



## 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 IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

---

Reel  
155

Box  
55

Folder  
471

The Ways that lead to Zion, 1935.

THE WAYS THAT LEAD TO ZION

By  
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At  
The Temple

On  
Sunday morning, January 20, 1935.





This day, my friends, is doubly significant. It is, first of all, a holiday, but of the minor holidays in the Jewish calendar known as the Fifteenth day of Sh'vat whis is the new year for trees. In our calendar we have a new year for human beings and we also have a new year for trees. On this day in Palestine trees are being planted because the new year has begun.

This holiday reminds us again of the fact we frequently forget, that originally our people was a nature folk, a people of the soil, a people which drew its life and sustenance from the land, a people of farmers, shepherds. Life has made of us an urban people crowded and herded in great metropolitan centers far removed from contact with the soil, and we have become a business folk largely a people of traders. But in the ancient days, in Palestine, we were largely a people of the soil. The legislation which we find in our Torah has to do largely to do with the land and the major holidays like Passover, Shavuoth and Succoth have to do with the cycles of the year -- early harvest -- late harvest.

most  
The/joyous occasions of our ancestors were those occasions when, three times a year, they made a pilgrimage from their homes and villages and towns bringing their choicest fruits of field and orchard to the Temple in Jerusalem. The Talmud describes with what joy our forefathers would carry their offerings on these three festivals from their homes to Mount Zion. As they climbed the mountain they would sing songs -- Shir Hamaaloth. They would climb and whileand stop to rest and sing



those joyous songs of thanksgiving and gratitude.

Our Talmud tells us that in ancient Palestine when a child was born, if he was a male child, a son, the father would plant immediately a Cedar tree. If it was a female child, a daughter, he would plant immediately upon birth, a Cypress tree. "Man is like unto a tree and a tree is like unto a man." And for every man born, a tree was planted.

Palestine was up until recently a deforested land, a land where there were few trees. It was full of rocks and desert sand everywhere. In ancient days, however, it was a land full of the gracious shadow of trees. And I can imagine how our ancestors, looking over their fields in ancient days would feel a surge of pride and peace come into their souls as they thought to themselves: "These are my paternal fields where my father lived and where his father lived before him. Here they knew labor, love. Here their dreams were fashioned. And here rests their sacred dust. These, too, shall be the fields of my children." That gives a person, my friends, a sense of immortality, a sense of the continuity of life which compensates us for so many of the deprivations and sorrows of life.

The movement to rebuild Palestine and establish Jewish folk on the land as farmers again aims to create this home which had been ours. During <sup>the</sup> hundreds of years of exile when we were removed from the soil we became a people of business folk. Some nations reproach us frequently with the fact that we are not producers but only exploiters of what other people produce.



The Zionist movement sought to realize this prophetic dream.

"Behold! I will give you back the corn from the stalks, the wine from the grapes, the oil from the olives and you will no longer be a reproach among the nations."

This is a significant and happy day because on this day the Jewry of this country are celebrating what is coming to be known as Palestine Day. And throughout the land, gatherings are being held celebrating Palestine Day. Such a celebration takes on a very joyous character because, after all, we have achieved in Palestine something quite amazing, and something which justifies the Jews throughout the world to have and to proclaim their sense of satisfaction. Much has been accomplished. After all, in these few years since the war the Jews used their initiative, their enterprise and sacrificed their beings. They did transform the wilderness into a fruitful land. They did drain the marshes. They did recapture the fertility of places long wasted by centuries of neglect. They did establish colonies. They did build schools and high schools and a university on Mt. Scopus. They did build research laboratories, hospitals and clinics. They did produce their newspapers and magazines and periodicals and they did revitalize and modernize their speech.

They transformed that backward area into a modern prosperous center of civilization -- all in less than fifteen years. That is a record. And the Jews of the world can be proud of it and should be proud of it. We should rejoice. There is so much of sorrow in Jewish life today, so much sadness and tragedy, Naziism, Hitlerism and anti-Semitism, that it is good to have the opportunity to pause



a little and rejoice at something so soul-uplifting which is happening in Jewish life today.

All roads, my friends, today, lead to Zion. In 1931 there were 4,500 Jews in Palestine. In 1932 there were 9,500. In 1933 there were 45,000. In 1934 there were 65,000 Jews in Palestine. If this rate continues through this current year, eighty to ninety thousand Jews will enter Palestine.

That little country has already become the greatest center of libation in the world. Into the United States last year, only half the number of immigrants of all races and of all religions entered as entered in Palestine. A whole people is on the move. The number of Jews who returned from the Babylonian Captivity 2600 years ago -- the total number of those who returned was no more than 42,000 and today, twice that number are entering Palestine annually. This return which is taking place in our own day is eclipsing in magnitude anything which has taken place in history heretofore.

I read a few weeks ago that in a city of Poland, ninety certificates were available for emigrants who wanted to go to Palestine and for these ninety certificates, 7,000 people applied. I read the other day of a riot in the office of the Jewish Agency against the officials of the Jewish Agency because they had insufficient certificates to meet the demands of hundreds of people who were clamoring to go to Palestine. One quarter of a million of young Jews are today training themselves in Latvia, Poland, Roumania, Germany and Austria, preparing themselves and waiting for the moment when they will be given the great privilege of migrating to Palestine.



I spoke of these things to make you aware that something monumental is happening in Jewish life today. It is no longer a question of settling two or three hundred Jews in Palestine. It is now a question of a whole nation moving towards Palestine -- hundreds of thousands of people.

And the gratifying thing about it all is that in spite of the numerous problems which this wholesale immigration is creating, the fact is that if this present rate of immigration continues over a period of five to seven years -- if there is no interruption-- the Jews will form a majority of the population in Palestine and the Jewish homeland will become a fact, not merely on paper, but on land.

Now, of course, this stampede in to Palestine, and it is approaching the nature of a stampede, is not due entirely to the idealism of a few impractical Jews who have suddenly realized the need of the up-building of Palestine at all. It is due largely to external forces over which we have no control and which are driving great numbers of our people to seek a new refuge. The demoralization which has taken place all over the world, the economic situation, the impoverishment, the accentuation of nationalism and racialism, the accentuation of anti-Semitism -- these things are making it more and more impossible for large Jewish communities to live at peace where they are -- Hitlerism, Nazism, Fascism, Communism -- all these have brought a tragic instability and insecurity in Jewish life.

Tens of thousands are forced by conditions over which they have



no control to uproot themselves and to seek a new home. The logic of history has made Palestine a center in Jewish life today. A leader, a man of genius, a man of compelling personality may give a direction to a movement, may inspire a certain number of individuals to become his disciples.

Twenty to twenty-five thousand Jews from Germany didn't go to Palestine of their own free will. Many of them thought of Palestine as an out of the way country and never connected themselves with it. They were Germans. Germany was their Fatherland. They couldn't conceive that someday Berlin would fall in the hands of a Goering, a Goebbels. These Jews, in the last few years, have been fighting for certificates to go to Palestine which practical idealists had prepared for them by the seat of their brows.

Fifty years ago, men saw far ahead. The leaders could see through to reality. Men like Herzl, Hess, Pinsker and Nordau -- these men and men like unto them expressed this simple fundamental truth -- that there is no safety for Jews in assimilation anywhere in the world. Safety lies in himself, in resolving to constitute himself as a people on his own land.

Nearly seventy-five years ago, Moses Hess, one of the pioneers of Zionism, wrote in his famous book "Rome and Jerusalem" the following prophetic message: "The European nations have always considered the existence of the Jews in their midst as an anomaly. We shall always remain strangers among the nations. They may tolerate us and even



grant us emancipation, but they will never respect us as long as we place the principle ubi bene ibi patria above our own great national memories. Though religious fanaticism may cease to operate as a factor in the hatred against the Jews in civilized countries, yet in spite of enlightenment and emancipation, the Jew in exile who denies his nationality will never earn the respect of the nations among whom he dwells. He may become a naturalized citizen, but he will never be able to convince the gentiles of his total separation from his own nationality. It is not the old-type, pious Jew who would rather suffer than deny his nationality, that is most despised, but the modern Jew who, like the German outcasts in foreign countries, denies his nationality while the hand of fate presses heavily upon his own people. The beautiful phrases about humanity and enlightenment which he employs as a cloak to hide his treason, his fear of being identified with his unfortunate brethren, will ultimately not protect him from the judgment of public opinion. In vain does the enlightened Jew hide behind his geographical and philosophical alibi. It is of no avail. Mask yourself a thousand times over, change your name, religion and character, travel throughout the world incognito, so that people may not recognize the Jew in you; yet every insult to the Jewish name will strike you, even more than the pious man who is permeated with the spirit of Jewish solidarity and who fights for the honor of the Jewish name."

In our own day, in classic Germany, assimilation does not work. The non-Jew doesn't wish the Jew to assimilate and the non-Jew resists the assimilated Jew far more than he resists the Jew who clings to



his orthodoxy, to his loyalty, to his heritage.

We are inclined to under-estimate the importance of nationalism. Why talk about being a Jew? Let us talk about being human beings. The whole world is one family. But nationalism is a tremendously powerful and compelling factor in the life of a people. The real and sound background which is unfortunately over-accentuated became a menace instead of a virtue.

Look what happened in the Saar in the last few weeks. Here, 80,000 people had an opportunity to choose freely and without pressure or compulsion between two alternatives: the status quo in which they found themselves which insured them freedom, economic prosperity -- because the Saar folks are the most prosperous people in Western Europe; on the other hand, oppression, tyranny, brutality and Hitlerism and the economic depression which would be theirs if they joined Germany. The opportunity of re-joining their Fatherland won. Ninety percent of these people chose to rejoin their Fatherland.

It was much easier for the Jew in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century. In those days the spirit of the Renaissance and the Reformation were still dominant. These two movements stimulated the spirit of free thought and inquiry. This helped the Jews because it helped to destroy prejudice and intolerance.

The French Revolution established the rights of man as against the rights of the State and Church. These rights were his by virtue of his humanity and not by virtue of his membership in any political or religious grouping. The Jew was destined to benefit from this revolutionary movement. And he did benefit. The Jew became an equal.



Even while the fires of the French Revolution were still raging in 1791, the Jew was made a citizen of the French Republic.

Unfortunately since the war these doctrines of "liberty - fraternity - humanity" are in retreat. They are in recession. They are being scrapped. Dictatorship, state absolutism, autocracy of a party, have destroyed these inalienable rights and the Jew finds himself today exactly as he found himself in the Middle Ages. He is no longer entrenched in a law which is above men, but is again subject to the whim or will of parties or an individual. State absolutism or Fascism lays all emphasis on nationalism and in some countries upon racialism.

Hence the desperate need for Palestine today is for those of our people who no longer lead peaceful lives in many parts of the world. I have spoken of the achievements of Palestine. It would only be fair to correct the picture by presenting the problems which confront our people there.

There has developed because of this great influx of immigration, a land hunger. The country is becoming crowded, for after all, it is a small country. And the crowded conditions, particularly in the towns and cities have produced a land speculation, a boom of the type which we had in Florida. Speculation in land is rising in Palestine. Palestine needs more room and more room is available across the Jordan. Trans-Jordania was always a part of Palestine in the original mandate.

That great stretch of land across the Jordan is twice as large as Palestine with but one third of Palestine's population can hold a million people and support them. Trans-Jordania must open its gates for Jewish settlement so that the reconstruction of Palestine is



permitted to follow sound economic principles by extending its scope of settlement, by correcting the over crowded menacing condition by opening up new land.

The second problem is the economic situation. Unfortunately, and here again, because of the influx, that problem which had been outlined, namely, returning Jewish life to the soil, building a nation of farmers -- that is being sacrificed. Most of the immigrants into Palestine today are going into the towns and cities. Palestine is becoming a land of business, industry and speculation. And that period which characterizes a pyramid standing on its apex -- is being set up in every detail in Palestine where something new and finer might have been built. There are all too many professional men and too few farmers and workers. And that is unfortunate.

In fact, the higher wages being paid in the cities today are attracting those people working on the land to the towns and cities with the result that Jewish colonies have to employ non-Jewish labor. Forty percent of the labor on land is Arab labor, not Jewish labor. That is a grave problem which faces Palestine today.

They must realize that part of the Palestinian program was the rebuilding of the people, not merely the rebuilding of the land. The Zionist idea was to reconstruct a more normal economic, political and cultural life for our people so that the reproach of the nations would be removed from our race. We don't want in Palestine merely a Jewish community, merely a Jewish state. We want Palestine to be a land that will somehow embody some of the ideals which we have been talking about throughout the ages.



We have been held up before the world as a people who believed in justice, in righteousness and human equality. And now, in Palestine, we have for the first time an opportunity to demonstrate in our own land where we are masters, how earnest we are in giving these prophetic ideals expression. And we must not miss this opportunity or we will become a reproach to the world.

A Palestine of farmers, laborers, will be an object of pride to all the fifty <sup>over</sup> million Jews in the world and will be an enlightenment to the nations of the world.

For the present, it is highly gratifying and so refreshing to know that in the midst of all the demoralization, economic chaos, political misfortune and unhappiness, that this ancient people so sorely tried, is still able to find that energy, that confidence, that strength within itself to build this monumental thing which is taking place before our very eyes -- to rebuild a whole country, to rebuild a nation, to build a new civilization. Nothing bears such eloquent testimony, my friends, to the inherent strength of our people, to the international world as this great enterprise which is taking place on the shores of the Mediterranean today.

Whether we are Zionists or not, whether we believe in a Jewish state or not -- these things have become vital questions today... In the future people should contribute whatever they can contribute in sympathy, in understanding, in substance to this great historic task whose real significance our children and those after them in the future generations will be able to realize.



ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE  
ANSEL ROAD AND EAST 105TH STREET ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 20, 1935.

### THE WAYS THAT LEAD TO ZION

In 1931 Jewish immigration into Palestine was 4,000; in 1932 it was 9,500; in 1933 it was 45,000; in 1934 it was 65,000; and in 1935 it promises to reach 80,000. Considering the size of the country this mass immigration is truly remarkable. Palestine today is one of the most important immigration centers in the world, if not the most important.

The upbuilding of Palestine, which years ago was regarded as the negligible enterprise of a few impractical idealists, has today assumed the character of a mighty undertaking of nation-building involving hundreds of thousands of people, vast financial expenditures and of great international significance.

The unfavorable political and economic conditions in which millions of Jews find themselves as a result of the post-war disorganization and the accentuation of national and racial animosities are forcing many of them to find a new home where they will have the opportunity to rebuild their lives physically and spiritually. To the youth, especially, the appeal of Palestine is proving irresistible.

Tens of thousands of Jews from Hitlerized and brutalized Germany, and from the impoverished lands of Eastern Europe are flocking today to Palestine in what is destined to eclipse in magnitude the return of the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity many centuries ago.

In a few short years Jewish enterprise has converted a backward, Oriental hinterland into a flourishing, prosperous and altogether modern country. Numerous colonies, towns and cities have been built as if by magic, swamps drained, waste places reclaimed, roads built, hospitals, clinics, research laboratories, schools, high schools, a university on Mt. Scopus, newspapers, magazines and periodicals in a



revived and modernized Hebrew language -- these and many other achievements are eloquent tribute to the courage, faith and ability of these Jews ~~in~~ who have gone to Palestine to make it their home and the home of their children.

The remarkable tempo of Palestine's progress, the great influx of new settlers and the still larger wave of immigrants which is coming, make it imperative to revise the constricted territorial limitations under which Palestine has been developing until now. The frontiers of Palestine must be extended and restored to the original borders contemplated by the Mandate. The country must no longer remain cleft in twain, one half open to Jewish settlement, and the other half closed.

Trans-Jordania, which is twice the size of Palestine with but one-third of Palestine's population, must open its gates for Jewish settlement. The separation of Trans-Jordania from Palestine is a political fiction. It is administered by the High Commissioner of Palestine and should logically ~~form~~ form a part of Palestine. The opening of the doors of Trans-Jordania will relieve the tension of the immigration problem in Palestine and check the regrettable land speculation which today threatens not only the prosperity of the country but the whole social program of the Zionist organization. It will open up new territory for productive enterprise which will increase the prosperity of the whole country for the benefit of both Jews and Arabs.