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THE American Zionist

ABBA HILLEL SILVER
ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

EMANUEL NEUMANN SILVER: HISTORY MAKER

SOLOMON B. FREEHOF BURDENS FOR AMERICAN JEWRY

ABRAHAM J. HESCHEL THE MOMENT AT SINAI

SALO W. BARON THE COLD WAR AND JEWRY

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THE TONGUE OF THE WISE: Moses Gaster

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The Tongue of the Wise

Messengers of Truth *

A nation does not live only by the toil of its hands. It lives still more by the work of its brain and by the impulses of the heart. No one expects the whole of Jewry to settle now or within a measurable distance of time within the borders of the Holy Land, however widely they may be extended. Yet we expect from the settlement of a comparatively small portion of the Jews a complete emancipation of the spirit. A new possibility is to be given to the Jew to live again, and not to live in accordance with the standards and requirements of Western civilization, but to unfold his innate ethical and religious greatness in the land of his fathers, unfettered and unhampered.

The Jewish Commonwealth is to give the world a lead, not only in the new interpretation of ancient truths, but also in the practical application of the ancient laws, towards the solution of many of the social problems which so much oppress and darken the life of the inhabitants of Europe and America.

The conflict between labor and capital, which threatens to assume serious proportions; the relations between the governing classes and the submerged; the principle of education and of equal opportunities, of religious tolerance for the beliefs of others—these and many more which are simple catchwords among the Western nations have to obtain a different interpretation and different application in the home which is to be ruled, governed, and inspired by those principles and those traditions which make up part of the Jewish life and the Jewish faith.

Unless the Jews are purified from the dross of the Middle Ages which clings to them through oppression, persecution, and prejudice; unless the religious spirit is allowed to take a new flight, and unless the Jews feel themselves to be the messengers of God's truth, no gathering, no talking of Jewish nationality has any meaning, or will have any beneficial result either for the Jews or for the rest of the world.

The Jewish regathering is to be of great moment in the history of the emancipation and progress of mankind. Only from this point of view has Zionism a meaning and Judaism a justification.

MOSES GASTER: "Judaism—a National Religion" in *Zionism and the Jewish Future* (1916)

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THE American Zionist

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A Whole Man

Abba Hillel Silver has now attained, and a grateful Jewish people are celebrating, his sixtieth birthday. The present issue of the *American Zionist* is therefore appropriately dedicated, as a modest tribute, to the man and his work. Its contents are devoted either to his decisive role in contemporary Jewish history or to those aspects of Jewish life, spiritual and social, which have been his profound concern.

Yet it is significant, and a clue to Dr. Silver's character and influence, that his life has not been encompassed by his Jewish activities alone. Or perhaps it would be truer to say that in his conception Judaism, rightly understood and practiced, must embrace the totality of a citizen's life. He presents the inspiring exemplar of a Jew who is a whole man.

As an American citizen, Dr. Silver has fought the good fight. He has been the untiring supporter of civil liberties and the advocate of social well-being in its broadest as well as most concrete sense. He was largely responsible for the formulation and adoption of Ohio's first unemployment-insurance bill. In the days when such a stand was hardly popular, he pleaded for that invaluable adjunct of a healthy labor movement, the "closed shop," and helped to make it respectable. He was conspicuously associated with the movement for equalizing the bargaining power of the worker through industry-wide organization, a movement which culminated in the creation of the C.I.O. He has been an unfailing tribune of the public interests in behalf of justice, mercy, and a righteous peace.

Nor in the Jewish scene has his role been confined to Zionism. Liberal Judaism in America owes much of the form and direction of its development to his intellectual guidance. In the pulpit, the school, and the congregation—no less than in the arena of Zionist politics or before the forum of the United Nations—he has been an embodiment of the vitalities with which generations of rabbis and teachers sustained our people through their centuries of tragedy and triumph.

The Jewish people have found in him an indomitable faith in the just God of Israel who will never permit His people to perish utterly, and in His redemptive



promise to return the captives in song to Zion. He has given witness to an Hassidic, an almost fierce, joy in serving this God and in being an instrument of His purpose. He has inculcated by example a compassionate love for the Jewish people, a belief in its potentialities, a zealous pride in the fruits of its law, learning, and lore. Again by example he has taught the virtue of endurance through thick and thin, of work without stint, of speaking the truth boldly, of never mistaking wishes for facts, of facing up to reality. Imbibing these lessons, the Jewish people have sustained him in turn. As he once put it in quite another context, it has been an instance of "the Ark carrying those who carry it."

Dr. Silver surely knows that with our birthday wishes, as with every birthday wish he has received, goes another heartfelt wish. He has fought the good fight, and a whole fight, but we venture to remind him: "There is no discharge in war." It was Koheleth who also said, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand."

So, *ad meah shanah*—may he be granted a plentitude of years and strength!

Susa to Moscow

Many scholars claim that the events recorded in the Book of Esther, to be celebrated soon on Purim, never really happened. If so, the Book of Esther is one of the most remarkable pieces of historical fiction ever written. If it is not true history, it has become for the Jews typical history. If Haman never lived and plotted in Susa, he has been living and plotting in other capitals ever since. With ghastly regularity he has reappeared down the centuries under many names: no one, unfortunately, can doubt the reality of Antiochus, Titus, Torquemada, Chmielnicki, Pobiedonostsev, or Hitler. Susa, or "Shushan the palace," has in its time been transported, as though by black magic, to the Palantine Hill in Rome, to the Alhambra in Granada, to the Brown House in Munich—and now it has come to rest in the Kremlin.

The arrest of nine physicians in Moscow, six of them Jews, for alleged murder in behalf of a "Zionist plot," has launched a Soviet-wide press campaign against the Jews as "bourgeois nationalists" and "Zionist imperialists." In Hungary there have been mass deportations, and arrests of Jewish officials have taken place there and in East Germany. Some 360 Jews—out of a total of 2,800—have fled in terror from the latter satellite land. Obviously the ground is being laid across the vast range of the Soviet empire for the execution of a Haman design—this time against three million Jewish victims.

Because of the iron curtain, the ultimate motives for this resurgence of anti-Semitism in its modern homeland can only be conjectured. Perhaps all of the guesses so far advanced—the need for a scapegoat; the forging of a bond between Russia and Nazi-conditioned Germany, foreshadowing another Stalin-Hitler pact; the wooing of the Arab states—are correct. It hardly matters, for Jew-baiting needs no rational excuse.

And because of the same iron curtain, the world will never know the outcome until it is long too late. Entire ethnic minorities were done away with in the Crimea and along the Volga during the last war—without leaving a trace.

Purim is coming around again. But no Mordecai and no Esther are in sight.

Arms for the Love of Allah

Great Britain is supplying jet planes and other heavy arms to Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. If not condoning this incitement to an armament race between the Arab

states and Israel—a race the latter does not desire and cannot afford—the United States has done nothing to prevent it. Such, in brief, is a state of affairs which can become ruinous to Israel and a disaster to the whole Middle East.

The situation is paradoxical—a diplomatic word meaning that the major Western powers figure that as long as their right hand knows what their left hand is doing, it is all right for the left hand to keep at it. On the one hand, Britain, France, and the United States have pledged themselves (in the tripartite agreement of May, 1950) to guarantee the status quo in the Middle East and to prevent aggression against any one of the states in that region. And on the other hand, Britain is now furnishing the latest, most lethal, and most costly weapons to the Arab nations who, as Ambassador Eban pointed out to our State Department, claim to be at war with Israel, maintain a blockade against Israel, refuse to negotiate a peace with Israel, and make no bones of their hostile intentions.

For what purpose is Egypt, as well as Syria and Lebanon, acquiring these deadly planes? So far as being employed in defense against possible Soviet aggression, Egypt and her partners have up till now refused to enter into any mutual security pact with the free world. The planes will scarcely be used for joy-rides over the Pyramids. Israel, in fact, has only too good reason to know against whom they will be piloted. And possibly the names of the ex-Nazi aces who will pilot them.

Nor can the menace be dissipated by a Solomonic decision to provide each nation in the Near East with an equal number of jets. Such a proposal smacks of the meat pies which a French baker truthfully claimed was half rabbit and half horse: the contents, that is to say, were made up from one rabbit and one horse.

The only sound solution is patent. America, Britain, and France, the three guarantors of peace in the Near East, must persuade or compel the Arab states to drop their belligerent stand and intentions against Israel, to come together with Israel in a mutually profitable agreement, and to enter—all of them as peaceful neighbors and allies—into a common security pact with the free peoples of the West. If that would prove to be too difficult, the sanest thing is to sell no arms whatever to the Arabs. Or is this too easy—and simple?

Besides protesting against the present behavior of Britain and the non-behavior of America, the American Zionist Council as well as the British Zionist Federation and other alarmed bodies of peace-loving Jews and Christians, are advocating one or the other of these wise and sane courses. Their voices should be strengthened.

Abba Hillel Silver: History Maker

by EMANUEL NEUMANN

I

A Boys' Club to a Man's Job

THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF A GREAT LEADER is a festive occasion but not necessarily the most appropriate for a definitive appraisal of his life-work. In the case of Dr. Silver it is obviously too early—and too hazardous. Dr. Silver is in his prime, at the height of his powers, one of the most dynamic personalities of our generation; and experience has taught that any period of relative calm in his life may be but a lull in an eventful and often stormy career.

Moreover, a truly objective evaluation could only come from someone less involved and more detached than myself. My association with Dr. Silver goes back to childhood days and I could hardly escape a subjective tone or resist the lure of personal reminiscence.

Reviewing it in its entirety, I am struck by a certain wholeness or integrity about Silver's Zionist career. It began in the Herzl Zion Club, one of the earliest boys' groups in the history of American Zionism, formed in 1904, the year of Herzl's death. It met on the East Side and the meetings—at least its "literary programs"—were conducted in Hebrew. I joined a few years later, on a wintry Saturday evening, when the club was celebrating the Bar Mitzvah of the president. Its president then and its natural leader for years thereafter was Abba Silver. His was a firm rule, tempered always with a saving sense of humor. He was loved, admired and obeyed. His word at the end of a long debate had the ring of finality and was accepted without demur. The very quality of his voice brought conviction.

It was as a delegate of the Herzl Club that Silver, still a boy, attended his first convention of the Federation of American Zionists. Without precocity but with mature self-confidence, he addressed the convention, demanding greater financial support for the Zionist youth movement. He got little or no money but his appearance was a harbinger of a new and younger generation who were soon to claim their place in the movement and its leadership.

Then came an interruption—or what seemed like one—in Silver's Zionist life. He went to Cincinnati

to study at the University and train for the rabbinate at Hebrew Union College. With him went several other alumni of the Herzl Club. Many of us had unhappy forebodings about this move; for Hebrew Union College was reputed to be not only a nursery of Reformed Judaism, but a stronghold of anti-Zionism. To those who remonstrated with Silver, he replied somewhat jauntily that if Cincinnati was an anti-Zionist fortress, he and his friends would capture it from within.

The years passed and a new Silver emerged, whom we did not easily identify with the boy we had known. Elegant in dress, polished in manner, faultless in speech, he appeared to have undergone a transformation. He had shed the habits and manners, the accents of his earlier environment. He seemed "goyish." It all smacked of "assimilation."

But it soon became evident that the changes were external: they had not touched the core of the man—his inner spirit. The fires, kindled at the parental hearth and in the company of his youthful comrades, were not smothered but had been banked against the time when they were to burst into ardent flame. Before long he found his place in the galaxy of distinguished personalities gathered about Louis D. Brandeis, and he began to appear on Zionist platforms in many cities. His reputation as an orator grew, but his role in the councils of the movement were still modest. He was a loyal and disciplined follower of Brandeis.

IN 1920, the war against Germany having been won, a large delegation of American Zionists went to London, to the first international Zionist Conference in seven years. There a rift developed between the Weizmann and Brandeis forces. Our American delegation was divided, Silver standing firmly behind Brandeis. At this Conference Silver first attained international prominence. Though one of the youngest delegates—still in his twenties—he was called upon to address a great public meeting at the Royal Albert Hall, where he shared the platform with such established celebrities as Balfour and Weizmann, Max Nordau and Lord Cecil. He also addressed the closing session of the Conference, as spokesman for the American delegation pledging the continued support of American Zionism.

Dr. Neumann, a former president of the Zionist Organization of America and at present a member of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Executive, was a close collaborator of Dr. Silver in the forefront of the struggles he now describes. His article draws on material which will furnish the basis of a comprehensive book on the subject.

In the succeeding years of controversy between Brandeis and Weizmann, originally over the Keren Hayesod, Silver eventually found his way back to participation in the mass movement. He accepted Weizmann's leadership though he differed with him strongly from time to time on important questions of policy.

In 1939 Silver assumed the leadership of the United Palestine Appeal and of the United Jewish Appeal as well. In the same year he attended the Zionist Congress in Geneva when Europe and the world stood on the brink of the Second World War. It was shortly after the publication of the White Paper—the last and most deadly of a long series of policy pronouncements by the British Government. In Palestine the Yishuv was seething with indignation and the first stirrings of active rebellion and even the official leadership of the Yishuv had begun to promote illegal immigration.

IT WAS not, however, until the war had run half its course, and the ghastly rumors of the mass slaughter of European Jews had become accepted fact, that Silver's career entered upon its historic and heroic phase. During the first three years of the war he took no prominent part in Zionist political affairs, devoting himself assiduously and with success to the great fund-raising campaigns which were his immediate responsibility. But he could not suppress the authentic Zionist note and the Herzlian heritage which were part of his innermost self. Essentially he was concerned not with philanthropy but with statesmanship. He gradually converted the platform of the Appeal into a political forum, giving incisive and compelling expression to the Jewish demands for national freedom and a secure national existence on the ancestral soil; he grew increasingly outspoken and critical both of the statesmen of the world and of sundry Jewish organizations concerned with Jewish rights, but too weak and ineffective to influence the mighty forces at play.

Meanwhile, the Zionist movement had a greater awareness of its role than any other Jewish organization. With the approval of the World Executive, the American Zionist Emergency Council, representing all of the major parties, was established in New York in 1940 to undertake whatever steps appeared necessary, in view of the crisis. Slowly the Council got under way and initiated a number of activities—notably, the formation of the American Palestine Committee, numbering hundreds of United States senators, representatives, cabinet members, governors of States and influential personalities in all walks of life. Regular official contact was established with the State Department. Public meetings were organized and the first steps taken to secure the ear of the American press. It was

a brave beginning but far from that all-out effort some of us had hoped for and anticipated. Above all we had made no dent, not the slightest, upon the State Department and the White House. Roosevelt was at the height of his power and popularity. His sympathy and friendliness toward the Jews was beyond dispute; but for the Zionist cause he had little thought and less time. Actually we were moving in circles and getting—nowhere.

During Weizmann's second wartime visit to America in 1942, he suggested a reorganization of the Emergency Council and the drafting of Silver to its leadership. The latter had just returned from a successful tour in England and had won Weizmann's admiration both by his platform appearances and his dealings with British statesmen—and a warmer relationship developed between the two. However, Weizmann's plan met with resistance and nothing came of it at the time.

But the stage was being set for Silver's emergence into leadership. The necessary and inevitable political struggle preoccupied his mind and invested his speeches with increasing dignity and importance. The orator was ripening into the statesman. The climax of this development came on May 2, 1943 in a memorable address which he delivered before the National Conference of the United Palestine Appeal in Philadelphia. It was a turning point in the evolution of American Zionist policy. For the first time a leader of commanding importance dared to challenge not only the State Department but the attitude of President Roosevelt himself. Dr. Silver's speech was a mercilessly frank and honest analysis of our own weakness and the unfriendliness of the American Government, however veiled in polite and meaningless gestures. It was a clarion call for a new approach based upon political realism and militant action. It was a full-scale programmatic speech and stirred thoughtful Zionists who sensed in it something new—a revolutionary note!

They began to rally about him. Within a few weeks a self-constituted delegation called upon Dr. Silver and urged him to assume the direction of American Zionism. As a result of the steps initiated by his friends, he was invited to become the active head of the Zionist Emergency Council that summer, thus ushering in a new era of American Zionism—the era of political "activism."

A decisive test came within a few weeks, at the first session of the American Jewish Conference convened at the Hotel Waldorf-Astoria in New York. The principal and dramatic issue was a resolution endorsing the Zionist demand for a Jewish Commonwealth. Virtually all American Zionist groups had conducted their election campaign for delegates to the Conference on the

basis of this program. Yet, when confronted with the intransigent attitude of a small non-Zionist minority, some of the most prominent Zionist leaders wavered and sought a way out. On the plea of "unity," a compromise was in the making by which reference to Jewish statehood was to be eliminated from the resolution. Silver was incensed by what he regarded as an unwarranted retreat. Behind closed doors there was a brief but violent scene between him and some of his colleagues. He went before the Conference and delivered one of the most masterly addresses of his career. When the vote was taken, it resulted in an overwhelming victory. The Jewish Commonwealth resolution was carried with but four dissenting votes out of a total of the 502 delegates assembled.

SILVER is a born orator—one of the greatest of our generation—with all of the orator's gifts and techniques at his command. There are few in our time who can stir mass emotion so deeply, when he chooses to do so. But it has been one of Silver's minor misfortunes that his remarkable oratorical talents have tended to overshadow his higher qualities and superior gifts: his powers of analysis, political insight and statesmanship. If he had chosen a legal career he would easily have been one of the most brilliant advocates of the American Bar. When he took over the political leadership of the movement, however, he abandoned more and more the rabbinical manner and the emotional stimulus, in favor of closely woven argumentation and cogent appeals to reason.

If Dr. Silver neglected his personal affairs at the call of Zionism, he brought an even greater sacrifice by interrupting his scholarly pursuits. He was devoted to the world of letters and ideas and in his earlier years loved to immerse himself in research and philosophical speculation. He had produced important works distinguished by sound scholarship and yearned for the peace and quiet of his library, for his books and his unfinished manuscripts. This deprivation was perhaps the hardest to bear.

II

A Revolution in Policy

THE STORY of the great mobilization of American Jewry which followed, the prodigious effort to win American public opinion, the dramatic struggle to secure passage of a pro-Zionist resolution in the Congress of the United States, the conflict between Dr. Silver and President Roosevelt, and the pitched battle between the "Silver militants" and the "Wise moderates"—all that is a chapter too recent and familiar to

be detailed here. Dr. Silver had not underestimated the magnitude of the task he had undertaken or the strength of the powerful forces arrayed against him: the Arabs, the British, the U. S. State Department, the missionary circles, the oil interests and others. What he had underrated was the power of inertia within the Jewish camp and the iron grip which conventional ideas and established political traditions held upon the Zionist movement. He found that no revolutionary change could be brought about in the international arena without a revolutionary change on the internal front. He had to undergo profound changes of outlook himself and destroy many cherished illusions among his followers before he could strike out on new paths and in new directions.

Such radical revision of long-accepted viewpoints and habits of mind is a painful process, irritating and upsetting. And, it must be admitted that Silver was none too gentle with his critics and opponents. He was impatient. He could flay with his tongue and bear down opposition with crushing effect. He did not do this deliberately, out of any desire to hurt, but behaved like a general leading his army in desperate battle, with too much at stake to brook disobedience or insubordination. He acted impulsively at times, in disregard of the "human equation"—and repeatedly the "human equation" rebelled and backfired.

It had long been accepted orthodox doctrine that Zionist policy must continue to be based on a British orientation. But as time passed Silver was forced to the conclusion that this was an illusion: Britain would not return to her original pro-Zionist line in the face of Arab opposition unless she was compelled to do so by a force greater than Arab pressure.

THIS SUPERIOR force was America! Here again Silver realized earlier and more clearly than others the extent to which Britain was growing dependent upon American strength. He was therefore convinced that the key to Palestine's future lay in Washington, that this was the point upon which to concentrate all the strength, the influence, the pressure, we could muster.

But he also had no illusion about the difficulty and the dimensions of the task. Britain was America's closest ally. For many decades the policy makers of the State Department had regarded the Near East as a British sphere. They were prepared to extend and consolidate Britain's influence in the region even at the expense of France. They were certainly not prepared to override British policy in favor of the "vociferous Zionists" and their "quixotic plans" for a Jewish State.

Moreover, as we have seen, Silver was the first of

the Zionist leaders to shed his illusions about Roosevelt's demeanor toward the Zionist idea. With keen insight he came to realize sooner than others, that behind Roosevelt's suavity and charm, and despite his humanitarian friendliness for the Jews as people, there lay a deep-seated skepticism about Jewish Palestine and a cool indifference, which Silver described as an attitude of "uninvolved benignancy." Roosevelt was ready to listen but unwilling to act and firmly opposed any step which might involve him in difficulties with the Arab rulers. But to the Jewish masses of America and throughout the world, Roosevelt loomed as the great friend and champion of their people. How could such a friend oppose or ignore Jewish national aspirations? Not only was it difficult to accept such a painful thought—there was a strong psychological need to reject it. In a tragic hour and a hostile world there simply had to be a champion and protector. If it was not Stalin or Churchill, it had to be Roosevelt. This emotional dependence on Roosevelt was reinforced by eminently practical considerations. He might be re-elected, and he was re-elected for a fourth term. His would be the power to shape the postwar settlement. To cross him, to offend him, to alienate his affection, was to court disaster for the Zionist cause.

WHEN SILVER persisted in his attempt to force the passage of the Palestine Resolution through Congress after Roosevelt's re-election in November 1944, he was forced to resign as Chairman of the Emergency Council. He and his friends carried the issue to the American Jewish community; but it was not until Roosevelt's death in the Spring of the following year, and the revelation of his secret correspondence with Ibn Saud, that the tide turned and Silver was recalled to leadership through the pressure of public opinion. His judgment had been vindicated and his leadership more firmly established than before.

The struggle in Washington went on during the early part of the Truman Administration, but the going became easier as Truman gradually became convinced that the overwhelming majority of the Jewish citizens were now solidly behind the Zionist program. Truman was moreover a far less complex personality than his illustrious predecessor—less adroit and sophisticated, simpler and more straightforward. He accepted the Zionist line reluctantly and under pressure, at first, but having accepted it, he followed through honestly and firmly. In the end he found himself in direct conflict with Britain's Bevin. He did not shrink from the encounter, but supported by popular opinion, he stuck to his guns and forced the State Department to acquiesce in his pro-Zionist policy.

By this time Silver's sagacious policy of building up support in Republican as well as Democratic circles and his skillful bi-partisan strategy was earning its reward. Taft and Dewey were equally outspoken and unhesitant in their backing of Zionist aspirations. The Republican Party as a whole was openly competing for Jewish support; and the attitude of millions of American citizens, roused and vocal, proved more potent than the prejudices and manoeuvres of career diplomats and oil magnates.

Making the fullest allowance for Truman's gradual but genuine conversion to the Zionist cause, as well as the beneficent influence of some of his personal friends and supporters, the record leaves no room for doubt that he would never have gone as far as he did were it not for the constant pressure exerted upon his Administration and the prospect of wholesale defection from the Democratic Party.

III

The Political Offensive

THE WHOLE procedure represented a revolutionary change in Zionist policy and political technique. From Herzl's earliest diplomatic explorations down to the days of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, and Weizmann's latest efforts, political Zionism was political mostly in the sense that it pursued political objectives. It sought to achieve these objectives largely by diplomacy; and considering how few and doubtful were the cards in their hands, Zionist diplomats had played them skillfully and at times brilliantly. But in the final analysis, diplomacy, to be successful, must be backed by something more concrete and substantial than ideas, sentiments and remote potentialities. It is a game of give and take, and the would-be diplomat must have something of value to offer or withhold. He must be in a position to benefit his friends and inflict injury on his adversaries. Herzl had grasped this principle firmly, but lacked the counters with which to negotiate. The greatest diplomat our people had produced since Disraeli died of a broken heart—for lack of bargaining power.

Weizmann was more successful in the circumstances of the first World War. For all his personal charm, persuasiveness and skill, he would have failed like Herzl—but for the fact that Britain, hard-pressed in the struggle with Germany, was anxious to gain the whole-hearted support of the Jewish people: in Russia on the one hand, and in America, on the other. The non-Jewish world regarded the Jews as a power to reckon with, and even exaggerated Jewish influence and Jewish unity. Britain's need of Jewish support furnished Zion-

ist diplomacy the element of strength and bargaining power which it required to back its moral appeal.

The circumstances of World War II were radically different. Jewry was destroyed in Central Europe and politically immobilized in Soviet Russia. Hitler carried out his program of extermination without effective opposition from any quarter. In the eyes of practical politicians he had demonstrated that Jewish power and influence were a myth. What was really crucial in the new circumstances was the fact that the Jews of the world were now perforce solidly arrayed with Britain as the leader of the democratic world in the war against Hitler. There was no need to woo the Jews, for they had no alternative. On the contrary, it was the Arabs who had to be wooed, for they could flirt with the Axis—as they did. Disaffected, they had to be appeased; loyal, they had to be rewarded. So overwhelmingly were the British convinced of the reality of Arab power and the complete loss of our bargaining position, that our cause in England became hopeless.

The official Zionist leadership realized the position and sought anxiously for new political leverage—but found none. The one hope was, of course, America. And Weizmann once went so far as to say—in a closed circle—that “the next Balfour Declaration” had to come from the United States.

But Weizmann’s error, shared by a large part of the movement and most of the American Zionist leaders at the time, was to hope that effective American intervention for the solution of the Palestine problem could be brought about by nothing more compelling than a somewhat diffuse humanitarian sympathy for the Jewish plight.

THE ESSENCE of Silver’s revolutionary approach lay in the new realism which he introduced. He came to perceive that diplomacy, unsupported by some form of power, degenerated into mere *shtadlanut*—backstairs intercession—humiliating and futile. There was no other way but to recreate for Zionism the bargaining position it had lost, building it up out of such elements of strength as the Jewish people still possessed. Virtue did not suffice and weakness was no virtue. The chief positive elements in our position were two: first, the growing strength of the Yishuv, its ability to resist and its offensive power to strike; secondly the potential power of five million American Jews, if properly organized and led and if their collective strength was fearlessly employed. Activism—here and in Palestine!

The moment the war was won in Europe Silver favored full support for the resistance movement in Palestine. If the rebelliousness of the Arabs was a

factor, Jewish rebelliousness could be no less a factor, even more embarrassing to Britain in her international relations. Activism and resistance in Palestine had to be matched and supported by an equally aggressive and relentless policy in America—on the political plane. It meant abandonment of apologetic and defensive attitudes in favor of an “offensive spirit” sustained by striking power. The political offensive was to be directed in the first place against the British Government, but also against anti-Zionist influences entrenched in Washington. Both the British and American governments were to feel the full impact of an aroused and militant body of opinion comprised of millions of American citizens, Jews and Christians alike. Under Silver’s leadership they did.

A classical example of this aggressive policy was the stand Silver took on the first postwar loan to Britain, about to be voted by the Congress of the United States. Inter-governmental loans, he argued, were not mere commercial transactions, but political measures to achieve political ends; and it was common practice for the lending power to exact political conditions. Should the representatives of the American taxpayer vote millions to be used by Britain in repressing the Yishuv and hunting down Jewish refugees in the Mediterranean? Shrewdly, he did not propose to defeat the loan but to delay its passage—which seemed a feasible objective. No more brilliant or effective stroke could have been devised. Had we pressed the issue with full force, it might possibly have brought Bevin to his knees. But even after years of political education, not all American Zionists were ready for so drastic a step. It was one of many opportunities we lost.

In the same vein Silver opposed any cooperation with the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. He correctly appraised it as but another delaying tactic designed to relieve the British and American governments from relentless pressure in Palestine and the United States, and personally he refused to testify before the Committee. After months of hearings, investigations, and more hearings, the Committee produced a report containing some positive recommendations, which Truman promptly approved. But Bevin raged and fumed. The American Government, he felt, was subservient to “New York Jews.” More specifically, he meant—a rabbi from Cleveland. Unceremoniously he rejected the report. The outcome of this affair again vindicated Silver’s judgment. The Anglo-American Committee was a fiasco. If it had served any purpose, it was to point up the paramount issue: could or could not a satisfactory settlement be achieved by diplomatic negotiation with the British?

That summer, 1946, saw the arrest of many leaders of the Yishuv in Palestine, including members of the Jewish Agency—and shortly thereafter a fresh attempt at diplomatic negotiation. A group of Agency members met in Paris, Silver being absent. Behind-the-scenes conversations were going on with Bevin in London. The British Government was proposing a round-table conference with Jews and Arabs. The bait for Jewish participation was an alleged willingness on the part of the British to entertain proposals for the partition of Palestine emanating from the Jewish Agency. Silver was furious over what he regarded as a political and tactical blunder—an untimely and futile gesture, undermining our own position. In protest he resigned from the Executive and prepared for a showdown at the forthcoming Zionist Congress.

As it happened, Foreign Secretary Bevin visited America that fall and Silver saw him on two occasions: the first, on his own initiative; the second, on the invitation of Mr. Bevin. The effect of these conversations was to convince Silver, more fully than before, that Bevin had no intention whatsoever of assenting to a Jewish State even in a minor part of Palestine and that the proposed round-table conference was another British maneuver. The coming Congress, he felt, would be decisive. Zionism was at the crossroads: it would either go on fighting or negotiate itself into defeat and surrender.

IT WAS indeed a fateful Congress, that winter of 1946, painful and dramatic. On one side were ranged the Weizmann forces, clinging to the hope of a negotiated settlement with Bevin on the basis of partition; on the other, the "activist" forces led by Silver and in part by Ben-Gurion. The Socialist Zionists, torn between their conflicting loyalties to Weizmann and their own leader, Ben-Gurion, divided and split. Silver was named to the key position of Chairman of the Political Committee, on which he had a bare majority. It was touch and go. The outcome of the Congress was in doubt until the very last session. When the vote on the resolutions was taken in the small hours of the morning, the atmosphere was tense and bitter. As usual, personal loyalties and antagonism came into play, as well as party rivalries and factional disputes. But the main issue remained clear: confidence or lack of confidence in the British and in the leadership which stood for continued cooperation with them. We were warned that failing a negotiated settlement with the British, the question would be thrown into the United Nations where we risked final and irretrievable defeat. The Congress took its courage in its hand, decided to disregard the warning and accept the challenge. Silver's policy won out; the die was cast.

IV

The United Nations—And After

SILVER'S VICTORY at the Congress of 1946 imposed upon him new tasks and burdens of unprecedented gravity. As head of the American Section of the Jewish Agency, he was now charged with the duty of organizing and directing the defense of the Zionist position in the forum of the United Nations. Bevin had made good his threat to refer the issue to the community of nations. In the spring of 1947 and again in the fall, the "Palestine Question" came before the General Assembly. Politically and internationally this was the court of last resort.

The responsibility for handling the Jewish case was a crushing one. But Silver rose to the new challenge. Without abandoning the technique of mass action and public pressure, he also resorted to the arts of the accomplished diplomat. Skillfully and sagaciously he sought to isolate Britain and the Arabs by building up a majority for Jewish independence out of widely disparate elements: the United States, the Soviet Bloc, the Catholic countries of Latin America, the British Dominions, and Western Europe. Silver's colleagues on the Agency Executive worked feverishly as a team at his side and under his direction. Every avenue of support was thoroughly explored. Every clue was meticulously checked and pursued. Not the smallest or the remotest of nations, but was contacted and wooed. Nothing was left to chance.

Even so, it was once more touch and go. Three days before the final vote in the Assembly of the United Nations we were just short of the required two-thirds majority to carry the Partition Resolution. Providentially Thanksgiving Day intervened, giving us a respite of twenty-four hours for the last supreme effort to corral the additional votes. By Saturday, the 29th of November, we had succeeded. For the first time in history the nations of the world, in council assembled, gave moral and legal sanction to the re-establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine. One by one we left the hall and drifted into the lobby. We were all overcome by emotion. I glanced at Silver and saw what I had never seen before—he wept!

The menace of Arab invasion and British sabotage threatened the implementation of the United Nations decision, which was to take final effect on the termination of the British Mandate, May 14, 1948. In March the American Government suddenly reversed its position and declared for an international trusteeship over Palestine in place of partition. Silver threw himself into the struggle all over again, sum-

Xmoned a nationwide conference for political action in Washington, and resumed public pressure upon the President and the State Department. There followed a perilous period of behind-the-scenes negotiations. Representatives of the State Department offered a new plan of mediation if the proclamation of the Jewish State would be postponed. The offer of the State Department was coupled with dire threats if it was rejected. We believed that Ben-Gurion had every intention of proceeding with the proclamation of the State but we also knew that the leadership of the Yishuv and his own party were divided. What we did in New York would either strengthen his hands or weaken them. The Agency Executive in New York was similarly divided but we rallied behind Silver, drawing courage from his unshakeable resolution. The offer of the State Department, reputed to have come also from the President himself, was rejected—though the course smacked of defiance. To be more precise, we informed Ben-Gurion of our vote in favor of rejection, leaving the ultimate decision, as we felt we must, to the Yishuv itself.

The State was duly proclaimed; and for the moment, politics and diplomacy gave way to the test of war. The ultimately decisive victory of the cause was won on the field of battle, by the valor of the Yishuv and the sacrifice of its heroic youth. Without the War of Independence the Jewish State would not have arisen. But without the political victory at Flushing Meadow and the international sanction it conferred the War of Independence might never have been fought. On this point there can be no doubt about the verdict of history. Silver's resolute leadership his vision and statesmanship, his militant and audacious policy, his over-all strategy and brilliantly executed tactics and the prodigious activity he unfolded—these were largely responsible for the triumphant outcome. That this victory was snatched from impending defeat, enhanced the magnitude of the historic achievement. He had moved and acted in the great tradition of Herzl and Weizmann: the achievement was perhaps greater than they had dared to hope for.

X It is one of the tragic ironies of Zionist history that immediately following the greatest triumph of his career, another internal conflict forced Silver to resign his position of leadership. Its overt and surface cause was disagreement with the leadership of Israel over fund-raising activities in the United States. The real and deeper issue was the attitude of that leadership toward the Zionist movement in general and American Zionism in particular. Silver realized that the establishment of the State had by no means secured its future existence, and

he insisted upon a strong Zionist movement as its chief bulwark in the difficult years which he foresaw. Unless the State of Israel and its Government, created by the Zionist movement, reciprocated by placing their full strength and prestige behind the movement, both the movement and the State would suffer. And though the matter was belittled at the time, as of minor consequence, it became a burning issue which agitated the Zionist and Jewish world during the past few years.

In this too, Silver's judgment has been vindicated by the events. A change of heart has been taking place in Israel. Only a few months ago, the Knesset finally enacted a measure which, though not in the precise terms unanimously requested by the last Zionist Congress, granted official status to the organization. But more important, a significant change has been taking place in the personal attitude of leading members of the Israel Government—one expressive of a renewed desire to strengthen the Zionist movement and retrieve its commanding position in Jewish life.

AS CLOUDS gather again on Israel's horizon and as the international situation grows more tense and menacing than ever, one can only hope that Silver will not remain for long on the margin, but will be drawn back into the full tide of affairs. He has steadily refused and will perhaps continue to refuse to seek leadership once more. But neither Israel nor Zionism can afford to be deprived of his galvanizing force. His place in Jewish history is already secure—but another chapter is still to be written.

Whatever the future may have in store for him personally, there is a postscript to be added. The long and often fierce struggle waged under his leadership for the Zionist cause has yielded a by-product of inestimable value in itself—its permanent and tonic effect upon the Jewish community in this country. Silver had found American Jewry a slumbering giant: he roused the giant from his lethargy, made him conscious of his strength. To that extent the Jewish scene has been transformed. He taught us to stand up like men, to fight on our feet in the tradition of American freedom, without the paralyzing inhibitions of fear and inferiority. We dared. We risked open conflict with powerful forces and with men in the highest authority. We gained not only victory, but self-respect, a new awareness of our worth. If ever the time should come—and it may come soon—when we shall have to gird ourselves once more in defense of the Jewish position, we shall be more courageous, more confident and effective, and the better prepared, because of the lessons we have learned under Abba Hillel Silver.

Jewish Life and Destiny

by ABBA HILLEL SILVER

Judaism

JUDAISM IS CONCERNED WITH THE UNCHANGING needs of man and of society, the needs which take on new forms in new settings, but which remain fundamentally the same, the basic and perennial conflicts and adjustments in individual and collective lives. From Abraham and Moses to the last of the great and the wise teachers of our faith, there stretches an unbroken chain of spiritual continuity, changeless principles in mutable forms which were the fixed points of reference for each generation. Each generation faced the same problems: how to achieve freedom under the sovereignty of God, justice under the mandate of His law, and dignity in kinship with Him; how knowledge was to be made whole through the fear of God, and courage heightened through trust in Him; how brotherhood and peace could be covenanted in the sight of Him who is Father of all men and all nations.

Judaism has offered men the faith and the code sufficient and adequate to every age. Men have not heeded it. Jews have not heeded it. *Theirs* was the inadequacy, *theirs* the insufficiency. Many believed that mankind could dispense with Israel's faith and code, and could achieve freedom, justice, dignity, courage, brotherhood and peace without reference to God and the techniques of religion. But they achieved only dictatorship, slavery, littleness of stature, fear, hate and war. They put their hope not in spiritual conversion, not in moral regeneration but in a precipitous scientific and intellectual progress which has now hurled rider, horse and chariot alike into one bloody and ruinous tangle.

(1942)

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Some say that the Jew survived because of his religion. We have no quarrel with them, for there is much truth in what they say. But we would remind them that it would be equally true to say that the Jewish religion survived because of the Jew. Had the Jews been made of weaker stuff, had they been incapable of converting the vision of a few inspired seers into the life-motif of a whole people, had they not been endowed by nature with the peculiar genius to translate

their faith into expressive and evolving laws and institutions, to keep it forever fresh and vigorous by pouring new concepts into old forms, and to adapt it ever anew to profounder insights and higher intuitions, had they been unwilling or unable to suffer long for an ideal, and had they failed to match the heroic quality of their faith by a corresponding quality in their own nature, both they and their religion would have perished. It was Judah Halevi who declared: "If there had been no Jews, there would have been no Torah."

It is of less moment now to determine who sustained whom, and how the intertwined strands of cause and effect can be separated, than to grasp fully the amazing fact that a long, unbroken covenanted relationship did exist between the people of Israel and the faith of Israel, that Israel from of old, athirst for life and immortality, evolved a faith which exalted life and emancipated it, and that this faith, in turn, through the long centuries, nurtured the life of Israel and fed its powers of survival. In a word it is important to understand the miracle of "The Ark carrying those who carry it." (1941)

American Jewry

AMERICAN JEWS ARE AT LAST FINDING THEMSELVES under the necessity of doing that which Jews in the Old World have always had to do—consciously orienting themselves as Jews in a non-Jewish environment and realistically facing all the implications of their status as a minority group. . . . While some Jews are rather unnerved by this new experience and are unable to make an intelligent adjustment to it, the majority of our people are being helped by this keener awareness of their true position, to a fuller, franker and more dignified life as American Jews.

These American Jews are facing the future without any illusions, but certainly not without hope. The New World, for a time, made possible a pleasant sense of almost complete identification. That is no longer the case and in all probability will never be again. The Old World brand of anti-Semitism is here to stay—not forever, of course, but for a period long enough for all practical considerations. This is realism, not defeatism.

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, in the course of his manifold activities, has produced three books which contain his views on a wide variety of Jewish themes—themes of interest to all conscious and aware Jews. The volumes are MESSIANIC SPECULATIONS IN ISRAEL, THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL and VISION AND VICTORY. The selections here are culled from Dr. Silver's books, one of which, VISION AND VICTORY, contains his most memorable addresses.

. . . But much of what we now call the "good" and temperate anti-Semitism, in contrast to the killing and annihilationist kind, that which in happier times we used to call prejudice, will remain as a constant factor in our experience . . .

Zionism

WHAT IS REALLY MOVING US TOWARD PALESTINE, and why is our movement irresistible? Our sages say that two Arks led the Children of Israel through the wilderness on to the Promised Land: the Ark wherein lay the dead body of Joseph, and the Ark of the Covenant. Two Arks! The Ark of death and the Ark of faith!

Two million dead are leading us on today through the wilderness to Palestine! Our myriad martyred hosts in this last and greatest tragedy of our dispersion—they are leading us on. The horror and pathos and the crushing logic of their needless deaths—they are leading us on. Their bodies lie in unknown mass graves, but the Ark which enshrines their imperishable memories moves on before us. This vast ghostly company from the slaughter-pens of Warsaw, Cracow, and Lemberg now join up with the older companies of the last war from Galicia and the Ukraine, and from Kishenev and Bialistok of the earlier years, and with those tortured hosts of the foregoing generations—all the way back to the universal holocaust in the days of Chmielnicki, and with their brothers from other parts of Europe in almost every century and every land. It is their spirits which give us no rest, which admonish us against all vain illusions and false hopes. It is their innocent blood which will not be covered up, until out of their martyrdom a new life is born—the free and redeemed life of their people. . . .

And along with the Ark of Death there moves before us also the Ark of the Covenant—the Ark of Faith—our covenant with the future, our faith in our destiny, in ourselves and in the God of our Fathers who sleepeth not, nor slumbereth. "Exiles are never terminated and people are never freed except through faith."

(1943)

. . .

We shall have to continue our struggle for survival in the same way as we have had to do throughout the ages—with our own resources, however diminished, with our own unbroken will, our own unshaken confidence in our destiny, and with the help of God. The sins which are being visited upon our helpless refugees—wittingly or unwittingly—will return to plague the world. This is the unfailing law of moral retribution.

Corrupt and cursed indeed is a world that cannot give sanctuary to men fleeing from death!

We are confident that the inescapable logic of events will in due time make Palestine a Jewish State. For a shorter or a longer time this may be halted or retarded, but the rebirth of Israel as a nation in its historic home is as sure to come to pass as God's word never returns empty until it has accomplished that for which it was sent.

The inescapable logic of events! When all the doors of the world will be closed to our people, then the hand of destiny will force open the door of Palestine. And that hour is rapidly approaching.

(1943)

Israel

IF HISTORY IS ANY GUIDE, THE JEWS OF TODAY WHO will continue to live in other lands will, by and large, maintain the same attitude towards the State of Israel as their forefathers did. Theirs will be a most sympathetic relationship towards that land. They will materially help it to absorb as many Jews as will wish to go there or may have to go there. They will help to build up its cultural, scientific, and spiritual institutions, as well as its economic life so that it may become a land of which Jews everywhere can be proud. For the eyes of the world will be on the land of Israel to see what Jews, as a people, can accomplish on their own.

Israel will come to be again the non-political center of world Jewry. Pilgrims will go there as of old—and not merely the pious. There will be a free flow of manifold communications, of mutual stimulation, of give and take. Israel will again come to exercise a unifying and sustaining influence in Jewish life everywhere.

We shall remain one people, one historic community, as of old. But the Jews of Israel will be Israeli citizens and the Jews of the United States will be citizens of the United States, and similarly with Jews in other lands.

They will owe undivided allegiance to their respective countries and they will discharge loyally their full duties as citizens, as Jews have always done. But they will retain a special attachment to the land of Israel which will in no way interfere with their duties and obligations as citizens of their respective countries.

It was Voltaire who said that every cultured man should have two fatherlands—his own and France. In an even more profound sense, but equally non-political, it may be applied to the Jew and Israel. Israel will be the Sabbath in the life of our people when, according to a beautiful tradition, an additional soul is vouchsafed unto man.

(1948)

Burdens for American Judaism

by SOLOMON B. FREEHOF

IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, RABBINICAL REACTION to the American environment has been significantly varied. The Orthodox rabbinate in Europe was definitely deprecatory. In many of the legal responsa remarks are made indicating that there is no trustworthy learning in America, that documents, such as bills of divorce, which have come from America to Europe were full of errors, as they were expected to be. In fact, Yisroel Meir Kahan (the Chofetz Chayim) wrote a pamphlet (*"Nid-che Yisroel"*) expressing his anxiety that the Eastern European Jews emigrating to America would abandon all their traditions and the study of the Torah. The Orthodox rabbinate in general feared the influence of America upon Judaism. And the typical Orthodox father, when confronted with the religious rebellion of his children, would shrug his shoulders, sigh, and say, "What can you expect of America?"

The attitude of the early leaders of Reform was astonishingly different. When they had difficulties with the governments in the old world, as they frequently did, they would often voice the hope that America really could be counted on to "redress the balance of the old world." As a matter of fact, the master-builder of American Reform, Isaac Mayer Wise, was so confident about the future of Judaism in America that he said frequently that Reform Judaism would some day be the religion of all America, not only of the Jews. Both the Orthodox leaders and the Reform were partly mistaken and partly right. As a matter of fact, it would be well worthwhile to make a study of what precise advantages America has brought to all branches of Judaism and also what new difficulties. This discussion will confine itself to the question of what special difficulties confront every branch of Judaism in America and what, if anything, can be done to overcome them.

THE APPREHENSIONS of European Orthodoxy have proved to be fully justified. The story of the non-observance of Jewish law and ritual is a melancholy one. It always brings with it family tension or pathetic despair on the part of the older generation. There have been, of course, previous periods of non-observance of Jewish ritual but they had been overcome. In the time of Rabbenu Tam (12th century) there was widespread

neglect of the Tefillin (cf. Tosfos to Shabbas 49a). Time and time again the rabbinate succeeded in re-winning the people to a stricter observance.

Can it succeed to a considerable degree in America, considering the widespread non-observance of almost every department of Jewish law and on every level of the population? As it confronts this task the Orthodox rabbinate carries a burden in America which it never had to carry before. In the past, whenever laws were not observed, the non-observers would admit that they were sinners; that the laws were laws and should be observed and that the rabbis had authority to interpret those laws. The Karaites who disputed the authority of the rabbis ceased to be Jews. They formed a different religion. All who considered themselves Jews accepted the authority of the rabbinate.

It is this basic assumption that the rabbis have legal authority which Orthodoxy has lost in America. This is a catastrophic loss for it goes to the very heart of Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is primarily a legal system with a majestic claim of unbroken authority going back to Mount Sinai. But when the time has come that the majority of the people no longer accept that authority, the keystone has fallen from the arch. This loss of authority affects the law itself. Paradoxical as it may seem, Orthodox law was less burdensome when there was paramount rabbinical authority, not merely because the laws were resisted less or seemed more acceptable, but actually in the working out of the laws the authoritativeness of the rabbinical court made the laws themselves less difficult.

This can be seen in the laws of divorce. Laws which seem unbearable and unfair today were not at all unbearable and unfair in those days. To a modern non-Orthodox man or woman, it seems unfair that according to Jewish law a husband can divorce his wife but a wife cannot divorce her husband. But when Jewish law had authority she was virtually equal to him whatever the letter of the law said. All she needed to do was to convince the rabbi that her husband ought to divorce her.

"I am happy," wrote Dr. Freehof, "to join in honoring my dear friend and colleague, Abba Hillel Silver, on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday. An article on Judaism in America should be appropriate, for Dr. Silver's life work as a Rabbi is a vital part of his world view and of his special influence in the Zionist movement. His rabbinate and his Zionist leadership are each based upon thoughts and feelings which mutually modify one another and merge into unity." Dr. Freehof, of Rodef Shalom Temple in Pittsburgh, is one of the leading Reform rabbis in American life and the author of many important scholarly volumes.

The rabbi would tell him so and he would obey. When Jewish law had authority, the superior privileges of a man over a woman in this matter were merely technical and not actual; but nowadays when Orthodoxy has lost authority, such young men do not listen to the rabbis. The changing times have made tyrants of many worthless young men and Jewish law is put into the miserable position of maintaining their tyranny. Thus the loss of authority of the rabbinate in America makes Jewish law, contrary to its own intention, doubly burdensome and unfair.

The loss of authority has a wider historical implication than these human tragedies with which it can no longer cope. As long as the rabbinate had authority it would, by renewed efforts or through the influence of some new rabbinic personality, be able to restore neglected observances. But, with Orthodoxy in America having lost the main prop of its legal system—the authority vested in the law-givers—how can it possibly strengthen or restore itself? This central problem of Orthodoxy was not visualized even by the most pessimistic of the European rabbis who only saw the remedial dangers of ignorance and non-observance. They could not imagine that the authority itself would vanish almost entirely. How, then, can an authoritative legal system be reconstituted if legal authority has disappeared?

CONSERVATIVE JEWRY has been going through a building "boom" all over the country. Numerous new synagogue structures, large and often modernistic, have been erected. A favorite theme for the addresses given at building-fund meetings and at the dedications has been: America—its freedoms, its comradeships and its suitability as an environment for Jewish growth. The facts seem to confirm this confidence. Synagogues are growing in membership. The Conservative rabbinate is rising in status and in public influence. The Conservative laity is attaining more leadership in Jewish affairs. Yet, as Orthodoxy in America has to live without the strongest element in its system, namely, the legal authoritativeness, so Conservative Jewry, for all its growth, must admit that its central definition of Jewry is contrary to the actual facts of American Jewish life.

To Conservatism from the very beginning the nature of the Jewish community is the central element in its theology. The founders of Conservative Judaism were Zacharias Frankel, who was a liberal with regard to all historical studies and historical texts, and his co-worker, Heinrich Graetz, who was a radical in Biblical criticism. Both men, though liberal or radical in science, were Conservative with regard to Jewish ritual. They felt that the value of Jewish observances must not be judged entirely by past tradition as Orthodoxy said, nor by the

logic of certain doctrines as the Reformers said. What is permissible and what is essential in Jewish observance, prayerbook, kashrus, etc., must be judged primarily by the prevailing mood of the Jewish people. In other words, if the Jewish community treasures certain prayer-texts or observances, this is the fact which matters most. The Talmud occasionally directs disputing scholars as follows: "*Puk chazi ma ama daber*"; "Go forth and see what the people says" (b. Berachos 45a). This occasional test in the Talmud is raised to a general principle in Conservative Judaism. The Jewish people is not only the carrier of Judaism or its instrument; its changing moods are the sovereign test of what is Jewish and what is not. In other words, it is based upon the conviction that *vox populi* is, in truth, *vox dei*.

This test has a democratic persuasiveness but it rests on the assumption that it is possible to ascertain what the people want or believe. It was generally possible to ascertain this in Europe and in the environment in which Frankel and Graetz lived and worked. There were organized Jewish communities with official status. Its opinions could be very easily learned. It is, therefore, indispensable for Conservative Judaism to seek for an ascertainable Jewish opinion, and that means an organized Jewish community. Hence the effort of Conservative Jewry in America is constantly in the direction of organizing the Jewish community on the local and on the national level. It was only from a great leader of Conservative Judaism, Solomon Schechter, that the phrase could come, "Catholic Judaism," or "Catholic Israel." It was from the Conservative movement that Mordecai Kaplan's plan came for a separate "Jewish civilization" organized nationwide as integrated self-governing and disciplined Jewish communities.

Unfortunately, this indispensable sociological basis, the constant goal and effort of Conservatism, does not actually exist in America and is not likely to exist for some time. Every effort to organize Jewry on a nationwide basis breaks up on the first or on the second or at the latest on the third assembly. As for local Jewish communities as organized "kahals," the Jewish Community Councils, Jewish Boards of Education, can only function with the greatest of care and the minimum of control.

As an actual fact, there is no near prospect of the kind of organized Jewish community for which Conservatism longs and which is, for it, not merely a goal but an urgent necessity, since for it the "voice of Jewry" is the chief vehicle for the voice of God. As Orthodoxy in America lacks its legal essential, an accepted authority, so Conservatism lacks its social foundation, the united and vocal Jewish communal unity.

AT FIRST it seemed that America was the perfect environment for Reform Judaism. It was not merely that "non-Conformist" Judaism would be at home in a "non-Conformist" land. It was more than a question of observances or theology. It was primarily a question of mood and emotions. The mood of messianic optimism which Reform voiced in the early nineteenth century in Germany, the spirit of comradeship and hope which soon, alas, disappeared from the cradleland of Reform, seemed to be the permanent spirit of this new land. The air that Reform had breathed at its birth it found again in America. It was because of this confident spirit that Reform developed the way it did. Its chief emphasis in Scripture were those preachments which fitted in to the spirit of the times, the grand universalistic promises of a unified world. A favorite verse was from Isaiah, "My house shall be a house of prayer for all people." It was no longer necessary for Jews to build around themselves a wall of separating ritual and observance as Orthodoxy had insisted. The mood expressed in the will of Moses Sofer against any changes in the old Jewish garments or colloquial speech, or in the Hungarian Responsa against changes in synagogue architecture or procedure, seemed to the Reformers to be the ugly medieval remnants of a vanishing past. So when Reform, with its grand historic optimism came to America, it found here a land of confidence, hope and progress. Here its leaders pioneered in every movement which meant social progress and inter-group comradeship. The part played by the earlier generations of enthusiastic Reformers in helping weld bonds of brotherhood between various groups in America deserves much more attention and appreciation than it has hitherto received. At all events, this world optimism is an essential mood in Reform.

But who could have predicted that the optimistic spirit would have faded from the world, even indeed have subsided in America? Who could have known that we would have lived into a time in which faith in science itself has lessened and that the time would come when America would feel itself unsafe and in its terror endanger its own liberties? As Orthodoxy and Conservatism cannot find the bases of their respective doctrines in America, so it has come about that Reform too has lost the historic background for its essential spirit. What prospect then can there be for a vital Judaism in America, for an Orthodoxy without its authority, for a Conservatism without its community and for a Reform without its world hope?

IT IS safe to assume that there will always be Orthodoxy in America, or for that matter, in any Jewish community of considerable size. There are always families

in which the chain of tradition is especially strong. There are always individuals who are happiest under religious discipline and who feel the need of the "authentic" and "authoritative." But can Orthodoxy grow much stronger in America? That depends on whether it will be possible to widen the area of popular acceptance of Jewish legal authority, whether more and more people will come to believe that the law as expressed in the Shulchan Aruch and in the later Codes is actually God's command and that the rabbis are its authoritative voice, the rulers by Divine authority (*"Man Malchi? Rabbanan."* "Who are the kings?—the Rabbis.") Without this basic faith the law becomes an unbearable burden which none will accept other than those who are trained into the habit of acceptance. How then can Orthodoxy grow?

It well may be that its best chance is in the plan for the revival of a Sanhedrin in Israel, a concept which most Orthodox leaders at present reject. If the Sanhedrin could be reestablished after the modern Jewish European catastrophe, a center of religious authority might arise which could have persuasiveness and even a majestic standing. For there surely needs to be a re-analysis of the status of the Jewish state in Jewish law. A Jewish king has special status and authority in Jewish law. Is it not obvious that a Jewish state likewise has a special status? In that case it well may be, or is at least theoretically conceivable, that in a Jewish state religious changes could occur *within the framework* of Orthodoxy which, outside of a Jewish state, could not occur without a *break* with Orthodoxy. If, for example, the State of Illinois declares in its law that as a husband may divorce a wife, so a wife may divorce a husband, both sexes being equal before the law, such a declaration of the woman's rights has no bearing upon Jewish law (any more than it has bearing upon Catholic law which does not recognize divorce at all). But if a *Jewish* state in Israel would declare that men and women are equal before the law, such a decision may well have status or achieve status in Orthodox Jewish law.

At all events, such changes in the direction of modernization brought about by a Jewish state, could only be assimilated into Orthodoxy if accepted by an authoritative Sanhedrin which could, if necessary, break with many exilic decisions. If such a Sanhedrin, influenced by a progressive Jewish state, could bring authoritative reform into Orthodoxy, Orthodoxy might well win thousands of people in America who have an appreciation and a reverence for the state and the people of the Republic of Israel. Other than that, there seems to be no way for a rapid recovery of the majestic authority of Jewish law.

THE EFFORT of Conservatism to construct in America the sociological basis which is indispensable for its theology, cannot have an early success. The historic Jewish communities have taken much longer to coalesce into unity than may, perhaps, be supposed. There were Jews in Spain for many centuries before Chasdai, and Jews in the Rhineland for many centuries before Rabbenu Gershom, and Jews in Poland for many centuries before Moses Isserles and Solomon Luria. But these were silent centuries with no learning that has left a trace and no institutions that became part of Jewish life. Why these centuries of silence in Jewish communities which became so creative and so self-characteristic in later years?

It is due to what must have happened in every great Jewry. It took centuries for the various elements coming from different lands, bringing with them different habits of thought and mood, to coalesce into an integrated Jewry. In the United States this process may be somewhat hurried along, speeded by cooperation in charity appeals, etc., but it cannot be hurried too fast. Any attempt to force it because of doctrinal presuppositions in the favor of unified communal government, will only tend to exasperate and divide. Yet the effort is in the right direction. Meantime, Conservatism grows, not because of its Conservative philosophy, but because of its Reform practice: family-seating, modern music, modified prayer-books, etc. In its willingness to accept changes in ritual, to seek new methods, Conservatism gains strength. In its essential struggle for Jewish unity, Conservative Jewry is on a rough and rocky road in America, but it is on the right road.

If America has no future as a free and creative and optimistic country, Reform has no future in it. If hatred increases so that the bridges built across historic chasms lead only into a wilderness, if it will become necessary for the people of Israel in America to withdraw from contact with their fellow citizens, if to protect our people and our faith we must build walls of seclusion through separating ceremonies and habits fulfilling the tragic verse of the Prophet:—"Go, my people, hide thyself in thy inner room. Close the door after thee until the storm doth pass" (Isaiah 26:20); if in a hate-filled America Jewish isolationism becomes a tragic necessity, then Reform Judaism is not the instrument to do that job and it has no future here.

What will the future actually be like? How far will the tension between Catholics and Protestants go? Will it reach as far as creating an atmosphere of religious fanaticism and hatred? How far will the international tensions reach into the mood of America? Will it create resentments so violent that any one different from the majority is immediately suspect? Predic-

tions are usually answered according to one's philosophy. But aside from long-range predictions, it may well be that precisely because this is no longer the day of radiant optimism, there is greater need for the buoyant mood in Judaism, for that branch of the *Etz Chayim* which reaches further outward and upward. Whatever the distant future may hold, Reform has a present function. Being the least bound by past Jewish law and the most moved by prophetic expansiveness, it is the branch of Judaism on which all must count to be creative, original and experimentally bold. If Reform cannot have that unquestioning messianic confidence which once it had, then at least in these darker days it can say as Maimonides said of the Messiah:—"Even though he lingereth, I hope in him."

IF JUDAISM were a supernal theological system, if its hope were with St. Augustine only in an ethereal City of God, it could scorn the logic of earthly events and hold on to beliefs even though they would appear to earthlings as absurd. But Judaism, being an earth-bound religion, must constantly accommodate itself to human and historical conditions. This it always was able to do and always did, some branches of Judaism more slowly than others, but all were able to adjust themselves.

Conservatism and Reform may declare that they are more apt instruments than Orthodoxy for adjustment. Yet the greatest and the most drastic adjustments occurred long before these modernist movements were formed. There never was as drastic an adjustment in Jewish life as the one which needed to be made when the Temple was destroyed and the entire Biblically-ordained system of sacrifices became impossible and a non-Biblical system of oral prayer had to be substituted for it. Even in more recent centuries, Jewish Orthodoxy in its own slow way, continued to adjust itself. The great rabbi of Salonika in the sixteenth century, Samuel de Medina, said:—"As times change, so the laws change."

If new modernist movements in Judaism had become necessary, it was due to the fact that with the piling up of thousands of precedents in the Jewish law the process of change in Orthodoxy had become more difficult while simultaneously, because of the revolutionary changes brought about by modern life, the need for change has become urgent. But now the traditional and the two modernist movements are in a problem situation where they all must face new circumstances. To grow and prosper, Orthodoxy must find new acceptance for its ancient authority. Conservatism must hasten the process of communal integration. And Reform must hold on to its basic mood, the old liberal belief in human progress, and continue to build upon faith in human decency.

The Moment at Sinai

by ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

LITTLE IS RECORDED OR REMEMBERED EITHER ABOUT the life and character of Euclid or about the way in which his *Elements* came into being. The laws of his geometry are timeless, and the moment in which they first dawned upon the human mind seems to have no bearing upon their meaning and validity. Time and thought, act and content, author and teaching are not related to each other. In contrast, the words of the Bible are not suspended; they do not dangle in an air of timelessness. Here time and thought, act and content, author and teaching are profoundly related to each other. The Bible reflects its divine as well as its human authorship; expressed in the language of a particular age, it addresses itself to all ages; disclosed in particular acts, its content is everlasting. The word of God is in time and in eternity. It preceded the creation of the world, the beginning of time, and is given to us in the setting of time. It is therefore continually in need of new understanding.

The Bible is not a system of abstract ideas but a record of happenings in history. Indeed, some of the biblical maxims and principles may be found or could have been conceived elsewhere. Without parallel in the world are the events it tells about and the fact of taking these events as the points where God and man meet. Events rather than abstractions of the mind are the basic categories by which the biblical man lives; they are to his existence what axioms are to measuring and weighing. Man does not steal because of a timeless imperative but because he was told by God not to steal; the Sabbath is kept not because it is of timeless value—because it is good to rest—but because God commanded us to rest.

The God of the philosopher is a concept derived from abstract ideas; the God of the prophets is derived from acts and events. The root of Jewish faith is, therefore, not a comprehension of abstract principles but an inner attachment to those events; to believe is to remember, not merely to accept the truth of a set of dogmas. Our attachment is expressed by our way of celebrating them, by the weekly reading of the Pentateuch rather than by the recital of a creed. To ignore these events and to pay attention only to what Israel was taught in these events is like tearing out a piece of flesh from a living body.

AN ESTHETIC experience leaves behind the memory of a perception and enjoyment; a prophetic experience leaves behind *the memory of a commitment*, not only of a perception. Revelation was not an act of enjoyment. God spoke and man not only perceived but also accepted the will of God. Revelation lasts a moment, acceptance continues.

This, then, is given to us in Jewish tradition: not an idea of, but a commitment to, revelation. Our task is to examine our attitude to that commitment. Is there any meaning to our being loyal to events that happened more than two thousand years ago?

Biblical revelation must be understood as *an event*, not as a *process*. What is the difference between process and event? A process happens regularly, following a relatively permanent pattern; an event is extraordinary, irregular. A process may be continuous, steady, uniform; events happen, intermittently, occasionally. The term "continuous revelation" is as logical as the term "a round square." Processes are typical; events are unique. A process follows a law; events create a precedent. Nature is made up of processes—organic life, for example, may be described as consisting of the processes of birth, growth and decay; history consists primarily of events—what lends human, historical character to the life of Pericles or Aristotle are not the organic processes through which they went but the anomalous, surprising and unpredictable acts, achievements or events which distinguished them from other human beings.

The term event is a *pseudonym for mystery*. An event is a happening that cannot be reduced to a part of a process. It is something we can neither predict nor fully explain. To speak of events is to imply that there are happenings *in the world* that are beyond the reach of our explanations. What the consciousness of events implies, the belief in revelation claims explicitly, namely, that there is a voice of God *in the world*, not in heaven nor in any unknown sphere—that pleads with man to do His will.

What do we mean by "the world"? If we mean an ultimate, closed, fixed and self-sufficient system of phenomena behaving in accord with the laws known to us,

"Dr. Abba Hillel Silver is a man inspired by scholarship and insight, one of the very few Jews of our time who has made a lasting contribution to Jewish history"—was the tribute which accompanied Dr. Heschel's present article, a foretaste of a work on the philosophy of Judaism now engaging his pen. Abraham J. Heschel is associate professor of Jewish Ethics and Mysticism at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and author of *THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S* and *MAN IS NOT ALONE*.

then such a concept would exclude the possibility of admitting any super-mundane intervention or penetration by a voice not accounted for by these laws. Indeed, if the world as described by natural science is regarded as the ultimate, then there is no sense in searching for the divine which is by definition the ultimate. How could there be one ultimate within the other?

The claim of the Bible is absurd, unless we are ready to comprehend that the world as scrutinized and depicted by science is but a thin surface of undisclosed depths. Order is only one of the aspects of nature; its reality is a mystery given but not known. Countless relations that determine our life in history are neither known nor predictable. What history does with the laws of nature cannot be expressed by a law of nature.

Among many difficulties is this: There would have to be a leak, a flaw in the perfect mechanism of mind and matter to let the spirit of God penetrate its structure. To assume that the world for all its immense grandeur is a tiny cymbal in the hand of God, on which at certain times only one soul vibrates though all are struck; in other words: to assume that the entire complex of natural laws is transcended by the freedom of God, would presuppose the metaphysical understanding that the laws of nature are derived not from a blind necessity but from freedom, that the ultimate is not fate but God. Revelation is not an act of interfering with the normal course of natural events but the act of instilling a new creative moment into the course of natural events.

The chain of causality and of syllogistic reasoning, in which things and thoughts are fettered, is fixed in the space of endless possibilities like the tongue hanging in a silent bell. It is as if all the universe were fixed to a single point. In revelation the bell rings, and words vibrate through the world.

A PROCESS HAS no future. It becomes obsolete and is always replaced by its own effects. We do not ponder about last year's snow. An event, on the other hand, retains its significance even after it has passed; it remains important because and regardless of its effects. Great events, just as great works of art, are significant in themselves. Our interest in them endures long after they are gone.

It is, indeed, one of the peculiar features of human existence that the past does not altogether vanish, that some events of hoary antiquity may hold us in their spell to this very day. Events which are dead, things which are gone, can neither be sensed nor told. Of course, not all events of the past survive or are worthy of survival. Much of the past must be discarded. An act to which

God is not a partner is like "chaff before the wind." To the ears of history there is no perfect past. History may be described as an attempt to overcome the dividing line between past and present, as an attempt *to see the past in the present tense*.

Such understanding of time is not peculiar to historians. It is shared unknowingly by all men and is essential to civilized living.

It is a supreme necessity for human beings to live in more or less durable and dependable relations to each other. There is a variety of such relations, as, for example, marriage, friendship, professional organizations and international conventions. With some exceptions such as those which grow out of parenthood, social relations are not given naturally; they do not originate in a process; they are initiated in an act or in an event *at a definite moment of time*. These relations can endure only if we remain loyal to the promise we have made or to the agreements into which we have entered. They collapse when our loyalty ceases.

The paradoxical nature of such loyalty is obvious. Why should a person be bound all of his life by what he did or said at one single moment of it? And yet civilized men have never failed to admit that their promise had some force to affect their future acts. People believe in the mortality of time; they claim that the past is dead for ever. Indeed, the moment in which a promise is made is quickly gone: gone from our calendar, gone from our clocks. And yet, we are willing to regard it as if it were immortal. In other words, we accept events that happened at moments gone by, as if those moments were still present, as if those events were happening now.

THE DECISIVE event in the spiritual history of our people was the act that occurred at Sinai. It had a twofold significance. One in opening up a new relationship of God to man, in engaging Him intimately to the people of Israel; and second in Israel's accepting that relationship, that engagement to God. It was an event to which both God and Israel were partners. God gave His word to the people, and the people gave its word of honor to God.

That word of honor was not given by one generation alone. All generations of Israel were present at Sinai. It was an event that happened at a particular time and also one that happened for all time. "Nor is it with you only that I make this sworn covenant, but with him who is not here with us this day as well as with him who stands here with us this day before the Lord our God." (Deut. 29:13-14)

It was an act of transcending the present, *history in reverse*: thinking of the future in the present tense. It was a prophetic foresight, for to be a prophet is to be ahead of other peoples' time, is to speak of the future in the present tense.

The contemporaries of Moses succeeded in transcending the present and committed subsequent generations to follow the word of God, because of their ability to think of life in terms of time.

They had no space, they had no land; all they had was time and the promise of a land. Their future depended upon God's loyalty to His own promise, and their loyalty to the prophetic events was the essence of their future.

Some of us may think: how unwise of our ancestors to have committed all future generations to a covenant with God. Yet the life of a historic people is not unlike the life of an individual. As we have seen, there is no civilized living without acts of entering upon social relations, and such acts imply the acceptance of a commitment, the making of a promise or the taking of a pledge. To enter into a relation with God the people had to accept a commitment.

Socrates taught us that a life without thinking is not worth living. Now, thinking is a noble effort, but the finest thinking may end in futility. In thinking man is left to himself; he may soar into astral space and proclaim the finest thoughts, yet what will be the echo and what its meaning for the soul?

The Bible taught us that life without commitment is not worth living; that thinking without roots will bear flowers but no fruits. Our commitment is to God, and our roots are in the prophetic events of Israel.

IN THE LIGHT of the Bible, history then is not a mere succession of *faits accomplis*, things done and no longer worth arguing against. In the eyes of God nothing is ever lost, the past is always present. Though events do not run according to a predestined plan, and though the ultimate goal can never be expressed in one word or in words at all, we believe that history as a whole has a meaning that transcends that of its parts. We must remember that God is involved in our doings, that meaning is given not only in the timeless but primarily in the timely, in that task given here and now. Great are man's possibilities. For time is but a little lower than eternity, and history is a drama in which both man and God have a stake. In its happenings we hear the voice as well as the silence of God.

The spirit of philosophy has often been characterized as the quest of values, as a search for that which is of

greatest value. What is the spirit of the Bible? Its concern is not with the abstract concept of disembodied values, detached from concrete existence. Its concern is with man and his relation to the will of God. The Bible is the quest for the righteous man, for a righteous people. "The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of man, to see if there are any that act wisely, that seek after God. They have all gone astray, they are all alike corrupt; there is none that does good, no, not one." (Psalms 14:2-3)

To the discerning eye the incidents recorded in the Bible are episodes of one great drama: the quest of God for man; His search of man, and man's flight from Him.

Judaism is a way of thinking, not only a way of living. And this is one of its cardinal premises: The source of truth is not found in "a process for ever unfolded in the heart of man" but in unique events that happened at a particular moment in history. There are no substitutes for revelation, for prophetic events. Jewish thought is not guided by abstract ideas, by a generalized morality. At Sinai we have learned that spiritual values are not only aspirations in us but a response to a transcendent appeal addressed to us. Greek philosophy is concerned with values; Jewish thought dwells on *mitzvot*.

The mere attachment to events does not fully express the essence of Jewish living. Event is a formal category, describing the fact of pure happening. To speak of a pure event, of an event in and by itself, is to speak of an anticipated abstraction that exists nowhere except in the minds of some theologians. The movement of revelation must not be separated from the content of revelation. Loyalty to what was uttered in the event is as essential as the belief in the reality of the event. The event must be fulfilled, not only believed in. Revelation is the beginning, our deeds must continue, our lives must fulfill it.

Yet we must not idolize the moment or the event. The will of God is eternal, transcending all moments, all events, including acts of revelation. The significance of time depends upon what is done in time in relation to His will. The moment at Sinai depends for its fulfillment upon this present moment, upon all moments. Had Israel been disloyal subsequent to Sinai, that great moment would have been deprived of all meaning. The Tablets are broken whenever the Golden Calf is called into being. We believe that every hour is endowed with the power to lend meaning to or withhold meaning from—all other hours. No moment is as a moment able to bestow ultimate meaning upon all other moments. No moment is the absolute center of history. Time is a circle whose center is everywhere and whose periphery is nowhere.

Cold War and Jewry

by SALO W. BARON

THE IMPACT OF THE PRESENT INTERNATIONAL tensions on Jewish communal life and thought is often so imperceptible as to escape attention. There are people who still believe that even "hot wars" never basically affect the long-range ways of living and thinking of the masses, and that whatever effects are felt during the conflict soon wear off in the postwar periods. The phrase "wars settle nothing" was particularly popular during the 1930's. Although largely discredited now, this phrase still reflects the half-conscious ideas of many persons who, looking behind any war's outward manifestations into its fundamental causes, consider the ultimate outcome as a more or less automatic effect of these causes which would have occurred even if the war itself had never materialized.

In a recent paper on the "Impact of Wars on Religion" (*Political Science Quarterly*, Dec. 1952) the present writer has pointed out the fallacy of such generalizations. While reacting to basic social forces and often merely accelerating their maturation, wars have on many occasions tipped a tenuous balance and decisively influenced the subsequent course of history. This is no less true of cold wars. At bottom, cold wars are even more directly a reflection of the underlying social trends. But they too bring certain factors into swifter and more decisive play than would otherwise be the case, and also frequently tip the balance between opposing forces which, more or less of the same strength, might otherwise take a different turn.

In its latest phase, especially, the present cold war has placed the Jewish community on the defensive. The Prague trials, highlighting anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist trends within the Soviet orbit which had been gathering momentum during the last decade, have served, more than any other event of recent years, to focus the attention of the Jewish and non-Jewish public opinion on the danger of extinction threatening the Jews still living behind the Iron Curtain. And yet, the reaction of the world Jewish community is far from uniform. When one recalls the remarkable unanimity which ran through the cries of anguish heard throughout the Jewish world twenty years ago, after Hitler's rise to

power, the present response is not only relatively lukewarm but also utterly confused.

OF COURSE, there are differences between Hitler's and Stalin's brands of anti-Semitism. Nazi Jew-baiting carried with it the immutability and irrevocability of a natural law. No Jewish individual, not even a half-Jew or a quarter-Jew, could escape the taint imposed upon him by the "master race."

Stalin and his associates are far more discriminating. Jewish descent *per se* is not considered a crime. In the official propaganda during and after the Prague trials, the attack was always qualified by some such adjective as "bourgeois Jew" or "Zionist Jew." These terms purported to convey the idea that some other Jews might prove to be acceptable Communists.

Although one must not underrate this distinction, the menace of the present Soviet policies to the Jewish people is no less frightening. Far less violent in form though it may be, its enduring effects may prove quite as devastating. To begin with, Stalin and his satellites now rule over a Jewish population of more than 2,500,000, living in an area extending from the Oder to the Pacific and inhabited by nearly forty percent of the human race. Twenty years ago, Hitler ruled only over some 500,000 Jews, inhabiting a relatively small country of some sixty million souls. The Nazi anti-Semitic ideology, while effective domestically, and even helpful in sowing internal discord among Germany's European neighbors, could serve as but a minor vehicle in Germany's march to world domination. In fact, it probably lost for the Reich as many (or more) influential friends as it secured. Stalin's anti-Jewish assault is now primarily geared to Soviet propaganda in both Eastern Germany and the Middle East. By appealing to the undying Nazi heritage of large segments of the German people, it hopes to strengthen the anti-Western forces in both German republics, and ultimately to neutralize the much-dreaded participation of Germany's armed might in the Atlantic alliance. At the same time it endeavors to win the entire Arab world over to the Soviet side. With the growing inner tensions in the Arab countries, nurtured by extravagant nationalism as well as the unspeakable poverty of the masses, the Communist appeal

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combining ardent anti-Zionism with the preachment of social revolution has proved all too attractive. The Kremlin rulers know that they are playing for very high stakes in seeking to bring the Middle East with its inexhaustible oil reserves under Soviet control. To serve this purpose they think nothing of victimizing not only the new state of Israel but also the entire Jewish people.

Most important, the Nazi ideology, based upon the doctrine of racial superiority and idolization of the German state, was not a universalist credo which could be adopted everywhere else without grave alterations. Certainly, the "inferior" races, numerically the majority of mankind, could not fail to resent bitterly the Nazi doctrines, and were able, at best, to enter with them into a temporary "marriage of convenience," as did the Japanese during the brief interlude of the Axis. Communism, on the other hand, has already proved, in the thirty-five years of its power, to be a pliable instrument for universal application, and has appealed with equal force to the colonial peoples and to the disgruntled intellectuals in the West. In fact, Communism has grown into a major world religion menacing the survival of all the older religions and societies. If imbedded as an article of faith in that new religion, anti-Semitism could indeed become a world menace of unprecedented scope.

THE AMBIGUITY of the Jewish reaction to that menace has, therefore, most serious implications. A great many Jews, even Jewish communal agencies, are largely content with a smug "I told you so"—an attitude which they do not clearly articulate but which apparently acts as a satisfactory substitute for a positive forthright program. Those liberals, who had never been fellow-travellers before, find in the new developments a confirmation of their reiterated assertions that totalitarianism as such must in the end prove antagonistic to Jewish survival. They readily forget that only a few years ago, when the Fascist menace loomed largest, they had lent a willing ear to Communist exhortations that the Jewish question was only part and parcel of larger social conflicts and hence, that only an alliance of all anti-Fascist forces could help the Jews to weather the storm. Now, they counsel substantially the same procedure, only with the inverted sign that the struggle must be directed against all totalitarian movements, and advocate a complete and unequivocal alliance of the entire Jewish people with the western coalition. They disregard the millennia of historic experience in which the Jewish people had often managed to survive only because, however tempting the conditions were at certain critical moments, it refused to throw all of its support behind one side in a divided world. In any case, there are many specifically Jewish aspects to this

struggle which could never be resolved by such an all-out alliance, since the western coalition could not reciprocate by casting its lot entirely with the Jewish side.

Some members of the Jewish community, particularly those of its leaders who are deeply engrossed in the struggle for Jewish rights and a defense against anti-Semitic accusations, cannot quite conceal their satisfaction over the decisive way in which the old anti-Semitic identification of all Jews with Communism has now been exploded. The more anti-Semitic the Communists prove to be, these leaders seem to feel, the easier it will be to convince the non-Jewish public that the occasional Jewish members of the Party had always been nothing but misguided individuals belonging to a tiny minority of their people. In their virtually overriding concern with public relations these men fail to perceive the perfect futility of such pyrrhic victories. They should long have learned from experience that anti-Semites, indeed all "antis," are never short of arguments, real or fictitious, and that if a social situation favors hostility to minorities, or particularly to Jews, no amount of rational argumentation, however persuasive to the unprejudiced, would in any way stem the rising tide of bigotry and intolerance.

EXTREME ZIONISTS, on the other hand, see in this evolution a confirmation of their oft-reiterated view that anti-Semitism, more or less rabid, is a necessary and eternal accompaniment of Jewish life in exile. In their basic denial of Jewish survival in the galut, they now claim to have found additional and, in some respects, decisive testimony. Was not the Soviet Union a short time ago the only country in the world which had outlawed anti-Semitism? Was it not the only state or rather federation of states where a man accused of calling a fellow-worker "dirty Jew" could be, and at times was, condemned to prison for several years? More significantly still, in the early months of the Revolution Lenin himself had delivered an eloquent address, broadcast to all the peoples of the Soviet Union and frequently rebroadcast thereafter, in which he emphasized that anti-Semitism was a counter-revolutionary crime, undermining the very basis of the Soviets' revolutionary achievement. And yet now, barely three decades later, Slansky was being made to confess that:

I deliberately shielded them [the national bourgeois Zionist organizations] by abusing the campaign against so-called anti-Semitism. By proposing that a big campaign be waged against anti-Semitism, by magnifying the danger of anti-Semitism, and by proposing various measures against anti-Semitism—such as the writing of articles, the publication of pamphlets, the holding of lectures, and so forth—I criminally prevented the waging of a campaign against Zionism and the revelation

of the hostile character of Zionist ideology, and the unmasking of the hostile activity of Zionists and Zionist organizations.

In other words, the very struggle against anti-Semitism which was real, indeed imperative, under the conditions prevailing in postwar Czechoslovakia which had just emerged from several years of Nazi occupation, could be twisted into a camouflage of some altogether imaginary pro-Zionist activities. If then, argue some extremist "deniers of exile," even the Soviet Union had so quickly completed the whole circle from a radical repudiation of anti-Semitism to its encouragement and more or less public espousal, which Jewish community in the dispersion can feel secure?

Apart from these ideological deterrents, the general world situation and certain recent domestic developments in the United States help explain the relatively tempered reaction of Jewish communal leadership and still more of the ordinary Jewish citizen. In our divided world, any attack on the Soviet Union and its satellites, is not only stamped by Communist propaganda the world over as "warmongering," but it allies the attacker even against his will with the western coalition. The Jewish people as such, dispersed over the whole globe, is naturally enough reluctant to be drawn into the struggle between these world powers. Like India, Pakistan or the Arab nations, the Jews may reason that somehow, sooner or later, they too will be drawn into the vortex of this world conflict. But they are doubly reluctant to hasten that day, when they remember the lessons of their entire history that their very survival sometimes depended on their not having aligned themselves exclusively with one side of clashing imperialisms or world outlooks. They may even recall the reasoning of an early medieval homilist who claimed that God had divided the world between Edom and Ishmael (Christianity and Islam) only "in order to preserve Israel" (*Seder Eliyahu rabbah*, xx). At the same time the Jews know, of course, that they cannot remain quiescent in the face of endless communist provocations. They also realize that their whole religious heritage, the achievement of the millennial ethics, is facing one of the most dangerous assaults. To remain passive is impossible; to raise one's voice, be it on the Jewish issue alone, makes one immediately a partisan in the imperial struggle. That is why Jewish public opinion seems so bewildered and speaks with so many tongues.

IN THE United States, the reactions of the Jewish community have been further colored by the spreading menace of McCarthyism. Reluctant to join this indiscriminate pursuit of everything smacking, however remotely, of communist ideology, many progressive Jew-

ish leaders feel hampered in giving vent to their anger over Soviet anti-Semitism, lest they be suspected of such collusion. So dear is to them, and rightly so, the struggle for the Four Freedoms within America, that they do not wish to join, however indirectly, the ruthless campaign for the suppression of all independent, unregimented thinking under the guise of anti-Communism.

Such are the deep perplexities confronting the Jewish communities throughout the western world, and particularly in the United States. These perplexities, are indeed, to a large extent, a reflection of the "split" communal personality of the Jew in the Emancipation era. After all, most western Jews today are not exclusively or even primarily Jews, as their ancestors had been through twenty-five centuries of Exile from Ezekiel to Mendelssohn, but rather primarily Americans or Englishmen, Canadians or Frenchmen, Argentinians or Russians. Not only the man on the street, but also the Jewish communal leader or intellectual spokesman, acts and thinks primarily as member of the larger national entity amidst which he lives. He normally reacts to the great dangers menacing his particular country as do most of his fellow-citizens of other faiths.

Of course, as the first prospective victim, the Jew is more sensitive to the menace of anti-Semitism not only to himself, but also to the basic traditions of western democracy. Having been in the front line of attack during the Nazi period, he can again raise his voice in warning that an attack on the Jew is merely a spearhead of an all-out attack on the fundamental values of the entire Judeo-Christian tradition. However, this time his fellow citizens of other faiths are much less in need of such a warning because, even without Soviet anti-Semitism, they realize that the powerful combination of communist ideology and Soviet imperialism is the greatest menace to the survival of their civilization.

WHAT THEN can Jewish leadership do to counteract that confusion? This is not the place to discuss comprehensive, ultimate solutions. There exists, indeed, no simple, and certainly no single remedy. However, it appears that one of the answers to the challenge of our age is a renewed emphasis on the basic teachings of the Jewish heritage. This does not mean sheer escapism and turning one's back on the staggering problems of the outside world. On the contrary, it means that, however enormous the difficulties, Jews must for idealistic as well as practical reasons, try to strengthen the hand of the United Nations and those other international agencies which hold out a promise of peace. Without falling for the "phony" peace propaganda emanating from the Soviet camp, nor, on the other hand, simply dismissing all peace talk as utopian, they must con-

stantly remember that it no longer suffices for them to pray, as they have done ever since Jeremiah, for the welfare of the country in which they live. Some four hundred years ago the distinguished historian, Azariah de' Rossi explained that "at a time like this, when our sins have caused our dispersion to the four quarters of the world, we also have to implore Heaven to grant peace to the whole world, that no people should raise arms against another" (*Meor Enayim*, ed. by D. Cassel, p. 446). This is far more true today in our wholly interdependent world when a third world war might spell utter ruin even to victors. Nor is it enough to pray for peace. As politically active citizens, which their ancestors in De' Rossi's day were not, Jews must also act in behalf of peace, though admittedly not of peace at any price.

Return to the Jewish heritage is even more imperative from the standpoint of Jewish communal life. Precisely because the Jewish people is facing such complex and in many ways unpredictable dangers, it is doubly important to strengthen its internal forces of resistance. Any communicable disease, physicians often contend, can be combated not only by fighting the germs of that malady but also by strengthening the resistance of the body under attack. Jews can do very little about fighting anti-Semitism in general. Jew-baiting has long been recognized as a disease of Gentile nations, and only the Gentile nations can stave it off effectively. The Jews are even more helpless in combating the Soviet brand of anti-Semitism both because of the overwhelming power of the communist propaganda machine backed by a totalitarian state, and because they can scarcely communicate with their coreligionists behind the Iron Curtain. But they certainly can go on strengthening the morale of their own people. They can and ought to devote far more energy than heretofore to grappling with the fundamental issues raised by the new menace. Turning away from the relatively petty internal squabbles, such as have characterized the recent breakup of the NCRAC membership, the leaders must try to grasp the full meaning of the new status of their people in the emergent world situation, and then translate it to their own members and to their non-Jewish neighbors.

Only a Jewish community cognizant of its millennial tradition, determined to weather whatever storms it might encounter in its historic procession, equipped with a staunch will to survive under all circumstances, and constantly refining the tools for such survival which have been forged in the crucible of untold sufferings throughout generations—only such a community will be able to confront the new challenge with deep concern, but also with perfect assurance concerning the ultimate outcome.

Is This Israel's Turning Point?

by ELIAS M. EPSTEIN

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE STATE OF ISRAEL, A government has formed together with the General Zionists or center party. Its ministers occupy an impressive place in the cabinet, numerically and qualitatively. It is the partner of Mapai, the largest party in the Knesset, with whom its agreement formed the basis of the broadest coalition secured since statehood was achieved. The new government commands almost three-quarters of the parliamentary votes.

From the inception of Israel's independence, the General Zionists assumed a critical attitude to the dominant force in the nation's political and economic life, namely, the Labor Party and the ramified Histadrut Ovdim. Without hostility to the workers, who have always been represented in their ranks, the General Zionists claimed that the orbit of Jewish life embraced more than a class-conscious struggle for the ascendancy of the so-called proletariat; that individualism—a characteristic of Jews—is not an unmixed evil, but is responsible for much good; and that in the fashioning of the sovereign state, all Jews must play their part, irrespective of their philosophy, calling, or class. Moreover, the General Zionists emphasized the indispensable cooperation of World Jewry in the upbuilding of Israel, and stressed that Jews abroad belonged by nature and habit of thought, by experience and qualifications, largely to what may be called without ignominy the middle class—the element which binds the economy of a country together and which instinctively seeks a realistic approach to the greatest good for the greatest number.

As a small party of seven members in the first Knesset, the General Zionists began to outline a policy divergent from the high-minded, but impracticable welfare State based on the primacy of labor, which they knew one could ill-afford at this stage in Israel's history. In economics, with which they were familiar as builders of industry, of individualist agriculture, and of commerce and handicrafts, they warned against a doctrinaire atti-

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tude. Respecting distribution, they doubted the efficacy of extensive controls liable to overwhelm the intricate machinery of marketing and production. On national issues they pressed for a state and not a party educational system, a non-political civil service, a national health service instead of party sick funds, and the like.

They were met, unfortunately, with derision, denounced as the party of "big business" and petty interest, and the "enemy of the worker"—though most "capitalists" in Israel work at least as hard as their employees. Zionists abroad, for psychological rather than other reasons, had wanted to back the powerful Labor Party with whose comprehensive program of works and endeavor they were made more familiar. This weakened the General Zionists in Israel. But as the ambitious plans of Labor were put into execution, the public gradually experienced the effects of the wide gap between promise and fulfilment. At the municipal elections they had an opportunity to express themselves, and the issue became frankly national rather than local. The voters swept the General Zionists into the position of the second largest party in the country; they received almost as many votes as Mapai.

Many people believed that the victory was a "fluke," or only a passing manifestation of disappointment, and the General Zionists remained outside the coalition government. But at the second Knesset elections, they were again the recipient of a huge vote of confidence. They obtained 23 seats, thus constituting the second largest of the parties not only in the popular count but in the parliament.

SINCE THEN there has been a stiff tug-of-war between Mapai and the Center group. For a time, in reaction to the opposition's criticism, Mapai intensified its own remedies for a situation which began to become economically more ominous. Controls were extended into many phases of daily life. The government allotted all raw materials, it distributed the main finished products, and above all it directed the receipt and expenditure of foreign currency, essential to life. Gradually, however, both in Israel, and to an increasing extent abroad, it was realized that the malady which lowered the value of the Israel pound, which frightened investors upon whom so much depended, which led to emigration and restricted immigration, which did not benefit the ordinary wage-earner and which impoverished the middle class, could not be halted by these means. An attempt was made to relax controls, to attract capital, to ease restrictions, to adapt conditions to a western aliyah. Pourparlers began between the Premier and the head of the General Zionists, with a view to the latter joining the government. But the indispensable conditions for such

cooperation were not easily created. As the leading opposition party, the custodian of a mounting confidence expressed by increasing membership, the General Zionists could not accept responsibility without a fair opportunity to implement their policy. Twice the negotiations broke down, but eventually the persistence of Mr. Ben-Gurion, and the accommodation of Mr. Bernstein and his colleagues, achieved the desired purpose.

Other factors also had their effect. The international scene darkened. There has been a distinct shift in influence and policy among some of the great powers, in whose shadow small states must live. The succession of General Eisenhower to the Presidency of the United States made a deep impression on the government and people of Israel. It portended the possibility of a modification of American foreign policy, if only in degree. It was definitely a move towards the Right. Devastating in its effects was the Prague trial, with its plain manifestation of a rebuff (and worse) from the Soviet zone of influence, to Zionist aspirations and Israel's interests, and indeed Jewish welfare. The repercussions of this revelation have been far-reaching upon Mapai and Mapam, and, in another sense, upon the General Zionists.

Mapai saw that it cannot hope to bridge the ever-widening gulf dividing it from its former comrades; Mapam was torn by internal dissension, and with great difficulty, if at all, it will remain intact. The General Zionists felt more than ever the incompatibility of voting in the opposition together with Mapam against the government of the day. The Prague convictions, after a staged spectacle, lit up luridly the sinister forces lying in wait for "fellow-travelers." But vivid as was this warning in the sphere of world relationships, it was even more searching and illuminating in respect to the internal complexion of Israel nationalism. The vexed question of Socialism *and* Zionism, as contrasted with Socialism *or* Zionism, posed itself ruthlessly. Mr. Ben-Gurion and his colleagues were uncompromising and unhesitant in their reaction, which found thorough approval from the General Zionist benches.

The revulsion of public opinion to the exposed Cominform cleared the air, and it may well be that Prague has done more to discredit Communism and its sympathizers than all the propaganda of its opponents.

ABOUT THE same time a change occurred in respect to the relations of the Mapai leadership with the large Zionist constituency in the United States and elsewhere. The Zionist Organization of America, at its last convention, reverted to its friendly relationship with the General Zionists of Israel, reasserted the need for a

strong World Zionist Organization, and underlined the desirability of greater influence of Zionists abroad on Israel affairs so far as the latter affected their own activity. The bill for granting the World Zionist Organization a special status was passed by the Knesset, and there was an end to references in high quarters questioning the contribution and value of the Zionist Organization abroad.

Of more immediate consequence was the effort undertaken by the government to create conditions in greater conformity with the needs of a western aliyah. Departments and committees were set up to deal specifically, for example, with housing for English-speaking immigrants, and to render more attractive even temporary engagements of skilled personnel. These developments were bound to lead to a greater approximation of viewpoint between Labor and the center party of the General Zionists. In other words, Mapai had slowly and partially been drawing nearer to the platform advocated by the General Zionists (and the Progressives). As therefore the economic and internal political situation worsened, the road to a full alliance became both open and imperative.

It would no doubt be unfair to read too much into the published text of the government program based on this agreement, as presented to the Knesset by the Premier. All governments and parties are apt to insert among their declaratory intentions the absolute ideal.

However, the new program is in a very true sense a "Bill of Rights," which, while not covering all the objectives of the General Zionists, comprehends a large measure of their policy. In respect to economic administration, while admitting the necessity of a minimum control over essential articles in short supply, the rule will be that "all unnecessary and ineffective controls will be abolished." This has given satisfaction to all but the extremists. The question as to which restrictions are superfluous or unfeasible is now being probed. Nothing has irritated people so much as the pettifogging interference with trade, production and marketing, which has not produced real egalitarianism, (surely Utopian) but has rather hampered initiative and enterprise. Yet no one believes that all control over scarce commodities can be abolished overnight.

Foreign currency, a precious necessity, is to be concentrated on development works and not dissipated on current expenditures. Only in this way can one prepare the ground for an increased output, itself indispensable. We must produce or perish. The budget is to be balanced, and economy introduced by retrenchment of personnel, which will be facilitated by the abandonment of

overmuch supervision. Steps will be speeded in the attempt to stabilize the Israel pound. This is bound up naturally with the control of foreign exchange. The General Zionists have urged that there is no longer any benefit in the artificial restriction of exchange transactions, and that the free flow of dollars and other hard currency will help and not injure the pound. Certain Mapai thinkers have adopted this view. It is now being studied intensively in the light of the knowledge accessible to the government. This is obviously a key to many other ramifications of policy. If dollars can become available freely, production and export are likely to be stimulated in order to obtain them. With such dollars, raw materials of which we are starved can be bought and thus the wheel of output, revenue, investment, and further output, will come full circle—instead of the previous spiral of decreased exports, decline of Israel currency, higher wages, taxation and prices, and still lower production.

THE NEW GOVERNMENT expects to remain in office until the end of the present parliament in mid-1955. It has therefore included in its program other necessary reforms of national import. The party control of schools is at last to be abolished—not later than October 1953. There will be a minimum standard curriculum for all schools, which will be under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Parents may ask for additional hours of special instruction, and all who desire religious education will receive it.

Opportunity will also be taken to introduce a reform of the electoral law, which was taken over from the Zionist Congress system, itself a relic of old European and outworn practice. Calculated in theory to yield the maximum representation for all minorities, the National Party Lists in effect produce fragmentary groups, thus precluding any one party from gaining a majority. Hence the successive coalitions of small parties from which Israel, like France, has suffered. The precise form of alteration is still to be adopted—the proposed elimination from the Knesset of all parties failing to secure ten percent of the votes being thought too drastic and undemocratic. The Progressives joined the government on condition that this particular proposal be re-examined, and that other methods to achieve a stable majority government be considered.

The present opposition, both Left and Right, has been emphatic in its denunciation of the coalition. Mapam, still in the grip of inner friction, has stigmatized the alliance of Mapai with the General Zionists as a betrayal of the working-class, as a bond between "Reformism" and the bourgeoisie; and it calls the General Zionists "Boazim"—a reference to the landowner who married Ruth and who curiously enough has

become a symbol of exploitation. *Al Hamishmar*, the organ of Mapam, questions the sincerity of Mapai's championship of democracy, its fairness to the Arab minority, and its neutrality towards the USSR. In the Knesset, Mr. Meir Yaari, the Mapam spokesman, stated that his party would "oppose the government till it falls, in order to save the mission of the working class." He warned that there would be an end to Labor education, and that the General Zionists were sold to American imperialism.

On the other hand, while Mapam saw in the new government the victory of the Center, the Herut party interpreted it as a capitulation of the General Zionists to Mapai. Its paper, *Herut*, professed to see no change at all, and announced the intention of the party to oppose the General Zionists for the betrayal of their principles. It had no confidence in the government. It added that it had also failed on foreign policy by not being forthright enough at the United Nations and complained of its tenderness to the aggressive Arab states now sharpening their weapons for a second round.

The Agudah spokesman, Rabbi I. M. Levin, also attacked the new cabinet for its alleged disregard of conscientious religious scruples. This was in reference to the conscription of women for national, though non-military service. He also deplored the failure to appreciate the place of Judaism in the state, which would be bound to fail "without Divine approval."

THIS is the picture which is the sequel of many months of a precarious political life, now assured of greater equilibrium. What concretely has been achieved? The new program and cabinet undoubtedly represent a turning-point in Israel's national policy. We now have a centrist rather than a Labor government. The specific changes in kind and emphasis, the distribution of portfolios, all indicate a fresh approach. We must hope that it is not too late to follow a path better taken earlier. However, over and above the practical aspects of the realignment of forces, is a moral factor which the General Zionists have in particular emphasized. To a large extent it influenced their decision to enter the coalition in spite of the apprehension that their party as such may suffer (partly because of diversion of energies to the work of government, and partly because their supporters may become impatient if success is not immediate). This is the creation of an atmosphere of cooperation rather than frustration in the government of Israel. It is believed that there is goodwill on both sides now, and that the spirit of peace and harmony in tackling the grave problems of the nation, will be at least as potent in winning through, as in effecting administrative and political improvements. There had existed a danger

from the suffocation of initiative and civic enterprise; this evil atmosphere should now be dissipated.

Moreover, this constructive positive mood, this unified effort, should spread beyond the confines of Israel into world Jewry at large. For too often the storms and passions of Israel are reflected and aggravated in the communities of our dispersed people. It has been part of our misfortune that at the very time when Israel is dependent on the friendliness of world Jewry, on its personal aid as well as its financial and other resources, there has emerged a certain *malaise* in Zionist ranks. Criticism, misunderstanding, and even anger have been aroused among our fellow-Jews by happenings and conditions in Israel. The rallying together of the main constructive forces in a new national government, pledged to a program of realistic progress, democratic principles and personal liberties, should dissipate the languor, eradicate the resentments, and give spur to a greater and more united endeavor.

If this goal is attained, it will alone justify Israel's small "revolution." The period of fumbling and quarreling will pass and open the way to that result of sovereignty which we all assumed would follow the War of Independence—a grand resurgence of Jewish élan.

It may be recalled that when interpreting the mandate of the last Israel election, Dr. Abba Hillel Silver intimated that he welcomed the implication that the moderate Laborites and the centrist General Zionists would now collaborate. This stand was endorsed by the Zionist Organization of America, which saw in such a coalition the opportunity and hope not only of strengthening and rationalizing the economy of Israel, but also of mobilizing increased and unified support for Israel from abroad. Thus once again the "Silver line" has proved inevitable, and it was naturally to its author that Peretz Bernstein first cabled the good news. The Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Knesset both expressly stated in the Knesset that this cooperation of Mapai and the General Zionists was overdue, and that they regretted it had not been brought about sooner. The satisfaction which its consummation evokes may now serve as a symbolic gift to the esteemed American Zionist leader as he observes his sixtieth birthday. The fruition of its full significance will surely depend also on the degree to which Dr. Silver will himself be able to participate in the wider activities flowing from the new situation.

Should the response of Jewry match that of the Knesset, the coalition government may mark a real turning point in the transition from digging the foundations—grimy, unlovely, grim—to laying the cornerstone, at first rejected by the builders, for a firmly established and durable State.

Books

Judaism and Zion

Those who live and write from the depths of their being should always be listened to with reverent attention. Whether or not their message strikes a responsive chord in our hearts as we scan their words is not the decisive test, for even if we remain unconvinced, we know that we stand face to face with the ultimate reaches of the human mind. The works of Martin Buber fall into this category, expressive as they are of his mystical personality and his lifelong search for truth.

The little volume *AT THE TURNING*

(Farrar, Straus and Young, 62 pp. \$1.50), consists of the three lectures which Prof. Buber had prepared for his American tour. Couched in beautiful language, these essays expound the proposition that God has a life of his own, now moving away from and now toward the world of men. It is not true that God is "ever near to those that call upon him in truth," for just as man may move in two directions—toward the Divine pole of being and in reverse toward the Satanic pole of materiality and evil—so God, too, is a "living God," at times altogether inaccessible to the agonizing cries of men; and during the times when He is near, piercing and transforming us with the rays of His love.

This conception of the Deity as alternating between two phases or dimensions of being corresponds to the insight of the Bible, which refers frequently to the possibility of the Lord

hiding His face, and to the conception of Kabbalah, which elaborated imaginatively on the Talmudic legend of "the chair of justice" and "the chair of mercy."

Prof. Buber finds it possible to "explain" theologically so inhuman a catastrophe as the extermination of the six million Jews in Europe. The God, whose nearness impelled an Isaiah to project the ideal of the Messianic Kingdom, retreats at will, and the demonic forces of human nature come to the fore. The answer to Israel's protests, if answer it can be called, comes when God allows His Being to be glimpsed and comprehended in a moment of glowing dialogue with man. Essentially, this is the message of the book of Job, which culminated in such a dialogue.

Job does not receive a rational reply to his query, but his mere encounter with God is in itself so transforming as to make a rational answer superfluous. Job now feels he belongs to the Almighty, and he consents to play his assigned role. Does the doctrine of a "retreating" God imply a reversion to anthropomorphism? In a sense, it does; but the essence of personal mysticism, in contrast to pantheistic mysticism, necessarily involves the assumption that God is a person. Once this hypothesis is accepted, Buber's concept of the Divine mystery is not inappropriate. We are accustomed to identify Judaism

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with its rationalistic interpretations in medieval and modern Jewish philosophy. But, mysticism is also an authentic expression of Judaism, and mysticism shades off inevitably into the vagaries of mythology.

ISRAEL AND PALESTINE (Farrar, Straus and Young; East and West Library. 161 pp. \$3.75) presents in outline the evolution of the Zionist idea. From the earliest days of his identification with the movement, Prof. Buber sought to uncover the insights and realize the ideals of the romantic current in Zionism. Manifestly, the movement was motivated in every age by realistic as well as mystical considerations and in our day the two currents have failed to blend. Buber and his followers stand even now for a conception of national destiny so lofty and spiritual as to make them virtually stranded in the turbulent and starkly realistic currents and tides sweeping the land of Israel.

Prof. Buber, accordingly, sets out to trace the evolution of the heaven-storming surge of Zionist mysticism. Repeatedly he insists that Zionism is not a "national" but a religious concept; both the "people of Israel" and the "land of Israel" were "chosen" at one and the same time. The modern phase of the movement was a "restatement of an age-old religious and popular reality, adapted to the universal form of the national movements of the nineteenth century." The awareness of election for a Divine purpose and a special mission took various forms in the long history of our people. But it never wholly disappeared and even today it functions as a haunting memory and a challenge.

Describing the development of this idea through the centuries, Prof. Buber draws heavily on the romantic and mystical tradition of Judaism—from the Hebrew prophets of old to A. D. Gordon, the modern prophet of the "religion of labor." Gordon's life and work constitute a living incarnation of the Zionist idea, in all its mystical depth and historical pathos. He taught that man attains the complete expression of his personality by selfless devotion to the soil; and, for the Jew, the meaning of life is disclosed only

when he surrenders his entire being to the earthy rhythms of the land of Israel. "It is not we, it is our land that speaks to the people. We have merely to express and to intimate the words spoken by the land; and we say to you, the whole people: the land is waiting for you."

Whatever we may think of the truth or value of mystical Zionism, we must not overlook the fact that it forms a significant aspect of the movement as a whole, and that its full impact, as a historical factor, is yet to be felt.

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Understanding the Bible

Dr. William A. Irwin, Professor of Old Testament languages at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, has written a memorable book on the Hebrew Bible, **THE OLD TESTAMENT: KEYSTONE OF HUMAN CULTURE** (Schuman, 293 pp. \$4.00). First as to its negative virtues: It is free from the errors usually committed by most

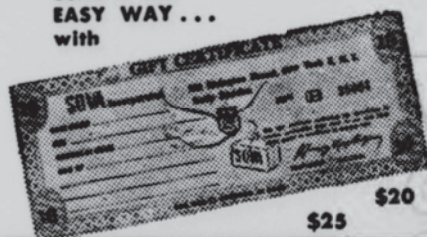
Christian authors who write on the Old Testament. If they are orthodox Christians, the Hebrew Bible is to them a book which though still sacred has been outlived and superseded by the New Testament. Its chief value is that of a promise and prologue. If, however, the Christian author is a modern Bible critic he scorns the Old Testament from another point of view. He delights in finding contradictions,

primitive ideals, evidences of cruelty. To him the Old Testament is brutal, bloody and self-contradictory. Only the Prophets, fighting against an ignorant priesthood and hated by a brutalized people, show any ethical worth. Thus, Christian commentators generally manage to diminish the status of the Hebrew Bible. It is either a mere prologue to the New or except for the Prophets, primitive and self-contradictory.

Dr. Irwin is free from both of these prejudices. He is not at all concerned with proving the incompleteness of the Hebrew Bible so as to justify the New Testament which "completes it." Nor is he concerned, as are the critical

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scholars, to show how, except for the Prophets, the Old Testament lacks any inspiration. His interest is not to demonstrate what the Old Testament does *not* possess, but the magnificence that is in it. This is the positive virtue of the book. He says early, "In the pages of the Old Testament . . . we find revealed attainments in the realms of thought, facility in literary expression, profound religious insights and standards of individual and social ethics, all of which . . . have been of the vital motivating forces which have made our world of the modern spirit." He deals with the Biblical God-conception, with the ideals of society, of the individual, of man in nature and with the superb literary style of Scripture.

One of the main questions which concerns him is one of the most fascinating and yet perhaps one of the unanswerable Biblical questions: What is the origin of these superb ideas and this great literary attainment? This is the problem which, for example, in recent years, has been dealt with by Ezekiel Kaufmann. Why is it that this particular people should have attained so exalted a concept of God? Why should it have been they who established the

unbreakable bond between religion and righteousness? Why should it have been this little people that developed the profound optimism which turned the human concept of history from a sigh for the past into a hope for the future? The Scriptural answer is simply that God revealed Himself to Israel in all His majesty. We moderns who like more complicated answers with footnotes, can give no better response. Professor Irwin agrees with Ezekiel Kaufmann that these great attainments were

due to the *genius* of the people.

The whole volume is beautifully and convincingly written. Perhaps the most stirring part of the book is the last chapter which deals with literary style. All in all, this is a refreshing work which changes the usual direction of modern scholarship. Instead of asking, "What Is Wrong with the Bible?" the author asks, "What is the reason for its greatness?"

SOLOMON B. FREEHOF

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