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### **MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.**

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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Jewish Welfare Fund, Cleveland, 1962.



62-12

Cleveland

AN ADDRESS by

DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

JEWISH WELFARE FUND APPEAL - Wednesday, May 2, 1962

Whenever I attend campaign functions such as this one this evening, I am moved to marvel at certain qualities in our people's character which these occasions reveal. I have lived and worked among Jews, as you may well imagine, for a long time. I have seen them at close range, both in mufti and on dress parade.

There were times when they baffled and troubled me. There were occasions when I found myself entertaining some unpleasant thoughts about them, which, fortunately, I quickly discarded. For no one can serve his people who does not love them even in their imperfections.

But my confidence and pride <sup>we've</sup> ~~was~~ always renewed when I saw them engaged in some such act of group compassion and loyalty as this Jewish Welfare Fund campaign illustrates. These acts revealed to me a very precious quality in our people's character.

For this outpouring of solicitude and generosity for fellow-Jews the world over on what you might call an emergency basis has been going on for more than half a century. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee -- the J.D.C. -- was founded in 1914, on the eve of the First World War. Every year since that time, the Jews of America have marshalled their resources, and responsibly have met the desperate needs of their fellow-Jews wherever and whenever they occurred. Their giving was not in the nature of a one-time response to a flood or earthquake disaster, but a planned and continuing program of assistance to fellow-Jews who found themselves in dread and continuous crisis. It was prompted by a deep sense of group loyalty and solidarity. Nothing like it has ever happened in the history of peoples before. It is unique and it is magnificent.



But even prior to the year 1914, a year which ushered in the most violent and disastrous half-century in our history, American Jews had organized extensive aid for the immigrant Jews from the Old World who were coming to America at an average rate of one hundred and fifty thousand a year, seeking a new life and a new hope. By 1914 more than a million and a half had come to these shores, most of them penniless. They needed every kind of assistance, practically every form of assistance which the Jewish immigrants of today, who are seeking new homes in Israel or elsewhere, require. These immigrants to the United States soon outnumbered the older settled Jewish population. Their needs for relief and integration placed a heavy burden upon the older settlers, but they assumed them readily and as a matter of course. Hebrew immigrant aid societies were organized -- Settlements, English classes, relief agencies, technical schools, hospitals, orphanages, resettlement programs, such as Galveston and Woodbine. Out of these efforts our community-wide and, later, our nation-wide federations have evolved.

The children and grandchildren of those immigrants are today the leaders, workers and donors in the various welfare fund campaigns of our own day. Thus the chain of benevolence remains unbroken; the invisible chord which binds generation to generation abides un-severed.

This prompt and continuing response on the part of American Jews to the needs of fellow-Jews over a period of more than three-quarters of a century, is what fills me with admiration. And it is all so voluntary. No compulsion, no one had the authority to impose taxes. The only dictation came from the hearts of men and women who appreciated the privilege of being needed and who were aware of their historic responsibility. Again, the voluntary giving of thought, service and substance was a mass enterprise. It was not the exclusive project of a few



wealthy philanthropists. The campaigns have been almost in the nature of national plebiscites. The ancient Sanctuary of our people in the Wilderness was also built out of the free-will offerings of every man and woman among the people whose heart was willing. It is an ancient tradition among our people but I marvel that it still evidences itself on so large a scale and so late in our history, when so many alien forces had whittled away at so many of the noble traditions among our people.

Many years ago, the eminent English poet and literary critic, Matthew Arnold, declared:

"As long as the world lasts, all who want to make progress in righteousness will come to Israel for inspiration as to the people who have had the sense for righteousness most glowing and strong." He might have added to righteousness the word compassion.

I had occasion, several months ago, to see with my own eyes this extraordinary sense of Jewish compassion at work. On our vacation this year, our wandering feet took us to Morocco. We spent some three weeks there visiting its principal cities of Casablanca, Rabat, Salé, Marrakech, Fez and Tangier. Being a Rabbi, and therefore on a busman's holiday, I was especially interested in the Jewish communities of Morocco and in their history. There are some one hundred and sixty thousand Jews living in Morocco today. There had been, until recently, some three hundred and fifty thousand. Nearly two hundred thousand have left for other countries -- France, South America, Canada, and especially Israel. Many more wish to leave.

Jews have lived in Morocco since before the Common Era, before it became a Roman province. We have records that some of the native tribes of Morocco, known as Berbers, were converted to Judaism. Many Berber tribes bear unmistakable traces of their Jewish origin. In the seventh century, the Arabs



invaded Morocco in their imperial sweep across North Africa.

By and large, the Moroccan Jews got along pretty well with their Arab rulers. They engaged in agriculture, trade and commerce. Some of them held important posts in government. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, Moroccan Jewry produced scholars of note, such as the foremost Talmudist of his day, Isaac Alfasi and pioneer Hebrew grammarians and philologists. Moses Maimonides lived in Fez for five years. Morocco was one of the important centers of Jewish life in the early Middle Ages.

A disastrous change in the fortunes of Moroccan Jews came in the middle of the twelfth century when the ultra-orthodox and fanatical dynasty of Almohades came to power. The Almohades gave both Jews and Christians the desperate choice of embracing Islam or leaving the country. Many Jews fled to Spain and Egypt. Others embraced Islam, though they continued to practice Judaism in secret.

When the power of Almohades was broken in the thirteenth century, the position of the Jews who returned to Morocco and those who in later centuries joined them in large numbers as refugees from Spanish persecutions of 1391, and as exiles from Spain in 1492, and from Portugal in 1497, did not improve very much. Moroccan Jewry never recovered from the crushing blows of the Almohades. A pattern of persecution and degradation had been set which future generations of Arabs were to follow. Under succeeding dynasties, their position was always subject to the whim of the rulers, their demands and extortions, and subject also to the scorn and contempt of the populace. They were reduced to the most menial occupations and were forced to live exclusively in the Mellahs. Frequently they were attacked, robbed and massacred.



This condition continued with only slight amendment throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

An attempt was made in the middle of the nineteenth century to improve their condition. In 1883, Sir Moses Montefiore, supported by the British Government, went to Morocco and asked of the Sultan that the Jews should be protected, that no person should molest them, and that they should enjoy the same privileges as all other subjects. Montefiore was successful. In 1884, an edict was published granting equal rights to the Jews. The local magistrates, however, ignored these edicts and all similar ones which followed. A definite improvement took place when the French occupied Morocco in 1912. The Jews were confirmed in their full civil rights. But six years ago, the French withdrew. Morocco is today a sovereign Moslem state. The Jews are again apprehensive. The rising tide of nationalism among the Moslem population and the efforts of the government to Arabize all Jewish schools have added to their sense of insecurity. Emigration, especially to Israel, is prohibited. Fortunately the prohibition is not uniformly enforced.

The economic condition of the Jews of Morocco, except for a very small upper class, is appalling. The majority live in unspeakable squalor. They eke out a livelihood in the humblest of occupations. Many of them have no occupations at all but live on begging and charity.

A hundred years ago, the Alliance Israelite Universelle was founded by French Jews to improve the political position and to provide educational opportunities to backward Jewish communities in the world. It interested itself especially in the Jews of Morocco. It founded there the first school



for Jewish children in 1862. Since then, it has established seventy-five such schools where some thirty thousand Jewish children receive a secular, as well as a Jewish education. Other Jewish organizations have established schools for Jewish boys and girls, the Ozar Hatorah, an organization devoted to the promotion of religious and secular education in the Middle East and North Africa, and the Lubavitcher Schools founded by a Hassidic sect with headquarters in Brooklyn, which conducts a program of religious education in North Africa and elsewhere. Over twenty modern kindergartens, expertly supervised and attended by nearly four thousand children, are in operation. The O.S.E., a health service, has established clinics and dispensaries and is carrying on a remarkable health program among Moroccan Jews for children as well as adults. It is bringing to these people, among whom disease is prevalent and epidemics frequent, health and new concepts of hygiene and cleanliness. The Ort, an organization for rehabilitation through the training of youth in useful trades and occupations, has four thousand young people enrolled in its courses.

All of these vital institutions which constitute the one bright spot in an otherwise very bleak and somber picture -- many of these institutions I personally visited and observed their work -- are supported by the American Joint Distribution Committee, that is to say, by the generosity of American Jews, that is to say, by the contributions which you make annually through the United Jewish Appeal. I could see with mine own eyes the end results of your giving.



Every Jewish child in Morocco, except those who come from self-sustaining homes, receives in all these schools breakfast, a hot meal at noon which is carefully planned by dietitians, and a snack in the afternoon, before returning home. I was amazed when I was told that the total cost for food per child was \$1.60 a month...A whole generation of Moroccan children is thus being saved from hunger, beggary and hopelessness by fellow-Jews in other lands who care, who have not forgotten the ancient Jewish code ( ).

Many young Jews are leaving Morocco. They do not believe that there is any future for them there. Many business-men have left or would like to leave. Most Moroccan Jews would like to go to Israel. Morocco is a member of the Arab League, and that, the Jews suspect, does not bode well for them. When Colonel Nasser recently visited King Hassan of Morocco, riots broke out against the Jews.

There are many Jewish communities like those of Morocco in the far-flung Arab diaspora and elsewhere, which have received your help. "As dew from the <sup>Lord</sup> ~~but~~, as showers upon the parched grass". There are other such communities which live today in constant fear and tension, not knowing what tomorrow will bring forth.

In Algeria there are today some ninety-five thousand Jews. A few years ago, there were some one hundred forty thousand. Forty-five thousand have already left for France, Israel and other lands as a result of the terror, strife and bloodshed which have continued for some years between the Algerian French, and the Algerian Arabs, and the O.A.S. The Armistice which has been recently established, has as yet brought no peace to that ravaged land and



certainly not to the Jews of Algeria who have been harassed by terrorists on both sides. The Jews now feel themselves to be on the edge of storms. With Algeria, a sovereign Arab state, the trend, they suspect, will be to Arabize the country politically and economically, and that, in spite of all guarantees, the Jews will suffer discrimination.

Let us bear in mind that these are dangerous, eruptive and unpredictable times for all peoples. Passions are running high; hates and fears are stirred up and prejudices have proved to be formidable weapons in the hands of unscrupulous political adventurers and governments. There are those who are determined to stop at nothing. Such violent times are especially dangerous for minority groups, and even more so for the Jewish minority group which historically has suffered most in periods of social, political or economic upheaval. Because they are everywhere, they are always in the center of world events, and as the Rabbis said, in commenting upon the fate of Jews at such times, when the stone falls upon the pot, the pot is broken, and when the pot falls upon the stone, it is the pot which again is broken.

In such times -- and these are such times -- our only salvation lies in solidarity, in closing ranks, in strengthening our defences, in mutual helpfulness. We dare not relax our alertness. We dare not be tardy in rushing aid, economic or political, to any hard-pressed sector of our people anywhere. We must re-enforce every weakened or threatened part of our far-flung line. This has been our strategy of survival in the past. It must continue to be so in the future, whose remote horizons no one can glimpse.

Most Jews who are today abandoning lands of intolerable conditions and of dark prospects, are bound for Israel. In the last fourteen years -- and



next Wednesday The State of Israel will celebrate its fourteenth anniversary -- the young state has welcomed over a million immigrants from all parts of the world. A large number -- larger than was anticipated -- will come this year. Israel, which is a small state, and not very affluent, is exerting itself to the utmost to absorb these new-comers, most of them penniless, many of them without any technical skills or vocations, some aged and infirm, to rebuild their lives and integrate them into the economy of the new pioneer country. From all accounts, an incomparable and heroic job is being accomplished by the young state in meeting the enormous problems with which this immigration has taxed it, thanks to the imagination, dedication and enterprise of its leaders.

In the past fourteen years, Israel has accomplished so much, incredibly so much. By its faithful allegiance to the free world, the development of its educational system and its institutions of higher learning, its advanced social legislation, the aid which it has extended to less developed nations of Africa, and Asia, and the maintenance of peace, in the face of boycott, blockade and the contrivances of its un-reconciled neighbors, it has revealed to the world the ground-tone of its chosen way of life, its fundamental purposes and dominant interests as a nation. All this is in complete accord with the ancient and noble traditions of our people. This is what makes us rejoice today as Israel completes its fourteen prologue years of testing and probation, even more than its extraordinary material progress and what it has done for the immigrants.

Every one who has had a hand in helping to bring Israel into being and in assisting in its growth -- as you have assisted through the Jewish Welfare Fund -- may feel proud and deeply gratified.



But Israel knows that its historic task is far from being over -- and we know that our task is far from being over.

The days to come will make even greater demands upon our loyalty and perseverance, on Israel's part and on ours, than ever before. Israel will not be able to escape the political tensions and pressures of the world of which it is a part. Grave, unsolved problems -- internal and external -- still remain. Danger lurks upon its borders.

There is much work still to be done. Israel must be made strong, strong enough to withstand pressures, strong enough to defend its rights, strong enough to fulfill its destiny.

We are a privileged generation in that we are the chosen tools in the hands of Him who declared:

"I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel.

And they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;

They shall plant vineyards and drink their wine and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.

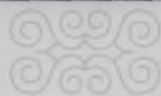
I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land which I have given them."

says the Lord, your God.





# OFFICIAL OPENING





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1962  
**JEWISH WELFARE FUND  
APPEAL**

**WEDNESDAY • MAY 2 • 6:30 P.M.**

**STATLER HILTON HOTEL**  
Grand Ballroom

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**DINNER \$5.00 • *Including sales tax***  
*Dietary laws observed*

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*KINDLY MAIL RESERVATIONS, WITH  
CHECK, IN ENCLOSED ENVELOPE*

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*GUEST SPEAKER*

**Dr. Abba Hillel Silver**

*THE TEMPLE*