



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and  
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

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

Series VII: Personal Miscellaneous, 1908-1989, undated.

Sub-series A: Biographical, 1908-1981.

---

Reel  
212

Box  
79

Folder  
17

Some Patterns of Meaning in the Life and Thought of Abba Hillel  
Silver, Andrew Sarvis, 1968.

SOME PATTERNS OF MEANING  
IN THE LIFE AND THOUGHT  
OF ALBA HILLEL SILVER



Andrew Sarvis  
561, Society and Thought  
December 14, 1968



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1-2
From the Jewish Experience	3-9
From Religious Experience	10-12
From a Political Experience	13-30
Conclusions	30-31
Footnotes	32-37
Bibliography	38-41
Appendix	42-45





Abba Hillel Silver's many roles display his energy and capacity, but at the same time render him a difficult figure to interpret. The writer finds himself repeatedly questioning whether he has adequately described the man or treated the important events of Silver's life adequately. Of all the things he did, clearly Silver's activities as a Zionist during and after the Second World War have had the greatest impact. He ranks as a powerful orator, a brilliant organizer, and a notable propagandist for a political cause. He pushed hard. That part of Silver's life can hardly be ignored, and I do not intend to ignore it. Nevertheless, as I have sunk deeper into his writings my discontent with the cutting out of that one part of the man as alone significant has grown. In fact, the whole historical project of slicing, snipping and selecting according to what is a novel or an original contribution seems to me to deprive us of a good deal of what is meaningful, which may not be novel at all, yet is important in the understanding of individual men in history. This is particularly true of Silver.

It is also particularly important if one attempts to evaluate images, symbols and myths in history. For images and myths and symbols often endure, are played upon, and become meaningful to men long after they have lost the downy feathers of originality. But what are these myths and symbols. Henry Nash Smith calls them intellectual constructions that fuse concept and emotion into an image. The images are collective creations.<sup>1</sup> They are not necessarily and often not at all factual. They exist on a different plane from that of empirical fact. I would add also that they are not necessarily fantasies. They are not necessarily the synthetic creations of anxious early American biographers trying to sell their books to sentimental romantic ladies and



naïve school boys. They are not always the mirages spun by land speculators and American dreamers set up to be shattered later by literary realists. They can also be, and they will be treated here, as potentially valid motifs and sources of meaning, derived from historical traditions.

This treatment of myths, symbols and images as intellectual motifs and sources of meaning, without particular regard for the kind of "who-dun-it" question of where the images were derived, is useful in examining American-Jewish thought, because many traditional Jewish ideas were, of course, developed so long ago that questions of exact origin and publication dates become irrelevant to anyone outside the fields of archeology and Biblical criticism. The Jewish tradition is a source of values from which one selects and emphasizes themes, motifs, that are to him significant. This is what Abba Hillel Silver did, quite honestly and freely. This paper will deal with certain of those images, those motifs, which he found particularly important and which became relevant to him as a political activist in the Zionist movement as co-chairman of the American Zionist Emergency Council from August 1943 through December 1944, a period during which these motifs were first fully revealed. In Silver one finds a unique interweaving of some of the oldest elements of the Jewish tradition, with modern, and purely liberal American ideas in a forceful and politically astute man.



# FROM THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE

The Jewish experience and tradition was the basic source of ideas for Silver. As a Rabbi he studied it and taught its beliefs. He used the flexible mode of the Sunday sermon to express his ideas about it as well his other ideas. In his doctoral thesis, which he later published as a book, he wrote a history of Messianic speculation in Israel. In his role as religious teacher his comments range over virtually every area which concerned his congregation, from the family to Rabbinic legalism and Jewish mystics, all organic parts of the Jewish experience. As one approaches the man as leader and a Zionist, however, a number of definite themes recur.

The prophetic motif in the Jewish tradition is rarely absent when Silver speaks of the Jewish experience. It was, along with nationalism, mysticism, legalism one of the main themes of Jewish life.<sup>2</sup> When He looked at Judaism from a larger perspective it was this prophetic theme that was above all the Jewish contribution to mankind. The Greeks contributed philosophy, pure thought. The Romans were preeminently statesmen, but the Jews contributed an ethical tradition, the prophetic motif, to western civilization.<sup>3</sup> The prophet, an untrained layman, was a man of action and strife. Not content with what was, he stood for what ought to be: "Prophecy is the cry of the best that is in a people's life against the worst...the faith of a people in the perfectibility of human life, individual and social...."<sup>4</sup> A scoffer, a flouter of religious dogma, systems and idolatry the prophet would serve God through justice, humility and suffering. Silver even found prophetic qualities in atheists like Max Nordau who like a prophet shattered idols and raged against old social institutions, in order to build new ones.<sup>5</sup>



Prophecy though it had been reflected in the activities of men since the time of the early prophets, ended for the Jews after the first Babylonian exile. It ceased "because the people was no longer free, and freedom is at the root of spiritual autonomy, and spiritual autonomy is ... at the very heart of prophecy."<sup>6</sup>

With a change in its condition the Jewish people turned to new sources of strength, according to Silver. The Messianic theme runs through Jewish history from the final dissolution of the State, the destruction of the Temple, and the dispersion of the Jews. His doctoral thesis, A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel recorded this major theme as it was kept alive through seventeen centuries of Jewish life. He argued that the Messianic ideal "... was essentially a political ideal... Certain eschatological and supernatural features were combined with it, but essentially it was and remained a this world, temporal, national ideal."<sup>7</sup> The people never ceased to hope for the end of the dispersion and for self-emancipation, he argued.

The Messianic ideal was formed from three basic beliefs: the will to live as a people, a faith in divine justice, and the sorrow at the loss of national independence.<sup>8</sup> At each crisis in Jewish history the renewed Messianic hope thrilled the greatest Jewish thinkers who revived the hope among the Jewish masses. Although the restoration of Israel was to be a part of the larger redemption of the world, redemption and a national life for the Jews were fundamental. Finally, in the Nineteenth century Zionism revived the political implications of Messianism and the old theme became a new national purpose.



Silver saw other patterns of Jewish experience. One that he reviled was that of the court Jew, the Jew who gained prestige and power from his wealth and for a while achieved an important position beside a king only to arouse jealousy which eventually led to persecution for the entire community. The "court Jews" he found were "the most near-sighted, the most baffled and the most disastrous leaders of the Jewish people."<sup>10</sup>

They were nearly as bad as the "enemies from within", the anti-Zionist, and the rich Jews. The former had "...lost his vision..." and "...sold his birthright for a mess of pottage...." The latter, in the search for wealth had lost his soul.<sup>11</sup> In his quarrels with anti-Zionist and Zionist leaders he found these types reappearing and assailed them bitterly.

If there were in the Jewish experience enemies from within, they were overshadowed by the enemy from without, anti-semitism. Certainly Silver's life was filled with it. The National Socialists and other rabid nationalists in Europe brought anti-semitism to its gory fulfillment during his lifetime. He condemned them unceasingly, but repeatedly said that he was not principally concerned with anti-semitism. Unlike the assimilated Jews who were annoyed by antisemitism alone ("the one thing which disturbs their bovine peace") Silver was concerned with more important matters. "We are reconciled to it; we have developed a strategy for meeting it; we have seen it in uglier forms in the past; we shall see it in the future..."<sup>12</sup> Antisemitism was a constant, Silver sought rather to fight the moral decay of the Jews which he feared in America.

After distinguishing the many streams within Jewish life, Silver expressed his fascination at the continuing life of his people. It was for



him a miracle that a small people, which had never conquered the world, or sought to, or erected great monuments, had survived so long. It had outlasted all the great empires"... and is now, twenty centuries later, even more numerous and energetic, more for life than in the past."<sup>13</sup> That survival could be explained by two dogmas, the dogma of the eternal people, and the dogma of the Messiah. Both could be found throughout Jewish history.<sup>14</sup>

If the Jews were to survive, their survival depended upon their own national consciousness. They could not continue a mere inert mass. They could not fall into escapism.<sup>15</sup> They had survived because, while absorbing foreign elements, they had also retained their individuality.<sup>16</sup>

The Jews, especially in America, must not give up this individuality. At the same time they could not live on past achievements. They needed new values. Just as Jews in other countries had created distinctive values, so American Jews needed distinctively Jewish values. 'Nowhere did our ancestors regard themselves as a piece of "stubborn antiquity", but rather as a vital, challenging and moulding spiritual force in every age and clime.'<sup>17</sup> They needed independence and spiritual vitality in order to continue the Jewish tradition.

But vitality could not be realized without national identity. The Jews could not survive on a gruel of internationalism and spiritualism. 'Why do theologians and theologic historians become so sanctimoniously international and "spiritual" when it comes to the national interests of the Jewish people, while remaining so patriotically national and "worldly" when it comes to the interests of their own people.'<sup>18</sup> As progressives, Social Democrats, and Internationalists in Europe Jews gained little and suffered horribly, he contended. Nationalism and internationalism, both of which he accepted were not contradictory, but complementary, and the



Jews are

... an integrated people held together by ties racial, religious, historical, enjoying common memories, common traditions, common loyalties, common aspirations and these, we maintain--in deference to the realities of the situation--are the essentials of nationality.<sup>20</sup>

Nationalism, and therefore Zionism, were for Silver a necessary conclusion derived from Jewish experience:

I am what I am. I have been molded by centuries of distinctive cultural experiences. I am a unique racial precipitate. I wish to remain what I am. I am ready to acknowledge that my neighbor has the same right to retain his individuality and his racial and cultural distinctiveness...I am a Hebrew and not Anglo-saxon. I am Hebrew and not Teuton, Gaul, or Slav.

The prophets were nationalists, not non-political universalists. The revival of a Jewish state had always been central in Jewish life.

Jewish nationalism, however, could not be satisfied simply by the creation of a petty state "another little Montenegro somewhere, (a state created) merely for the sake of existing as a separate entity.... I wish my people to continue its historic mission as a light bringer unto mankind..."<sup>22</sup> As Judah Halevi, a Jewish philosopher, believed the Jew was at the heart of the nations. Indeed, the Jewish consciousness was the object of the Nazi persecutions. The Jewish spirit within western civilization, not just the particular Jews who were persecuted, was the enemy which the Nazis hoped to extirpate.<sup>23</sup> Nationalism was neither the ultimate aim of mankind nor of the Jews: "...it is not the substance of our own ancestral tradition, whose motif, is not nationalism, but prophetism. Nationalism is not enough. It is a minimum requirement, not a maximum programme."<sup>24</sup> Beyond nationalism lay the goals of brotherhood, peace, freedom, and internationalism, but without



it these goals could never be realized. A nation meant freedom for a people. "Freedom alone enables a man to express, without let or hindrance, the gifts which are latent in his soul."<sup>25</sup> Nationalism was not the ultimate end, but a necessary political goal. It was a part of the hope for ultimate justice not merely for the Jews, but, as in the old Messianic dream, for all mankind.

From this description of Silver's ideas it is, of course, immediately apparent that many of them smack more of Condorcet or Tom Paine than Hillel or Isaiah. Like many men of religion Silver was impatient with academic distinctions and found it easy to bring widely disparate ideas into his inclusive religious view of things. He was not content merely to adopt such foreign ideas as Progress and Liberalism and Internationalism. He sought to show that fundamentally they were rooted in his own tradition. As a Reform Rabbi this was not an illegitimate project. The Reform wing of the Jewish faith believed that the faith should be reinterpreted to suit the times. With his Reform background Silver freely integrated the secular humanist worldview. Indeed, he reshaped all his ideas in order to accept it.

Prominent among these ideas that Silver repeatedly invoked were his hopes for peace and international government. In his book Religion in a Changing World Silver called for education of the world's youth for peace and the creation of world government.<sup>26</sup> Repeatedly he condemned the United States for losing its nerve after World War I in its failure to join the League of Nations. He bemoaned the return to the armaments race, and balance of power politics.<sup>27</sup> None of these ideas, of course, had any necessary relation to the Jewish tradition or experience, although they were common to many Jews, rather they were part of the liberal climate of opinion of the time, to which Silver was receptive.



Silver repeatedly asserted his liberalism. He called for economic justice and an end to "immoral and anachronistic" laissez-faire.<sup>28</sup> He argued for individualism over the powers of the "usurping state", the "usurping machine", and the "usurping capitalist class."<sup>29</sup> In 1928 he deplored the demoralization of liberalism. Its power had been broken in the war, when all liberal ideals were denied.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, he never abandoned his liberal views and characteristically insisted that liberalism was most alive in religious movements.

Nothing was more clearly a part of contemporary liberal dogma than Silver's continual invocation of the faith in progress. He chanted, "...man alone of all created beings marches on, while all the rest practically stand still."<sup>31</sup> In 1930 he heralded the cause of social betterment: "The great dogma of social service is that life can be made more harmonious and beautiful even within our present imperfect social system, that human beings can be helped to higher levels, even though they be weighted down with wickedness or incompetence."<sup>32</sup> Only later, with the coming of the Nazis and the holocaust in Europe, opposition from fellow Jews, and the callous indifference of liberal governments did a note of anger and even disillusion creep into Silver's speeches. Even then, however, the cause of humanity and progress was not forgotten, rather Silver linked that cause even more closely with the cause of Jewish nationalism and its prophetic origins in Judaism.



#### FROM RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

If the secular and strictly humanitarian cannot be ignored as sources of meaning for Silver neither can religion be overlooked. Religion was a vital force to Silver, the ground on which he stood. As a reform Rabbi, however, it was a flexible religion. He believed in the creative re-evaluation of traditional values.<sup>33</sup> It freed him for other roles. Like many religious men he often argued from its implications, so much so that everything he interpreted no matter how secular acquired a religious coloring. Indeed, far from being a mere segment of thought he insisted that the religious view was a comprehensive conception into which all others fit.

There is a touch of the 18th Century in Silver's proof of God by design, the perfection of God's plan, and his allusions to scientific ideas. The universe is a unified sea of energy animated by divine purpose.<sup>34</sup> Such cosmological vagaries were rare though and only mentioned occasionally. Religion and God were real personal needs. Like food, God was a basic requirement for the fulfillment of human life.<sup>35</sup> Faith helped man to surmount intellectual difficulties, which otherwise would inhibit him. It freed him for life.<sup>36</sup>

Besides giving man personal strength the religious view had a social role. It called on man as a responsible agent. Condemning all the man created "Baalim" or false gods, it compelled him to obey God's law. It explained human suffering as judgement on man's failure to follow divine law.<sup>37</sup> The religious view compelled men to moral conflict within themselves and in the world.<sup>38</sup> Silver valued this tradition of tension. Spiritual movements, he argued, break not only with the past, but with the present. In restoring righteousness and establishing justice



they restore the timeless essence of religion.<sup>39</sup>

In the writings of Silver almost no shadow of inner intellectual struggle appeared. He struggled with the evils outside, the "Baalim" of a wicked world, and Jews who disagreed with him.

Zionism was among those disputed matters among Jews, and especially among Reform Jews. I will discuss some of the conflicts later, but Silver's arguments on Judaism and Zionism are important at this point. Zionism was no aberration from the Biblical faith. National rebirth was an integral part of Jewish religion. Its origins could be found in Biblical texts.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, as has been mentioned above, Silver argued that nationalism had been historically a part of the continuing Messianic hope of the Jewish people. But religion also informed national hopes. Israel's genius as a nation was moral and religious idealism. That religious contribution did not, however, make the Jews simply a religious sect. They were a nation, which had created a religion.<sup>41</sup> Religion did not abolish the nation, rather it transcended it. Prophets, not diplomats, or nationalists would ultimately save Israel.<sup>42</sup>

The difficulty in analyzing Silver, is the fact that he worked not only as a Zionist, a religionist, a Rabbi, a Jew--very much within the Yiddish speaking community, but also as a democrat and as an American. Furthermore, somehow all the varied roles fit within the active life of the man. It should not surprise one then to find that in his writings and speeches Silver strained at the historically valid in order to reconcile personal religious truths.

Silver like many religious men was a great appropriator. Because religion was fundamental for him, somehow it became fundamental for society and not only for society, but for his own democratic society. Because democracy was a part of his liberal faith, somehow it also became a part of his Jewish faith. The



deeply pagan impulse in American democracy with all its Roman archs and nude Greek statues was discreetly covered with Puritan religious respectability.

He consulted the Pilgrim tradition. The Pilgrims were simple religious people who formed the seed of republicanism and eventual democracy which came finally to fruition in the American revolution. Puritans were confused with Pilgrims and given a reputation they would neither have understood, wanted, nor deserved:

"... the legacy of absolute freedom--the right of free economic opinion in this country."<sup>43</sup> Silver was an orator, a preacher, and he freely used his lectern on Sundays as a platform for both secular and religious ideas. The shades of Puritans and Pilgrims were not enough, however, for his Jewish audience, nor, perhaps, for himself, so he delved into the foggy Jewish past

to find the religious basis for liberal democracy. He found that between the Exodus and the era of Saul "... the early government of our ancestors was perhaps the most democratic form known to history."<sup>44</sup> Silver could then

state in passing that perhaps the outstanding historical contribution of Israel was democracy, not only in politics, but in religious, social and economic life as well.<sup>45</sup> Finally, he said, and not, I think, unjustly, that in World War II

Israel was the symbol of freedom, the symbol of what the Nazis wanted to root out.<sup>46</sup>

So democracy, religion, Judaism itself, like Zionism and Judaism were knit together until they became a single fabric, of harmonious and basically religious belief.

The whole was not so much coherent in thought as it was necessary for action.

One belief reflected, complimented, and symbolized the others.



FROM A POLITICAL EXPERIENCE

I have, thus far, considered some basic patterns of meaning, important for Rabbi Silver and how they were structured and related. Undoubtedly, Silver's main contribution is as yet very largely unmentioned. He was not a great thinker, nor was he an original thinker. He never intended to be. His real achievements were not intellectual, but political. As we look back on him these activities seem to make the man chiefly an agitator for a Jewish state, a gifted orator, who correctly judged the strengths and weaknesses of his contemporaries especially American Presidents. The preceding parts of this paper have been written to balance that interpretation, to reveal parts of his character which were basic to his activities and yet to some degree hidden by them.

Silver's deeds overshadow his thoughts for a very good reason, they were so numerous and so important. Head of the United Palestine Appeal (UPA), co-chairman of the American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC), President of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), President of the Central Conference of American Rabbies (CCAR), these represent only a few of the more important positions he filled. It would be fruitless to list the countless committees and associations of which he was a member. Because of the complexity of these activities it was impossible to record them all in this paper. Even his co-chairmanship of the AZEC from 1943 through 1944 which I am about to treat is not complete.

I have tried to examine Silver's role through Silver's own writings, seeking to reveal how he conceived it, where he looked for inspiration, how he understood his position and what meaning he attached to events, in order to see why he acted as he did. To what degree did those things he believed, those



images he identified with, influence or explain his political action?

This is the question I have sought to answer.

One can hardly approach an answer to this or any other question about Silver during the '40's without recognizing the importance of what was to be known as the holocaust. In the summer of 1942 the full truth about the Nazi plans for the Jews had begun to seep out of conquered Europe. It is probably impossible to explain the feelings of a man who had lived as a child in Russia, as he watched disaster engulf the people he had left behind. One can only imagine a kind of total revulsion and subdued anger. That anger turned to action against the British White Paper of 1939, which restricted immigration into Palestine.

The overriding fact, however, as early as 1942 was the indifference of America. Worst of all, Franklin Roosevelt seemed especially indifferent, or concerned with other problems, in the face of the death of so many Jews. He had been practically worshipped by many Jews, and was staunchly supported by leading Zionists like Israel Goldstein and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, who affectionately called Roosevelt "Skipper" or the "Chief".<sup>47</sup> Silver had not been so free with his support. Although he favored FDR in 1932 and 1936, he publicly supported Wendell Willkie in 1940. Silver made the change because he did not want the tradition of a two term Presidency broken. He argued that in a world in which liberal democracy was being challenged, American liberal traditions should be firmly maintained. Strongmen were not necessary in a strong democracy.<sup>48</sup> Although Silver stressed the idea that there were no Jewish issues in the campaign, one might suspect from his later actions that Silver had begun to seriously re-evaluate FDR in terms of Jewish interests.

In 1942 in New York Silver discussed the problem of the Jews with



Wendell Willkie. Willkie argued, and apparently Silver agreed, that the administration, as long as it was linked with England, would do nothing to open the doors of Palestine. Willkie himself regarded large Jewish immigration into Palestine a reasonable demand, and was willing to be helpful. He said American Jews must put the State Department on the spot; they must force a stand.<sup>49</sup>

A continuing theme can be seen in Silver's writings as he began to focus his attention in public on the inadequacy of the administration's response to the holocaust. It was a sense of moral revulsion. In a pamphlet in 1942 written for the UPA he pointed to the strange silence of allied governments and leaders. They were not so silent about the persecution of other peoples, he said; "Surely we are not unnoticed. Are they hoping to arrive at some solution of our problem in some furtive and surreptitious manner? Or is our fate to be an afterthought? We are left suspended between our unrelenting foes and our unconfiding friends."<sup>50</sup> Silver never referred to the European Jews as merely a persecuted European minority group, they were always "we", the people of Israel. He identified with the suffering of other Jews.

In 1943 the note of impatience and moral judgement grew stronger. Governments, he wrote, have been "formal" and "perfunctory"; "For a long time the world hardly wished to be reminded." The indifference was a part of a growing insensibility to human suffering. Governments, he demanded, must reach beyond the expedient. "There is a callousness which is almost as black as iniquity..."<sup>51</sup> Silver mourned the cheapening of human dignity evident in the public reaction to persecution.<sup>52</sup> Again, he pleaded, "Has every avenue been explored?"; "There are 3 1/2 minutes left. Can nothing be done for them?"<sup>53</sup>

As early as 1942 in speaking to the National Conference for Palestine



he said that the world must answer the question of whether the Jews of all peoples were to be left behind when the time for justice would come. The Jews, however, must act for themselves. They must, he concluded, take the advice of Daniel O'Connell who when asked how Ireland was to be freed, said: "Agitate! Agitate! Agitate!" or the advice of Danton: "Boldness! More boldness and always boldness!" The Jews must arouse the conscience of the world. The powers must not be allowed "... to side step this ghastly national tragedy, for which an unChristian Christendom is responsible."<sup>54</sup>

Silver did not understand his role merely as a sympathetic individual who wanted to save refugees. He looked on the holocaust as a disaster for the Jewish nation. The movement he sought to promote was immigration into Palestine as the only solution of the Jewish problem, the problem of homelessness, the problem of a nation without a state. Repeatedly he said that Zionism not philanthropy or immigrant aid societies was the answer to Jewish homelessness.<sup>55</sup>

These were disputed points among many Jews, especially a group of Jewish Rabbis in the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) of which Silver was a member. Reform Judaism had traditionally been anti-Zionist. In 1885 at Pittsburgh the Reform Rabbis declared that Judaism was a religion. The Jews were not a nation. They renounced all hopes for a return to Palestine. For several decades the CCAR was regarded as the seat of anti-Zionism in America. Many Reform Rabbis, however, like Silver, turned away from and worked against this stated policy. By 1935 the CCAR decided to retract the 1885 decision and declared itself neutral on Zionism.

In 1942 the Zionist contingent dominated the CCAR. Rabbi James Heller, a member of the ZOA executive board was president. By 1944 Silver himself



was Vice President and would later head the organization.

In 1942 a resolution was passed by the CCAR favoring a special military force for stateless Palestinian Jews. The Zionist majority wanted to emphasize Jewish unity on this current issue. Anti-Zionist Rabbis, however, called the resolution an interjection of Zionism into the CCAR in violation of the 1935 agreement for CCAR neutrality. A movement which culminated in the creation of the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism began, after the resolution for a Jewish army was passed by the CCAR. In 1942 ninety reform Rabbis issued a statement charging that Zionism was incompatible with the teachings of Judaism.<sup>56</sup> Silver responded by writing a reply which was signed by over 750 Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Rabbies. Zionism, they said, was an affirmation of Judaism.<sup>57</sup> In 1943 Silver was chairman of the resolutions committee at the CCAR convention. Under his chairmanship the CCAR against the efforts of anti-Zionists held firm on the 1942 resolution. The web of Silver's belief had become the consensus among American Jewish Rabbis on the subject of Zionism and Judaism.

While the CCAR was debating Zionism and religion, maneuvers for concerted action had been begun in earnest by Zionists. In 1942 at the Biltmore Hotel in New York they decided to press against the White Paper of 1939 which restricted immigration into Palestine and would in 1944 make Jewish immigration dependent upon the will of the Arab majority. The salient points of the Biltmore program were: 1) that the Jews should be given the opportunity to create a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine, 2) the Jews should have the right to organize a military force, 3) that a new world order could not be established on the foundations of justice and peace unless the problem of Jewish homelessness were solved, and 4) that the 1939 White Paper should be rejected as illegal



and immoral.<sup>58</sup> These were precisely the themes that Silver constantly reiterated among the Jews and later before congressional committees.<sup>59</sup>

The first step toward the realization of these goals was to secure the united support of Jews. The first meeting of the American Jewish Conference in September 1943 was the opportunity to achieve a reasonably well united Jewish front.<sup>60</sup> Silver chaired the committee on the Palestine resolution at the American Jewish Conference. Though there was some conflict the Zionist resolution passed, calling for unrestricted Jewish immigration and a Jewish Commonwealth.<sup>61</sup> At this meeting in September 1943 and the next meeting of the American Jewish Conference in December 1944, where again a pro-Zionist resolution on Palestine was passed, Silver roundly condemned the maneuvers of non-Zionist and anti-Zionist Jews. Silver's general understanding of the nature of his opposition has been described before, but at the American Jewish Conference and the CCAR convention Silver declared that they had found a new device. They had called for "unity." "Every organization," Silver said,

seeking to maintain a privileged position, every organization unwilling to submit to the judgement of the majority, and everyone who out of assimilationist tendencies wishes to hold down American Jewish life to minimal program, has sheltered himself behind this slogan of unity.<sup>62</sup>

The theme of unity, indeed, is common among the opponents of a Zionist resolution. Rabbi David Shapiro and Judge Proskauer both opponents of the Zionist resolution in 1943 who eventually asked that the motion be tabled both prefaced their remarks with appeals to unity.<sup>63</sup> At the same time it is also true that the objective of the Zionists was to make Zionist aims in Palestine and the aims of American Jewry in Palestine virtually synonymous. Silver, along with other Zionists, astutely isolated Jewish opponents of Zionist aims from the Jewish



majority and was able to state before the House Foreign Relations Committee in 1944 that American Jewry as a whole and the Zionist movement were in agreement on basic goals, especially in their desire for a Jewish state. This was to become an even more telling weapon against reluctant politicians who wanted endorsements at election time.

Silver's activities within the Jewish Community, however, were only part of a larger effort of agitation aimed at arousing America and particularly American political leaders to the problem of Jewish refugees and the larger issue of resettlement and the disposition of Palestine after the war. His talents as organizer, orator, and activist were first fully realized as head of the American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC) from August 1943 through December 1944. The problems that arose and his response to them reveal his understanding of the need for and the proper uses of political action, his ideas about American political leaders, as well as some fellow Zionists.

Silver gained his position as co-chairman of the AZEC in the summer of 1943 as a part of a settlement of the in-fighting among American Zionists for the presidency of the ZOA. Emanuel Newmann spearheaded a drive to draft Silver for president of the ZOA in opposition to Israel Goldstein a member of the dominant, and in the minds of Newmann, Silver, and others, ineffectual clique in the ZOA.

For the sake of unity in the ZOA an agreement was reached. Goldstein would become the president of the ZOA and Silver would with Stephen S. Wise, chair the AZEC.

Silver's position it was agreed would be that of "Director of Political Affairs". Silver understood that he was to be the real leader of the organization and that Wise was to be merely honorary chairman or president, in any case, a



generally inactive member. Wise apparently did not have that impression.<sup>66</sup>

In any case, for the first months Silver had a free hand to reorganize and reactivate the AZEC. He wanted action and to get it he wanted independence and initiative throughout the organization. A number of committees were organized each with sharply defined authority and each headed by a member of the executive board of the Emergency Council.

As time was essential, Silver decided that representatives from the committees should assume the authority usually delegated to democratic representatives so that they could make speedy decisions while the committee was not in session following the general direction set by the committee.<sup>67</sup> He reinstated the defunct public relations committee, combined and reorganized other committees, and gained the power to appoint the chairman of each group. Silver urged action and independence on the part of local AZEC groups and supplied them with a plethora of propaganda tracts, books, and factual information with which to promote publicity. The AZEC moved as it had not done before.

While the reorganization was going on, Silver reoriented AZEC policy. In the fall of 1943 Silver heard a variety of opinions on how the organization could act most effectively. Wise's strategy had been to appeal personally to President Roosevelt and members of the administration. Silver realized that this simply would not work. Members of the executive committee were divided in their advice. Arthur Lourie argued that the AZEC should concentrate on a small group of powerful leaders. Max Kirshblum opposed an all-out press campaign. Others advised Congressional Resolutions and mass political action to inform the people. Some suggested contact with labor and political leaders.

In October Silver went to Washington to get advice and information from



national leaders. He spoke with congressmen Emanuel Celler and Sol Bloom, Justice Frankfurter, Secretary Stettinius, Sumner Welles, Governor Lehman, Henry Morgenthau and others. He heard a variety of suggestions, a few of which I will mention. Welles and Bloom suggested that personal contacts with high officials would be most effective in aiding refugees, in changing British policy on immigration, and in getting the idea of a Jewish state accepted as administration policy. Lehman and Stettinius advised him to speak to the President. Welles thought that an advisory committee to the President on Palestine might be useful. Frankfurter suggested that Silver explore sentiment in Congress on the chances of a resolution. He also pointed out that the President was impressed by British official policy, Mrs. Roosevelt, and pro-Arab elements in the State Department with the idea that Palestine could not absorb all the Jews Zionists wanted to send there. Sumner Welles insisted that government resistance to Zionist demands was only a matter of war policy. It did not mean a withdrawal of sympathy on the part of the administration.<sup>69</sup>

Silver, then, was confronted with a number of alternatives for action. He faced a deplorable, and worsening, situation in Europe. If nothing were done the British would close the door entirely to Jewish immigration into Palestine in March 1944. He had a reactivated Emergency Council at his command and a mandate of sorts from the American Jewish Conference representing all the organized Jews in the United States which had met in September 1943. He chose the method of public relations, political action, and mass meetings, while still not rejecting the use of personal influence. The principle aims of political agitation were to focus national attention on British policy toward Palestine and to gain congressional support for unlimited immigration and a Jewish



commonwealth. After months of pressure Sol Bloom, congressman from New York, introduced in February 1944 a resolution in the House and Robert Wagner also of New York introduced a resolution in the Senate supporting the rejection of the White Paper and the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine.<sup>70</sup>

Silver's testimony to the House Committee on February 8, 1944 is interesting as a statement of his opinion and of the Zionist case. First, he argued that the clear intent of the Balfour Declaration (Nov. 2, 1917), which promised the Jews a national home in Palestine, was that eventually a Jewish State should be established there. The Mandate which followed and repeated the homeland idea, made Britian responsible for holding Palestine open to immigration until a Jewish state could be established, or until the Jews were a majority in Palestine.<sup>71</sup> With a series of White Papers in 1922, '36, and finally in '39, the British reneged on their promise, in the face of Arab pressure.

It was not, however, merely a promise to the Jews, but an international, responsibility, which Britian had assumed by accepting the mandate. Rather than aiding in the building of a Jewish homeland in Palestine British officials had obstructed Jewish efforts. They no longer saw a state in Palestine as a desirable solution to the Jewish problem.<sup>72</sup> Silver contended that only settlement in Palestine could solve the Jewish refugee problem. There were, he said, no other opportunities for mass immigration and there would be none.<sup>73</sup> The Zionist aim was for the Jewish State in Palestine to be as Jewish as England is English, or as France is French. Palestine could no more be a Jewish home with two thirds of its population Arab than France could be French, if two thirds of the population were German.<sup>74</sup>



The United States, said Silver, was responsible for the fulfillment of the mandate, because Charles Evans Hughes, former Secretary of State, had required in 1922 that any change in the mandate must receive American approval. Like the Munich agreement, by which Czechoslovakia had been sacrificed, the White Paper was, he declared, an act of appeasement toward the fascist oriented Arabs who had done nothing to help the war effort and often had obstructed it. As for the Palestinian Arabs, they would not be forced to leave. Arab national aims, however, had been satisfied by the establishment of Arab states and the loss of Palestine to them would be negligible.<sup>75</sup> To the Jews the loss of Palestine would be a total national disaster.

Though House and Senate approval would probably have been given in February 1944, the action on the resolutions was halted by the administration. The War Department called for an end to the discussion of the resolutions because they would jeopardize the war effort. The resolutions were tabled. Silver suffered his first major political setback at the hands of the administration.

Silver and Wise went to FDR. He authorized them to state that the U.S. Government had never approved the White Paper of 1939 and that "full" justice would be done to those who sought a national home for the Jews in Palestine. It was another kind word, but not a substantive act. In one sense Silver's efforts to this point had been no more successful than Wise's before him. Nothing had been done by those men who could act effectively to open the doors of Palestine. An organization, however, had been set up; the public was aroused. A pressure group very much in the American tradition now existed. Congressional leaders were conscious of it and ready to respond to it.

Silver had been frustrated before by government inaction, but now he responded publicly to it. On March 21, 1944 a mass rally was held at Madison Square Garden.



Silver spoke. With a politician's faith (often misplaced) in the American people he declared, "...the great heart of America is with us..."

We shall not be deterred. Our people is moving forward to Palestine as an irresistible tide... Destiny is summoning us... On our side we know are justice, morality, law, humanity. Against us are powers and potencies which are variously motivated, in London, in Washington, in the Near East.<sup>76</sup>

Sometimes, he submitted, the military can be wrong and should be opposed. The rally was held to object to business as usual and bowing to oil interests and empires.<sup>77</sup> Britain must honor her pledge to the Jews, who were her faithful allies.<sup>78</sup> Silver, however, made little mention of FDR. When he spoke of Roosevelt it was with respect. Roosevelt's support was "... clear and unmistakeable..."<sup>79</sup> He expressed his trust in the President who would see "full" justice done.<sup>80</sup>

The summer was spent in the application of pressure upon party members and leaders of government at all levels in order to get the Jewish question placed on the political agenda. In a letter in support of Champ Clark for senator which was sent to local Zionist leaders all over the country Silver argued the case for political action.

We must give, in my opinion, what other groups of American citizens give to attain political objectives which are dear to their hearts and minds. In other words we must give votes...

He wrote on in an ever more embittered tone. "We did not give what counts in our American body politic--political service. Our contribution was lip service,<sup>81</sup> and lip service is what we have gotten in return..." Those days it seemed were past. Both parties firmly endorsed a Jewish commonwealth in their platforms. Silver joined the Republicans in Chicago to twist arms and give a prayer. Finally, on October 15 Roosevelt himself endorsed the idea of the Jewish Commonwealth.<sup>82</sup>



Along with fellow Zionists, Silver had gained, it seemed, some hard commitments.

In Atlantic City on October 15 Silver addressed the annual convention of the Zionist Organization. He emphasized that as a bargaining point Zionists must insist on total demands.<sup>83</sup> The idea of a homeland had been made synonymous with the idea of a Jewish state. This was one of the main thrusts of AZEC propaganda. He emphasized the Jewish responsibility to turn the homeland into a state, for no one else would help them and there were many who would oppose a Jewish state.<sup>84</sup> Nor could Jews be satisfied with higher immigration quotas. The national program was not an aid scheme for refugees; it could not be comprised.<sup>85</sup> ~~omised~~

Why he queried rhetorically were congressional resolutions necessary? The only effective way to place the Zionist program on the national and international agenda, the only way to break the silence in Washington on Jewish matters "... was by producing the discussion of our problem in the world's greatest forum of opinion--the Congress of the United States. What happens there is news, national and international. In fact, the very discussion of a problem before such a forum is a political event."<sup>86</sup> Zionism for Silver had to be a political program. It had to meet the public eye or it would be lost amidst so many other timid hopes that went unrealized.<sup>87</sup> It could not remain a project within the Jewish community, a matter of philanthropy. It had to be recognized by world leaders as a world problem.<sup>88</sup> Finally, at the end of the speech he cautioned against reducing the pressure, and I quote him at length because the statement was central to his political position. There should be no relaxation or partial demobilization, he argued,

We must build upon the broad and secure base of public sentiment, the approval of public opinion which in the final analysis determines the attitude and action of governments in a democratic society.



With all my supreme admiration for the great personalities who are our friends, and with the full realization of the significance of great personalities in the world crisis today, I still say to you what the psalmist said long ago: "al tivtechu bi-neddim."—"Put not your trust in princes..."

The Hebrew text was Biblical, but the argument was realistic, based on a careful and correct assessment of a political situation within a liberal democratic society.

If Silver had rapidly lost whatever illusions he had about Franklin Roosevelt and great men in general, he had entertained fewer illusions about the inadequacies of the Zionist leadership. Silver's understanding of these tensions was only revealed, however, in the heat of battle with the "powers and potentates" of Zionism, just as it was only found with Roosevelt when Silver confronted the administration's backsliding and double talk. That expression was most clearly revealed in the events at the end of 1944 when Congressmen again presented resolutions in Congress calling for unrestricted immigration into Palestine and a Jewish Commonwealth.<sup>90</sup>

It is difficult to find a detailed examination of the complex events that took place toward the end of 1944 and at the beginning of 1945 within Zionist circles. Silver's understanding of them, however, is not complex. Since I am concerned here more with the meaning Silver attached to these events than the events themselves, I will neither pretend objectivity nor will I attempt to do justice to all the men involved.

The Emergency Council in October 1944 had resolved that it would not press for passage of resolutions in the House and Senate if it did not get a "green light" from the administration. They wanted to avoid the embarrassment they had experienced in February when the military had the resolutions tabled. At the same time they were anxious to get the "green light" on the resolutions



from FDR. They decided not to press for the resolutions immediately, but to try to get the administration to go along.

They had a letter from Secretary of War Stimson saying that the War Department withdrew its objections to the resolutions as the matter had become chiefly a political question.<sup>91</sup> On November 9th Silver, Wise and Nahum Goldman<sup>92</sup> went to Secretary of State Stettinius to see whether he would give them the go-ahead. Stettinius asked for time to see the President. Sol Bloom was to call his committee to consider the resolution.<sup>93</sup> On November 21st Wise reported to the AZEC Executive Committee that Stettinius had called him asking that the President be given more time to deal with the matter himself. Silver on the 22nd sent Wise a telegram urging him to contact Bloom, to get Bloom to try to change the President's mind. Silver in his report to the Emergency Council revealed this as the first major point of conflict between Wise and himself over the resolution. At the Executive Committee meeting there was some question as to whether Stettinius or FDR should have been consulted in the first place. Silver argued that the AZEC should try at the very least to change Roosevelt's mind, whereas Wise opposed even this.<sup>94</sup> Silver saw that Wise would do nothing. On November 27th Bloom told Silver that no new "green light" was needed. For him the President's October 15th statement was adequate approval for the Congressional resolution. He, therefore, asked Silver for a letter approving the course he was following.<sup>95</sup> Silver complied. On the 28th of November Max Shulman suggested that Wagner shelve his Senate resolution until he got Presidential approval. Wagner baffled by this mixed Zionist counsel refused. On December 3rd Wagner drafted a letter to FDR urging him to withdraw his reservations. By this time the House committee quite independently had already acted favorably and the Senate committee also on its own power was about to do the same. Zionist propaganda planned months before



was pouring in and according to Silver victory was in sight.<sup>97</sup>

By December 2nd, however, Israel Goldstein with Wise's guidance had begun to sabotage Silver's efforts. He called a meeting of the Executive Committee of the ZOA in Pittsburgh to review AZEC activities and especially the problem of the resolutions. Silver called an interim committee of the AZEC Executive Committee on the same day, but Wise failed to attend, rather he called an unauthorized<sup>98</sup> meeting of the full Executive Committee of the AZEC for the 3rd in order to restrain Silver, but by that time Silver was on the train from Pittsburgh to Washington on his way to a crucial meeting with Wagner and Stettinius. On December 4th when these three met Stettinius showed them a telegram from Wise which stated in effect that Wise was prepared to acquiesce in deferment of the resolutions.<sup>99</sup> That finished the resolutions. What followed was a confusion of reversals, denials, recriminations and resignations. On December 8th Goldstein appeared for the ZOA at the Senate committee hearings to withdraw the resolution which his organization had been urging on Congress for the last year.<sup>100</sup> On December 20th Silver appeared before the AZEC to defend himself against Wise's charge that he had contravened the orders of the AZEC Executive Committee. The motion of censure was rejected, but both Wise and Silver resigned their positions on the AZEC. A passage on leadership appears shortly thereafter among Silver's manuscripts: "There is no reward for leadership. Leadership is not a crown but a cross. He who brings fire to men must suffer in chains."<sup>101</sup> an intriguing combination of Christian and promethean images for a Jewish Rabbi! ~~Nevertheless,~~  
~~he was to rise again.~~

Silver's opponents did not give up the charges of irresponsibility with the failure of the motion of censure in the AZEC Executive Committee. Goldstein



later repeated the charges against Silver pointing out that the one good thing was that Wise was still close to Roosevelt. He still had the Presidential ear.<sup>102</sup> Wise asserted that Silver had "...substituted dangerous political improvisations..." for AZEC decisions and that such "lawless improvisation" was unacceptable in a Zionist leader.<sup>103</sup>

Silver countered with a blistering statement which revealed his feelings about Wise's leadership. It was not couched in the apparently calm and rational terms of Wise's and Goldstein's statements, but was a biting attack on Wise's whole program. Wise has "...persistently treated

the Zionist movement of the United States as a piece of personal property and has bitterly resented any new leadership which threatened his monopoly.

His "Shtadlanut" in Washington has been an egregious failure for many years, and not only as far as Zionism is concerned.<sup>104</sup>

He not only assailed Wise, however. Wise was only one of the leaders who failed, his error had been in his too intimate and obedient attachment with the Administration.

Washington has done next to nothing for our people during these tragic years of slaughter and annihilation, but our Court Jew has always shielded, defended and apologized for an Administration with which he is politically entangled, and has violently denounced all those who dared to question its unfailing goodness and justice.<sup>105</sup>

The quarrel went on for a short time, but quickly Silver called a halt to recrimination. The struggle, within the Zionist movement did not cease.

The American Zionist Policy Committee was formed chiefly to get Silver back into the leadership. Very shortly he was back in the leadership, not as head of the AZEC, but as President of the ZOA. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the developments of 1945 in detail, it is important



to note that Silver's assessment of the political situation was vindicated. At Yalta in the spring of '45 when Zionists hoped that FDR and Churchill would discuss the Palestinian question, little mention was made of it. Roosevelt, however, on his way back to Washington visited Ibn Saud, king of Saudi Arabia, promising that nothing would be done in Palestine without prior consultation with the Arab states. Only after Roosevelt's death would this agreement be made public. Silver was proved right. The President had disregarded all Zionist appeals, and was willing to deal with the enemy. Wise's special position had literally died with Roosevelt, and Silver's political methods proved the only path available to Zionists. The slogan "Put not your trust in Princes..." had proved correct and to that Silver added in his moving acceptance speech as President of the ZOA: "We were slaughtered by our enemies; we were betrayed by our friends."<sup>106</sup> Silver's program of political action almost totally superseded the old methods of personal cajoling. It was an important reason for later Zionist achievements.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Can Silver then be called simply a successful political activist and thereby neatly fall into a classification and be duly recorded. The main thrust of this paper is that that is not an adequate treatment of him. He cannot be understood cut off from the deep strain of traditionalism he espoused. His activities are closely related with his religious traditionalism. Under his leadership Zionist Rabbis formally recognized the link between Jewish religion and Jewish nationalism in 1942 when they opposed anti-Zionist Rabbis. No motif is clearer in Silver's political activity than his opposition to the activities of what he called the "Court Jew". His understanding of the



"Court Jew" comes directly from his understanding of the Jewish experience. At the same time many of his values come from democratic society. His faith in popular government, and his whole political program come from the American tradition of liberal democracy and from his assessment of the political situation at the time. Finally, underlying it all, was the moral and religious idealism and a sense of justice traceable to Silver's belief in the prophetic tradition in Judaism, the Messianic hope for deliverance, and the western humanistic tradition.





FOOTNOTES:

1. Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land, The American West as Symbol and Myth, New York, Random House, 1950.
2. A. H. Silver, "Prophecy--the people's protest", Silver Archives, Sermons, A-199, Jan, 24, 1926, pg. 1. \*
3. A. H. Silver, "Introduction", an undated typescript, Silver Archives, Manuscripts-typescripts, 44-27, pg. 1.\*\*
4. A. H. S., "Prophecy", Archives, A-199, pg. 3.
5. A. H. S., Therefore Choose Life, Selected Sermons, Addresses and Writings of Abba Hillel Silver, ed. Herbert Weiner, Cleveland, World, 1967, pg. 236.
6. A. H. S., "Prophecy...", Archives, A-199, pg. 12.
7. A. H. S., A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel, from the 1st through the 17th Centuries, Boston, Beacon Press, 1959, pg. 13.
8. Ibid., pg. ix.
9. A. H. S., "Zionism what it is, what it is not", Archives, A-626, October 31, 1943, pg. 11.
10. A. H. S., Address to the Madassah Convention, Archives, mss-typ, 43-18, pg. 1.
11. A. H. S., Therefore Chose Life, ed. Weiner, pg. 210.
12. A. H. S., "Nationalism and the struggle for survival", Archives, A-202, February 14, 1926, pp. 12-13.
13. A. H. S., Therefore Choose Life, Weiner ed., pg. 219.
14. A. H. S., "Nationalism...", Archives, A-202, pp. 4-6.
15. A. H. S., The World Crisis and Jewish Survival, A group of essays, New York, Smith, 1941, pg. 39.
16. A. H. S., Where Judaism Differed; an Inquiry into the Distinctiveness of Judaism, New York, Macmillan, 1956, pg. 39.
17. A. H. S. "World War II", Archives, mss-typ, 43-23, pg. 4.

\* The sermons are listed in the Archives by number, subject and date, here A-199, prophecy, and Jan. 24, 1926, respectively. Hereafter, sermons will be cited: "Archives, A-199, date, page" after the title of the sermon. A-199 refers to the number of the sermon.

\*\* The Manuscripts are listed also by number, subject, and date. Hereafter, they will be cited: Archives, mss-typ, 44-27, page. The 44 refers to the year 1944, the 27 is the number in the file for that year.



FOOTNOTES:

18. A. H. S., Where Judaism Differed, pg. 121.
19. A. H. S., "Our Role in Jewish Rescue in War and Peace", Archives, mss-typ, 43-18, pg. 121.
20. A. H. S., "Nationalism...", Archives, A-202, pg. 3.
21. A. H. S., Religion in a Changing, New York, Smith, 1930, pg. 122.
22. A. H. S., "Nationalism...", Archives, A-202, pp. 9,10.
23. A. H. S., The World Crisis and Jewish Survival, pg. 44.
24. A. H. S., "Beyond the Jewish State", Archives, mss-typ, 40-26, pg. 3.
25. A. H. S., "Nationalism...", Archives, A-202, pg. 10.
26. A. H. S., Religion in a Changing World, pg. 93.
27. A. H. S., The World Crisis and Jewish Survival, pg. 16.
28. A. H. S., Archives, mss-typ, 44-14, pg. 6.
29. A. H. S., Religion in Changing World, pp. 132-41.
30. A. H. S., "The Faith of an Untired Liberal", Archives, A-279, October, 21, 1928, pp. 1-4.
31. A. H. S., "The Nature of Man", Archives, mss-typ, 40-16, pg. 1.
32. A. H. S., Religion in a Changing World, pg. 82.
33. A. H. S., Therefore Choose Life, ed. Weiner, pg. 15.
34. Ibid., pp. 44-45.
35. A. H. S., Religion in a Changing World, pg. 41.
36. Ibid. pg. 38.
37. A. H. S., Therefore Choose Life, pg. 63.
38. A. H. S., "The Nature of Man", Archives, mss-typ, 40-16, pg. 3.
39. A. H. S., "Century in retrospect", Archives, mss-typ, 42-24, pg. 1.
40. A. H. S., "Zionism an Affirmation of Judaism", Archives, mss-typ, 42-7, pg. 2.



FOOTNOTES:

41. A. H. S., "Zionism what it is, what it is not", Archives, A-626, October 31, 1943, pp. 8-9.
42. A. H. S., "Beyond the Jewish State", Archives, mss-typ, 40-26, pg. 1.
43. A. H. S., "The Spiritual Legacy of the Pilgrim Fathers", Archives, A-44, November 14, 1920, pg. 14.
44. Ibid., pg. 9.
45. A. H. S., Therefore Choose Life, Weiner ed., pg. 267.
46. A. H. S., "Introduction", Archives, 44-27, pg. 1.
47. Stephen Wise, Letter to Silver from Wise, March 2, 1944, Manson File, 1-1, 19-3.
48. A. H. S., "A Third Term for President Roosevelt?", Archives, A-455, March, 31, 1941, pp. 9-10.
49. A. H. S., Memorandum of talk with Wendell Willkie at the Commodore Hotel, Tuesday, December 15, 1942, New York, Archives, mss-typ, 42-14.
50. A. H. S., "In War and Peace, the Role of Jewish Palestine," Archives, mss-typ, 42-1, pg. 8.
51. A. H. S., Radio Address, Archives, mss.-typ, 43-6, pp. 2,3.
52. A. H. S., Protest Meeting, Public Hall, Cleveland, Archives, mss-typ, 43-16, pg. 2.
53. Ibid. pg. 4.
54. A. H. S., "In War and Peace--A Jewish Palestine", a CBS radio broadcast, Archives, 42-2, pg. 9.
55. This point appears countless times, a few citations.  
A. H. S., Vision and Victory, A Collection of Addresses, 1942-48, New York, The Zionist Organization of America, 1949, pg. 52.  
A. H. S., "The American Jewish Community in Wartime and After", Archives, mss-typ, 44-4, pp. 9-10.  
A. H. S., "Embattled Palestine", Archives, mss-typ, 41-7.  
A. H. S., "Zionism an Affirmation of Judaism", Archives, 42-7, pg. 2.
56. Isaac E. Marcuson ed., Central Conference of American Rabbis, Report, Philadelphia, Press of Jewish Publication Society, 1942, pp. 164-176.
57. A. H. S., "Zionism an Affirmation of Judaism", Archives, mss-typ, 42-7, pg. 2.



FOOTNOTE:

58. Richard P. Stevens, American Zionism and U.S. Foreign Policy 1942-1947, New York, Pagaent Press, 1962, pg. 6.
59. I have appended Silver's statement on Zionist objectives, rather than trying to incorporate his ideas in detail in the body of the paper.
60. A good discussion of the machinations of Zionists and others can be found in Richard Stevens book, also from a slightly different point of view in Samuel Halperin's The Political World of American Zionism, see bibliography.
61. The resolution reiterated many of points sighted in the Biltmore program.
63. Alexander S. Kohanski, The American Jewish Conference, Proceedings, 1st Session, August 29,-- September 2, 1943, New York, American Jewish Conference, 1944, pg. 165-169.
62. Ibid., 2nd Session, December 1944, pg. 58.
64. Letters from Emanuel Newmann and others, Correspondence file, 11-3, "Draft Silver", 1943.
65. Actually the name American Zionist Emergency Council was a product of Silver's reorganization. It had formerly been the American Emergency Council for Zionist Affairs, chaired by Stephen Wise.
66. "Memorandum Accord", Correspondence file, 11-3, "Draft Silver", 1943, pp. 1-4.
67. AZEC notes, Archives, Manson file, 1-1, September 17, 1943, pp. 1-3.
68. AZEC notes, Archives, Manson file, 1-1, 1943, "Digest of Letters", pg. 2.
69. Ibid., November 11, 1943, pp. 1-3.
70. "Resolved, That the United States shall use its good offices and take appropriate measures, to the end that the doors of Palestine shall be open for the free entry of Jews into that country, and that there shall be full opportunity for colonization, so that the Jewish people may ultimately reconstitute Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth." United States Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Hearings, Washington, U. S. Government Printing Office, 1944, pg. 1.
71. Ibid., pp. 27-30.
72. Ibid., pp. 88-90.
73. Ibid., pg. 93.



FOOTNOTE:

74. Ibid., 109.
75. Ibid., 30.
76. A. H. S., Vision and Victory, pg. 39.
77. Ibid., pg. 41.
78. Ibid., pg. 43.
79. Ibid., pg. 44.
80. Ibid., pg. 45.
81. A. H. S., "A Suggested Letter", Archives, mss-typ, 44-27, pp. 1,2.
82. Richard P. Stevens, American Zionism and U.S. Foreign Policy, pp. 55-59.
83. A. H. S., Vision and Victory, pg. 50.
84. Ibid., pg. 49.
85. Ibid., pg. 52.
86. Ibid., pg. 55.
87. Ibid., pg. 74.
88. Ibid., pg. 65.
89. Ibid., pg. 71.
90. A discussion of the controversy in its larger dimensions can be found in Stevens, American Zionism and U.S. Foreign Policy.
91. This occurred on Oct. 10, 1944, in response to a letter from Robert Taft on the subject.
92. Goldman was a world leader of Zionism and sided with Wise in the controversy to follow.
93. Harold P. Manson and Harry I. Shapiro, "Dr. Abba Hillel Silver's Resignation--A Memorandum", Manson file 1-2, "Resignation AZEC", pg. 2.
94. A. H. S., "Report to American Zionist Emergency Council", Archives, mss-typ, 44-10, pg. 2.
95. Manson and Shapiro, "Dr. Abba...", pg. 2.
96. Ibid.
97. A. H. S., "Report to American Zionist...", Archives, mss-typ, 44-10, pg. 3.
98. It was unauthorized because as Silver pointed out in his report, cited above, meetings of the full Executive Committee were supposed to be called only if three days notice was given.



FOOTNOTES:

99. Manson and Shapiro, "...Silver's Resignation", pg. 3.
100. Ibid., 4.
101. A. H. S. "Dreamer and Builder of Zion", Archives, mss-typ, 44-12, pg. 10. The quote actually referred in this case the Chaim Weizmann. The paper was written as an introduction in honor of Weizmann.
102. Israel Goldstein, Statement on the AZEC controversy, Archives, mss-typ, 45-27, pg. 6.
103. Stephen S. Wise, Statement on the AZEC controversy, Archives, mss-typ, 45-27, pg. 2.
104. A. H. S., Statement on the AZEC controversy, Archives, mss-typ, 45-27, pg. 1.
105. Ibid.
106. A. H. S., "We Were Slaughtered by Our Enemies; We Were Betrayed by Our Friends", November 15, 1945, pp. 14, 15.





## BIBLIOGRAPHY:

### 1) Some general works on Zionism;

Baron, Salo W., Modern Nationalism and Religion, New York, Harper, 1947.

Halpern, Ben, The Idea of the Jewish State, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1961.

Hertzberg, Arthur, The Zionist Idea, A Historical Analysis and Reader, New York, Harper, 1966.

### 2) Other secondary works more closely related to the topic and period. None of these books gives a really adequate account of Silver's activity, some are merely propaganda tracts, others I read in order to be acquainted with events occurring in the period.

Baron, Salo W., The Effect of the War on Jewish Community Life, New York, Harry L. Glucksman Memorial Committee, 1942.

Bittelman, Alex, Should Jews Unite? Jewish People's Unity as a Force for American National Unity, New York, Morning Freiheit, 1943.

Committee for a Jewish Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews, From Evian to Bermuda, New York, 1943.

Halperin, Samuel, The Political World of American Zionism, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1961. Contains an excellent Bibliography on American Zionism and discusses the issues involved in American Zionism very thoroughly.

Lowdermilk, Walter C., Palestine Land of Promise, New York, 1949. Very biased.

Manuel, Frank E., The Realities of American-Palestinian Relations, Washington, Public Affairs Press, 1949. A Zionist history of Zionism, surprisingly little mention of Silver.

Morse, Arthur B., While Six Million Died, A Chronicle of American Apathy, New York, Random House, 1967. A book written for obvious purposes, nevertheless, I think, he makes his point and makes Silver's righteous wrath a little more understandable.

Stevens, Richard P., American Zionism and U.S. Foreign Policy 1942-1947, New York, Pageant Press, 1962. The most relevant book, a highly objective, critical study.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY (Cont.)

3) There are several published reports and bibliographies which were useful.

\_\_\_\_\_, Palestine and Zionism, a Bibliography of Books Pamphlets and Periodicals, New York, Zionist Archives and Library, published annually.

\_\_\_\_\_, Book of Documents, Relating to the Establishment of the National Home for the Jewish People, 1917-1947, New York, Jewish Agency, 1947.

Kohanski, Alexander S., The American Jewish Conference, Proceedings, 1st Session, August 29,-- September 2, 1943, New York, American Jewish Conference, 1944. The second session was also used, same listing except date of publication was 1945.

Marcuson, Issaac E., Central Conference of American Rabbis, Report, Philadelphia, Press of Jewish Publication Society, 1941-4, volumes LI-LIV.

Udin, Sophie ed., The Palestine Yearbook, Washington, Zionist Organization of America, 1945, volume 1.

\_\_\_\_\_, The Jewish National Home in Palestine, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Seventy-eighth Congress, 2nd Session, on H. Res. 418 and H. Res. 419, Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944.

## 4) Articles

\_\_\_\_\_, Public Opinion on the Zionist Controversy, American Zionist Policy Committee, New York, 1945. A series of excerpts from Jewish papers.

Akin, Benjamin, "Memorandum to the Executive Committee of the American Zionist Emergency Council, New York, AZEC, 1945.

Feuer, Leon I., "Abba Hillel Silver: A Personal Memoir," American Jewish Archives, vol. XIX, no. 2, November 1967.

The following articles were editorials in Palestine, an AZEC publication.

\_\_\_\_\_, "What comes after the White Paper?", Palestine, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 1 and 2, Feb. 1944.

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Palestine Resolution in Congress," Palestine, vol. 1, no. 4, pg. 1, March 1944.

\_\_\_\_\_, "After the March 31 'Deadline'", Palestine, vol. 1, no. 5, pg. 1, April 1944.

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Republican Platform", Palestine, vol. 1, no. 8, pp. 1,2, July 1944.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Foreign Policy Improvisation," Palestine, vol. 1, no. 10, pp. 1,2, Oct. 1944.



# BIBLIOGRAPHY (cont.)

- \_\_\_\_\_, "Return to the Wilson Line", Palestine, vol. 1, no. 11, pp. 1,2 November, 1944.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Hope Again Deferred," Palestine, vol. 1, no. 12, pp. 1,2 December, 1944.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Still on the Waiting List", Palestine, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 1,2, March, 1945.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Flaws in the Pattern", Palestine, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 1,2, January, 1945.

- 5) Most of the important material for this paper came from Silver's papers and the manuscripts and typescripts to be found in the Silver Archives in The Temple. The ones I used can be found in the footnotes, although I studied a great many more it would be tedious to cite them all here. However, Silver did publish a number of books which were useful.

Silver, Abba Hillel, A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel, from the 1st through the 17th Centuries, Boston, Beacon Press, 1959.

Silver, Abba Hillel, Moses and the Original Torah, New York, Macmillan, 1961.

Silver, Abba Hillel, Religion in a Changing World, New York, Smith, 1930.

Silver, Abba Hillel, Vision and Victory, A Collection of Addresses, 1942-48, New York, The Zionist Organization of America, 1949.

Silver, Abba Hillel, Where Judaism Differed; an Inquiry into the Distinctiveness of Judaism, New York, Macmillan, 1956.

Silver, Abba Hillel, The World Crisis and Jewish Survival, A group of essays, New York, Smith, 1941.

Silver, Abba Hillel, Therefore Choose Life, Selected Sermons, Addresses and Writings of Abba Hillel Silver, ed. Herbert Weiner, Cleveland, World, 1967.

Silver, Daniel Jeremy, ed., In the Time of Harvest; essays presented to Abba Hillel Silver on the occasion of his 70th birthday, New York, Macmillan, 1963. This book is invaluable because it contains a bibliography of all the published works of Silver prepared by the Temple Librarian, Miss Miriam Leikum a tireless and very helpful person.

The following is a list of relevant articles which appeared in The New Palestine, the Zionist periodical, which was later to be called The American Zionist.

Silver, A. H., "A Call to American Jewry", January 3, 1941, pg. 5.



BIBLIOGRAPHY (cont.)

Silver, A. H., "The Cause of Zion Must Not be Minimized", January 31, 1941, pp. 7,8,25, 26,27.

Silver, A. H., "Jews and the Allied Cause", May 15, 1942, May 15, 1942, pg. 11.

Silver, A. H., "The National Idea", September 10, 1943, pp. 1,2.

Silver, A. H., "Zionist Effort Wins U. S. Public Opinion", October, 27, 1944, pg. 5.

Silver, A. H., "Zionist Leaders Report on London Conference", September, 28, 1945, pg. 11.

Silver, A. H., "On the Record", Oct. 31, 1945, pg. 13.

Silver, A. H., "We Were Slaughtered by Our Enemies; We Were Betrayed by Our Friends", November 15, 1945, pp. 14, 15.





APPENDIX: I have appended here a single statement by Silver which clearly elucidates his position in detail on Zionist demands, during the period under study.



RACERASE BOND

SOUTHWORTH CO. U.S.A.

25% COTTON FIBER



- 1) The hearing before the Congressional Committee on Foreign Affairs will probably put American Zionist leaders in the position of committing themselves to a definite interpretation of the Biltmore Platform. The line taken by us at the hearing will be regarded as the official Zionist position, to which the Zionist Movement will stand committed. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the Zionist spokesmen should be in complete agreement in their interpretation of the Biltmore Platform and the official line.
- 2) The big question which will confront us is: a Jewish Commonwealth, when and how. The wording of the Biltmore Program leaves room for ambiguity. Nothing is said regarding the time when or the circumstances under which the Jewish Commonwealth is to be proclaimed or established. It is not, for instance, stated that the attainment of a Jewish majority is a condition precedent, though the Palestine resolution of the American Jewish Conference does make that point.
- 3) What is involved is the question whether our demand for a Jewish Commonwealth is to be interpreted as being simply an expression of the ultimate objective, the Endziel, and in the nature of a slogan, or whether it is a practical political demand to be implemented by concrete measures without delay. If the latter position is taken, we must be prepared to answer just what measures we would regard as constituting implementation of the demand for a Commonwealth.
- 4) Zionists have been in the habit of referring to a "period of transition", during which presumably Palestine would be administered under some form of trusteeship. This would seem to imply substantially <sup>a</sup> the return to the old Mandate or to a new Mandate similar in character. It may also imply an indefinite period of "transition", during which the forces which have operated in the past against the realization of Zionist aims will continue to operate in the future. The history of the past twenty years may thus



be repeated and we may then be heading for a new White Paper ten or fifteen years hence. If we take this line of a "period of transition under a trusteeship", we will be asking in effect <sup>for</sup> a return of the status quo ante. The demand for a Jewish Commonwealth would thereby be relegated to the sphere of theory and pious hopes.

5) The only plank in the Biltmore Platform marking a really radical departure is the demand for Jewish control of immigration and colonization. If we are not to ask for the proclamation of a Jewish Commonwealth in the immediate or near future, then the demand for control of immigration and colonization is the most important, from the practical point of view.

It is incompatible not merely with the administrative practice of the Palestine Government <sup>hitherto</sup>, but with the Mandate itself and its underlying conceptions. It implies a division or separation of powers between two authorities: the Mandatory power or the Government of Palestine on the one hand, and the Jewish People or the Jewish Agency on the other. In the sphere of immigration and Colonization, the Jewish People and the Jewish Agency would be vested with certain Executive or Governmental powers. They would be free to make certain decisions, the validity of which the Government of Palestine could not challenge. On the contrary, the Government of Palestine would be legally required to implement these decisions or to facilitate their implementation. This clause of the Biltmore Program means precisely that, or it means nothing.

6) In the light of the foregoing analysis, it is submitted that the position to be taken should be along the following lines:

- (a) The demand for a Jewish Commonwealth is not to be regarded as a mere slogan or expression of hope for the future but as the objective to be achieved speedily, i. e., within the space of a few years. This despite the use of the word "ultimately" in the resolution pending before Congress;
- (b) This involves not a "normal" annual immigration of 40,000 or 50,000, or even 100,000, but a population transfer, i. e., the transfer of several hundred thousand Jews to Palestine in a



short period of time, two or three years, following the precedent of the transfer of Greeks from Asia Minor to their homeland.

- (c) This transfer of population implies international cooperation and assistance, such as was forthcoming in the case of the repatriation of the Greeks.
- (d) Such a population transfer is related to the absorptive capacity of Palestine <sup>only</sup> in the long range sense of the term. That is to say it is justifiable from the point of view of the ultimate economic possibilities of Palestine, and not of with the economic possibilities existing at the moment.
- (e) We should therefore not speak of a period of transition of indefinite duration but rather of a period of implementation to begin at once and to culminate in the establishment of a self-governing Jewish Commonwealth.

- (f) The demand for Jewish control of immigration and colonization may and should be interpreted in the sense that the Jewish Agency for Palestine shall be authorized to set up a Reconstruction<sup>2</sup>Development Authority, preferably in the form of a chartered company, which shall take over and exercise those functions of government relating not only to immigration but to economic development and reclamation in all their aspects; leaving to the Government of Palestine all its other functions, such as the administration of justice, the enforcement of law and order, the administration of the political system, etc.

7) The only alternative to the program outlined above consistent with the Biltmore Program would be the early proclamation of a Jewish Republic and the setting up of a provisional government preponderantly Jewish in its composition, despite the fact of an existing Arab majority. Personally I would not reject this idea out of hand as utterly fantastic, but the idea would require much analysis and exploration, for which there is now no time. We, Zionists, have been so firmly wedded to the application of "democratic principles" to the solution of the Palestine question that a discussion of this alternative would have only theoretical interest.

8) The phrase of the Biltmore Program "integrated in the structure of a democratic world" is, of course, susceptible of the interpretation favored by English and Canadian Zionists that the Jewish Commonwealth of Palestine should become part of the British Commonwealth of Nations as a dominion. It would be wise to avoid either rejecting this possibility or committing ourselves definitely to it.