



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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178

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ZOA convention, New York City, 1937.



J.O.A. Convention  
June 28, 1937

158  
NYC

In 1897 the first Zionist Congress was held in Basle and the Zionist program was defined and proclaimed. So great was the inherent soundness and potency of the idea that within twenty years it received its vindication and its triumphant *acceptance* in the Balfour Declaration. Politically established, the next twenty years saw the Zionist ideal incorporated in concrete economic, social and cultural achievements. An amazing era of upbuilding, surcharged with remarkable energy, initiative, courage and sacrifice set in. In the face of terrific obstacles - non-cooperation on the part of the Mandatory government, violence and terrorism on the part of the Arabs, in the face of a Jewish world broken and impoverished by war, with millions of our people in Eastern and Central Europe demanding the greater share of our resources and our energies, in the face of a disastrous economic depression which along with the whole <sup>Western</sup> world engulfed <sup>also</sup> the whole Jewish world ~~as well~~ - we ~~have~~ nevertheless succeeded in bringing into existence in Palestine, a remarkable Jewish community which at the time of the Balfour Declaration numbered 60,000 and now numbers more than 400,000. We established hundreds of settlements and colonies, built schools and hospitals, created industries, revived a language and a culture and crowned the cultural edifice with a Hebrew University. The whole record has been universally acclaimed as an amazing epic of achievement.

And now, twenty years after the Balfour Declaration, an effort is being made to cut the Jewish Homeland in twain, to constrict its boundaries and to consign an expanded <sup>ing</sup> Jewish Homeland to what must be a political and economic absurdity.

The high spiritual exaltation of our people, in 1917, inspired by the Balfour Declaration, has been, through two decades, successively dampened and chilled, not so much by terroristic resistances on the part of certain intransigent Arab elements in Palestine, as by the failure of the Mandatory Government to fulfill <sup>the</sup> ~~its~~ obligations which it undertook under the terms of the Mandate.



The whole record of the Administration of Palestine ~~on the part of the~~  
~~Mandatory Government~~ with reference to the upbuilding of the Jewish Homeland  
has been a series of failures, ~~of blundering~~, inaction and non-cooperation.

Great Britain undertook, under the terms of the Mandate, "to place  
the country (Palestine) under such political, administrative and economic  
conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home."  
It failed to do that.

It undertook "to facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable  
conditions." It has failed to do that.

Far from opening the doors of Palestine wide to a Jewish mass  
immigration, it has continually wrangled and ~~wangled~~ <sup>bickered</sup> and bargained for  
minimum ~~schedules~~ <sup>schedules</sup> for immigrants. The depth of the farcial and the  
outrageous was reached in the latest ~~schedule~~ <sup>schedule</sup> which allows ~~220~~ <sup>labor</sup> certificates for  
a period of four months - at a time when hundreds of thousands of Jews are  
turning to Palestine as their last ray of hope ~~and desperately reaching out for these~~  
~~visas for a new life. Quite properly the Jewish Agency rejected them.~~  
Great Britain undertook "to encourage in cooperation with the  
Jewish Agency close settlement of the Jews on the land, including State  
and waste land not required for public purposes." It has failed to do that.  
Not a foot of land has been granted to Jewish settlers in Palestine. On the  
contrary, endless difficulties have been placed in the way of acquisition of land  
through purchase by Jewish settlers. Commission after Commission was called into  
existence in response to the promptings of Arab rioters, to prove that no land was  
available, at the very time when Jews, by draining marshes and irrigating desert land,  
were demonstrating how much ~~of~~ available land there really was.

It undertook to provide physical protection and security to the Jewish  
settlers - an elementary and primary concern of any ~~of any civilized~~ <sup>worthy</sup> government.  
It has failed even to do that. Within the last fifteen years there have been ~~been~~ <sup>tattered</sup>

*place*



four large sacle uprisings and massacres in Palestine.

It undertook to build a Jewish Homeland in <sup>the</sup> a clearly defined area of Palestine which included both sides of the Jordan. It failed to do that. In 1922, it extracted from the application of the Jewish National Home provisions of the Mandate ~~at~~ the whole of Transjordan, a territory twice as large as the present Palestine, and, contrary to definite guarantees given, the Jews, have not been allowed to settle there. Transjordan thus became one of the few countries in the modern world <sup>where</sup> ~~which by law and~~ under the promptings of a great civilized nation, <sup>was not allowed</sup> ~~refused to allow~~ Jews to settle in it.

And this incredible record of failures is now to be climaxed with yet another - <sup>an</sup> ~~the~~ unlawful partition of Palestine in a desperate effort to solve <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ problem which the Mandatory Government, through its own blundering and neglect, created.

What hve the Zionists <sup>asked</sup> / of Great Britain <sup>over</sup> since the issuance of the Balfour Declaration? Only an honest and forthright fulfillment of the Mandate - no more and no less. We had a right to ask that. - not only on the basis of the Declaration <sup>and</sup> ~~of~~ the Mandate and the international approval which was given to both, but on the basis of the concrete achievements <sup>of the Jews</sup> within Palestine during the last twenty years. The Jews have made Palestine their own by virtue of conquest through labor and sacrifice and achievement. The Jews of Palestine are not mendicants begging for crumbs at the doors of the British <sup>chancellery</sup> ~~Chancellery~~. They are the men who are Palestine today. They are the ~~the~~ creative, progressive upbuilding community today. They have a right to speak for Palestine. No one else has. Left to itself, Palestine would still be an <sup>insignificant strip</sup> ~~insecure scrap~~ of blasted and blighted oriental hinterland. Left to themselves, the Arabs would still be illiterate, impoverished, exploited fellaheens ruled by a semi-fedual oligarchy. "Left to themselves", Mr. Winston Churchill declared in 1922, in the House of Commons, "The Arabs of Palestine would not in a thousand years have taken



effective steps towards the irrigation and electrification of Palestine."

It is the coming of hundreds of thousands of Jews to Palestine that has revived that land and ~~that has~~ made it the hub of vast enterprise in the whole Near East. It is the coming of the Jews which has given the Arabs of Palestine a status and a voice and a measure of freedom and prosperity heretofore unknown to them and, to some of their spokesmen and leaders, a colossal impudence.

To the problem of Palestine today there is no other logical solution than that which the Zionists have been advocating <sup>ever since 1917</sup> ~~right along~~ - a complete and loyal fulfillment of the terms of the Mandate.

The successive shrinking of the Jewish Homeland in order to satisfy Arab opposition will not only destroy the idea of the Jewish Homeland but will not satisfy the Arabs. They have said so. The first partition of Palestine in 1922 did not satisfy them. To whatever microscopic portions the Jewish Homeland in Palestine will finally be reduced, it will still be a red flag in the eyes of Arab Irredentists. The partition of Palestine will not solve a single problem which at present embitters Arab-Jewish relationships. Territorially, it is quite impossible to separate Jews from Arabs in Palestine. What <sup>ever</sup> zigzag frontiers are finally defined, whatever serpentine borders are finally fixed, there will always remain an Arab minority in the Jewish portion and a Jewish minority in the Arab portion - aisles of insecurity in a sea of hostility. In either case the minority will be a tinder box for political incidents, agitation and explosion. By fragmentizing Palestine, by setting up so-called international <sup>zones, free cities</sup> and corridors, they will only ~~be multiplying~~ <sup>multiply</sup> the <sup>points</sup> ~~number of irritation points~~ in the country.

By dividing the country still further they will only increase its economic difficulties being into existence additional trade barriers, stultifying ~~its~~



They were given Transjordan as a total Arab state, en-  
tirely free from Jews. It became completely  
Arab, unlike the Jewish Palestine which has never  
<sup>allowed</sup> ~~permitted~~ to become totally Jewish, <sup>c.e.</sup> ~~free from~~  
~~Arab~~ Arab national aspirations. Were the  
~~the~~ Arabs satisfied?



agricultural development, bringing about artificial and speculative land values and creating the economic aberration of an increasing <sup>by large</sup> immigration into a ~~land~~ <sup>small country</sup> ~~greatly~~ <sup>still further</sup> diminished ~~country~~ in size.

And let it be said, and frankly said, that a partition of Palestine will make of every Jew a Revisionist; for it is quite clear that a Palestine without Jerusalem, without Haifa, without the Hills of Judea is not the Jewish Palestine. ~~And we shall not~~ <sup>cannot</sup> be beguiled by the thought that some day those portions which are now to be cut away from ~~the~~ Palestine will be reincorporated within the Jewish Homeland. It is far more likely that they will ~~be~~ ultimately <sup>be</sup> incorporated <sup>with it</sup> into a great Arab <sup>e</sup> Empire. Transjordan was cut away from Palestine in 1922. It has not <sup>since</sup> been reincorporated. Rather it is being extended to include more of Palestinian territory while the Palestine of the Jewish Homeland is <sup>now</sup> ~~not~~ to be constricted still further.

To compensate for the proposed truncation of Palestine by the promise that Arab countries, contiguous to Palestine, will admit Jewish immigration is an intolerable idea to anyone who understands the philosophy of Zionism. <sup>but to transform it through the establishment of a Jewish National Home,</sup> The aim of Zionism is not to reshift the Jewish diaspora, to take masses of Jews from ~~one~~ <sup>its aim is not</sup> one country where they are an insecure minority and move them to another where they will be an insecure minority. <sup>but to ingather them in an autonomous Jewish center where they will have mastery over their own political fortunes.</sup> Leo Pinsker, fifth years ago, understood this matter thoroughly when he said: "This land, <sup>(the national home)</sup> must be uniform and continuous in extent, for it lies in the very nature of our problem that we must possess as a counterpoise to our dispersion one single refuge, since a number of refuges would again present the features of our old dispersion."

It has been delicately hinted that whatever the findings of the Royal Commission will be, the British Government is resolved to implement them, with force,



if necessary. But, in all humility, we beg to state that force has never intimidated the Jew. The world ought to know that by this time. In fact, no self-respecting people has ever permanently reconciled itself to great wrong under threat or actuality of force and terror. We have no armies or navies to launch against Great Britain. We can only appeal to the conscience of the English people and to their sense of fair play. We can only appeal to the conscience of the world - if there is such a thing left in the world today. Beyond Great Britain there is a League of Nations. Without the sanction of the League, the Mandate can not be altered. Beyond the League there is mankind. At the present moment, the prestige of the League is at zero point. And the moral sense of the world is in a tragic state of suspension. Witness the tragedy of Spain <sup>and the world's</sup> ~~their~~ shameless inaction in the face of the criminal raping of that unhappy land. Witness Ethiopia and the ~~shameless~~, cynical story of the world's moral collapse in the case of that unhappy land.

The present age is characterized by nothing so much as by the spirit and methods of gangsterism and international racketeering. An unclean spirit, risen from the ten million graves of the last war, is haunting the habitations of mankind. The air is filled today with the stench of moral putrefaction. But the Jewish people belongs not to the present only. It belongs to <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ great past and to a great future. Certainly we have no right to assume that the moral climate of the hour is the permanent and enduring one for all future time. We, who have seen so many regimes of iniquity rise and fall, and so many seemingly insurmountable obstacles clear <sup>ed</sup> from our path, <sup>a down</sup> ~~down through~~ the centuries, have no right to assume <sup>millennial</sup> ~~now~~ that the present is anything more than a comma in one of the sentences of the story of our survival.

We may have no one to lean on today. Let us therefore lean on ourselves -



and on our God. Perhaps it is of this moment that the prophet spoke when he declared: "And it shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel and they that are *escaped* of the House of Jacob, shall no more rely upon him that smites them but shall rely upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, completely."

Certain arrangements with reference to Palestine may be forced upon us. However, we shall not accept them. We shall continue to work, to advocate, to educate until such time as the *just* ~~Jewish~~ claims of our ~~historic~~ people are established. "e have ~~no~~ right to sign away the historic claims of ~~the~~ Jewish people, ~~nor~~ nor the future of our children. We have no right to pledge future generations to a political arrangement which is ~~not~~ in consonance ~~with~~ ~~neither~~ with the hopes, the history nor the religious convictions of our people.

