Reform Jews and Zionism — 1919–1921

IRVING LEVITAS

For Henry Berkowitz, one of the American Reform rabbinate's outstanding personalities at the turn of the century, Zionism was "untenable, chimerical and absurd." That was the way he characterized the new movement in a sermon delivered in 1898. He was not a Zionist, he declared, because he saw "the ultimate end and aim" of Jewish history as

> the maintenance of Judaism, not the maintenance of the Jews. Judaism has preserved itself thus far because of the power of its ideals, the inspiration of its precepts. These are eternal and superior to race or nationality. As Judaism has persisted despite the passing of its pure racial expression, so has it developed out of and superior to nationalism.

Zionism, as Berkowitz understood it, restored "the fantastic dreams of the Middle Ages" and valued "the tinsel crown of a David Reubeni or a Sabbatha [*sic*] Zevi higher than the true halo that wreathes the sainted martyrs of the ages."[1]

Rabbi Berkowitz' views were typical of the Reform attitude to Zionism in the years preceding the Balfour Declaration; in an article published some ten years ago, Naomi Wiener Cohen summarized that attitude when she wrote that "Reform did not merely question the means employed by the Zionists to achieve their ideal, but rather discarded on theological grounds the very objective . . . of a return to Zion."[2]

Mrs. Cohen's article, which discussed the reaction of some of Reform Judaism's leading spokesmen to the Zionist movement, was

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[1] *Jewish Exponent* (Philadelphia), December 23, 1898; a typographical error omitted Berkowitz' allusions to the medieval "false messiahs," David Reubeni and Sabbatai Zevi, from the sermon published in the *Exponent*, but a clipping in the possession of the American Jewish Archives bears the rabbi's own handwritten correction of the error.

[2] "The Reaction of Reform Judaism in America to Political Zionism (1897–1922)," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, XL (1950–1951), 361 ff.

excellent, but the author was far too general in her presentation of the attitude of Reform Jews. She implied that the Reform rabbinate as a whole, as well as many of Reform's lay leaders, voiced opposition to Zionism. In fact, however, there were several outstanding Reform Jews who did not align themselves against the nascent Zionist movement, either because they declined for various reasons to commit themselves, or because they were in favor of Zionism.

A Statement to the Peace Conference

The recent discovery of a collection of letters in the file of the late Rabbi Berkowitz contains evidence that many Reform Jews refused to affix their signatures to an anti-Zionist petition which was to be presented to President Woodrow Wilson when he went to Paris in 1919; the petition was a protest against the Zionist claims to be presented at the peace conference.[3]

Entitled "A Statement to the Peace Conference," the petition set forth its sponsors' "objections to the organization of a Jewish State in Palestine as proposed by the Zionist Societies in this country and Europe and to the segregation of the Jews as a nationalistic unit in any country." While evincing sympathy for Zionist efforts "to secure for Jews at present living in lands of oppression a refuge in Palestine or elsewhere," the petition rejected "the demand of the Zionists for the reorganization of the Jews as a national unit, to whom, now or in the future, territorial sovereignty in Palestine shall be committed." The Zionist demand, it was asserted, would involve "the limitation and possible annulment of the large claims of Jews for full citizenship and human rights in all lands in which

[3] This material was found in the archives of Congregation B'nai Jehudah, Kansas City, Missouri, even though the letters had derived from Rabbi Berkowitz' office at Temple Rodeph Shalom, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Berkowitz had served in Kansas City from 1888 to 1892; he served the Philadelphia congregation until June, 1921, and passed away on February 7, 1924.

The question as to how these letters came into the possession of Congregation B'nai Jehudah can perhaps be answered by the fact that Rabbi Berkowitz' biography, written by his nephew Max E. Berkowitz, depended on many documents in Congregation B'nai Jehudah. Another reason might be that still another nephew, Henry J. Berkowitz, served as a rabbi of Congregation B'nai Jehudah in Kansas City from 1925 to 1927.

those rights are not yet secure." The document went on then to list five "objections to segregation of Jews as a political unit":

Against . . . a political segregation of the Jews in Palestine or elsewhere we object:

1. Because the Jews are dedicated heart and soul to the welfare of the countries in which they dwell under free conditions. All Jews repudiate every suspicion of a double allegiance, but to our minds it is necessarily implied in and cannot by any logic be eliminated from the establishment of a sovereign State for the Jews in Palestine.

By the large part taken by them in the great war, the Jews have once and for all shattered the base aspersions of the Anti-Semites which charged them with being aliens in every land, incapable of true patriotism and prompted only by sinister and self-seeking motives. Moreover, it is safe to assume that the overwhelming bulk of the Jews of America, England, France, Italy, Holland, Switzerland and the other lands of freedom have no thought whatever of surrendering their citizenship in these lands in order to resort to a "Jewish homeland in Palestine." As a rule those who favor such a restoration advocate it not for themselves but for others. Those who act thus, and yet insist on their patriotic attachment to the countries of which they are citizens, are self-deceived in their profession of Zionism and under the spell of an emotional romanticism or of a religious sentiment fostered through centuries of gloom.

2. We also object to political segregation of Jews for those who take their Zionistic professions seriously as referring not to "others" but to themselves. Granted that the establishment of a sovereign Jewish State in Palestine would lead many to emigrate to that land, the political conditions of the millions who would be unable to migrate for generations to come, if ever, would be made far more precarious. Roumania — despite the pledges of the Berlin Treaty — has legally branded her Jews as aliens, though many are descended from families settled in that country longer than the present Roumanian government has existed. The establishment of a Jewish State will manifestly serve the malevolent rulers of that and other lands as a new justification for additional repressive legislation. The multitudes who remain would be subject to worse perils, if possible, even though the few who escape might prosper in Palestine.

3. We object to the political segregation also of those who might succeed in establishing themselves in Palestine. The proposition involves dangers which, it is manifest, have not had the serious consideration of those who are so zealous in its advocacy. These dangers are adverted to in a most kindly spirit of warning by Sir George Adam Smith, who is generally acknowledged to be the greatest authority in the world on everything connected with Palestine, either past or present. In a recent publication,

"Syria and the Holy Land," he points out that there is absolutely no fixity to the boundaries of Palestine. These have varied greatly in the course of the centuries. The claims to various sections of this undefined territory would unquestionably evoke bitter controversies. "It is not true," says Sir George, "that Palestine is the national home of the Jewish people and of no other people." "It is not correct to call its non-Jewish inhabitants 'Arabs,' or to say that they have left no image of their spirit and made no history except in the great Mosque." "Nor can we evade the fact that Christian communities have been as long in possession of their portion of this land as ever the Jews were." "These are legitimate questions," he says, "stirred up by the claims of Zionism, but the Zionists have not yet fully faced them."

To subject the Jews to the possible recurrence of such bitter and sanguinary conflicts which would be inevitable would be a crime against the triumphs of their whole past history and against the lofty and world-embracing visions of their great prophets and leaders.

4. Though these grave difficulties be met, still we protest against the political segregation of the Jews and the re-establishment in Palestine of a distinctively Jewish State as utterly opposed to the principles of democracy which it is the avowed purpose of the World's Peace Conference to establish.

Whether the Jews be regarded as a "race" or as a "religion," it is contrary to the democratic principles for which the world war was waged to found a nation on either or both of these bases. America, England, France, Italy, Switzerland and all the most advanced nations of the world are composed of representatives of many races and religions. Their glory lies in the freedom of conscience and worship, in the liberty of thought and custom which binds the followers of many faiths and varied civilizations in the common bonds of political union. A Jewish State involves fundamental limitations as to race and religion, else the term "Jewish" means nothing. To unite Church and State, in any form, as under the old Jewish hierarchy, would be a leap backward of two thousand years.

"The rights of other creeds and races will be respected under Jewish dominance," is the assurance of Zionism. But the keynotes of democracy are neither condescension nor tolerance, but justice and equality. All this applies with special force to a country like Palestine. That land is filled with associations sacred to the followers of three great religions, and as a result of migrating movements of many centuries contains an extraordinary number of different ethnic groups, far out of proportion to the small extent of the country itself. Such a condition points clearly to a reorganization of Palestine on the broadest possible basis.

5. We object to the political segregation of the Jews because it is an error to assume that the bond uniting them is of a national character. They

are bound by two factors: First, the bond of common religious beliefs and aspirations and, secondly, the bond of common traditions, customs, and experiences, largely, alas, of common trials and sufferings. Nothing in their present status suggests that they form in any real sense a separate nationalistic unit.

The reorganization of Palestine as far as it affects the Jews is but part of a far larger issue, namely, the constructive endeavor to secure the emancipation of the Jews in all the lands in which they dwell. This movement, inaugurated in the eighteenth century and advancing with steady progress through the western lands, was checked by such reactionary tendencies as caused the expulsion of the Poles from Eastern Prussia and the massacre of Armenians in Turkey. As directed against Jews these tendencies crystallized into a political movement called Anti-Semitism, which had its rise in Germany. Its virulence spread (especially) throughout eastern Europe and led to cruel outbreaks in Roumania and elsewhere, and to the pogroms of Russia with their dire consequences.

To guard against such evils in the future we urge that the great constructive movement, so sadly interrupted, be reinstituted and that efficient measures be taken to insure the protection of the law and the full rights of citizenship to Jews in every land. If the basis of the reorganization of governments is henceforth to be democratic, it cannot be contemplated to exclude any group of people from the enjoyment of full rights.

As to the future of Palestine, it is our fervent hope that what was once a "promised land" for the Jews may become a "land of promise" for all races and creeds, safeguarded by the League of Nations which, it is expected, will be one of the fruits of the Peace Conference to whose deliberations the world now looks forward so anxiously and so full of hope. We ask that Palestine be constituted as a free and independent state, to be governed under a democratic form of government recognizing no distinctions of creed or race or ethnic descent, and with adequate power to protect the country against oppression of any kind. We do not wish to see Palestine, either now or at any time in the future, organized as a Jewish State.

A Vehement Protest

In *The Beloved Rabbi*, a biography of his uncle, Max E. Berkowitz spoke at some length of the petition and attempted to explain the meaning which it had for the rabbi:

[Henry] Berkowitz's final official act in connection with the World War was the preparation of a statement to the Peace Congress. On this work he was assisted by his lifelong friend, Mr. Max Senior of Cincinnati, and

by Professor Morris Jastrow of the University of Pennsylvania. This had to do with the Balfour Declaration to which he was strenuously opposed, as were the two hundred and ninety-nine other signatories of the document. The statement, which was presented to President Wilson by the Honorable Julius Kahn of California on March 4, 1919, was a vehement protest against Political Zionism and an appeal for securing equal rights for the Jews in all lands. Berkowitz had always believed and preached that the issues created by the Zionists in their desire for a restoration of Palestine as a political homeland for Israel befogged the real issue before the Jews of the world — the emancipation of the Jew in any land wherein he dwells, the desire for definite recognition by the world that the Jew, as a citizen, knows allegiance only to the country in which he dwells, and the official expression of that fact by an article in the League of Nations Covenant.[4]

This, however, does not tell the whole story. The answers received and contained in the rabbi's file shed a great deal of light on the attitude of many Reform rabbis to the question of Zionism. The file includes, besides these answers, a list of rabbis to whom Dr. David Philipson, rabbi of Cincinnati's Rockdale Avenue Temple and a past president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, was to write together with the Committee's three other members, Max Senior, a prominent Cincinnati businessman and philanthropist, Dr. Morris Jastrow, of the University of Pennsylvania, and Rabbi Berkowitz himself, who was also Chancellor of the Jewish Chautauqua Society at this time. In the file were found other interesting documents as well — an appeal to the members of the World Peace Conference to be held in Paris; printed copies of "A Statement to the Peace Conference" which was to be signed by interested parties; and, finally, a covering letter that accompanied the "Statement" and requested that the recipients secure the necessary signatures. There is also a listing of the signatories to this "Statement" (although this listing calls it a "manifesto"). Congressman Julius Kahn, of the Fourth District of California, was to present the petition to President Wilson. An interesting feature of the letters in the Berkowitz file is that they were variously addressed either to Jastrow, Philipson, Senior, or Berkowitz. The indication is thus that each one of the

[4] Max E. Berkowitz, *The Beloved Rabbi* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1932), p. 92.

four took it upon himself to issue letters and doubtless received answers from those to whom he had sent the petition.[5]

Against the Establishment of a Jewish State

The sponsors of the petition had hoped, of course, that the prominent Reform Jews to whom they wrote would not fail to give the anti-Zionist cause their vigorous support. In a number of instances, they were not to be disappointed.

Rabbi Leo M. Franklin, of Detroit's Temple Beth El, president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, assured Senior, on January 16, 1919, that he would sign the "virile and straightforward document" and secure additional signatures. A little more than a month later, however, on February 26th, he informed Berkowitz of his view that the document would be ineffectual without a very strong organization behind it, but on April 22nd, Franklin very positively affirmed his support of the petition and announced his decision to sign it.

Rabbi Max C. Currick, of Congregation Anshe Hesed, Erie, Pennsylvania, stated in responding to Philipson: "I wish that anti-Zionists, to whom theoretically I belong, would take a positive and constructive attitude toward Palestine." Despite this objection, however, he would sign the petition.

Professor Jacob H. Hollander, of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, indicated his desire to sign as well as "to obtain a group of really representative signatures" to the petition, and Attorney Lee M. Friedman, of Boston, wrote Berkowitz that he was "very willing" to have his name used as a signatory to the Statement.

Edwin R. A. Seligman, the eminent economist, approved the document and was "very glad" to add his signature, as was also Horace Stern, the jurist. George Washington Ochs-Oakes, former mayor of Chattanooga, Tennessee, and then editor of *Current*

[5] Since it is impossible to analyze each letter separately in the space available to us in these pages, comments and appropriate quotations will be made from certain significant letters, with the whole file to be deposited in the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, for further reference by interested scholars.

History Magazine, indicated to Jastrow that he and his brother, Adolph S. Ochs, the publisher of the *New York Times*, would sign the petition. In a separate letter to Berkowitz, Adolph S. Ochs concurred; he had "no objection to . . . a protest against the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine." Simon Wolf, a prominent member of the B'nai B'rith, considered the Statement "too academic." Still, he would sign it and associate himself with the committee.

Full support was pledged by Henry Morgenthau, Sr., who added that he would communicate with Congressman Kahn in Paris to press the issue. A recent book on the Balfour Declaration discusses the political situation in 1917–1918 that prompted Henry Morgenthau to append his signature to the document sent to President Wilson. As American Ambassador to Turkey (1913–1916), Morgenthau had been favorable to Jewish settlement in Turkish-ruled Palestine. Upon his return to the United States, he evidently conferred with President Wilson and was sent to Turkey in 1917 to negotiate a separate peace. This met with a violent reaction in British circles, since the disposition of the Ottoman Empire had already been agreed upon between Great Britain and France. The British Government sent Chaim Weizmann to Gibraltar to intercede with Morgenthau and prevent him from consummating his objective. Morgenthau had already declared, in a speech at Cincinnati in 1916, that he would be willing to negotiate with Turkey for the sale of Palestine to the Zionists. In the light of this commitment, Weizmann's plea to dissuade him from his objective for military reasons was evidently effective, but it appears to have left Morgenthau with a bitter feeling of resentment against the Zionist movement. Walter Page quotes him as being violently anti-Zionist in 1919, prior to the signing of the Statement.[6]

The Committee also received sympathetic replies from some highly influential exponents of European Reform Judaism. There is, for example, a typewritten extract of a letter from Professor Sylvain Lévi, of the Collège de France, Paris; the renowned Indologist was quoted as having informed Jastrow that "there is no kind of infamy

[6] Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), pp. 352–58.

that [the Zionists] have not tried to propagate at my expense." Lévi asserted his thorough objection to the Zionist movement and characterized the "Statement to the Peace Conference" as "a masterpiece of precision and clearness, expressing exactly my own sentiments."

Claude G. Montefiore, the distinguished scholar-philanthropist who was president both of London's Liberal Jewish Synagogue and of the Anglo-Jewish Association, was "glad you [Berkowitz] are making this stir and protest." He informed Berkowitz that he "agree[d] throughout" with the Statement and that the League of British Jews had "sent in its views to the British Prime Minister" in the same vein. This opinion was reiterated by Lionel de Rothschild, president of the League, who advised the Committee that his organization was "in much sympathy" with the Statement and was circulating it as a supplement to *Jewish Opinion*, the monthly bulletin regularly sent to all its members.[7]

Such notable American Reform Jews, then, as Franklin, Currick, Hollander, Morgenthau, Ochs-Oakes, Ochs, Seligman, Stern, and Wolf — and leading Europeans like Lévi, Montefiore, and Lionel de Rothschild — indicated substantial agreement with the aims of Berkowitz and his associates. Still, the group that denied the anti-Zionist petition its support included some remarkably illustrious names from the ranks of American Reform Judaism.

The Real Question

Abram I. Elkus, whom Wilson had appointed United States Ambassador to Turkey in 1916, answered both Senior and Berkowitz to the effect that he was examining the Statement, but said no more than this. The interesting feature of Elkus' response is that his letters were dated January 17 and January 25, 1919, respectively, and yet Senior, in a letter to Berkowitz a month earlier, on December 21, 1918, had castigated Elkus. "The outrageous betrayal of the non-Zionistic cause," he told Berkowitz, "by such men as [Louis] Marshall, [Jacob H.] Schiff, Elkus and [A.] Leo Weil, fills me with

[7] "A Statement to the Peace Conference" appeared as a supplement to *Jewish Opinion*, No. 3, February, 1919.

dismay. How men of this kind could have been led to approve the plans for national separateness even in countries outside of Palestine is beyond my comprehension. . . . " Senior was incensed by the unwillingness of the American Jewish Committee, in whose councils Marshall, Schiff, Elkus, and Weil were prominent, to abstain altogether from collaboration with the Zionists.[8]

Dr. Julian Morgenstern, then Professor of Biblical and Semitic Languages at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, wrote Jastrow that

> after mature consideration I decided not to sign them [the anti-Zionist resolutions]. I was actuated by several considerations. In the first place the resolutions go far beyond my own point of view, particularly in their opposition to the principle of group rights. . . . Furthermore, I believe that developments within the last two or three weeks have obviated the necessity of such or any resolutions. Manifestly the Zionists['] claims will receive scant consideration other than as a pure colonization scheme, and furthermore as a means to enable Great Britain to gain a diplomatic advantage over France.

Reiterating his opinion that it was wrong to go further than to "affirm in unmistakable and incompromisable terms the principle of the citizenship as an individual, and not as a national group or racial group within the American body politic, of ever[y] Jew in America," he concluded by pointing out that "that is the real question at issue."

From his office in the headquarters of the Society for Ethical Culture of New York, Felix Adler wrote Jastrow that "cultural *autonomy* within the national frame is a possible and even desirable solution of the political problem in mixed areas." He felt, therefore, that to affix his signature to the petition would not accord with his general ideas, even though he did "heartily and earnestly agree with everything that [Jastrow had] to say against Zionism." Jastrow responded that "cultural autonomy" should give way to "cultural assimilation"; he reiterated his objections to Zionism and expressed regret that Adler "should have declined to sign [the petition] for a reason which, if I may say so, emphasizes a side issue, and not the main point."

[8] *See* Charles Reznikoff, ed., *Louis Marshall: Champion of Liberty* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957), II, 538 ff.

The Statement Is Cold

Maurice Bloomfield, a famous authority on linguistics, then teaching at Johns Hopkins University, asserted his

strong sympathy with the Zionist Movement, and, tho I have doubts as to its practicality, I appraise at a high value its spiritual significance. . . . my state of mind is not at all favorable to propaganda on the part of Jews against Zionism. I do not believe that the movement will hurt them the least bit, because I do not think that the political status of the Jews will suffer from it. I do believe that Zionism is an antidote against undiluted Jewish pictism [assimilationism] on the one hand; and on the other hand against materialism, and that rather sugary satisfaction with themselves which comes to Jews with their prosperity.

Consequently he refused to sign the petition.

Taking "direct issue with the statement," Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen, a well-known Philadelphia physician, communal leader, and poet, called himself

a Zionist for many years, and still count myself as such, despite the false position into which the official Zionist Organization in America has recently been misled through the efforts of certain individuals chiefly concerned with the nationalistic aspirations of Russo-Polish Jews rather than with Palestine.

Solis-Cohen further declared that

It is — on no less authority than [former U. S. Secretary of State] John Hay's — perfectly possible to combine with entire loyalty to America, Great Britain, or other free country, adherence to the original (so-called Basle) program of Zionism.

Concluding that the Statement was "ill-advised and incorrect and very likely to injure all Jews, both Zionists and non-Zionists," he suggested that Berkowitz himself, to whom he sent the letter, "reconsider your proposed statement."

In a long letter to Senior, Rabbi Samuel Schulman, of New York City's Temple Beth-El, a past president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, made the point that he would have been in favor of a petition dissociating American Jewry from "the aspirations of the Zionists in this country and in Europe, to create a national

home-land for the Jewish people in Palestine." But he did not see how, in line with this dissociation, American Jewry could protest what Jews in other countries might deem desirable. He also objected to the negative character of the Statement; "the Statement is cold and does not show a sufficiently warm interest in the [religious] destiny of Israel." Schulman found objectionable

> the polemic against the citizens in this country, who are Zionists and whom the Statement declares, "self-deceived in their professions of Zionism, and under the spell of an emotional romanticism, or of a religious sentiment fostered through centuries of gloom." A statement to the Peace Conference should not have anything in it, which concerns our controversies with our brethren.

He was "not a Zionist" and was "unalterably opposed to Jewish Nationalism," but "I do not see why I should strenuously object to Jews living in Palestine, if they must go there, and to creating for them the conditions best available for their welfare."

The Statement's use of the phrase "Jewish people" offended Schulman, who argued that, for him, the word "Jew" was to be interpreted "exclusively in terms of religion or of a Church." The Statement, he told Senior, "does not envisage the problem of Israel in its entirety, and yet, it assumes to speak for Israel, as a whole." In a later letter to Philipson, Schulman took exception to a "Committee of Rabbis" addressing "a communication to all our colleagues all over the country, urging them to get such a resolution passed." Such an undertaking would, it seemed to him, "embarrass many a colleague"; the views of the laity should come from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and not be solicited by the rabbis.

A communication from the leading educator and philosopher Abraham Flexner, then at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, read in part:

> Now I must in candor confess that the creation of a Palestinian state has never greatly interested me. . . . For the life of me I cannot really believe that the creation of a Jewish state will achieve the good that is expected by the Zionists or that it will do the damage feared by those of a different mind.

Under these circumstances, Dr. Flexner did not see fit to sign the Statement.

Jesse W. Lilienthal, president of the United Railroads of San Francisco, did "not believe in a Jewish nation or that a Jewish political entity in Palestine . . . would be practicable," but he had assured Felix Frankfurter in the winter of 1918 — and had allowed Frankfurter to telegraph Louis D. Brandeis — that he recognized "the yearning of millions of Jews to find a home in Palestine." Lilienthal had further promised Frankfurter that he would "be in favor of doing everything possible to facilitate the settlement in Palestine of those who desire to found their home there." He would not break his word to Frankfurter and Brandeis now.

Let the Neighbor Call in a Policeman

Rabbi Louis Wolsey, of Cleveland's Euclid Avenue Temple, declined to sign the Statement, "because I am completely a-weary of having Anti-Zionism confused with doctrinaire Professionalism." The sight of men like J. Walter Freiberg, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, "sit[ting] back and keep[ing] silence," and of Louis Marshall "openly desert[ing] the Anti-Zionists," as well as "politicians like Oscar Strauss [*sic*] wobbl[ing] between two stools," made him feel that "some of our Jewish laymen have no backbone," and he no longer cared to be one of the "prophetical Cassandras."

In a letter to Senior, the celebrated banker, philanthropist, and communal leader, Felix M. Warburg, stated that he wanted to stay out of the controversy, as he felt that it was wrong to make a public issue out of the question. While he agreed with Senior's "point of view,"

> I hate to take our Jewish difference[s] before the State Department. The Zionists have done it to such a degree that the State Department is very sick of it; we have done it perhaps to some degree, and have added to the irritation. I feel in this regard somewhat as I would towards two members of a family who might call in a policeman to settle their differences. I would prefer that they fight things out in their own rooms — and let the neighbor call in a policeman if they do not behave.

Oscar S. Straus, who had twice served as Ambassador to Turkey and, as Theodore Roosevelt's Secretary of Commerce and Labor,

had been the first Jew in American history to achieve Cabinet rank, responded to Jastrow's letter that he was "disinclined to sign the memorial."

I think both you and I will agree for the establishment of a homeland in Palestine for the Jews as outlined in the Balfour declaration, and that to secure such rights for the inhabitants of Palestine would be a blessing in comparison with the conditions that have prevailed there for hundreds of years past. The question, therefore, presents itself, Why should we quarrel about this, or oppose it, even if some extreme Zionists hope to secure more, which we know in advance will not be granted them.

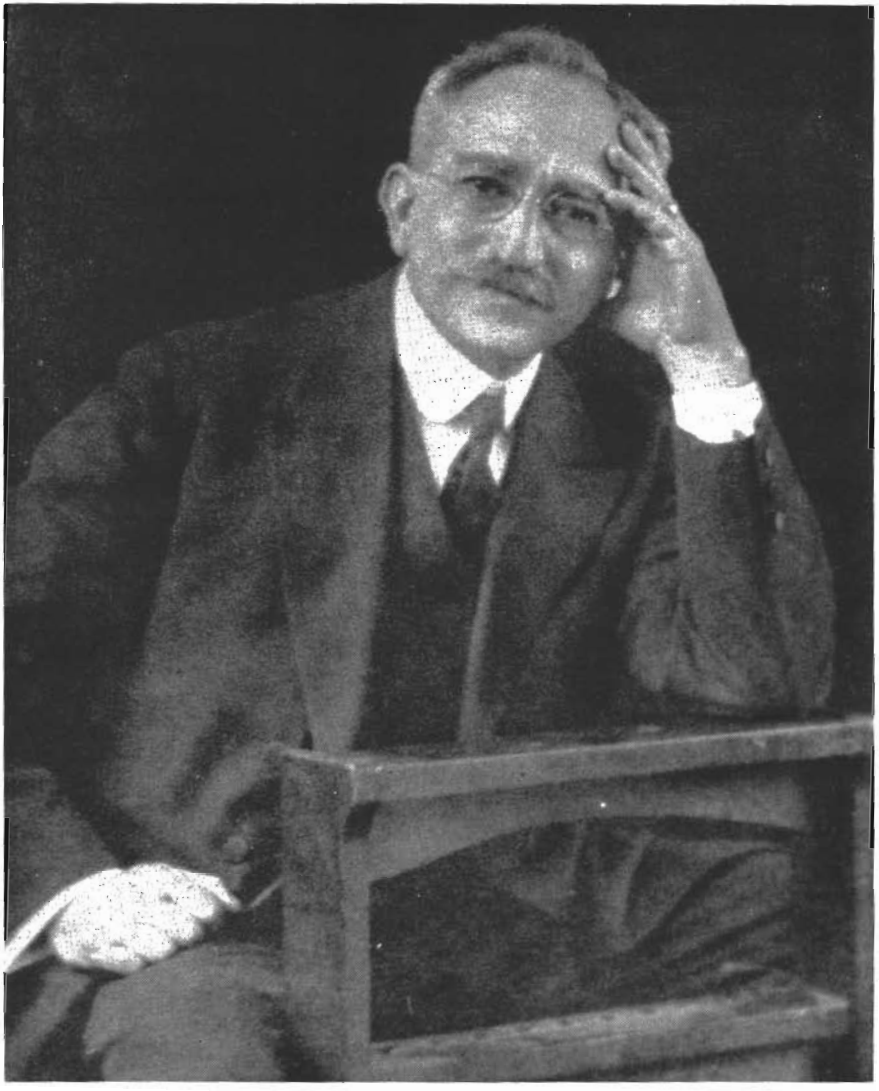
To oppose this plan of Balfour's as practically endorsed by President Wilson would in my judgment tend to defeat the beneficent purposes of the Balfour declaration. Not only as a Jew, but pre-eminently as an American, I am strongly in favor of having Palestine made a land of freedom so as to enable oppressed Jews in other lands to return to their historic homeland. To the extent that they avail themselves of this long cherished ideal they will not be compelled as in past years, notably since 1882, to seek a refuge in this country in larger numbers than may be good for either them, or for the country, on account of congestion, which forms an obstacle and hindrance to their Americanization.

Julius Rosenwald, the president of Sears, Roebuck & Co., widely famed for his philanthropic interests, wrote:

My position in this matter is rather peculiar on account of my connections here [in Chicago] with the philanthropic organizations as well as my connections in New York. The people all understand my position as I have not endeavored to disguise it in the least; but I hesitate to antagonize these people by publicly opposing them. I have refused to attend a Zionist dinner which is to be given here next Monday night at which several of my friends, such as Judge [Julian W.] Mack and others, will speak and have plainly stated my reasons for refusing.

Daniel Guggenheim, a distinguished scion of the famous family of industrialists and philanthropists, informed Jastrow that he did not intend

entering actively into the controversy between the two factions. While I am not a Zionist, I have no objection to the plans of those people who desire to develop a Jewish State, and I have, therefore, decided not to align myself with one side or the other.



HENRY BERKOWITZ

The Beloved Rabbi

OSCAR S. STRAUS

Defender of the Balfour Declaration

On the Side of Justice and Truth

One of the notables to whom the anti-Zionist petitioners had written — and from whom an answer was duly forthcoming — must have been a particularly exasperating disappointment to the committee. On January 10, 1919, Leo Wiener, the historian and translator of Yiddish literature and Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Harvard, assured Jastrow of his support and of his aversion to "the Zionist monstrosity." A month later, however, Wiener told Berkowitz that, although he had signed the petition originally sent him by Jastrow, he had come to the further conclusion that, having "for many years been a member of the Unitarian Church" and having "preached absolute amalgamation with the Gentile surroundings," he wished his name withdrawn from the list, "though of course, I shall always put my weight on the side of justice and truth, as I conceive them." He had "never allied" himself "with the Jewish Church or with Jews as such," and feared that his "name could only do harm to the Committee."

The final document in the file, a copy of a letter addressed to Jastrow, somewhat equivocally — but nonetheless effectively — concluded the matter:

> Thank you for your letter of March 4th. You may be sure that the views of the highly responsible persons for whom you and Mr. [Julius] Kahn speak will certainly receive most respectful consideration. I have time, as you will understand, just at this moment for only a line of acknowledgment, but it is one of very cordial and appreciative acknowledgment.
>
> Cordially and sincerely yours,
>
> Woodrow Wilson