he would confide to his friends that he yearned for the peace of his study; why he always spoke so wistfully

of the days when he could devote himself to Jewish scholarship—the days when he wrote the profound *Messianic Speculations in Israel*.

“When we view Dr. Silver in the light of his dedication to the spiritual essence of Judaism, we are better able to understand his unshakable faith that the Zionist cause would triumph, no matter what the obstacles, as well as the quality akin to mysticism which is present even in his most ‘political’ utterances—a quality which some regarded as a contradiction of his basic character, but which those close to him understood to be the true expression of that character.”

Two decades of intermittent but impressive scholarly activity were abruptly halted when Silver was called to the leadership of the American Zionist movement—though this phase of his creative life was energetically resumed following his withdrawal from Zionist politics. He wrote three more books prior to his assumption of active political leadership. *The Democratic Impulse in Jewish History* (1928) is a compact presentation of his view of Judaism as essentially a people’s religion and of Jewish creativity as people-based. The primary role occupied by the Jewish people in his concept of Jewish history would determine his approach to all aspects of Jewish life—including, of course, the Zionist program which, to his mind, required a strong popular foundation. The interaction between people and leader—each drawing inspiration from the other, with the former always paramount—would be a fascinating subject of inquiry throughout his life. He would also have the opportunity, given to few scholars, of translating his concepts into living history.

Silver foresaw the vast economic changes that would sweep over America in the 1930’s. In *Religion in a Changing World* (1930) he outlined a program toward a just social order and described the role that a vigorous religion would have to assume. It was in the prophetic tradition. The volume was for many months a nonfiction best-seller.

In *World Crisis and Jewish Survival* (1941), a collection of essays (including his 1940 Dudleian Lecture at Harvard), the scholar is embattled against the then-triumphant Nazi tyranny, and there are signs of the emerging political leader. There is also a ringing confidence in the Jewish people’s ability to survive the holocaust and to go forward toward the fulfillment of its role in history.

With his passionate devotion to social justice, Rabbi Silver was impelled to take stands on vital issues in the life of his city, state, and country. His Sunday morning sermons, which supplement the regular Temple services on the Jewish Sabbath, quickly became events of community-wide importance, attracting huge audiences of both Jews and non-Jews. One of the most civic-minded cities of

America, Cleveland responded warmly to Abba Hillel Silver, and forward-looking citizens turned to him for guidance and leadership. His unabated popularity has been phenomenal, not merely because he managed to remain a "prophet with honor" in his own community for so many years, but because he has achieved this without aiming at popularity. Never concerned with his professional career as an end in itself, he sought no favors and did not tailor his opinions and actions to conform to prevailing attitudes. Indeed, his words and actions were frequently disturbing to the comfortable and socially unconcerned.

After the First World War, when Cleveland, like so many other American cities, fell prey to the Palmer anti-Red hysteria, Rabbi Silver took the lead in restoring civic sanity. In 1921 he engaged in a running debate with no less formidable an opponent than Newton D. Baker, the former Secretary of War in Wilson's cabinet and one-time Mayor of Cleveland. The issue was the open shop versus the closed shop, with Silver arguing vigorously in support of the labor unions. He resigned from the Chamber of Commerce, of which Baker was then president. But vindication was not long in coming and Cleveland's unions achieved the closed shop.

In 1928 he initiated an enterprise in social pioneering which had tremendous effects. It was due to his vision and energy that The Temple became the birthplace of the unemployment insurance movement in Ohio and perhaps also in the United States. Eight years of unremitting effort on the part of Rabbi Silver and his associates resulted in the passage by the Ohio State Legislature of an unemployment insurance bill which he helped to frame.

During the depression years he was a militant champion of organized labor and an unrelenting foe of the "wreckers" among Ohio's industrialists and financiers. With the intensity of a Biblical prophet he denounced by name the prominent citizens who qualified as "financial jugglers" and "pirates." His zeal stimulated public protests and reform movements which made decency and social responsibility prevail.

The importance and scope of Rabbi Silver's contributions to his community may be gathered from the section on Cleveland in John Gunther's *Inside U.S.A.* (1947) where he is described as "probably its most distinguished citizen."

All of these works, however, were prologue and preparation for the chief task which was still to come. Silver had retained his intimate association with the Zionist movement from the days of the

Dr. Herzl Zion Club. By 1920 he was well known in Zionist circles as a brilliant young orator and was invited to address the international Zionist conference in London that year, sharing the platform with such eminent personalities as Lord Balfour, Lord Cecil, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, and Max Nordau. In the rift that developed between Dr. Weizmann and Louis D. Brandeis, the leader of American Zionism, Silver strongly supported Brandeis. The conflict, which was ideological in part, involved the control and administration of philanthropic funds raised in the United States for work in Palestine through the efforts of American Zionists. Silver was a loyal member of the group headed by Brandeis and Judge Julian W. Mack, and when Brandeis and Mack withdrew from leadership of the Zionist Organization of America, he went with them. He returned to active service in the movement in the late twenties, accepting Dr. Weizmann's leadership. But his early differences with the head of the World Zionist Organization would recur periodically and, at one critical moment, decisively.

With the rise of Nazism in Germany, Silver reacted with characteristic militancy. He was not content merely with denunciation of Nazi persecutions. Together with Samuel Untermyer he organized the anti-Nazi boycott in the United States. This brought him into sharp conflict with those American Jewish leaders who objected to "provocative" actions which, they held, might worsen the plight of the Jews in Germany. His dire predictions, based on a keen awareness of the evil forces which had been unleashed in the world, were borne out by subsequent horrors.

The immediate importance of Palestine became increasingly apparent with the growing acuteness of the Jewish refugee problem. Huge sums of money were required for the rescue and rehabilitation of the largest possible number of European Jewish refugees—and the greater holocaust was still to come. Regarding this task as the solemn responsibility of American Jewry, Silver undertook a leading role in fund raising, becoming chairman of the United Palestine Appeal in 1938 and also co-chairman of the United Jewish Appeal. The years of his leadership in this sphere were marked by greatly intensified activity and by the establishment and attainment of ever higher fund-raising goals. It is well worth noting that some of the highest peaks in the history of American Jewish fund raising were reached under the leadership of a Zionist rabbi. It would appear—later organizational mythology notwithstanding—that the Zionist label was not a liability in the raising of "big money" and that successful leadership is not necessarily confined to successful businessmen.

In the midst of his fund-raising efforts Dr. Silver was primarily concerned with Zionist statesmanship, rather than mere philanthropy. He made the United Palestine Appeal an instrument of education, which served to prepare American Jewry for the decisive political role that it was to play some years later. He had remained true to the Herzlian vision.

When the Zionist Revolution entered its climactic phase during the Second World War, no cause seemed more hopeless than the goal of a Jewish State in Palestine. The phenomenal progress of the *Yishuv*, the courageous Jewish community of Palestine, and its significant contributions to the war effort were rewarded by the White Paper policy barring Jewish refugees from the country. While the slaughter of European Jewry was being carried out with methodical efficiency by the Nazis, Great Britain left no doubt about her determination to scuttle her international obligation to assist the development of a Jewish National Home. Nevertheless, World Zionist diplomacy, based in London, clung resolutely to the hope that the partnership with Britain, which had begun so promisingly in 1917 with the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, would be resumed. In such circumstances the very idea of an independent Jewish State was fading fast from the world of political reality, even as this idea became the sustaining hope of the Jewish people, even as the *Yishuv* was readying itself for the decisive struggle, and even as the Zionist movement was confronted by a never-to-be-repeated opportunity to place its case high on the international agenda and to press for Jewish statehood as an act of world restitution and justice.

Only the entry of a powerful new force in support of the Zionist cause could avert a political disaster and infuse new strength and confidence for the major battles that lay ahead. That force was—had to be—the United States of America. The pivotal fact of the political struggle for Jewish statehood was that its center was shifting—at first slowly, almost imperceptibly, and later with tradition-shattering velocity—from London to Washington, as the center of world leadership generally was moving to an America which had neither sought nor prepared itself for such a role.

To anticipate this major trend and bring the Zionist cause into the mainstream of a historic process, and then to accelerate that process to win international approval of a Jewish State—this was the challenge to Zionist statesmanship. A new type of leadership, closely attuned to the American scene but motivated by classic Zionist concepts, was required. This became the monumental task of Abba Hillel Silver.

He had perceived the trend even before the beginning of the Second World War. A conversation, which took place between Emanuel Neumann and himself at the Twenty-first World Zionist Congress, held in 1939 in Geneva under the shadows of impending war and the recently issued British White Paper, is highly significant in the light of later developments. Neumann urged him to aspire to active political leadership of the Zionist movement in America. He replied that a world war would surely break out soon, that one of its probable results would be a shift of the center of gravity in world affairs to America, and that this would be the appropriate moment for his entry into the political arena. Neumann, then returning to America from a seven-year stay in Palestine, resolved to prepare the ground.

The American Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs, representing all major parties in the United States, was established in New York in 1940. In the three years that followed Neumann struggled to create a foundation for Zionist political action. Hampered by the inadequate commitment of Zionist colleagues to such a course, as well as by budgetary problems, he nevertheless managed to bring about the formation of the American Palestine Committee, numbering hundreds of members of both Houses of Congress, cabinet members, governors, and many other influential figures in public life. Subsequently he also fostered the formation of a special national committee of Christian clergy, the Christian Council on Palestine, and initiated other important activities in the field of public relations. Official contacts between the Zionist movement and the State Department in Washington were developed and cultivated. However, Neumann was the first to decry the inadequacy of Zionist efforts against the background of slaughter in Europe, perfidy in London, and silence in Washington. He voiced his protest by resigning his post. The ways of personal diplomacy had brought Zionist polity to a dead end. The old methods of *shtadlanut*, the approaches to governmental leaders by eminent Jews reinforced by nothing more than personal prominence and charm, had been thoroughly discredited.

The new voice and new approach were sounded on May 2, 1943, at the National Conference of the United Palestine Appeal in Philadelphia. Dr. Silver unfolded the Jewish people's condition in all its shocking reality. Then he took the offensive. He attacked not only British policy—criticism of which had been frequently voiced by other Zionist orators—but challenged the attitude of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt himself. ("The tragic problems of the Jewish people in the world today cannot be solved by chiefs of government or promi-

ment officials sending us Rosh Hashanah greetings!") He next summoned the Zionist movement to carry out a program of political action, prophetically describing the outcome:

"We are confident that the inescapable logic of events will in due time make Palestine a Jewish State. For a shorter or longer time this may be halted or retarded, but the rebirth of Israel as a nation in its historic home is as sure to come to pass as God's word never returns empty until it has accomplished that for which it was sent.

"The inescapable logic of events! When all the doors of the world will be closed to our people, then the hand of destiny will force open the door of Palestine. And that hour is rapidly approaching."

His assumption of active political leadership was now an inevitable—and for his opponents, an unavoidable—development. Dr. Weizmann had suggested it in 1942 during a visit to America. He had developed a high appreciation of Silver's talents during the latter's 1942 visit to war-torn London. But Weizmann's proposal had been blocked by some Zionist leaders who feared Silver's militancy and resented his none-too-gentle criticism. Now a group of American Zionists headed by Neumann earnestly requested Silver to head a reorganized Emergency Committee. It was to be called the American Zionist Emergency Council and it would create an imperishable record.

From August, 1943, onward Silver's biography and the history of Israel's establishment become inseparable—for any review of the momentous years that followed his acceptance of the chairmanship of the American Zionist Emergency Council brings into bold relief the decisive influence he exercised in determining the character, policies, and program of Zionism in its most crucial period.

He made a careful—and, as it turned out, accurate—estimate of the many fronts on which he would have to fight. He would have to contend with the British and with Arab propaganda (in those years largely a creation of British policy); with the United States Administration, headed by the most popular of world leaders, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and guided by an anti-Zionist State Department; with the oil interests and with the confusion-spreading anti-Zionist minority in American Jewry—and others as well. His confidence that this array of powerful forces could be—and would be—subdued was not motivated by foolhardy courage, though courage he had in full measure. It was a combination of iron logic and iron nerve which dictated his every action and which he sought to instill in the movement he led. Had he not succeeded in this, had the Zionist movement remained

embedded in conventional methods and attitudes, the outcome would surely have been different. Recognizing this at the very outset, he set about to transform the whole character of American Zionism—to convert a club of well intentioned and highly motivated, but politically passive, Zionist personalities into the nerve center of a revolutionary program with a mass following. And since time was short and his own temperament rebelled against procrastination and clever rationalizations, he was often impatient and “difficult” with those who would not or could not meet what he regarded as the clear and unmistakable challenge of the hour.

There was ample evidence that an overwhelming majority of American Jewry was prepared to support the full Zionist program. The opportunity for an impressive demonstration of this fact was at hand at the inaugural gathering of the American Jewish Conference in New York in the late summer of 1943. The resolution favoring a Jewish Commonwealth was violently opposed by the non-Zionist minority and was all but abandoned by prominent Zionist spokesmen in the name of “unity” and in return for non-Zionist support of unlimited Jewish immigration into Palestine. It was saved by Silver’s powerful plea to the delegates to reject such compromises. “If we surrender our national and historic claim to Palestine,” he warned, “and rely solely on the refugee philanthropic appeal, we shall lose our case as well as do violence to the historic hopes of our people.”

The Jewish Commonwealth resolution was adopted by a vote of 502-4.

American Jewish opinion had been crystallized and confirmed. Now the task was to make that opinion a potent force in influencing American policy. This was the responsibility of the American Zionist Emergency Council which within a year became the most effective instrument of public relations and organized action in the history of the Zionist movement and probably in the history of American Jewry. Indeed, in the melancholy and perhaps exaggerated opinion of some targets of the Emergency Council—British Foreign Office spokesmen, United States State Department officials, and Arab propagandists—it was for a time the most successful activity of its kind on the American scene. In its final form it was the handiwork of Dr. Silver—a highly efficient and sensitive instrument, completely responsive to his technique and style.

A Washington Bureau was established and superbly conducted by Rabbi Leon I. Feuer, the many-talented spiritual leader of Toledo, Ohio, who had served as Rabbi Silver’s close associate at The Temple

in Cleveland for many years. An intensive program of education on the Palestine problem had to be carried out in Washington. Friends were won in Congress and other areas of government.

The Emergency Council's policies were hammered out in an executive committee composed of representatives of all Zionist parties. This in itself was a formidable task in view of historical differences in ideology and methodology between the parties and their leaders. Inevitably, too, there were clashes of personality which sometimes overshadowed issues; old grudges which intruded into discussions of vital questions and made objective evaluations difficult. Nevertheless, this group was the power center of the organized Zionist movement. It had to be held together and made to function effectively—often against the wishes of some of its own members. Silver achieved this by a combination of reason and power. In political debate his arguments were usually irrefutable. But this alone would not have persuaded the opponents of his militant policy of exerting pressure on the Administration in Washington. His policy had to be backed by the force of public opinion. A mobilized mass movement, dedicated to the realization of his program, would not only be the chief factor in the main struggle for a Jewish State, but would prove vital on the internal front as well. It would enable him to push through his policies and frustrate those of his opponents who were bent on scuttling his program. In any case, his philosophy of Jewish life determined that the leader must seek and obtain his mandate from the people. This he did—and the masses of American Jewry, led by the Zionist rank and file, responded with unprecedented enthusiasm. It soon became clear to the British Foreign Office, the American State Department, and to the leaders of Zionism in the United States and abroad that the overwhelming majority of American Jews strongly supported Abba Hillel Silver.

The Emergency Council's program was carried out by a staff personally directed by Silver, and this was a main factor in its success—apart from the dedication of its members. Many observers of the American Jewish scene have said that never before or since was there a staff performance to approximate that of the Emergency Council team which functioned from late 1943 through 1948. It was not a very large group by present organizational standards, though the allegations of its anti-Zionist enemies created the flattering impression of a heavily financed army of propagandists. The anonymity of many of its most important members is a deficiency in the recorded history of Zionism which will, one day, be corrected. For example, the name of Harry L. Shapiro, the devoted and profoundly human

executive director of the Emergency Council, surely belongs in any record of Israel's emergence. The Silver method excluded any dichotomy between the leader and the professional executive. Key executives of the Emergency Council became his close and loyal friends and, when occasion required, fighters for his policies and program.

The history of the Palestine Resolution which was introduced in both Houses of Congress early in 1944 is an object lesson in political action within the American democracy. The sponsorship was impressive—in the Senate it was called the Wagner-Taft Resolution; in the House, the Wright-Compton Resolution. The primary purpose of the bipartisan measure was later explained by Silver in an address to the convention of the Zionist Organization of America: "If our cause was to be placed on the national and international agenda, if the attention of the American people and of the world was ever to be drawn forcibly to our problem on the eve of the effective date of the White Paper, and if the official silence in Washington was ever to be broken, the most effective, perhaps the only way in which it could be done, was by producing the discussion of our problem in the world's greatest forum of opinion—the Congress of the United States. What happens there is news, national and international. In fact, the very discussion of a problem before such a forum is a political event.

"Our investigation indicated beyond any reasonable doubt that sentiment among the members of Congress was highly favorable. Our nationwide poll, taken by our three hundred community contact groups all over the country before we introduced the resolutions, made it clear that when and if the resolutions came to a vote they would pass by very large majorities."

But the resolutions did not come to a vote. The Administration brought about a postponement of action through the intervention of the War Department, which argued for delay on military grounds. In response to the strong public resentment which this evoked, President Roosevelt, after a meeting with Dr. Silver and Dr. Stephen S. Wise, authorized the two Zionist leaders to issue a public statement in his name to the effect that "the American Government has never given its approval to the White Paper of 1939 . . . and that when future decisions are reached full justice will be done to those who seek a Jewish National Home."

Only later was it learned that immediately after the issuance of this and subsequent pro-Zionist pronouncements by the President of the United States, the State Department sent reassuring messages to Arab governments, advising them that there had actually been no change in American policy.

Silver refused to let the matter rest with Roosevelt's statement. He felt that the President's declaration should not be considered a substitute for Congressional action, but a powerful argument for speedy passage of the Palestine Resolution. He was, moreover, convinced that the "military" objections to the resolution would be withdrawn if sufficient public pressure was exerted on the Administration. The Emergency Council therefore held a great rally in New York's Madison Square Garden—the first of many huge mass demonstrations that would take place at critical moments of the struggle.

Silver then shifted the Zionist political front to Chicago, where the national conventions of the Republican and Democratic parties were to take place. Intensive efforts by the Zionist representatives at the conventions brought about the adoption of unequivocal Jewish Commonwealth planks in the platforms of both parties.

There is a wirespread tendency to write off the platforms of our major parties as pronouncements dictated exclusively by expediency, designed solely for vote-catching purposes, and therefore not really binding on the winning party. If this cynical view has any validity, the fault lies chiefly with some of the best elements in American society. Their own attitude is what, in the end, determines the seriousness and the binding character of party declarations. If they choose to regard the platform of the party in power as a solemn commitment and insist on action to redeem the party's pledge, they may be astonished to find that platforms are highly meaningful. The author was one of those engaged in the effort to secure the 1944 pro-Zionist planks in Chicago and the 1948 pro-Israel planks in Philadelphia, and can assure the cynics that they were not lightly or easily adopted. Moreover, their subsequent significance on the highest political level was unquestionable—simply because the organized Zionist movement chose to view them as serious declarations of policy and proceeded accordingly.

The wisdom of Silver's policy of seeking support from *both* of the major parties (a political truism today, but an unsettling concept for some Zionist leaders during the Roosevelt era) was strongly illustrated when President Roosevelt was induced to affirm his support of the Palestine plank in the Democratic platform. His memorable message to the convention of the Zionist Organization of America in October, 1944, had been immediately preceded by the pro-Zionist declaration of the Republican candidate for the Presidency, Governor Thomas E. Dewey. The "military" objections to passage of the Palestine Resolution were removed in a letter from Secretary of War Stimson to Senator Robert A. Taft, co-sponsor of the measure, and it was

decided that the matter be reopened in Congress. Clearance was sought from President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Stettinius; but notwithstanding the Democratic Party's declaration and Roosevelt's own statement, the Administration opposed action. On December 11, 1944, Stettinius appeared personally before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and argued against the Palestine Resolution in the name of the Administration. Such pressure from the Executive Branch made it impossible to pass the measure and it was tabled by a bare majority.

Within the American Zionist Emergency Council the situation was even more discouraging. When the Administration's opposition was encountered, a violent dispute developed. Those Zionist leaders who preferred to rely on Roosevelt's promise that he would, at some future date, support Zionist aspirations opposed further action which might prove embarrassing to the just-re-elected President or incur his hostility. Silver, on the other hand, felt that every effort should be made to induce the Administration to withdraw its opposition. Unfortunately, the proponents of these two views adopted separate and conflicting procedures in Washington. Thus, while Silver was pressing for a change in the Administration's attitude toward the resolution, other Zionist leaders were assuring public officials that they would not seek action against Roosevelt's wishes. The tabling of the resolution was, in these circumstances, inevitable, and Silver was forced to resign from leadership of the American Zionist Emergency Council.

The heated controversy in American Zionism which followed these developments proved to be an essential phase in the political education of the movement and of American Jewry. Silver's supporters sprang to the defense of his policies. Led by Neumann and organized by executives of the Emergency Council who had resigned in protest following Silver's removal from leadership, they formed the American Zionist Policy Committee which conducted a whirlwind campaign for the recall of Dr. Silver. In six months of debate between the "Silver activists" and the "Wise moderates" the central issue was crystallized: "The most effective representation (to leaders of government) in a democracy is through organized public opinion . . . Zionist leaders who cannot whole-heartedly join in such an effort, or who are too entangled in party politics to appraise situations objectively and to follow an independent Zionist line should step aside. We have nothing to lose now but our illusions. We have a new life to build for our people!" This was the essence of Silver's challenge.

It was taken up by the vast majority of American Zionists. After President Roosevelt's death and the disclosure of his secret corre-

spondence with King Ibn Saud, the demand for Silver's return to political leadership became ever more insistent. In July, 1945, he was recalled to head the American Zionist Emergency Council and shortly thereafter he was also elected President of the Zionist Organization of America.

The Palestine Resolution was reintroduced in Congress, with Dr. Neumann representing the Zionist position in Washington. Opposition on the part of the State Department under President Truman was no less vigorous than it had been under President Roosevelt. But this time the Zionist ranks could not be split. After a full debate in the Senate, the resolution was overwhelmingly adopted on December 19, 1945.

The lessons taught by Dr. Silver during this period were to be applied definitively during the next three years. The rank and file, if not all Zionist leaders, now understood that a Jewish State could not be won by appeals to vague humanitarianism and that the tragic plight of European Jewry was not, in itself, a persuasive argument for action by the world's leaders. The Zionist case had to be backed by political force—and the movement had come to realize that it was not without real political bargaining power. It had the increasingly strong and determined *Yishuv* in Palestine, and it had the growing support of American Jewry, the largest Jewish community in history. Now it had, too, the full endorsement of the Legislative Branch of the United States Government and the backing of millions of non-Jewish American citizens. It could no longer be put off or ignored and would henceforth address itself to the Executive Branch with greater confidence and far better results.

Silver's clashes with the Roosevelt Administration had led some of his opponents to attribute partisan political motives to his actions. In certain instances their own involvement in the affairs of the Democratic Party caused them to think in such partisan terms. Silver was a Republican, hence bent on embarrassing and defeating Democrats. For them it was as simple—and crude—as that. His friendship with his fellow-Ohioan, Senator Taft, was, moreover, proof that he was a "reactionary" to boot.

He never bothered to reply to these insinuations. He was disdainful of labels like "liberal" and "reactionary." In Ohio he had supported both Democrats and Republicans for high public office, always seeking the better man. In national affairs he had strongly supported the New Deal during Roosevelt's first two terms. He had opposed a third term for Roosevelt and had announced his support of Wendell Willkie (whom many liberals belatedly recognized as one of their own). He

had awakened Robert A. Taft's interest in the Zionist cause early in the latter's political career and had carefully nurtured the Senator's Zionist sympathies which, in the end, became a powerful factor in determining the course of American policy on Israel. As for his political views, he was quite content to let the record speak for itself. A review of that record—of the positions he has taken on both national and international issues—makes it clear that neither of our great political parties fully encompasses his political and social philosophy. If there were those who preferred to regard his program of political action as pro-Republican in purpose, he merely shrugged and went on with his work. His attitude proved advantageous to the Zionist cause during the Roosevelt and Truman Administrations, in view of their concern about the way in which "that Republican rabbi" might exploit the shortcomings of their Palestine policies.

Silver's initial assessment of President Truman was hopeful where Zionist aspirations were concerned. As a good Missourian the new President would "have to be shown." He would have to be convinced that American public opinion truly supported the establishment of a Jewish State, but once so convinced he would move forward. This analysis proved to be amazingly correct—though it was Silver's sometimes unpleasant duty to create the kind of public pressure which, while serving to persuade the President, also irritated him. Such a relationship may not cement personal friendships, but it can make for good politics, American style. In this instance, it helped to bring about the establishment of the State of Israel.

Silver was not similarly hopeful about the new Labor Government which had come to power in Britain at war's end. He urged restraint and a wait-and-see attitude on his Zionist colleagues, some of whom were prepared for dancing in the streets in view of the Labor Party's official position on Palestine—a policy declaration that was more "maximal" than the World Zionist program. The rude awakening was not long in coming. The White Paper policy was to be continued, and by one who would prove to be a bitter and vengeful foe—Ernest Bevin.

In August, 1945, President Truman sent his famous letter to Prime Minister Attlee requesting that 100,000 certificates be granted for the immigration of Jews into Palestine. The British Government countered with the suggestion that an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry be set up to investigate the position of the Jews of Europe, as well as the situation in Palestine. Silver refused to cooperate with the Committee, correctly appraising it as a delaying device and an excuse for inaction.

The Anglo-American Committee completed its report at the end of April, 1946. Silver immediately initiated representations in Washington, and President Truman, in releasing the text of the report, issued a statement which drew an important distinction between the positive recommendation that 100,000 homeless Jews be transferred to Palestine *immediately*, and the long-term recommendations which were opposed to Zionist aspirations.

However, there was no action on the 100,000 certificates. Instead, a Cabinet Committee was appointed on June 11, 1946. The product of the discussions between the deputy members of this committee and a corresponding British group was the "Morrison-Grady Report," which was actually Foreign Secretary Bevin's favorite scheme for the federalization of Palestine. This plan would have put an end to the idea of an independent Jewish State. Silver called for the full mobilization of American Jewry against it and, under pressure of an aroused and indignant public opinion, President Truman was persuaded to reject it. Bevin's fury against the "New York Jews" and the rabbi who led them was echoed in large sections of the British press which sought, without success, to discredit Dr. Silver.

Meanwhile, a carefully designed trap was being laid. With their guns pointing at the heart of the *Yishuv*, the British were projecting a round-table conference with the Jews and the Arabs. It was reported that the British would be willing to entertain a proposal for the partition of Palestine if such a proposal were to emanate *from the Jewish Agency*. The Executive of the Jewish Agency, meeting in Paris in August, 1946, responded that "it is prepared to discuss a proposal for the establishment of a viable Jewish State in an adequate area of Palestine." Silver, who had not been present at the Paris meeting, denounced this action as an enormous tactical blunder, declaring: "If it is true that the present Government of Great Britain is unwilling to grant us statehood in even part of Palestine, and the record of the present British Government is very clear on this subject, what point is there in making one grand gesture of renunciation after another and in publicly proclaiming our readiness for supreme sacrifices when our gestures are disdained and our sacrifices are contemned?"

He demanded a reaffirmation of the Biltmore Program calling for the reconstitution of *all* of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth, adding: "When proposals will be made *to us* by governments, which we will find truly reasonable and which will meet our fundamental needs and satisfy our national aspirations and our sense of justice, the whole movement will be prepared, I am sure, to give them every serious consideration. . . . Sound and just proposals are bound to be

made to us sooner or later if we do not lose our nerve and our perspective." He resigned from the Jewish Agency Executive, determined to bring about a decisive disavowal of its action at the World Zionist Congress.

The fateful Twenty-second World Zionist Congress—the first since the beginning of the war in 1939—opened at Basle, Switzerland, on December 9, 1946. It was to make one of the most momentous decisions in modern Jewish history. The underlying issue was clear from the very outset: would the Zionist movement persist in its efforts to achieve its goals through Great Britain, or would the Congress terminate a relationship which had become tragically unhappy and which foretold political disaster for the movement? The lines were drawn on the specific question of the London conference announced by the British Government for January, 1947, with the participation of representatives of the Arab states and of the Jewish Agency. Was the Jewish Agency to go to London in order to propose partition as its solution of the Palestine question, or would the Congress reaffirm the Biltmore Program?

Dr. Chaim Weizmann, President of the Jewish Agency and of the World Zionist Organization, was emphatically in favor of participation in the London conference on the basis of the partition proposal which the Jewish Agency Executive had put forward the preceding summer—and he made it clear that his future leadership of the World Zionist Organization depended on whether the Congress would support his stand. Dr. Silver was the chief spokesman against the course of action proposed by Dr. Weizmann. Declaring that it was bad tactics for Zionists to have proposed partition, he categorically opposed any proposal which would establish partition as the maximal Zionist position in international discussions of Palestine's future. He contended that this would inevitably result in the further whittling down of Jewish rights in order to arrive at a new compromise solution. Underlying his position was the confident expectation that a reasonable partition proposal would be offered to the Zionists (as indeed it was in 1947 by the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine) if only the movement would stand firm.

In the final vote, a winning bloc, extending from left to right, upheld Dr. Silver's position.

Another major issue at the Congress was the Jewish resistance movement in Palestine. On this question, too, there was a sharp difference between Weizmann and Silver. Weizmann deprecated physical resistance to the British regime in Palestine and deplored "the heroics of suicidal violence" on the part of Jewish youth. He urged instead

"the courage of endurance, the heroism of superhuman restraint." Silver, on the other hand, hailed the resistance movement as one of the chief factors in the creation of a Jewish State and pledged his help to it.

Soon after the Congress a frustrated British Government, in its meetings with Zionist leaders, revealed the plan for Palestine which it had hoped would emerge as a compromise between the White Paper policy and a Jewish Agency partition formula. The British solution turned out to be an inferior edition of the Morrison-Grady federalization plan. The soundness of the "Silver line" which the Congress had adopted was further demonstrated when Bevin, having been defeated in his attempts to impose a Palestine solution unilaterally, had no alternative but to announce that the British Government would refer the Palestine question to the United Nations—though some Zionists were alarmed by the British move. Many observers anticipated that the Jews would suffer a crushing defeat in the United Nations; not without reason, for the balance of forces did not, in the beginning, seem to favor the Zionist cause.

As head of the newly established American Section of the Jewish Agency, Dr. Silver was now charged with the enormous responsibility of directing the preparation and presentation of the Jewish case before the United Nations. He proved to be no less skilled in the arts of diplomacy than in the techniques of political action. He and his colleagues sought and won the understanding and, ultimately, the support of members of widely divergent blocs and groupings of nations.

Two years earlier he had boldly declared that the Zionist movement should seek support not only in Britain and the United States, but from the nations of the world generally—including the Soviet Union. This struck many as incredibly naïve, in view of the Soviet Union's consistent record of violent hostility to Zionism. Others applied stronger epithets to his proposal, though finding it difficult to reconcile "radical" with "reactionary." The appropriate word, of course, should have been "statesmanlike," as was shown when the Soviet Union—motivated by self-interest, to be sure—supported the establishment of a Jewish State in the United Nations debate.

Convinced that the results of the United Nations deliberations would depend largely on the position that would be taken by the United States, Silver once again mobilized American Jewry and the non-Jewish supporters of the Zionist cause. The case for a Jewish State became a burning issue throughout America.

On April 28, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly opened its first session on Palestine. After prolonged debate an invitation to

present its case was extended to the Jewish Agency. On May 8th a unique event took place. A spokesman of the Jewish people sat in a council chamber together with the official representatives of the nations of the world and formally voiced the demands of his people for national recognition and for the right to reestablish a national state in their ancestral home. It was a moment rich in drama and in historic significance. Dr. Silver's persuasive address, as well as his subsequent appearances before the United Nations, brought a new sense of pride and dignity to Jews the world over.

Silver's strategy proved to be decisive in the achievement of the United Nations Partition Resolution. During the last nerve-wracking days of the General Assembly's session it was by no means certain that the necessary two-thirds majority would be obtained for the resolution. The outcome depended entirely on whether the United States would use its great influence with the nations which normally follow its lead and urge them to vote in favor of the plan. Some representatives of the State Department were not at all helpful. As the time for the vote approached, the issue was very much in doubt. A last-minute respite was afforded by the Thanksgiving holiday, and during those critical twenty-four hours the Jewish Agency delegation exerted the most strenuous efforts to avert defeat. Silver, Moshe Shertok (Sharett), Neumann, and all their colleagues of the Jewish Agency Executive were indefatigable, as were the members of the Jewish Agency staff, including Abba Eban, Eliahu Epstein (Elath), Moshe Toff, to name only a few. The cooperation of many other Jewish leaders and friends of the cause was quickly enlisted. The results of this concerted effort were discernible when the United States delegation warmly urged other nations to follow its lead in support of the partition plan. On November 29, 1947, by a vote of 33-13, the General Assembly gave international sanction to the establishment of a Jewish State.

In a moving description of that memorable day, Neumann writes: "One by one we left the hall and drifted into the lobby. We were all overcome by emotion. I glanced at Silver and saw what I had never seen before—he wept."

While a Jewish State had been voted by the United Nations, it was far from established. The British now devised a series of schemes to frustrate the will of the United Nations and upset its decision. By systematically disarming the Jews and arming the Arabs, they anticipated that the Jewish State would be unable to defend itself against the Arab onslaught and that, consequently, British forces would be in a position again to take over control in Palestine. In order to carry

out this plan the British Government had to ensure that the United Nations Security Council would do nothing to halt the Arabs' attacks or to implement the Partition Resolution. However, the British miscalculated two vital factors. They underestimated the determination of the *Yishuv* to stand firm even against the most discouraging odds, and they believed that, in cooperation with their friends in the United States Department of State, they would be able to win—and hold—American support.

For a time they were remarkably successful. A shocking reversal of United States policy took place on March 19, 1948. The American Government argued in favor of an international trusteeship over Palestine in place of partition. For almost two months the United States delegation worked to reverse the November 29th decision and to substitute its trusteeship plan. During this period Silver devoted himself chiefly to the activities of the American Zionist Emergency Council, which gave massive expression to public indignation over the Administration's reversal. On April 4, 1948, an estimated 50,000 Jewish war veterans paraded down New York's Fifth Avenue in protest against the State Department's betrayal, while 250,000 demonstrators denounced the Administration at a rally in Madison Square Park.

Silver and his colleagues conducted a simultaneous offensive in the United Nations against the United States trusteeship scheme. In the Security Council and in the Political Committee of the General Assembly he presented effective refutations of the arguments which had been employed to justify the United States proposal.

The Jewish Agency's representatives had succeeded in defeating every attempt of the British and American delegates to bring about a repudiation of the Partition Resolution. As the May 15th deadline for the proclamation of the Jewish State approached, representatives of the State Department tried a last-minute gambit to avert the proclamation. They sought to engage the Jewish Agency in a round-table conference and proposed a temporary trusteeship arrangement. They implied that this proposal was supported by the President and coupled the offer with threats of dire consequences if it were rejected. Some Jewish leaders—including men who were soon to become high dignitaries of the new Government of Israel and of the World Zionist Organization—were ensnared by this maneuver and were prepared to accept the State Department's plan. They had been persuaded that the alternative might be the physical destruction of the *Yishuv*. Silver, however, insisted that the sole purpose of the proposal was to postpone indefinitely the establishment of the Jewish State. He believed

that David Ben-Gurion was determined to proceed with the proclamation and, moreover, that only the Jews of Palestine could make the final decision, since it would have to be underwritten with their blood. All that he and his colleagues could do was to offer a political judgment, leaving the ultimate decision up to the *Yishuv*. At the same time, Silver felt, the action that would be taken by the American Section of the Jewish Agency could either fortify Ben-Gurion's position or weaken it. This was, therefore, the most crucial action ever to be taken by the American Section. Fortunately, a bare majority voted with Silver to inform Ben-Gurion that they had rejected the State Department's offer.

On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed, and the President of the United States announced *de facto* recognition—even as American delegates to the United Nations were still busily engaged in trying to block the establishment of the State.

On that day, too, Abba Hillel Silver, in the last of his appearances before the United Nations, said: "At ten o'clock this morning the Jewish State was proclaimed in Palestine. . . . Thus, there has been consummated the age-old dream of Israel to be reestablished as a free and independent people in its ancient homeland.

"The Jewish State is grateful to the United Nations for having placed the stamp of its approval, and the stamp of the approval of the world community, upon the historic claims of Israel, and for the efforts which it made in the face of opposition to achieve that which the Jewish people have accomplished. The Jewish State, in setting out upon its career, is conscious of the many grave problems, foreseen or unanticipated, which confront it. It prayerfully appeals, therefore, to all freedom-loving peoples, and especially to those who gave their fullest endorsement to the establishment of the Jewish State a few months ago, to give a full measure of their support and of their strengthening to this newest republic established by this, the most ancient of peoples. The Jewish State will strive to be worthy of the confidence which has been placed in it by the nations of the world, and will endeavor to realize, as far as it is humanly possible, those prophetic ideas of justice, brotherhood, peace and democracy which were first proclaimed by the people of Israel in that very land."

He had completed his greatest work.

The leaders of the new Government of Israel lost no time in showing their appreciation. There is irony—and, for the Zionist movement, tragedy—in the fact that almost immediately after he had achieved this triumph, Dr. Silver was compelled to resign from lead-

ership of the movement. The internal conflict which precipitated his resignation was presumably over the management of fund raising for Israel in the United States. It is now generally understood that this was a false issue, and that the real question was the negative attitude of Israel's leaders toward the post-State Zionist movement. Silver's philosophy of Zionism—all-encompassing in its view of Jewish history and the Jewish people in their entirety—could never be reconciled with Ben-Gurion's negation of all Zionist activity that is not Israel-centered or State-based.

Realizing that a prolonged controversy with the Government of Israel on the question of the funds could destroy the campaign of the United Jewish Appeal, which was indispensable for Israel's survival, Silver preferred to resign his chairmanship of the American Section of the Jewish Agency. The underlying issues of that conflict are, thirteen years later, still being debated. Validation of Silver's position has been amply provided, particularly by those Zionist leaders who had opposed and succeeded him in 1949, but who adopted his views when they were confronted by Ben-Gurion's unabated ideological warfare against the movement.

Silver's withdrawal from active Zionist leadership did not, of course, affect his profound commitment to Israel's growth and development. His frequent, though for the most part unpublicized, interventions in Washington at crucial moments of Israel's recent history; his distinguished services as Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Israel Bond organization, and especially his incisive analyses of major political developments—these have kept him at the center of affairs. For the masses of American Jewry he is the living symbol of their own greatest moment.

Once again he found time for scholarship and for writing. His *Where Judaism Differed* appeared in 1956. It is an extraordinary blending of painstaking research with a strong reaffirmation of Judaism's distinctiveness and of its rational character. Existentialist faddists or those interested in jet flights to salvation will derive no comfort from this book, but it has all the qualities of a permanent contribution to the literature on Judaism.

Moses and the Original Torah (1961) is a scholarly quest for the pure faith of Moses imbedded in the Pentateuch. Rabbi Silver finds the classic impulses of Judaism in that original Torah and in the moral revolution wrought by Moses, "throneless monarch of a spiritual kingdom."

That he himself has been motivated by these same impulses and by the prophetic tradition is manifestly clear from his life and work.

The public image of Dr. Silver differs considerably from the man. His overpowering personality on the platform, his forcefulness in debate, and his fighting spirit have obscured other qualities. The first word that comes to mind is simplicity—a directness of approach, a quick arrival at the heart of the matter—a quality which one tends to associate with great artists. With friends he is hearty and warm. His enjoyment of life is huge and without ambivalence.

Abba Hillel Silver, Jewish statesman, taught a generation and trained it for the privilege of experiencing Israel's rebirth. He poured his gifts—his very soul—into this generation, and it became strong and proud. He has ennobled his time.

