



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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Philadelphia, re: American Jewish response to European Jews,
1939.

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER OF CLEVELAND, OHIO
IN PHILADELPHIA, PA. ON NOVEMBER 15, 1939

Within the last few months the area of Jewish distress in Europe has widened, and within the orbit of disaster are now included an additional three millions of our people. The heroic efforts which we made in the last few years to salvage the human wreckage of persecution will, I am afraid prove utterly inadequate to meet the new situation. Nevertheless, though we are unable to finish the task, we are not afraid to desist from it. The mandate is clear and inescapable and we members of the last important Jewish community outside of the areas of persecution or of war must now assume practically the entire burden upon our own shoulders.

My close contact with the life and spirit of my fellow Jews in America in nearly a quarter of a century leads me to the conviction that it will face its historic task unflinchingly.

The Jewish people faces the critical days ahead not without fears and misgivings, not without dark moments of agony and despair -- for great is the wrath and terror and the menace -- but fundamentally unshaken. Jews are carrying on, many of them magnificently. Witness the remarkable outpouring of loyalty, compassion and help on the part of Jews throughout the world for those of their fellow-Jews who find themselves in the iron crucible of affliction. All this is evidence of an inner soundness, of an unbroken solidarity. Thoughtful Jews know their history. They know their resources. They have taken the measure of their enemies. They understand the world significance of their great tribulation. In all this there is balm and healing. They know too that hope is a cardinal dogma of their ancient faith which they must not abandon.

To the everlasting credit of this sorely-tried generation of Jews be it said, that in spite of the tragedies which were piled up upon it, Oasa on

Pelion, in spite of the frightful disruption of numerous old centers of Jewish life, in spite of the impoverishment, exhaustion and persecutions which made of the whole household of Israel one vast hostelry of pain, it nevertheless was able to find within itself the energy, the courage and the resources to build in Palestine in twenty short years a new and resplendent center of Jewish life, already the fifth largest Jewish center in the world, and first and foremost in the richness and vitality of its intrinsic Jewish spirit and culture. Here in Palestine a new and powerful bulwark for the survival of the Jew and of Judaism has been established, as great and as rich in promise, and to be sure, under as great difficulties, as in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Regardless of any future developments, something great and heartening and re-assuring has already been achieved there.

