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Zionism, 1920.

I don't know that I have ever asked myself just why I am a Zionist. I don't know that I have ever stopped to analyze my feelings toward the movement.

I know that my colleagues and friends in the movement—many of them—have done so. When I ask them what brought them into the movement, one will say he is anxious for the Restoration of Palestine because Israel has need of a haven of refuge for the denied and oppressed of our brothers.

Another would say: "We need must have Palestine because the creative spirit of the Jew—the genius of the Jew—must have a congenial atmosphere and environment. Hebrew culture and literature must be given an opportunity to develop in an atmosphere and environment helpful instead of hurtful."

And I suppose a third one would say that he is in favor of the Restoration of Palestine because he is desirous of having the faith of his people—Judaism—live in a land which is inspirational and not corrosive and destructive.

And a fourth one would say he is in favor of this same end because he would like to see the economic ideals of the prophets of Israel, the ideals of justice and the sanctity of human life, given a chance to be tried out, given a local habitation and a name in the land of the Prophets.

I suppose each one of these reasons is a valid one, a cogent one, a potent one. And yet somehow I came to the movement years ago through none of these reasons. I am in the movement today not because of any or all four of these reasons, but simply—just simply—because I am a JEW!

That might sound strange. Not that a Reform Rabbi should be a Jew, but that one who has had some experience in life and has read a bit and seen somewhat of life, should not have a logical, a rational, an intellectual reason for joining the movement,—which I don't profess to have.

But, the truth of the matter is, friends, that we do the big things in life, not because we ought to do them, but because we HAVE to do them. It is not our minds and our fine logic that drive us. It is our soul and our emotion and our sentiments. We are moved by the plunging and onrushing waves that are almost irresistible, waves of emotion and passion and longings. And then we call in our minds to justify us.

I am a Zionist because I belong to a people for whom the hope of a return to Zion has been a sustaining and inspiring influence for two thousands of years: Because it was the unspoken hope and the vocal prayer of generations and generations: Because the prayers of my forefathers were saturated with that hope: Because in my ears there still resounds their pathetic echo: Because the singers and the poets of my people, throughout the darkness and the gloom of two thousand years, have sung, not of war and blood and the passions and delights of men, but of Zion and the Hills of Jerusalem. I am a Zionist because the past has a charm for me that is irresistible, and the future has a call and a challenge that is undeniable.

I have always maintained that there are some people who are temperamentally unfit to be Zionists, just as there are some people who are temperamentally unfit to be religious, or to love art or music. They haven't the disposition, the background, the receptive soul, the chords that can be struck within their souls.

I think, however, that the majority of those who have not yet joined our ranks are held back, not so much because of the fact that they are temperamentally unfit, but because of certain hesitations and doubts and perplexities which have not yet been resolved in their minds.

ZIONISM

As explained by Rabbi A. H. Silver at Carnegie Hall, April 19th, 1920

And of them, and to them, I want to speak a few words this evening. Because we need them. We need them badly at this most critical moment in the history of our people. We are at the cross roads. What you and I do at this moment may determine the course of Jewish history for a thousand years to come. We must, therefore, enlist the co-operation of everyone we can reach.

Some of them hesitate to join our movement because they fear that we will be accused of a double allegiance, that men will suspect our patriotism and our Americanism. But it is not



Rabbi A. H. Silver

the non-Jew who suspects our patriotism. It is not the non-Jew that fears for our loyalty. It is the Jew.

No one—I say, no one—has accused us of disloyalty except a few timid, cowardly, so-called Jews. The American knows full well that the Jew loves America, and that the Zionist loves America. He knows that loyalty to one's kinsmen, who may not be as fortunately situated as he is, does not of necessity imply disloyalty to one's land. Rather does it imply generosity of spirit and a liberality of outlook.

Why, the American knows that the Jew is devotedly loyal. If the Jew needed any vindication of his loyalty of America, this last and greatest of wars has supremely and superbly vindicated him. The Jew has given freely and willingly of his efforts, of his toils and of his sacrifices to America. And the Zionist in this war has been among the vanguard.

And the leaders of the Zionist movement have been among the most loyal in this war, not only because America was in this war but also because the things which America was fighting for—the rights of the smaller peoples, the self-determination of the small nations, the submerged and denied and oppressed—were the very things THEY were fighting for.

I sometimes think that this fear on the part of some of our fellow Jews is a confession of weakness, a confession of the sense of uncertainty and instability in this land. It gives me the impression that they merely regard themselves as welcome guests and strangers in this land; that they must be doubly grateful for a favor given to them.

That is not MY Americanism nor the Americanism of the Jew who IS an American. We do not look upon

our prerogative of citizenship as a gift bestowed upon us. We have purchased it with our blood, with our toils, with our sacrifices.

When the first white man placed his foot upon the soil of the Western Hemisphere, the Jew was there. When the eyes of the first white man beheld the shimmering outlines of the continent, the Jew was there.

When the first men signed that statement which heralded the coming of the Revolutionary War, the Jew was there. And when the Colonists struggled with a great power to gain their own independence, the Jew was there.

And when America engaged in bloody and fratricidal war to liberate millions of slaves, the Jew was there. And when in the last five years America went forward as a champion of a new and wonderful ideal, the Jew was there. And the Jew will be there in the ultimate cycle of time when the last sunset will set upon this continent!

I dislike—Oh, how much I dislike—to display, to parade our loyalty in public. And yet a thing that cuts most deeply—that cuts to the quick—is to see fellow Jews doubt one's loyalty, because forsooth, we are interested in the sufferings of our people; because we long to establish for them a home, a place of refuge for the body and the soul of Israel.

There are some of my friends who hesitate to join our cause because their minds have been confused by certain religious or theological notions that have been drilled into them for generations—certain academic questions: Are we a race? Are we a people? Are we a nation? Are we a religion? Are we anything?

You know when a man starts to ask himself such questions he is on the verge of morbidity. The healthy man lives, and that itself is its own justification. He does not need to analyze himself or question himself as to why he lives. Life itself is its own justification.

Let me say unto you, men and women, this question has always seemed to me so tragically academic, but more so in the last few years—in this period when all our notions have been undergoing a complete transformation, when life became cruelly and vitally real, when we are faced with the crude realities of life.

This question of what we are has appealed to me as being so pathetically futile. You think the Jew in Ukraine, who is being massacred, is being consulted as to whether he is a people or a religion or a race or a nation? Do you think the anti-Semites in Germany start to ask themselves before they denounce the Jew in Germany "in toto" whether he is a reform or orthodox Jew?

Let's face facts. We are a people. We are recognized as such by the world. We are a religion. Our people has always been completely identified with its faith. We are a race. We are more than that. We are a unique blending of all of these things. I think it is a statement of the Rabbis, is it not: "Israel and his faith and his God are one."

We are a beautiful rainbow. The rainbow is not the red or the pink or the green. The rainbow is even more than all the colors that go to make it up. The uniqueness and the glory of the rainbow is that peculiar blending and fusing of these colors, and the uniqueness of Israel is the fact that in him as in no other peo-

ple is the race and the people and the religion blended into one glorious and perfect whole.

And we want to retain it. Don't permit anyone to strip us of that which is ours—our pride and our historic glory. Don't analyze Israel into an insipidity. Don't permit anyone to starve and pauperize the rich and full content of Jewish life into any definition—whether it be religious or national. We are all those things blended into one perfect harmony.

There are some who are afraid to take our hands that are stretched out to them because they fear that all this is some piece of propaganda that we are putting over on them; that Zionism is a fad or a fancy of a few individuals for their own edification or entertainment, and that we are trying to impose it upon the whole people of Israel.

Well, I never realized how awfully, awfully serious, how awfully intimate, how awfully essential, this theme was to the hearts of millions of my people until I went abroad last year and studied the conditions abroad.

Oh! It's no propaganda, friends. It is something that has to do with life and with death. A whole people is being exterminated. Three million Jews in Ukraine have been, within the short space of twelve months, completely uprooted. I am not speaking now of the one hundred thousand that have been slain—slain because they are Jews—slain because they have been the scapegoat of the world, through no fault of their own,—but I speak now of the living dead.

I speak now of the millions that are homeless. I speak now of the millions who thought that they had a home in Ukraine, in Poland—a home that they loved, a home that they could call their own. And now, in one terrific blast of circumstances, they have been torn out, as if by the roots, and around them is fury, hate, the burning gaze of the enemy. They have nowhere to go. The gates of the West are closed. The gates of England and of America are closed. And there are streams of them—streams of them—moving down to Odessa, to the ports of the Black Sea, waiting, praying, longing, for the moment when the gates of immigration will be open so that they may go to Palestine.

Did you read the story of the eight young Jewish men who came with this endless stream of wanderers, of exiles, to Odessa, who waited and waited and could not endure any longer. Being unable to gain passage on a steamship, they decided to cross the Black Sea on rafts. Not one of them reached either shore alive.

Did I tell you the story—I must have told it here not long ago,—of the four Jews that I met in the little Jewish colony of Migdol in Palestine last summer. It was a beautiful Sabbath, as only a Sabbath in Palestine can be. It seemed as though a spirit of "Kadusha"—of sanctity—was over the peaceful land.

I was introduced to four young men who had just then come from Poland. I said to them: "Tell me, friends, why didn't you wait until the transportation facilities were better before you ventured to come here? How long did it take you to come here?" "Eight months." "But why did you come?" "Oh, Rabbi," said one of them, "We could not remain any longer. To go down the streets of Warsaw and see the patriarchal Jews, the venerable fathers, hounded, jeered at, spat upon, and their beards plucked; to go down the boulevards of the gay city and see vast, black-rimmed signs, urging the loyal Pole to boycott the disloyal Jew. Why, Rabbi, we found ourselves stifled; and so we left Warsaw. And from Warsaw we went to Budapest, and from Budapest, to Vienna, and from Vienna, to Venice, and from Venice,

to Alexandria, and from Alexandria, to Cairo, and from Cairo, to Kautara, and from Contaro here. Eight long, hungry, terrible months. But, thank God, we are here!"

Propaganda? I wish I could make you see it as I see it, men and women. More than physical suffering is the breaking of the morale of our people in Eastern Europe. The Jew is used to physical suffering, to torture, to exile, to the Inquisition, to the yellow badge. But he has come to a pass now where the indomitable spirit of the Jew is beginning to break. The Jew is morally bankrupt, because all of his hopes have gone up in the air,—the hopes of freedom, the hope that he had in the Revolution, the hope that he had in the glowing pretensions of the Allies,—they have all become ashes, gall and wormwood to him.

There is only one thing that keeps his spirit from breaking. There is only one gleam in that dreadful night of Stygian gloom and that is the light that is breaking in the East.

Some of my practical friends don't want to come to us because we are dreamers. "Oh, you know, you people are visionaries. You don't know the ways of the world. You are following the will o' the wisp. But we know. We are practical business men

—successful real estate dealers. You people haven't learned the hard lessons of life."

Whenever I hear that, I say: "That man is complimenting me. I belong to a people that was never afraid to be called a dreamer. I belong to a race that has lived and suffered and endured for a sake of a vision." And, if the Restoration of Palestine were but a dream of the dreamer that could never come true, I am for it.

But it is more than a dream. It is a living reality. It is an experiment actually being tried out and an experiment in rehabilitating not only broken lives, but also broken spirits.

I tell you, friends, frankly, the real tragedy of the "golus" is not to be found in massacres, in exiles, in suffering, in disabilities and anti-Semitism, in expulsions, in ghettos. The real tragedy of the "golus" is not to be found in the yellow badge which your forefathers were compelled to wear on their shoulders. The real tragedy of the "golus" is to be found in the yellow streak which your children are compelled to carry within their souls.

To me the ghastliest phase of it all is to see the men and women—more especially the women of Israel—the fine descendents of the Mac-

bees—the children of a race which was bent but never broken—cringing and fauning their way in the places where they are not wanted, ashamed, apologizing, currying favors, spiritual paupers, begging tidbits of the world.

I saw a different type in Palestine. I saw a group of proud, dignified, forward-looking Jews and Jewesses. I saw little children in the Streets of Tel Abil, of Haifa, speaking the accents of the prophets of old, freely and charmingly. The little children, who do not know the meaning of the word "prejudice" and "anti-Semitism," who are just fine, healthy, strong, young Jews.

I say the experiment in Palestine is to rehabilitate the broken spirit of the Jews—to inject a spirit of pride and dignity in the souls, not only of those who shall be privileged to live in Palestine, but those of our brothers who shall find their home throughout the world.

Oh! How much I wish—how much I long—that you, and more especially your children, should become conscious of the sacred privilege and dignity of being members of a people that was old when England unknown—a race which has produced sages and seers and poets and prophets when the arrogant Teuton was a barbarian, chasing over the plains of Germany. Oh! How I wish that your children should become inspired with the spirit of a people whose God is now the God of two-thirds of the world, and whose literature is now the sacred literature of half the world!

Lastly, there are some who say: "It is a very fine thing, but it is so hard. It is such a tremendous thing. It is too difficult. If Palestine was served to us on a silver platter we might deign to accept it. But to give money to Palestine—to go to Palestine, and with your very fingers, as it were, turn up the soil and plant the seeds of a new life—that is rather hard, don't you think? that is rather difficult."

There is a beautiful saying of the Rabbis—and mind—the Rabbis were wise, and their vision reached far beyond their own time, and it would be a fine thing if you called the attention of your children, who are so very modern, to the fine old wisdom of these Rabbis of our people—there is a Rabbinical saying which reads something like this: "God gave three things to Israel, but He gave it to them only through suffering. One was the Torah, and the other was 'Olom Habo'—Immortality, and the third was 'Eretz Yisrael'—Palestine."

Nothing that is worth while in life is ever given without suffering. Nothing that we get without suffering is worth while. We treasure and love the things for which we pay with our tears and our blood. A child is dear to its mother because the mother had to descend to the very brink of the grave to bring the child to the light of day.

We don't want Palestine given unto us. We are not a race of beggars. If anything, we are a race of givers. We have given unto the world of ourselves, of the finest of our manhood in every struggle for the emancipation of mankind. From the earliest days unto the day when the blood of the young men and women of Israel reddened the snow steppes of Siberia, the Jew gave to the world freely, without asking for reward or compensation, without receiving any. To every cause that aimed to widen the horizon of the children of men, that aimed to bring a little sweetness and light, into the dwellings of the children of men.

We don't want Palestine given to us. We want to acquire it—to purchase it—without our efforts, our toils and our sacrifices. We want the children of Palestine, in the days to come, to say with a spirit of pride:

"This is my land, because my fathers died for it." When your forefathers were about to enter the Promised Land in the days of Moses, did God give them Palestine? God said: "Go unto the land and conquer it." Let your bones whiten the plains of Palestine, and then the land will be dear to you.

I don't want to tell you men and women, that everything concerning Palestine is just as it should be; that there are no problems there; that it is so easy to get it now. I want to tell you that many a sacrifice will have to be brought by us, and by those who are there, before we shall be able to say: "This is 'Eretz Yisrael.'" And we don't flinch from that prospect. We face it with pride. We are going to mold and fashion the future for our people in Palestine with our own hands.

So when I make an appeal to my fellow Jews for Palestine, I do it in a real spirit of exaltation. I have made so many appeals in the last four years that I have actually come to be ashamed myself. I feel almost as though I were a "sublime snorer." When I entered my college to study for the ministry I did not know that this would be the supreme task of my life. This is my return engagement in Buffalo. And yet I tell you, friends, I have made many appeals to Jews for Jewish War Relief, and when I made the appeal my heart ached, because I said to myself: "Who knows—five or ten years and perhaps twenty years from now—I might be called upon to make similar appeals." A little relief here, a little there, nothing constructive—just to give bread to the hungry and raiment to the naked. A sacred, really important work. But, Oh! the tragedy connected with it!

When I appeal for the Palestine Restoration, I do it with a feeling of "simcha" because I appeal for a cause that is coming to life. I appeal for the living. I appeal for a cause that is triumphant. I appeal for something that is constructive. Every gift is a stone which will go into the structure of the new Temple which is reared in our Homeland. "When God looks with favor upon the works of a man even his enemies make friends with him." Now God has looked with favor upon our labors. Great powers have given their plighted oath and faith that they would help in the Restoration of Palestine as a Homeland for the Jewish people. England has spoken. France has spoken. Italy has spoken. America, through its great leader, has spoken.

Shall we, now, in this critical moment, fail? Shall we confess to the world that we really have never meant seriously the things for which we pray? That when we said it we really did not mean it? It was just a phrase. Shall we say that our bones are dried up and our hope is lost, and we are indeed cut off? No! We are not going to say that.

We are going to say to the world: This is the moment that we have waited for for two thousand years, and this is the moment when the heart and the soul and the hand and the purse of Israel will come into action.

Judge Mack perhaps told you this beautiful story. It is well worth knowing. There was a little Jewish village in the heart of Poland during the War, and Passover was approaching nigh. And the little village was surrounded by the enemy, and no Matzoh could come into this village. A few young Jews in a neighboring

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