



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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Council of Reform Synagogues of Greater Philadelphia, 1957.

The American Jewish community will be centered in Judaism or it will not survive. It will be as an ethnic-religious community that it will carry on in the American scene, or it will disintegrate in the course of time. The term ethnic-religious is broad enough to include all that we mean when we speak of the Jewish way of life -- Jewish philanthropy, Jewish social service, Jewish culture -- but it is not so broad as to give to these derivative activities priority over the synagogue and religious education. Our concentration in the last generation upon philanthropy, foreign relief and civil defense has persuaded many Jews, I am afraid, not alone that these represent the essence and totality of Judaism, but that they are also the true means of our survival. This is a dangerous delusion. These activities are commendable, necessary and worthy manifestations of wholesome Jewish life. But they are not its roots nor its nourishing strength. Jewish life in America will wither, and dry-rot will set in unless the tree sends its roots deep down into the rich soil of Jewish faith and Jewish learning. It should also be borne in mind that the state is steadily moving in on all fields of social and welfare services, pensions, socialized medicine, and all forms of security, and the importance of the private or denominational agency in these fields will progressively diminish. There will remain little which will be specifically Jewish in the field of organized social service. Likewise, campaigns for foreign relief will not continue indefinitely, and they cannot be counted upon to keep Jewish life permanently alerted and mobilized. Without a vital religion and a replenishing Jewish education and scholarship, the American Jewish community will linger on as a waning and decaying residuum of the past in a twilight zone of drift until some unforeseen storm breaks over it, attacks its weakened frame, and shatters it beyond repair.

It ^{should also be} clear that a considerable part of the Jewish people -- ^{surely} ~~perhaps~~ a majority -- will continue to live outside of Israel in the indeterminate future.

We might estimate 4 to 5 millions as the ultimate population of that country. There are more than that number of Jews today in the United States alone. It is to the interest, not alone of the State of Israel, which will have to draw replenishment and economic and political support from the Diaspora reservoir for years to come,

but of the Jewish people as a whole and of Judaism, the noblest creation of the Jewish people, and its supreme gift to mankind, that Diaspora Jewry should remain vital, vigorous and spiritually sound. All talk, however ~~patriotically~~ motivated, which derogates Diaspora Jewry or altogether writes it off, is meaningless and harmful in the extreme... What is clearly indicated today is the setting in motion of the liveliest possible spiritual and cultural intercommunications and interactions between Israel and the Diaspora, similar to that which existed during periods of the Second Commonwealth.

In the past, centers of Jewish life shifted from one part of the world to another. At times several important centers existed simultaneously. In our day we saw the oldest and noblest center of Jewish life in Europe practically destroyed. Providentially, two other important centers ~~are arising~~ *have arisen* today and are growing in strength and significance -- the national center in Israel, and the Diaspora center in the United States. The American Jewish community owes it to itself and to history to take over its full measure of responsibility for carrying on the historic work of Judaism. For this mighty task it will have to find, in the future, the resources within itself. It will no longer be able to live on borrowing. It can no longer expect its spiritual and cultural provisions to come to it from the Old World. Old World Jewry no longer exists as a provisioning center. We shall have to prepare our own victuals.

~~We are it to carry~~

abs.

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You are cordially invited

to hear

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

Spiritual Leader of The Temple, Cleveland, Ohio

at the

Council of Reform Synagogues of Greater Philadelphia

Annual Dinner

in behalf of the

Union of American Hebrew Congregations,

Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion

Sunday evening, January 27, 1957, 7:00 p. m.

at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel, Grand Ballroom

Mayor Richardson Dilworth

will participate in the program

COCKTAILS 6:15 O'CLOCK

DINNER 7:00 O'CLOCK

~~R. S. V. P.~~

~~DRESS INFORMAL~~

~~\$6.00 PER PERSON~~

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER

The fifth in a line of rabbis, Rabbi Silver was ordained at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati in 1915 and in 1941 this oldest of America's rabbinical seminaries conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Hebrew Letters. Dr. Silver has been termed the "first citizen of Cleveland" and in many ways is one of the first citizens both of American Reform Judaism and the American Jewish community.

He is the spiritual leader of The Temple in Cleveland and has served as rabbi of this congregation for close to 40 years. Dr. Silver is not only one of the great leaders of American Reform Judaism but is an outstanding champion of Jewish freedom in overseas lands—two roles which he has fulfilled with great distinction.

In addition to his many other activities, Rabbi Silver is an author of note and has just published another outstanding book entitled, "Where Judaism Differed."

MAYOR RICHARDSON DILWORTH

Mayor Richardson Dilworth is rapidly becoming one of America's best-known municipal planners and leaders. This outstanding Philadelphian is a member of one of the oldest and most prominent Pennsylvania families; served with valor in World War I and World War II and—in keeping with the spirit of brotherliness that Philadelphia has come to symbolize the world over—has been a key figure in the fostering of better human relations.

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