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Seeing our problems against the larger background, 1939.

ADDRESS BROADCAST ON "MESSAGE OF ISRAEL HOUR" BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER OF THE  
THE TEMPLE, CLEVELAND, OHIO ON SATURDAY EVENING, MARCH 18, 1939

### SEEING OUR PROBLEM AGAINST THE LARGER BACKGROUND

Since addressing you last Saturday evening on the subject of the Refugees of 1939, the situation has again changed for the worse. During this week, Czecho-Slovakia has ceased to exist as an independent country. Hitler destroyed it. The Czech nation has been absorbed and politically obliterated within the Third Reich. Slovakia, too, is now a German protectorate. Thus the Nazi Government which in six short years has made stateless and homeless two million people, Jews and non-Jews, is now shattering the lives and fortunes of hundreds of thousands of new victims in a conquered land which is non-German by race, and which until recently was a free and tolerant democracy. Another half million potential refugees, Jewish and non-Jewish, have been created over night. All who had loved their country too dearly, and had resisted too loyally Nazi propaganda and penetration, all who belonged to a differing political faith, all who had fled from Germany to Czecho-Slovakia for refuge, and all Jews, and those who are declared to be Jews by the infamous Nurenberg race laws, are tonight marked and doomed men - they and their wives and their children. Many are already in concentration camps. Many more are on their way there, to taste the savage brand of Nazi sadism and "schrecklichkeit". A veritable man-hunt is on. No one will escape. The borders are closed. The occupation of Czecho-Slovakia was as swift and unexpected as was that of Austria. There was no chance of escape. Men are trapped. The March horrors of Vienna are tonight being re-enacted in Prague. Many are committing suicide. Frightened people are seeking temporary sanctuary in the consulates and legations of foreign nations. The notorious and well-oiled Nazi routine of expropriation and confiscation, of robbing men of their businesses and possessions, and driving them from their positions and professions, is in full swing. When that process is completed, another half million or more of "plundered, profaned and disinherited" human beings will be cast out as human debris upon the mercy of the world.

Close upon the heels of this disaster comes the news of further anti-Jewish legislation in Hungary. Hungary has now absorbed one of the dismembered parts of Czecho-Slovakia -- Ruthenia -- which has a substantial Jewish population. Many Jews of Hungary will be forced to emigrate as a result of the new legislation which sharply restricts, and in many instances, completely destroys their opportunities to earn a living.

Likewise, during this week, Great Britain, following the breakdown of the London Round-Table Conference, announced its own plan for Palestine. By the terms of this plan, Jewish immigration into Palestine will be reduced to an average of some fifteen thousand a year for the next five years. Jews had hoped that Palestine would serve as a ready and welcoming haven for the vast number of homeless refugees from all parts of Europe. Palestine is capable of absorbing a hundred thousand new immigrants a year. Under the terms of the Mandate, Great Britain had undertaken to facilitate Jewish immigration into that country and to assist in the upbuilding of the Jewish National Homeland. It is now contemplated drastically to reduce Jewish immigration in order to insure that the Jews shall forever remain a minority in Palestine.

Thus, at a time when a tragic and overwhelming catastrophe has overtaken the Jewries of Europe, forcing myriads of them to wander forth in search of new homes, the doors to their own national homeland are to be steadily closed to them. The same wrong-headed and bankrupt British foreign policy of unilateral appeasement, which has been responsible for the dismemberment and annihilation of the brave and gallant little democracy in Central Europe, is now visiting a similar fate upon the Jewish Homeland in Palestine. In both cases, terrorism and lawlessness have been rewarded, and loyalty, labor and law have been flaunted and betrayed.

The prospect for millions of our people in Europe today seems hopeless indeed. But our history knows no hopelessness. We have passed through the deep,

dark waters many times before. We are an ancient people. Thirty-five centuries have hardened us. We have learned how to draw strength from danger and defeat. In every testing hour of our history, in every time of wrath, we found our sure and strong defense in a re-enforced loyalty and solidarity, in great love and ready sacrifice. And above all, in confident faith in the Guardian of Israel who neither sleepeth nor slumbereth:

"My flock was scattered for want of a shepherd, and became food for all the beasts of the field; my flock wandered over all the mountains and over every high hill; my flock was scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to seek or search for them..."

"Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, here am I, and I will seek and search for my flock. As a shepherd searches for his flock on a day of whirlwind, when his sheep are scattered, so will I search for my flock; and rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered, on the day of clouds and thick darkness."

The tragic fate which has now overtaken Czecho-Slovakia should make it clear to all men that the organized attack upon the Jewish people in many parts of Europe is not an isolated phenomenon, to be explained in and by itself, but rather part of a larger sinister design. It is part of a major offensive, along the entire front, not alone against the rights of all minorities, but against the rights and independence of all smaller nations. Imperialism is on the march again in Europe - and in that part of Europe which has always been the bloody arena of rival imperial ambitions. Minorities and small states are pawns in this desperate and infamous game of empire. They are first enmeshed in a web of scandalous intrigue, conspiracy and propaganda, and then ruthlessly and cynically sacrificed to power politics. The smaller states, which lie across the path of expanding empire, are systematically disrupted from within, disintegrated and then absorbed. In this skillfully elaborated technique of disruption, anti-Semitism has served as one of the handiest and most effective weapons. Anti-Semitism of the post-war era in

Europe has been purely political and governmental. It is neither religious nor racial. It is not the attitude of peoples but the incitement of politicians and Fascist adventurers and agents of imperial intrigue. The racism of the Nazis was only a grôtesque facade for a cunning and conscienceless political strategy by which to divide the German people, discredit liberalism and democracy and disrupt the German Republic. Since their coming to power, the Nazis have consistently employed anti-Semitism to confound the political life of those countries which they have marked down as stepping stones in the imperial expansion program of the Third Reich. By means of it, they succeed in destroying their democratic forms of government. They sow discord and disunion among their people and undermine their power of resistance to Nazi aggression.

Some of the smaller nations and minority groups of Europe beguiled themselves into believing that it was only the Jewish minority which would be singled out for persecution and destruction. They were immune. Some of them even introduced within their own borders some of the anti-Semitic tactics and practices of Berlin, and consented to act as Nazi marionettes. They erred grievously. They should have taken warning from the Nazi persecution of the Jews. When the elementary rights of one minority group are flaunted with impunity, the rights of all minority groups are endangered. When law is denied to one, tyranny is likely to overtake all. When there is no respect for the inalienable rights of men or religions or races which are too weak to defend themselves, there will be no respect for the inalienable rights of nations which are too weak to defend themselves. Hitler, the arch-anti-Semite, has now finally revealed himself in his true colors as the arch-enemy of all minority groups and small nations in Europe. The rape of Czechoslovakia is part of the same outrageous scheme of power politics and empire-building as is the robbing and looting of <sup>the</sup> Jewish group in Germany, and the shameless exploitation of anti-Semitism.

The Jewish problem in Europe is thus bound up with the whole problem of the protection of the rights of minorities and of smaller nations. It is part of the

problem of collective security in the world. It is also bound up with the classic ideals of liberty, peace and brotherhood, whose progress have been so sharply interrupted in our day. When this progress will be resumed, it is difficult to say. Hard and desperate days lie ahead for mankind - for Jews and non-Jews alike. The forces of reaction and blackest tyranny are triumphantly on the march. Democracy has suffered one severe defeat after another. The League of Nations lies shattered and discredited at our feet. The free spirit of man stands shaken and frightened today in a dazed and apocalyptic mood, as if awaiting some crash of doom.

But though our hearts are heavy and our minds perplexed, we should not despair. We should try to understand our age against the background of the ages. We should endeavor to appraise our present hour in terms of what has gone before. In so doing, we shall gain perspective, confidence and courage.

What seems like Armageddon at first, is in reality but another bitter skirmish in the age-old and irrespressible conflict between the religious and moral traditions of mankind, as represented in Judaism and Christianity symbolized in the concepts of law, freedom, peace, brotherhood and the inviolable rights of man - and the indurate traditions of paganism symbolized in the concepts of power, state idolatry, autocracy, militarism, conquest and war.

The outcome of this conflict cannot be in doubt. Man, though frequently yielding to fear, pressure and panic, will not permanently submit himself to intellectual and spiritual servitude, however great the deceptions and beguilements which a cynical government, bent upon power, will through a thousand and one forms of propaganda, practice upon him. In the long run, man will accept no substitutes for the autonomy of his spirit and the sovereign freedom of his questing and adventuring mind. Man does not wish to be a robot, or the blind instrument of some usurping state bureaucracy. Man wants freedom and dignity and a sense of personal and inherent worth. There is also something in man which at long last revolts against the mystic

adoration of force, the everlasting brandishing of fists and against national and racial chauvenism and exhibitionism. There are deeper sources of human inspirations whence well up irrepressibly the redemptive power of compassion, love and good will, the ideals of human solidarity, justice and peace.

Mankind will sooner or later return to these classic ideals of civilization. We are not at the end of a way, at the edge of a wilderness, but on a ~~long~~ <sup>long</sup> broken detour. We shall return to the golden highway. But this return will not come about automatically and as a matter of course, but only as the result of the patient labor and the heroic faith of those people who, in spite of the world's vast turmoil, still think with a minimum of bias and feel with a maximum of self-restraint -- who have lost neither their vision nor their perspective, who are conscious both of their strength and of their mission, and who are determined to carry on, even as a saving remnant, in these times of spiritual crisis and tribulation. Upon these people, working faithfully each in his sphere, to preserve the precious values of a free society, rests today the ultimate salvation of our world.

There are periods in human history when conditions become so bad and problems so involved and seemingly impossible of solution, that whole generations are seized with a desire to escape. Men begin to yearn for some distant hermitage of tranquillity from which the urgencies and anxieties of a distant world would be excluded and wherein all life would be beautifully simplified. Here and there, an individual may free himself from the coils and involvements of his day and age and find sequestered peace in some isle of ease. For the millions of men, this is quite impossible. There is no running away. There is no peaceful valley to which the masses of mankind can retire, and, amidst peace and pleasant labor, live unhurried and unharassed lives, savoring all the loveliness of existence.

It is only out of the hard and bitter realities of life, through struggle and suffering, by means of hard planning and building, slowly and with many heart-breaking set-backs, that men can construct a cleaner and lovelier order of

life for themselves and for their children. For all men of spirit this age should be a challenge, not a disillusionment, or a despair.

We Jews, especially, should learn to see our problem against the background of the entire world's problem, and also against the background not of the last few years, but of generations, nay centuries. We are bearing today a double load of the burdens which all free men are bearing. Frequently that has been our fate in the past. It is our cross and our ~~xx~~ crown and our immortality. Perhaps it is the key to our strange destiny so underlaid with grandeur and with pain. We never succumbed, and as long as we remain faithful to the God Whose name and nature our seers revealed to mankind, as long as we serve Him in simple truth, in justice, in love and in sacrifice, dealing our bread to the hungry, bringing the poor that are cast out to our homes, and satisfying the afflicted soul, so long will light ever rise in our darkness, and the gloom shall be as the noonday...

For us Jews, too, this age of surge and thunder, of suffering and menace, should be a compelling and undeniable challenge, not a disillusionment or a despair.

MESSAGE OF ISRAEL

7 - 7:30 P.M., E.S.T.

SATURDAY, MARCH 18, 1939

ANNOUNCER: The "Message of Israel" is brought to you tonight by the National Broadcasting Company in cooperation with the United Jewish Laymen's Committee. Rabbi Jonah B. Wise of Central Synagogue in New York City will preside, and Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver of The Temple in Cleveland, Ohio will preach the sermon. The choir of Central Synagogue, under the direction of Mr. Lazar Weiner, will render the musical service. Mr. Fritz Lechner is the baritone soloist.

ORGAN AND CHOIR: Hymn #93

RABBI WISE: Prayer

CHOIR: May the Words (Bloch; Birchard)

RABBI WISE: Prayer

CHOIR: Seu Sheorim (Bloch; Birchard)

RABBI WISE: I take pleasure in presenting Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver who will speak to you from Cleveland.

RABBI SILVER: Sermon

ANNOUNCER: The program continues from New York.

RABBI WISE: Thank you, Rabbi Silver.

~~MR.~~ MR. LECHNER: By the Waters of Babylon (Dvorak; Simrock)

RABBI WISE: Prayer

CHOIR: Hymn #256

RABBI WISE: Benediction

ANNOUNCER: The "Message of Israel" will be happy to send to you a copy of the sermon just preached by Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver. Write to the "Message of Israel", 35 East 62nd Street, New York City. Next week at this same service the speaker will be Rabbi Jonah B. Wise of New York City.... This is the National Broadcasting Company.



SEEING OUR PROBLEM AGAINST THE  
LARGER BACKGROUND

Radio address -- United Jewish  
Appeal for Refugees and Over-  
seas needs. March 18, 1939



# Seeing Our Problem Against the Larger Background

TEXT OF RADIO ADDRESS

By DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

*National Chairman, United Jewish Appeal  
for Refugees and Overseas Needs*



*Issued by*

UNITED JEWISH APPEAL FOR REFUGEES  
AND OVERSEAS NEEDS

*on behalf of*

AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE, INC.  
UNITED PALESTINE APPEAL AND  
NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE FUND, INC.

342 MADISON AVENUE

NEW YORK, N. Y.

# Seeing Our Problem Against the Larger Background

*By* DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

CZECHOSLOVAKIA has ceased to exist as an independent country and the situation has again changed for the worse. Hitler destroyed it. The Czech nation has been absorbed and politically obliterated within the Third Reich. Slovakia, too, is now a German protectorate. Thus the Nazi Government which in six short years has made stateless and homeless two million people, Jews and non-Jews, is now shattering the lives and fortunes of hundreds of thousands of new victims in a conquered land which is non-German by race, and which until recently was a free and tolerant democracy. Another half million potential refugees, Jewish and non-Jewish, have been created overnight. All who had loved their country too dearly, and had resisted too loyally Nazi propaganda and penetration, all who belonged to a differing political faith, all who had fled from Germany to Czechoslovakia for refuge, and all Jews, and those who are declared to be Jews by the infamous Nuremberg race laws, are tonight marked and doomed men—they and their wives and their children. Many are already in concentration camps. Many more are on their way there, to taste the savage brand of Nazi sadism and "Schrecklichkeit."

A veritable man-hunt is on. No one will escape. The borders are closed. The occupation of Czechoslovakia was as swift and unexpected as was that of Austria. There was no chance of escape. Men are trapped. The March horrors of Vienna are tonight being reenacted in Prague. Many are committing suicide. Frightened people are seeking temporary sanctuary in the consulates and legations of foreign nations. The notorious and well-oiled Nazi routine of expropriation and confiscation, of robbing men of their businesses and possessions, and driving them from their positions and professions, is in full swing. When that process is completed, another half million or more of "plundered, profaned and disinherited" human beings will be cast out as human debris upon the mercy of the world.

Close upon the heels of this disaster comes the news of further anti-Jewish legislation in Hungary. Hungary has now absorbed one of the dismembered parts of Czechoslovakia—Ruthenia—which has a substantial Jewish population. Many Jews of Hungary will be forced to emigrate as a result of the new legislation which sharply restricts, and in many instances, completely destroys their opportunities to earn a living.

Likewise during this week, Great Britain, following the breakdown of the London Round Table Conference, announced its own tentative plan for Palestine. By the terms of this plan, Jewish immigration into Palestine will be reduced to an average of some fifteen thousand a year for the next five years. Jews had hoped that Palestine would serve as a ready and welcoming haven for the vast number of homeless refugees from all parts of Europe. Palestine is capable of absorbing a hundred thousand new immigrants a year. Under the terms of the Mandate, Great Britain had undertaken to facilitate Jewish immigration into that country and to assist in the upbuilding of the Jewish National Homeland. It is now contemplated drastically to reduce Jewish immigration in order to insure that the Jews shall forever remain a minority in Palestine.

Thus, at a time when a tragic and overwhelming catastrophe has overtaken the Jewries of Europe, forcing myriads of them to wander forth in search of new homes, the doors to their own national homeland are to be steadily closed to them. The same wrong-headed and bankrupt British foreign policy of unilateral appeasement, which has been responsible for the dismemberment and annihilation of the brave and gallant little democracy in Central Europe, is now visiting a similar fate upon the Jewish Homeland in Palestine. In both cases, terrorism and lawlessness have been rewarded, and loyalty, labor and law have been flouted and betrayed.

The prospect for millions of our people in Europe today seems hopeless indeed. But our history knows no hopelessness. We have passed through the deep, dark waters many times before. We are an ancient people. Thirty-five centuries have hardened us. We have learned how to draw strength from danger and defeat. In every testing hour of our history, in every time of wrath, we found our sure and strong defense in a reinforced loyalty and solidarity, in great love and ready sacrifice. And above all, in confident faith in the Guardian of Israel who neither sleepeth nor slumbereth:

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The tragic fate which has now overtaken Czechoslovakia should make it clear to all men that the organized attack upon the Jewish people in many parts of Europe is not an isolated phenomenon, to be explained in and by itself, but rather part of a larger sinister design. It is part of a major offensive, along the entire front, not alone against the rights of all minorities, but against the rights and independence of all smaller nations. Imperialism is on the march again in Europe—and in that part of Europe which has always been the bloody arena of rival imperial ambitions. Minorities and small states are pawns in this desperate and infamous game of empire. They are first enmeshed in a web of scandalous intrigue, conspiracy and propaganda, and then ruthlessly and cynically sacrificed to power politics. The smaller states, which lie across the path of expanding empire, are systematically disrupted from within, disintegrated and then absorbed.

In this skillfully elaborated technique of disruption, anti-Semitism has served as one of the handiest and most effective weapons. Anti-Semitism of the post-war era in Europe has been purely political and governmental. It is neither religious nor racial. It is not the attitude of peoples but the incitement of politicians and Fascist adventurers and agents of imperial intrigue. The racism of the Nazis was only a grotesque façade for a cunning and conscienceless political strategy by which to divide the German people, discredit liberalism and democracy and disrupt the German Republic. Since their coming to power, the Nazis have consistently employed anti-Semitism to confound the political life of those countries which they have marked down as stepping stones in the imperial expansion program of the Third Reich. By means of it, they succeed in destroying their democratic forms of government. They sow discord and disunion among their people and undermine their power of resistance to Nazi aggression.

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The Jewish problem in Europe is thus bound up with the whole problem of the protection of the rights of minorities and of smaller nations. It is part of the problem of collective security in the world. It is also bound up with the classic ideals of liberty, peace and brotherhood, whose progress has been so sharply interrupted in our day. When this progress will be resumed it is difficult to say. Hard and desperate days lie ahead for mankind—for Jews and non-Jews alike. The forces of reaction and blackest tyranny are triumphantly on the march. Democracy has suffered one severe defeat after another. The League of Nations lies shattered and discredited at our feet. The free spirit of man stands shaken and frightened today in a dazed and apocalyptic mood, as if awaiting some crash of doom.

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The outcome of this conflict cannot be in doubt. Man, though frequently yielding to fear, pressure and panic, will not permanently submit himself to intellectual and spiritual serfdom, however great the deceptions and beguilements which a cynical

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*March 18, 1939.*