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The Jewish people needs a home, 1939.

United Palestine Appeal
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FOR PUBLICATION IN YOUR NEW YEAR ISSUE

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T H E J E W I S H P E O P L E N E E D S A H O M E !

A New Year's Message to the Jews of America

By DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER,
National Chairman, United Palestine Appeal

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A hard year is closing for our people, a year of bitter attack on many fronts. The disaster of Austrian Jewry was added to the disaster of German Jewry. Recession was the experience of our people throughout Eastern and Central Europe. In Italy the racist propaganda which is the inevitable forerunner of political disfranchisement and economic ruin has been officially launched. Millions of our people are in flight, driven from their old homes and seeking new homes in a world where few new homes are available.

In Palestine too, struggle and conflict have been the lot of our brothers during the past year. Our people have been forced to defend with their lives what they have builded with the sweat of their brows and souls. Jewish blood has now sanctified the soil which Jewish labor redeemed. Political uncertainty and the failure of the Mandatory Government to maintain law and order in the country have hung like a pall over the Yishuv and have intercepted its economic progress and development.

Nevertheless, though the year has been an extremely trying and difficult one and the immediate prospects are not bright, the remarkable courage, faith and tenacity of our people in Palestine, which in recent years accomplished such seemingly impossible tasks and wrested so many glorious victories, is continuing to stand them in good stead. Their morale has been splendid. They have not yielded to violence and terror. They have proceeded to build new colonies and settlements in the very zone of battle and have defended them valiantly. These Jews of Palestine who are our chosen vanguard have been carrying on the hard and sacrificial labor of land and nation building with a courage and a dignity which might well fill us with deep and justifiable pride.

Though the remarkable rate of progress which Palestine experienced in recent years, which in less than two decades brought three hundred thousand Jews into the country, has for the time being slowed down, the country nevertheless is continuing to develop. New settlers are arriving, among them hundreds of children rescued from the horror-pits of Austria and Germany. New

areas are being opened for settlement and cultivation. Palestinian exports have substantially increased. Intelligent effort is being applied toward the strengthening of industry and the solution of the unemployment problem which the enforced curtailment of immigration and the disturbances in the country have aggravated.

Palestine Jewry for the time being is holding and defending the political and economic positions already won, waiting for the hour of release from uncertainty and insecurity to make another decisive advance towards growth and expansion, as it has done so often in the last twenty years following brief periods of economic relapse.

Fellow Jews! Our task of building a National Homeland for our people is not the work of a year, a decade or of a single generation. That task should not be envisaged or evaluated in terms of separate moments of check or progress. Nor can our work in Palestine be stopped or postponed because of any temporary unfavorable condition. We are engaged in an historic enterprise of long duration, calling for wide perspectives and long-range planning, demanding patience and resoluteness and above all unflinching and generous offering of substance and man-power.

If a fraction of the life, labor and love which some Jewish communities had invested in other lands from which they are now being driven had been invested by us in Palestine in recent years the Jewish Homeland would now be a reality. Had there been a greater outpouring of vision, men and means, and greater cooperation on the part of the Mandatory Government, we could have built much faster and with much less difficulty. But we were unprepared when the great moment arrived in 1918. Our forces were unorganized, our household divided. Our resources were not adequate and the Government of Palestine was often either a negative or an obstructionist factor. We must now move along the harder way, the longer way. But move we must - towards the goal of national rehabilitation in our historic home.

Events have demonstrated conclusively what the seers of our movement had foreseen unerringly. Our people as a people needs a national status and a national homeland. In adversity we remembered it, in prosperity we frequently forgot it. Today we are being most tragically reminded of it again. Large communities in Israel, long established in their native homes, cultured, integrated in a thousand ways within the life of those countries, have been compelled, suddenly and cruelly, to taste the bitter taste of exile and homelessness. The Jewish people -- and not merely individual Jews -- needs a home! Let us never again lose sight of this inescapable fact of our

existence. The Jewish people needs a home! Across the dark curtain of hate, persecution and exile, spread across the face of two-thirds of Europe today, there is written large in letters of fire and blood this legend which our people must read and, reading, resolutely act: The Jewish people needs a home!

To be sure there are other important tasks which we must perform at the present time to help our fellow Jews throughout the world. There is political work to be done. Relief funds are desperately needed at this hour to help our people in Central and Eastern Europe, and no Jew will want to shirk this compelling obligation in this crucial hour. There are the continuing tasks of maintaining our communal life everywhere, our religious, philanthropic and educational institutions. Palestine does not and must not claim any exclusive allegiance or devotion. But Palestine does claim priority. Palestine is not just another worthy project in Jewish life. In the profoundest sense, it is the most vital and crucial need of our people at this time and at all times.

Fellow Jews! On the threshold of the New Year I transmit to you the appeal of the Yishuv in Palestine for a brotherly strengthening of their hands and hearts, for reassurance for a just sharing in sacrifice and for tools and materials with which to build the temple of our national life and of our imperishable ideals.

Jewish communities in the United States which have not yet organized their efforts for the United Palestine Appeal, are urged to do so at once. Those which have had their campaigns during the year and are conscious that they have not met their full responsibility in the present situation, are urged to supplement their funds. Individual Jews who cannot be reached by organized communal effort, are urged to make their direct and individual contributions to the cause.

May the coming year be a better year for our people. May it witness the lifting of the dark clouds from over the lives of those who are at present in tribulation and suffering. For Palestine may it be a year of redemption, progress, and peace.