



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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Testimonial by Community of Cleveland, 1948.

Mr. Franklyn, member of the Phi Epsilon Pi fraternity

I am deeply grateful for this great honor which Phi Epsilon Pi has bestowed upon ~~me~~. ~~I feel myself altogether unworthy of it.~~ ^{being included the honor to be elected among the distinguished men whom you chose to honor is the first} I am sure that you have evaluated my services all too generously, but, being human, I must tell you that it is nevertheless ^{I whole the success with which} welcome. ^{careen} The praise of our fellowmen is always a tonic to our souls, especially in a ~~situation~~ where blame and censure are also not slow in coming. But let me assure you that even as I have never been seriously disturbed by criticism, I shall not be greatly deluded by praise.

The historic achievement of the past year, the establishment of the state of Israel after the ^{long, long} hope and labor of centuries, was due to no one man, to no one group of men, ^{and I am not discounting the importance of} ~~although leadership is not to be discounted.~~ It was due to the struggles and sacrifices of the Jewish people as a whole, everywhere throughout the world; and more especially in Palestine. The confluence of vast historic forces made the creation of the state of Israel high inevitable, and the Jews throughout the world and more especially, those in Palestine, had prepared themselves through long years of preliminary labor and the laying of foundations ~~for a reconstructed national life in their~~ ~~ancestral home~~, so that when the historic moment arrived, they were ready for it — physically, spiritually, politically. The degree of their preparedness in Israel is evidenced by the ease with which they took over all the departments ^{and services} of government ~~and~~ ~~all the services~~ when the mandatory regime left the country in a manner calculated to lead to breakdown and chaos. ~~It~~ is also evidenced by the manner in which the state of Israel, having proclaimed its independence last May, was able to make good its proclamation and to defend its territory against the attacks of five invading armies. The story of the Maccabees, which is being celebrated throughout the Jewish world this week, is no more glorious than the story of the valorous deeds of the fighting men of Israel in the year 1948, who broke the power of the combined forces of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan, and Egypt.

The Jewish people is a peace-loving people. It hates war. It never ~~looked~~ *regarded* ~~war~~ as an instrument of national policy. 2,800 years ago the prophets of Israel proclaimed to the world the ideal of a war-less society when "nations will beat their swords into plowshares and learn war no more". But the Jewish people never hesitated to defend their basic human rights, their liberties, and their faith with the last drop of their blood. Joshua, David, Judas Maccabee, and Bar Kochba are matchless military figures. The myriads of Jews who died as martyrs for their faith throughout the dark ages were no less heroic. The hundreds of thousands of Jews, American citizens and citizens of other free countries, who fought in the last war against tyranny and dictatorship and in the First World War for the right of self-determination of peoples belong to the same illustrious company of free men who loved peace dearly, but who loved freedom and justice even more.

In October of last year, when addressing the United Nations at Lake Success, I stated, "The Jewish state, when it is established, will respect the sovereignty of its neighbor states as fully as it will defend its own. The Jewish people in Palestine is prepared to defend itself. It is not impressed by idle threats. A people which has survived the accumulated fury of the centuries, faced powerful empires in a bitter battle for survival, and during the last war saw hundreds of thousands of its sons fighting for freedom in all the liberating armies of the Allied nations - such a people will not be intimidated. The Jewish people of Palestine, I repeat, will be prepared to defend itself." And the events of the last few months have fully justified the statement which I made months before the state was established.

The establishment of the state of Israel was an act of historic justice. That is why the United Nations overwhelmingly voted for it. That is why 19 states, including our own beloved country, have given recognition to the government of the state of Israel. That is why everywhere the existence of the state of Israel is today accepted as an accomplished fact.

That the Jewish people needed such a state is attested not alone by the dictates of reason and the arguments from history, but by the stream of Jewish refugees which ~~has~~ ^{been} ~~is now~~ ^{since last May} pouring into that country, refugees who could find a home nowhere else and who could not find a home in Palestine under any other system of government but that of an independent and sovereign Jewish state. 18,000 arrived in October of this year, 23,000 in November, 27,000 in ~~December~~. It is anticipated that 30,000 will arrive in January. Thus, the state of Israel is already serving the ~~people of Israel~~ ^{Jews} in one of its most desperate emergencies - that of saving the hundreds of thousands of men, women and children who have for years been languishing in the displaced persons camps of Europe, and who have lived and are living in dread and under menace in other parts of Europe, Asia, and Northern Africa. The state of Israel is emptying the ~~Jewish~~ refugee camps and is rapidly restoring an element of normalcy to Jewish life. Thus, the stone which some builders rejected has now become the chief cornerstone of the rehabilitation of our people.

It is to the everlasting glory of American Jewry that it provided so much of the material aid and the physical tools for the establishment of the state of Israel and gave it, in the critical hours, such effective and decisive political support. In regard this act, ~~along~~ ^{together} with the generous relief which it extended to our suffering people abroad during this last tragic decade, as the most significant and noblest contribution which American Jewry has made throughout its history. This community of 5,000,000 Jews, living in this gracious land of freedom, was not found wanting in the critical and searching hour when its less fortunate brothers were passing through the many hells of persecution and annihilation, and when a remnant of them was struggling heroically to rebuild a sanctuary of national survival and spiritual renaissance in Israel's holy land.

American Jewry has yet much to contribute to the progress and the strengthening of the new republic of Israel. Hundreds of thousands of our people from all parts of

the old world must still be helped to settle there. Economic opportunities must be provided in order to absorb this great immigration. The small state cannot assume the entire burden of this enormously costly program. But American Jewry can do even more - it can make available to the new government and its people American skills and methods - our science, our technology, and the know-how which we developed as a pioneering people here in many fields of industrial development. The new ^{Jewish} state in the Near East which, judging by the draft of its constitution which has recently been made public, is resolved to establish in that part of the world a citadel of democracy, may well profit from the counsel, help and support which American ^{Jews} ~~citizens~~, proud of the American tradition and the American way of life, can give to it.

The establishment of the state of Israel is bound to have a tremendous effect upon the future course of the Jewish people throughout the world and upon American Jews as well. The end of national exile for the Jewish people as such is destined to affect favorably the psyche of the Jews throughout the world. It will endow the Jew wherever he lives with a self-respect and a sense of security, a moral tone long wanting in his experience. The concept of "galut" - exile - is bound eventually to disappear. Whatever the Jew is destined to create anywhere - in art or literature - will, I believe, come to reflect a new attitude of dignity and confidence. There will be much less of the stress and tension in his creative work, less of the spirit of dejection or of rebellion. There will be less obsession with anti-Semitism and with apologetics. The Jew will fight for his full and equal rights everywhere more confidently and more resolutely, enheartened by the fact of the new status and dignity which have come to his people through the re-creation of the state of Israel.

One important fact should be borne in mind - the majority of the Jewish people will continue to live outside of Israel. Assuming that Israel will in the course of time come to contain three or four million Jews, the majority of the Jewish people will, nevertheless, continue to reside outside its borders. This was the case also

during the second commonwealth, especially in the centuries immediately preceding the destruction of the Temple in the year 70. It has been estimated that in the closing centuries of the second commonwealth - that is to say, in the century before and the century following the beginning of the Common Era - when the state of Israel still existed, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ million Jews lived in Palestine and about $5\frac{1}{2}$ million lived outside.

What was the relationship of the Jews who lived outside of Palestine to the Jewish state? They owed no political allegiance to the Jewish state, and the Jewish state exercised no political control over them. The country in which they lived was their country. The existence of a Jewish state did not diminish by one iota their loyalty to the countries in which they lived and in which they and their children were born. Theirs was no dual allegiance. Dual allegiance was never a fact in Jewish experience. It is the frightened and the insecure Jew, the one who is generally unhappy about his Jewish lineage and who tries to curry favor with the non-Jewish world on the basis of self-effacement who spreads the charge of dual allegiance against those fellow-Jews who are not so frightened and servile.

The Jews who lived outside of Palestine in those days nevertheless recognized Palestine as the non-political center of world Jewry, especially because it was the center of their religion. It was the Holy Land. They were mindful of their prophecy, "Out of Zion shall go forth the Law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." They made frequent pilgrimages to Palestine. It was a revered custom of Jews everywhere to contribute annually a half-shekel which at stated periods was collected and carried to Jerusalem as their voluntary contribution towards the maintenance of their central religious institutions. They helped the nation to defend itself when Rome attacked it, and they supported the rebellion of Bar Kochba against Rome in the second century when the Jews of Palestine attempted to regain their independence. They wanted the Jewish state to survive. There existed throughout the centuries the liveliest interaction between Palestine and the Jews of the Diaspora which was a boon to both and which safeguarded the integrity of the people and the character of its faith.

If history is any guide, the Jews of today who will continue to live in other lands will maintain the same attitude towards the state of Israel as their forefathers did. Theirs will be a most sympathetic relationship towards that land. They will materially help it to absorb as many Jews as will wish to go there or may have to go there. They will help to build up its cultural, scientific, and spiritual institutions as well as its economic life so that it may become a land of which Jews everywhere will be proud. For the eyes of the world will be on the land of Israel to see what Jews as a people can accomplish on their own. There will be a free flow of manifold communications, of mutual stimulation, of give and take. Israel will again become the non-political center of world Jewry. But the Jews of Israel will be Israeli citizens and the Jews of the United States will be citizens of the United States, and similarly with Jews of other lands. They will owe undivided allegiance to their respective countries, and they will discharge loyally their full duties as citizens, as Jews have always done. But they will retain a special attachment to the land of Israel which will in no way interfere with their duties and obligations as citizens of their respective countries. It was Voltaire who said that every cultured man should have two fatherlands - his own and France. In an even more profound sense, but equally non-political, it may be applied to the Jew and Israel. Israel will be the Sabbath in the life of our people when, according to a beautiful tradition, an additional soul is vouchsafed unto man.

Having now reestablished the state of Israel, and having fully understood our obligations toward it in the future and correct relationship to it, the great mission of Jewish history nevertheless still remains to be fulfilled. National regeneration is only a part of our historic destiny. The spiritual regeneration of our people and of mankind is the historic mandate which was assigned to us by the prophets and seers of our people. Nationalism is always a means, not an end. The end is the kingdom of God - the just society which men and nations must establish upon earth, the one world community, grounded in justice and peace, wherein men can live the abundant

life and fulfill themselves as children of God fashioned in His image. This prophetic vision is the paramount contribution to the people of Israel to mankind.

To the thoughtful Jew it must be clear that there are no substitutes in Jewish life for religion. Neither philanthropy nor culture nor nationalism is adequate for the stress and challenge of our lives. All these interests can and must find their rightful place within the general pattern of Judaism. But the pattern must be Judaism, the Judaism of the Torah, the synagogue, the Judaism of the prophet, the saint, the mystic and the rabbi; the Judaism which speaks of God, the commandments of God, and the quest of God.

Both Judaism and its daughter religion, Christianity, face today a common, urgent task to defend a common heritage. Together they must build dikes against the flood of a new barbarism which is sweeping over our world. Materialism, dictatorship, the tyranny of the state or the class, the submergence of the individual, the appalling war machines which overshadow international life, the breakdown of moral standards in the lives of individuals and in family life, the cheapening and brutalization of life generally - these are the challenges which Jews who are faithful to the spiritual traditions of their people must face. Together with men of goodwill of all faiths they must make haste to cooperate in organized efforts to make secure for the future the kind of a civilization which Moses, Isaiah, Micah, and Jesus envisioned.

It is in a troubled and insecure world that young men and women live today - a world seriously menaced by catastrophe. Nevertheless, there is a glorious possibility for mankind to avert the threatening disasters and to fashion a great new and noble society which will know more of justice and freedom than any society in the past. The world needs faith and courage and sacrificial loyalty. Young Jews, especially those who have been advantaged by higher education, can make a great contribution towards the solution of the problems of our day and towards the fashioning of this new society if they remain faithful to the vision of their ancestors which was "to be a witness to the peoples and a light to the nations", to teach them how "to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with their God".

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