



Brandeis on Zionism: A Collection of Addresses and Statements by Louis D. Brandeis

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Numbers Count

This message was sent to the Zionist Council of Greater New York on the occasion of its tenth anniversary in December, 1915.

It is to be hoped that your Council will be able to report a substantial increase in the number of those who have agreed in this time of trial to stand up and be counted. Such action is demanded of all Zionists in this great crisis. Zionists have met the first onset of the war in a practical, earnest and hopeful spirit. They have brought succor to all the Jews of Palestine; they have supported the movement that inspires hope in all the sorely stricken Jews of Europe.

The Provisional Committee has accomplished much. To continue our work, we must make heavy demands upon every Zionist individually; and all Jews and Jewesses in New York should be moved to stand resolutely together with that group of Jews who are laboring unafraid and undismayed to heal the wounds of our afflicted people.

There may be a thousand difficulties ahead of Zionist accomplishment. We readily admit the obstacles to be overcome. But in New York City alone there should be a hundred thousand factors in favor of its success. Let but a hundred thousand of our own people bring to the movement their enthusiasm, determination, ability and means, and all obstacles will yield and success will be assured.

Zionism has not sprung out of the war; it was vital and active before. The Zionist movement will not pass out with the ending of the war. But the war has made the necessity for the movement obvious. For Zionism aims at the fundamentals of Jewish life, the self-respect, rehabilitation and restoration of the Jewish people. Hence, he who would be counted as a loyal Jew and American, self-respecting and conscious, trusting in his people, in their ability and character, will join in aiding the Zionist cause.

Of the members of your organization I say confidently that they will understand and respond with American readiness and heartiness:

1. The Provisional Committee is pledged to make good all intentional and particularly Palestinian obligations. We rely upon you to help us make good, both to the letter and the spirit of those pledges. We must raise this year \$200,000 for our Emergency Fund; and of this amount we rely upon New York's raising at least \$50,000.
2. Double or triple this year the number of organized Zionists, for we shall shortly need the support and cooperation of every affiliated member of our organization. Numbers count, will be counted.

The Victory of the Maccabees

This message to the Zionists of America was issued on Hanukkah, December, 1915.

The Jewish calendar has many sorrowful days. Hanukkah, the Feast of Maccabees, is one of the few joyous Red Letter days. It celebrates a victory, not a military victory only; but a victory also of the spirit over things material; not a victory only over external enemies, the Greeks; but a victory also over more dangerous internal enemies, the Sadducees; a victory of the many over the ease-loving, safety-playing, privileged, powerful few, who in their pliancy would have betrayed the best interests of the people; a victory of democracy over aristocracy.

As a part of the eternal world-wide struggle for democracy, the struggle of the Maccabees is of eternal worldwide interest. It is a struggle of the Jews today, as well as of those of 2,000 years ago. It is a struggle of America as well as of Palestine. It is a struggle in which all Americans, non-Jews as well as Jews, should be vitally interested because they are vitally affected.

For the Zionists the day has special significance. The Maccabees' victory proved that the Jews, then already an old people, possessed the secret of eternal youth, the ability to rejuvenate itself through the courage, hope, enthusiasm, devotion and self-sacrifice of the plain people. In that distant past the plain people achieved a rebirth. They will bring again a Jewish Renaissance.

Not by Charity Alone

Chicago was the first city to respond officially to Dr. Theodor Herzl's call for a Jewish Congress (The First Zionist Congress) in 1897. After the return of the elected delegate, a small group of Zionists organized the Knights of Zion, a fraternal organization chartered in 1897. In 1918 it became a constituent part of the Federation of American Zionists, and merged with it completely in the formation of the Zionist Organization of America in 1918. Following is an excerpt of an address delivered by Justice Brandeis before the convention of the Knights of Zion in Chicago on January 2, 1916.

You cannot in my opinion do your duty as Jews unless you help raise the Jewish people to that point where it may best serve America and the world.

And that can be done only by the realization of the ages long dream and the fulfillment of the prayers of Jews that they may have again a homeland, where the Jewish life may be lived according to the Jewish spirit, without trammel of any kind. You and each of you are called upon to do your part.

You may not shift that duty to others. You may not rely upon others to do more than their share and you do less. Your own self-respect, your own duty demands that you join a Zionist organization because without organization, without a great and perfected organization the cause which brings us here this evening cannot succeed. You, who hear about Zionism without being members of an organization, cannot picture to yourselves the forces that have kept alive Zionist thought and made possible the Zionist achievement.

There are no miracles. Things happen in the world of Zionism as they happen in your own businesses and in your own households. Things come from working. Men accomplish because they work, because they work with the necessary material and instruments. That means effort and it means money.

The great thing that the Zionist movement does and has sought to do in all its years is this: To look at the Jewish problem as something to be solved, and to go about it with statesmanlike aim, to remove once for all the causes of misery. We are not satisfied merely to alleviate suffering or, by charity, to lessen the tribulation and distress of centuries. We have learned, each and every one of us who are interested in the attainment of social justice, that no amount of philanthropy can ever remove social injustices unless we first remove its causes. The Zionist movement is undertaking to do just that, to remove the causes of the injustice to the Jew and thus to end his misery; to give him liberty; and not only to give him liberty but to give him that standing in the world without which no legal declaration of liberty will be of serious moment.

Palestine, as you know, has not only been harassed by the war, but it has also suffered because of the cutting off of its export and import. Palestine has lived largely from the exports of its plantations, orange groves, vineyards and wheat fields, and when the war came that was stopped. We have tried to sell some of their oranges here. You of Chicago know a little of that. But then came the complete prohibition of exports and the valuable orange crop was lost. The colonies were in great need, not in need of charity, but of capital, capital to operate their plantations, capital to continue that life of self-support and self-respect which had won the admiration of all who are acquainted with their story and their struggle. We in America, the Zionist Provisional Committee and others, undertook to raise a loan for those planters, to be repaid when better conditions would enable them to market their products.

Later there came to Palestine besides the severe sufferings incident to the war, sufferings incident to a locust plague. In the thirty-three years since the colonies were originally established there had been no locust plague there.

This year the horrible pest came. Had they had a well ordered government it would have been possible to have put an end to it or to have prevented it from coming, particularly since the general direction of the thing was in the competent hands of Aaron Aaronsohn. If he had had the power of government behind him the locust pest might have been prevented, but he did not have the power of government behind him, and consequently the colonies did suffer despite the tremendous fight they made. The locust came like an enemy, devastating the land. While, thanks to the heroic efforts of the colonists, no permanent damage was sustained, the year's crop in large part was lost. Now these planters need further help and the Provisional Committee is endeavoring to arrange another loan. That is the line of work we are doing.

But there is only one way in which we can carry on effectively, and that is through organization. We must bring behind the Zionist movement, the Zionist organization, the Provisional Committee and the Actions Committee, the support, not of a few, but of the many, because the cause for which they are fighting is the cause of the whole people. They need the whole people behind them. Everyone should give as much as he can even if he can give only little; but besides that which he gives in money there must be the giving of the heart and of the head.

You will have the opportunity in a few minutes to listen to the address of one who understands the Zionist problem so thoroughly and who feels it so deeply that each and every one of you who has a drop of Jewish blood and a speck of Jewish consciousness will, I am sure, be moved by his words. When Dr. Levin talks to you, you will feel more strongly than ever what

Zionism is. No one here can move you more mightily. But do not rest satisfied, even with what he says. Learn, study, read what has happened in the Zionist world.

There isn't a thing that should be more interesting to a Jew today than the events of Zionism as they are occurring from week to week. Your local papers give you some information. The "Yiddishe Folk" and "The Maccabaeon," the two Zionist organs published by American Zionists, will give you infinitely more. Read them. Read them as they appear. Learn about Zionism, and there will be no doubt as to your own interest, or your desire to move others to follow your example and to become members of the Zionist organization. There is work to be done for each and everyone of you. Let no one of you, if he be a true American, shirk his duty.

Blackstone and Herzl

The Reverend William A. Blackstone (1841-1935) a fundamentalist Protestant clergyman, on March 5, 1891, presented a memorial to President Benjamin Harrison, in which outstanding American Christian and Jewish leaders urged the president to use his good offices with the various governments of Europe "to secure the holding at an early date, of an international conference to consider the condition of the Israelites and their claims to Palestine as their ancient home, and to promote in all other just and proper ways the alleviation of their suffering condition." On May 8, 1916, he presented a petition to President Woodrow Wilson, calling on him to intercede with the European powers for the summoning of an international convention for the purpose of considering the Jewish situation and the claim of the Jews for a secured political home in Palestine. The following brief remarks indicate Justice Brandeis's reaction to an address on Zionism delivered by this minister on July 2, 1916, at the 19th Annual Convention of the Federation of American Zionists held in Philadelphia.

Those of you who have read with care the petition presented twenty-five years ago by the Rev. Wm. Blackstone and others, asking that the President of the United States use his influence in the calling together of a Congress of the Nations of the world to consider the Jewish problem with a view to the giving of Palestine to the Jews, must have been struck with the extraordinary coincidence that the arguments with Rev. Blackstone used in that petition were, in large part, the arguments which the great Herzl presented five years later, in setting forth to the world the needs and the hopes of the Jewish people. That coincidence alone, the sameness of the arguments presented in America and later by Herzl, shows how clearly and strongly founded they are.

They come to all men who will regard in a clear and statesmanlike way the problems of the Jewish people.

Democracy Means Responsibility

An address delivered on July 7, 1916, before the Convention of the Federation of American Zionists in Philadelphia.

Our work can be accomplished only if we recognize and live up to the fundamental basis of Zionism, the democracy of the Jewish people.

Democracy means not merely, I had almost said not so much, the rights of the whole people, as the duties of the whole people. It means that every Jew in this land, preeminently every Jew in the Zionist Movement, has a right to be heard. What is more, he has also a duty to be heard. This duty extends down to every private in the ranks; each and every man, each and every woman, must realize that with him or her rests the power; that upon them rests the duty to spread the Zionist Movement, spread the Ideal and the work, by word of mouth, by act, and by constant sacrifice. For only by constant sacrifice on the part of the whole people can we achieve what we are seeking to achieve. There should be no such thing as shifting responsibilities and tasks to be performed to the officers, be they the officers of the Provisional Committee, or the Federation, or of any of the other numerous central and local organizations.

It is our proud boast (if boast there be on the part of the Jewish people) that we have been a literate people, accustomed for thousands of years to use the mind, and use it especially for study, learning and intellectual pursuits.

We may ask, therefore, of each and every Zionist that he make study a part of his daily work; study of Zionist facts, not merely of the theory of Zionism. Doubtless every Zionist has some knowledge of the theory of Zionism; but the facts of Zionism, what is being done in Europe and what is being done in America to advance the Zionist cause, should also be known by each of us. If you know what is being done, if you understand the Zionist past and particularly if you understand the Zionist present, you will be able to picture it and the Zionist future to others; and you cannot adequately aid in our work without such knowledge.

Every Zionist should make it a part of his business to read at least one of our Zionist papers and to read it, not cursorily as he reads and throws away the daily paper, morning and afternoon, but to read it diligently and digest its contents. Read and master the facts and you will be able to overcome the indifference and the opposition which surround you. Approach the people who are Zionistically inclined but indifferent, equipped with a knowledge of the facts; make them understand what the problem is, and what the remedy is that Zionism is offering. In at least nine cases out of ten, the people you are approaching

will be obliged to admit that the Zionist program is the only practical solution of the Jewish problem. Those who wish to help, if they will use their brains, must accept that program.

No Zionist is doing his duty unless he is affiliated with a Zionist organization, and no member of a Zionist organization is doing his duty unless he sees to it that his brother and sister are also doing Zionist work. In that way and in that way only can we achieve what is before us.

We have, as the figures tell you, accomplished much. But the figures are only a part and not the most important part of what has been done. The most important work is that which has made those figures possible, the spread and intensification of Zionist conviction; that is what has made it possible to do what we have done. But what we have done is of interest mainly as an indication of what we can do. The past is valuable as the mirror of the future.

In the past year, we have practically doubled the activity of the preceding year in all fields, in membership, fund raising and propaganda among Jews and non-Jews. Now we must look forward to doubling our efforts and accomplishments during this year of 1916-17. For unless we do this, we shall be inadequate for the task which is set before us and which the Jews of the world are looking to us to perform.

When shall this work begin? Here and now on the part of those who are present, and as for your friends and associates whom you can reach and to whom you can carry our message, immediately after the Convention. Every Zionist should realize that this Convention is the beginning, not the end of the season's activities. Let each and every one of us carry on during the months of July, August and September with determination. In that way, and in that way only, can we hope throughout this year to bear the burdens which we have assumed.

All of the speakers made reference to the fund of \$240,000 which we propose to raise. Do not be deceived by the sum named. That is the money which we need for what we call the Emergency Fund. We need an infinite amount more. But that fund of \$20,000 which we must raise each and every month for the ordinary disbursements of the Provisional Committee is of vast importance. In order that you may understand what it means to raise that fund, let me remind you that last year our budget called for only \$135,000. In other words, we must almost double our regular budget. There is, in addition to that, the extraordinary work, the work for relief and those large loans of which you have heard.

No month must pass without our raising \$20,000 for the ordinary expenses and disbursements of the organization. It should be done, so far as possible, by monthly or annual pledges, by self-taxation on the part of members and societies. The Zionist Organization should have a regular income to meet its regular budget. I hope the time will come soon, when the Committee may say: "Our regular expenses are taken care of." But in addition to the budget of the Committee we require a large sum to carry forward the Zionist work throughout the world, and particularly the Zionist development in Palestine.

In conducting this work of our organization, we must call upon ourselves and upon others for an account, a monthly account, of what is being accomplished. This is to my mind one of the most important features of our method of proceeding. I want to say a few words to you on the importance of sending to the respective organizations a monthly account of what has been accomplished, in order that you may repeat them to your associates at home.

We must get from every local a monthly account of the additions of membership; a monthly account of funds raised; a monthly account of the activities and the meetings, and other functions that have been held. A difficult task you may call it. Yet you must realize, on a moment's reflection, that without that monthly account those who are endeavoring to lead and direct your organization, and to determine what obligations they may assume in its behalf, will go astray in their calculations, if you fail to provide them with such accounts. The central body necessarily relies upon the local organizations scattered throughout the country, and it must have this information if the leaders are to act intelligently in the present and plan wisely for the future. I ask each and every one of you to impress this upon your associates. Every unnecessary letter which you compel the central organization to write you about accounts and pledges detracts by just that much from what the Federation, the Provisional Committee and the other organizations could otherwise accomplish.

That task of looking after others to see that they do their work is a task which, in a democratic body like the Zionist Organization, ought to be wholly unnecessary. An organization of democrats is an organization of equals.

Members of such a body ought not to require policemen to see that they do their duty, or inspectors to see that they perform their task. Just as it is a part of the Zionist duty of each and every member to press forward in the work of propaganda instead of leaving it to the officers, so each member should, so far as possible, relieve the officers of all other kinds of work that can and should be done by the members throughout the land. The mere task of direction is a serious one. When once a rule has been laid down, when once a direction has been given, it ought to be the eager desire of each and every affiliated Zionist to obey those rules, to enforce the law upon themselves and not have it enforced upon them. It is a reflection upon ourselves, if an officer of any organization is compelled to call upon us more than once to induce us to carry out our duties to the Zionist ideal to which we have pledged our loyalty.

Such is the work before us. Such is the work for each and every one, for every man, woman and child in the service of the Zionist Ideal.