

THE ZIONISM OF THE JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY: 1902-1948

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It has long been commonplace in scholarly accounts to note the special bond between Conservative Judaism and Zionism. In *The Political World of American Zionism*, for example, Samuel Halperin wrote more than thirty years ago: "The American Zionist movement derived its most unanimously enthusiastic and dedicated supporters from the ranks of Conservative Judaism." Yet the role played by the Jewish Theological Seminary, the acknowledged head of the movement, in forging the Conservative-Zionist nexus is less obvious. A study of the Seminary and Zionism from 1902 until the establishment of the State of Israel reveals neither unanimity nor ongoing consensus. Among the components that made up the school – administration, faculty and students, Board of Directors – different views of Zionism, reflecting a variety of backgrounds, religious beliefs, and political values, prevailed. At times the subject of Zionism exposed serious differences between the Seminary's administration and the affiliated arms of the Conservative movement – the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue – who usually outpaced the school in support of Jewish nationalistic activities. The overall picture differed markedly from that at the Seminary's older counterpart, Reform's Hebrew Union College (HUC). There, despite sporadic manifestations of Zionist sympathies from students and faculty, a tighter institutional structure (HUC was directly controlled by Reform's Union of American Hebrew Congregations) allowed the first presidents to steer the college along an official anti-Zionist course in tandem with Reform's rabbinical and congregational organizations.

Before 1948 the Seminary never sought or mandated conformity on Zionism. Sabato Morais, who headed the school from its inception in 1886 until his

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death in 1897, broke with his rabbinical colleagues by speaking out against a man-made restoration of Jews to Eretz Yisrael. In his case, an upbringing in a home of fervent Italian nationalists dedicated to Italian unification failed to elicit his support for modern Jewish nationalism. Unconstrained by those views, Morais's successor, Solomon Schechter, allied himself in 1905 with the Zionist movement. Nevertheless, Schechter insisted that his action in no way bound the Seminary: "I should like it to be distinctly understood that this allegiance cannot be predicated of the Institution over which I have the honor to preside, and which has never committed itself to the [Zionist] Movement, leaving this to the individual inclination of the students and faculty, composed of Zionists, anti-Zionists, and indifferentists." Since Louis Marshall, chairman of Schechter's Board of Directors, agreed that each director as well as student and faculty member was free to take his own stand, Zionism early on became an extra-institutional matter and, within the walls of the Seminary, a subject that on occasion aroused heated debate.

In large measure differences over Zionism stemmed from variant readings of the Seminary's mission. The religious founding fathers, the pre-Herzl generation of Morais as well as the generation of Schechter and his faculty, envisioned a school for the propagation of historical Judaism in accommodation with modernity. With an emphasis on scholarship, the Seminary would train rabbis committed to halakha (traditional Jewish law) but conversant and comfortable with modern intellectual trends and scholarly methods. Aiming for "conservative progress" (Alexander Kohut's term) that would safeguard the future of Judaism against the inroads of Reform and assimilation, the Seminary was pledged to defend the cardinal principles of normative Judaism – the synagogue, *kashrut*, the Sabbath, and Eretz Yisrael. Jewish peoplehood was axiomatic, and a divinely sanctioned return to Palestine was nonnegotiable. All of the Seminary's academic heads before 1948 – Morais, Schechter, Cyrus Adler, Louis Finkelstein – subscribed to that mission despite differences in interpretation and differences over political Zionism.

Unlike the religionists, the laymen, who reorganized the Seminary at the turn of the century and set the pattern for the first and for succeeding boards of directors, stressed an American agenda. The patrician circle led in 1902 by Jacob H. Schiff and Louis Marshall were not averse to Jewish tradition in modern dress, but most refused to countenance the idea of a discrete Jewish nationality. They saw the Seminary primarily as an Americanizing agency, one that would produce modern rabbis and teachers to ease the acculturation of the East European immigrant masses and, equally important, to guard them against the nefarious and "un-American" doctrines of secularism and radicalism. More than another philanthropic organization created by the German Jewish establishment, the Seminary took on a practical urgency. It would teach the East Europeans how to retain their religion in a form both respectable and

acceptable to Americans. To be sure, Zionists sat alongside non-Zionists and anti-Zionists on the board, but all agreed that Zionism as well as Palestine, a land significant chiefly as a possible haven for persecuted European Jews, was extraneous to the Seminary's program.

Although one vision emphasized the preservation of Judaism and the other focused on shoring up the security of Jews, the two converged on a critical point. Neither one negated the American Diaspora. Until 1948 the lay leaders for the most part summarily rejected the notion that America was *galut* (exile). They believed that America alone held out the promise of permanent Jewish survival and that it alone demanded undivided Jewish allegiance. The religionists followed a two-centered approach. Nationalists at least in the traditional religious sense, they prayed for a return to Zion, but they deemed the ongoing exilic experience essential to the unfolding of modern Zionism. At the same time, they dedicated themselves to service the religious needs of an American Jewry and to perpetuate the Jewish heritage in the United States. A genuine love of the country also underlay their insistence that Judaism and Americanism were eminently compatible. Thus, however justified, acceptance of Diaspora survivalism united both groups and allowed each to invest in the future of the Seminary.

The outlook of the students reinforced this two-centered vision. The students took pride in their Americanism and were grateful for the country's boundaries. Moreover, their education and professional ambitions were predicated on an American future. Like the lay founders of the institution and like American Jews in general, including Zionists, they emended Herzl's laws with respect to the United States. The virulent anti-Semitism that menaced European Jewish well-being and physical security, the base on which Herzl rested his case, did not obtain in America. But although the students also agreed that America was different, their highly developed sense of Jewish ethnicity was virtually ineradicable. Overwhelmingly of East European origin, they bore a cultural baggage steeped in both religious and secular concepts of Jewish peoplehood and nationality. A few of the early ones recalled the Zionist influences that touched them as youngsters in the Old World or in American immigrant homes. Since Zionism was neither taught nor officially sanctioned in the Rabbinical School, it became a popular extracurricular activity. To be sure, not every rabbi ordained by the Seminary was an ardent Zionist; Gerson B. Levi, class of 1904, preached rabid anti-Zionist views when he edited the Chicago-based *Reform Advocate*. But overwhelmingly, in a pattern set by the first graduate, England's Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz (class of 1894), Seminary men went on to develop their Zionist leanings more fully during their pulpit careers.

Actual clashes within the Seminary between defenders of the one-centered and two-centered approaches were avoided so long as Zionism was little more than a pious dream or an exercise in philanthropy. Tensions mounted, however,

whenever Zionism as a secular political movement raised its head or appeared to threaten the image of American Jews that the Jewish establishment so assiduously cultivated. What in each instance determined the administration's position, or its response to conflicting Zionist and anti-Zionist pressures from within the Seminary and from the Jewish and American communities, depended on diverse factors, ranging from the nature of the presidential leadership to the school's financial needs.

Controversy ended with the establishment of Israel in 1948. Then the various components of the Seminary, together with the organizational affiliates of the Conservative movement, united in forging ever closer ties with the Jewish state.

Schechter's Legacy

A confident and optimistic Solomon Schechter arrived in New York in 1902. A native of Romania who had received a training in scientific scholarship in Western Europe, Schechter left his post at Cambridge University to undertake a singular mission, the establishment of a rabbinical school and a center of Jewish scholarship dedicated to the teaching of modern traditional Judaism. Convinced that the future of Israel was in America, he believed that the new institution, a "Conservative School removed alike from both extremes, radical-Reform and hyper-Orthodoxy," would capture the allegiance of American Jews. Schechter, who had developed a passion for American history and literature and who was a fervent admirer of Abraham Lincoln, delighted in American democratic institutions, which, he was fond of saying, had been inspired by the Hebrew Bible. He judged the practice of Judaism to be fully compatible with Americanism. Indeed, in the free American environment Judaism would flourish, and he, as one admirer put it, would be the new Ezra propagating the Torah in exile.

Almost from the outset, the Seminary's president encountered obstacles that cooled his optimism. Attacks from both Orthodox and Reformers, budgetary needs, the rise of new communal organizations that deflected support from the Seminary, and his own shortcomings as an administrator seriously threatened the viability of the school and its potential for attracting American Jews. Nor did the New World look as rosy as it had from across the Atlantic. Schechter was most troubled by the rapid inroads of assimilation among immigrant Jews. The major problem confronting the community, he wrote, was "not so much the Americanizing of the Russian Jew as his Judaizing." The anti-religious stand of the immigrants was partially to blame, but Reform posed an even graver threat to Jewish identity and to the very survival of American Judaism.

Schechter had lashed out in articles against Reform "radicals" while he was still in England. He intensified the attack in the United States, where his new office exposed him to the workings of a Reform movement stronger than in Europe. Time and again he disputed Reform's teachings that divorced mission from nationhood and spirituality from halakha, and he repeatedly sniped at the catch phrases of the Reform movement – "prophetic Judaism," "universalism," and "progress." Bent on recapturing the Prophets from skewed interpretations, he charged that Reform's definition of prophetic Judaism amounted to "the giving up of the Torah and uniting with the left wing of the Christians." According to Schechter, the Reformers' cry of "de-Orientalization" was no more than "a piece of theological anti-Semitism . . . copied from Christian theologians," and the Reformers' creed as formulated in the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 "was bound in the end to land us into what I may call 'No man's country,' or 'No Jew's religion'." In his inaugural address Schechter warned against such self-destructive tendencies that presaged an inevitable drift to "Paulinism."

His outward friendship with prominent American Reform leaders notwithstanding, the Seminary's President kept up his harsh criticism, even cautioning his graduates against Reform practices ostensibly made in the name of religion. Finding Reform guilty of disloyalty, betrayal, and destruction and sneering at its "Christianizing" and "skyscraping" rabbis, he became, in the words of his biographer, "the leader of a counter-Reformation."

At the heart of Schechter's counter-reformation lay his unshakable belief in Jewish nationhood and nationalism. His East European origins and rich Jewish education had made him a "natural Zionist." His twin brother, a *hovev Zion* (member of the *hibat Zion* or Love of Zion movement), was among the first settlers of Zikhron Ya'akov; Solomon himself had told Mathilde Roth that if she turned down his proposal of marriage he would become a farmer in Palestine. A Zionist before there was a Zionist movement, Schechter always longed for a Jewish Palestine – "Zionism was, and still is, the most cherished dream I was worthy of having," he wrote at the end of his life. His ongoing battle with Reform revealed his almost instinctive aversion to that movement's repudiation of Jewish nationhood. He by contrast always posited that a Jewish national consciousness was inseparable from the Jewish religious faith. Committed to the survival of the Jews as a distinct people, Schechter judged Reform's antinationalist posture to be untenable, un-Jewish, and, in terms of the community, downright destructive.

When he assumed the presidency of the Seminary, Schechter made use of Zionism as a weapon against Reform. Defining the Jewish problem as Reform-abetted assimilation that was gnawing away at the vitals of Judaism, he saw an antidote in Zionism, a force for the reinvigoration of Jewish life throughout the world. Like *Ahad Ha'am* (pen name for Asher Ginzburg, a Russian Jewish

intellectual), but essentially concerned with religious fundamentals, he dreamed of Palestine as a spiritual and cultural center whose influence would radiate throughout the Jewish Diaspora. The ideal Palestine did not negate the legitimacy of Jewish centers elsewhere; in fact, it depended for its realization on a Diaspora that was religiously and culturally vibrant. In Schechter's words, "There will be no redemption without the proper preceding preparation of the captivity." Thus, from the beginning, he reconciled his hopes for a restored Jewish homeland with American Jewish survivalism.

Schechter's counter-reformation served an institutional as well as ideological purpose. The Seminary promised the new immigrants a viable option between the antithetical poles of European Orthodoxy and classical Reform, but in order to attract the religious element who might be influenced by Orthodox taunts at Schechter's *shmadhoys* (house of apostasy), it had to prove that its commitment to tradition radically distanced it from Reform. Furthermore, to gain the confidence of the ethnic-minded East Europeans generally, it had to repudiate Reform's anti-Zionism and show a sympathy for Jewish national aspirations. At the same time, it needed to demonstrate to those most concerned with Americanization that it, no less than Reform, stood for modernity and Americanism. In a letter to Mayer Sulzberger, a trusted friend and a founder of the reorganized Seminary, Schechter explained: "We cannot allow the ignoramuses of the West [i.e., HUC in Cincinnati], who are unfortunately too strongly represented in the East, to monopolize all the patriotism." For all those reasons it behooved Schechter to become the anti-Reformer – to carve out a distinctive traditional yet modern American image for the Seminary and to cast his lot with the Zionist cause.

While in Europe Schechter had refused to join the movement launched in 1897 by Theodor Herzl. To be sure, he recognized the pressures of fin de siècle anti-Semitism, but to his way of thinking, the irreligious, if not anti-religious, attitudes of the Zionist leaders distorted the national ideal. "Zionism diverted from the religious idea is a very monster," he said. Schechter had promised Israel Zangwill, an active English Zionist, that he would join the movement when he arrived in the United States, but religionless Zionism looked no more palatable from an American vantage point. The weak and fragmented Federation of American Zionists (FAZ) was, in 1902, a strange alliance of opposites. Its leaders came from the German Jewish establishment – Gustav Gottheil, his son Richard, and Stephen Wise were Reform Jews – but the rank and file were principally of East European stock. Neither group championed Zionism on religious grounds. Nevertheless, if secular nationalism was un-Jewish to Schechter, unchecked assimilation appeared even worse.

From 1902 to 1905 the Seminary's president inched ever closer to announcing his support of the Zionist movement. In a very short statement in the spring of 1904 he publicly endorsed "moral Zionism, which is so

wonderfully described by Ahad Ha'am" as the necessary safeguard against assimilation. Although some Zionists resented the implied criticism of their political approach, the arch-Reformer and president of HUC, Kaufmann Kohler, was most outraged. His shrill rebuttal insisted that American Jews were not in exile, that Ahad Ha'amism in America was an anachronism, and that Zionism, however labeled, turned the Jew away from his true mission. Kohler, who was then embarking on a purge of Zionists from his faculty, interpreted Schechter's words as a public challenge to Reform ideology which he, Kohler, could not ignore. While the gap between the two seminaries widened, Schechter recognized the need to mend his institutional fences. Leaning toward formal Zionist affiliation but always aware that several of his most prominent board members were Reform Jews, he deemed it prudent to explain his position privately. As he confided to a close friend in the summer of 1904, "I was lately spending a good deal of time making [Zionist] propaganda . . . among the Jewish aristocracy here." To them too he preached a moral and spiritual Zionism.

Not only did Reformers refuse to yield, but other immediate factors apparently hardened Schechter's resolve to commit himself to Zionism publicly. For one thing, the rupture in the Zionist organization over the issue of territorialism underscored the need to press from within the ranks for a Jewish restoration to the true Zion. Second, Herzl's death in 1904, which Schechter called a "great calamity," exposed a serious void in Zionist leadership. He may well have been intrigued by the prospect of sharing in the choice of Herzl's successor, someone, he said, who could simultaneously "manage" the East Europeans and command the respect of Western Jews. Finally, Schechter was doubtless influenced by his close friendship with Israel Friedlaender. The latter, who joined the Seminary faculty in 1903, shared Schechter's views on Reform and assimilation and on Ahad Ha'am and a creative Jewish Diaspora. A diligent Zionist worker and propagandist, Friedlaender, along with Conservative Jews like Judah Magnes and Harry Friedenwald, was shifting the focus of the FAZ to spiritual and cultural Zionism. In that more comfortable setting, Schechter may have reasoned, his official presence could help bring about the necessary correctives to Herzlian secular Zionism.

Schechter publicly cast his lot with the Zionist movement in a speech delivered in December 1905 at a Zionist meeting and, exactly a year later, in a famous written endorsement entitled "Zionism: A Statement." In both versions he bemoaned Jewish assimilation, particularly spiritual assimilation, or *galut ha-nefesh*. Zionism, he maintained, negated that slow but tortuous process of dying – "Zionism declares boldly to the world that Judaism means to preserve its life by not losing its life." He added that the Zionist movement had already begun, and would continue to strengthen the synagogue, the Hebrew language, and Jewish cultural creativity. Again he scoffed at the Reformers – the

"prophetic" Jews who misinterpreted the Bible, called Zionism retrogressive, and marked *tisha b'Av*, signifying the liberation of spiritual Judaism from its nationalist shackles, as a day for rejoicing. Schechter countered that the nationalistic and universalistic elements in Judaism worked in harmony, that "Israel must first effect its own redemption and live again its own life, and be Israel again, to accomplish its universal mission." Zionism, he wrote impassionedly, was the "Declaration of Jewish Independence," the reassertion of the Jewish soul "as natural and instinctive as life itself."

Nothing in Schechter's words contradicted his vision of the Seminary's mission. To be sure, he stated that "it is not only desirable, but absolutely necessary, that Palestine . . . should be recovered with the purpose of forming a home for at least a portion of the Jews, who would lead there an independent national life." Nevertheless, his approach remained two-centered; his focus was on the Diaspora as much as on Palestine. He neither accepted Herzl's gloomy predictions of exilic conditions nor called for a mass *aliya*. On another level, his Zionist affiliation added strength to the distinctive image that Schechter sought to cultivate for the Seminary. It publicly distanced him, and perforce his institution, further from Reform, and helped by a widely circulated Yiddish translation of the 1906 statement, enhanced the attractiveness of the Seminary for the new immigrants.

Coming at a time when, as the quip went, "no gentleman was a Zionist and no Zionist was a gentleman," Schechter's move was a coup for the FAZ and a setback for the anti-Zionists. The abuse heaped by Reform spokesmen on Schechter – he betrayed his own principles as well as the Jewish cause, Kohler charged; he joined the Zionist "Salon de Refuses," the *American Israelite* taunted – supports the contention that Schechter's adversaries also saw Zionism as a significant weapon of a counter-reformation.

The Seminary's president was primarily concerned, however, with a controversy that erupted with his board. The fifteen-member board was dominated by banker Jacob H. Schiff, a Reform Jew by affiliation and an opponent of political Zionism. Unassuaged by Schechter's private explanations and prodded by Kohler and other Reformers, Schiff made public a letter to Schechter in criticism of Zionism. More than Reform sympathies prompted the action; Schiff's priorities at that time were first, to alleviate the sufferings of the Jews in Russia, and second, to combat the mounting tide of American immigration restrictionism that threatened to curb the entry of East European Jews. Zionism, which might conceivably cast the Jew in an unfavorable light, could prove highly detrimental to both. Schiff offered religious and practical arguments against Zionism, but the crux of his opposition concerned Jewish loyalties. "Speaking as an American," he wrote, "I cannot for a moment concede that one can be at the same time a true American and an honest adherent of the Zionist movement." Zionists who labored for the establishment of a Jewish

nation placed "a prior lien upon their citizenship"; the realization of their hopes would compromise their loyalty to the United States.

The issue of dual allegiance had first been raised in 1904 in Kohler's response to Schechter's "moral Zionism." Schechter answered this in his 1905 speech but ignored the subject in his written statement. Nevertheless, the charge of un-Americanism from a man of Schiff's power and influence, and which was pounced on by the press, demanded a forceful rejoinder. An emotional Schechter refused to be drawn into a public fight, but he revealed his deep feelings to Harry Friedenwald, another board member and president of the FAZ:

Both Wall Street and the Pulpit have arrayed against us – by us I mean not only the Zionists, but . . . the Jews who still act and live and believe Judaism. I was and am still contemplating to present a memorandum [to] the Board . . . that though I do not make propaganda for Zionism in the institution I recognize and teach no other theology than that given to us by the Prayer Book and Rabbinic Judaism which is that *u-mipnei hataenu galinu meartzenu* [because of our sins we were exiled from our land], that America is not the final destiny of Judaism, that we believe in the advent of the Messiah who will redeem Israel and bring us back to the Holy Land etc. If they think that these doctrines are incompatible with Americanization as they understand it and which they believe to be the salvation of the Jews they can have my resignation at once. I would prefer to starve than to keep them under any illusion or to abandon my principles.

Friedenwald, scion of a prominent Baltimore family known for general community service as well as Zionist activities, was sensitive to the slight against his father's honor implicit in Schiff's letter. He rose to Schechter's defense and, with the help of Israel Friedlaender and other Zionists, formulated a public response. At a Zionist mass meeting he attacked the Jewish banker, although not by name, for branding his fellow Jews with the charge of treason. On the shoulders of such Jews, Friedenwald intoned, lay the guilt of fomenting anti-Semitism. By formal resolution the Zionists repudiated Schiff's charges, affirmed their loyalty to the country, and called upon Jewish anti-Zionists to desist from harmful accusations.

Schiff was forced to retreat. In a second published letter he denied having ever said that Zionism was incompatible with patriotism, but he still insisted that it placed a "lien" on citizenship. Schechter neither answered nor resigned, and harmonious relations with Schiff were restored. In the long run, the incident did not diminish Schechter's influence over the board. When the directors questioned whether it was proper for him to permit a student Zionist society to meet in the building, the President's view prevailed. In that instance he reportedly thundered to Louis Marshall: "The money bags are not going to rule the Seminary."

An important note to the Schiff/Schechter controversy was added in a public letter by Marshall. The latter abhorred publicity surrounding Jewish differences, but he felt impelled to answer a charge by the *American Israelite* that Schechter had violated a board-imposed taboo on Zionism. Marshall defended Schechter's right to support Zionism publicly; the board, he said, never sought to control the judgment of individual directors, faculty members, or students. He emphatically denied the incompatibility of Zionism with American patriotism, a notion that the *American Israelite* shared with Schiff and which, the chairman of the board insisted, supplied ammunition for anti-Semites. A self-styled non-Zionist who was critical of political Zionism, Marshall nonetheless praised Zionist accomplishments in words strikingly similar to Schechter's.

[Zionism] has been productive of immense benefits to Judaism. It has stimulated a living interest in its history and development among thousands who have hitherto been indifferent to things Jewish, and among many who otherwise would have been lost to Israel. It has rescued Hebrew from the category of dead languages. It has given birth to a manly Jewish consciousness, in refreshing contrast with the apologetic attitude which precedes it. It . . . has made Jewish culture signify something that is positive instead of the shadow of a name.

Ten years later Marshall openly acknowledged the influence of the Seminary's president: "In common with the late Dr. Schechter, I have the greatest sympathy with the cultural Zionism of Ahad Ha'am . . . , and have been interested in the establishment of a Jewish spiritual center in Palestine." Ironically, by then Schiff too had modified his position. Considering affiliation with the Zionists in 1917, he endorsed the establishment of a homeland in Palestine which, he said in Schechter-like terms, would infuse Jews throughout the world with religious inspiration and cultural creativity. Neither Marshall nor Schiff, however, ever joined the FAZ.

Most of the Seminary's directors opposed *political* Zionism; even Friedenwald cast Zionism primarily into a religious mold. But that opposition made them non-Zionists sooner than anti-Zionists. As non-Zionists they sympathized with and contributed to the economic rebuilding of Palestine and its development as a religio-cultural center. Marshall and also Schiff were active sponsors of Aaron Aaronsohn's agricultural experiment station and the Haifa Technion. Indeed, much as they deplored schemes that categorized Jews as a race, nationality, or nation-in-the-making, they shared a deeply ingrained attachment to Palestine. At the same time, they preferred to express their sentiments in arenas other than the Seminary. Friedenwald operated through the FAZ; Schiff, Marshall, and Cyrus Adler fashioned non-Zionist policies through the American Jewish Committee (AJC). Just as Schechter refused to impose his Zionist views on the school, the directors never committed the institution to

their opinions. The controversy of 1907 caused no changes in the makeup of the board, and Schiff and Friedenwald continued to serve side by side.

The Seminary's president actively participated in Zionist affairs after 1906, and in 1913 he spoke at the Zionist Congress in Vienna. That same year he, along with Friedlaender and Judah Magnes, influenced the American directors of the Haifa Technion to cast the decisive vote for the use of Hebrew rather than German as the primary language at that school. Schechter also aired his opinions more informally. Since he vacationed some years in Tannersville, New York, where the Zionists held their conventions, he enjoyed opportunities to debate Jewish issues privately as well as publicly.

His Zionist activities never muted Schechter's criticism of secular Zionism, which he deemed as alien to normative Judaism as the teachings of Reform. In *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* he wrote: "The brutal Torah-less nationalism promulgated in certain quarters would have been to the Rabbis just as hateful as the suicidal Torah-less universalism preached in other quarters." In light of the "radical" (read: irreligious) tendencies among Zionists, he saw a positive value in the Orthodox Zionist organization, Mizrahi. Schechter also found fault with the secularist policies of the leaders of the *yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine before 1948), "a de-Judaized clique . . . who have not a spark of religion in them." Distinguishing now between the "real [read: spiritual] Zionists" and the "Nationalists," he said of the latter: "Theirs is the worst kind of assimilation from which we would shrink back even in America." To Ahad Ha'am he confided grave doubts about religionless schools in Palestine built by secularists – "unripe men, imbued with the most wild theories about religion and social problems, and . . . as fanatical and dogmatic in their statements as their antagonists of the Orthodox party." Shortly before his death, when the religious focus of the FAZ had faded, Schechter warned again of the "spiritual disaster" that irreligious Zionists courted:

There is such a thing as the assimilation of Judaism even as there is such a thing as the assimilation of the Jew, and the former is bound to happen when religion is looked upon as a negligible quantity. When Judaism is once assimilated the Jew will surely follow in its wake, and Jew and Judaism will perish together.

Schechter's religious Zionism found a ready response among Seminary students, many of whom were already Zionist sympathizers. The young men flocked to sermons and lectures by prominent Zionists and took an active part in Zionist youth and Hebrew-speaking organizations. Jacob Kohn, class of 1907, recalled how he and his schoolmates would travel to the Lower East Side for group meetings and for talks by Magnes, Shmaryahu Levine, and Zvi Hirsch Masliansky. Zionism, Kohn said, made them feel the unity of Israel and the Jewish heritage. The students venerated their President, and the rapport between them was strengthened by Schechter's Zionist stand. At an alumni

meeting in 1908 Kohn, then a new rabbi, argued in Schechterian fashion on the legitimacy of preaching Zionism from the pulpit. "The return to Palestine," he stated in part, "was necessary for a proper development of Judaism and Jewish culture and for 'the spark of religious devotion to serve the flame of national enthusiasm'." Thanks to their own leanings and to the input of Schechter and his faculty, more than 60 percent of the Seminary-trained rabbis in 1914 were, according to one estimate, active Zionists.

True to Marshall's word, the board's views did not intimidate the faculty, and the latter fully supported Schechter's Zionist position. Like the President, all were traditionalist Jews who subscribed to the two-centered vision and the cultural theories of Ahad Ha'am. Their Zionism, however, was a private and low-keyed affair. As Alexander Marx, professor of history, explained, "We were all Zionists – but not active." Except for Friedlaender and the young Mordecai Kaplan, the luminaries of the faculty – Marx, Louis Ginzberg, Israel Davidson – confined their organized Zionist activities primarily to participation in the short-lived Achavah Club. A small group of Jewish intellectuals from a variety of backgrounds who discussed aspects of contemporary Jewish problems from a learned perspective, Achavah limited its membership to "adherents of National Judaism." Rabbi Meyer Berlin, head of the Mizrachi, once expressed his surprise that neither Friedlaender nor Kaplan, the only Zionist activists on the faculty, could induce their colleagues to engage actively in propagandizing for the cause. But the research-oriented scholars structured their priorities differently from the activists. A bitter Kaplan believed that at bottom the faculty was unconcerned with both the training of American rabbis (at whom they sneered) and with the future of Judaism in America.

Friedlaender and Kaplan, who regularly attended Zionist meetings and delivered Zionist lectures, helped to offset the passive Zionism of their colleagues. Their wives followed suit; Lilian Friedlaender, Lena Kaplan, and Mathilde Schechter were among the first directors of Hadassah. Within the Schechter circle, however, it was Israel Friedlaender who chalked up the most impressive Zionist record before the war. An exponent of the two-centered vision, this professor of Bible demonstrated his faith in the future of American Jewry through articles and through his work for communal projects like the New York kehilla and Jewish education. At the same time he played a multifaceted Zionist role: organizer, committeeman, polemicist, and, above all, theoretician. Friedlaender credited both Theodor Herzl and Ahad Ha'am with awakening the Jewish national consciousness, but his theory of Zionism was fundamentally Ahad Ha'amist with religious emendations. He saw in Zionism a movement that transcended statehood. Not only was it a powerful tool for Jewish unity but its objective, a normal Jewish life in a *new* Palestine, promised to revitalize Judaism. By working for a religiously vibrant Palestine where the prophetic ideals could be realized, Zionism would establish a center

of religious significance for the Jewish Diaspora and for all humanity. The explicator of "Diaspora plus Palestine, Religion plus nationalism," Friedlaender aired his beliefs to Jewish and non-Jewish audiences and, privately, even to non-Zionists on the Seminary's board. His views, like Schechter's but developed in far greater detail, made him a major influence on Seminary students, who knew him as the Zionist "par excellence."

Schechter and Friedlaender cast Zionism in spiritual terms and bound it securely to the Jewish Diaspora experience. The resultant product was well suited to take root in American soil. A comfortable Zionism, it satisfied the Jewish ethnic urge, and since it posited the legitimacy of a Jewish center in the United States, it required no personal sacrifice like *aliya*. A religious interpretation and an aversion to secular Jewish nationalism also fit Zionism into the American scheme of things, where Jews were defined as a religious community. Thus, an American Jew could in all good conscience easily hold on to both worlds. At the same time, as the cases of Schiff and Marshall suggest, the religious emphasis slowly succeeded in bridging the gap between Zionists and non-Zionists. By adapting Zionist theory to the preferences of Jews and the host country, Schechter's circle nurtured the prospect of an American Jewish consensus on Zionism.

Adler and "Palestinianism"

Schechter served as president until his death in 1915, long enough to set his style upon the Seminary and its faculty. Although his successor, Cyrus Adler, had been associated with the Seminary for many years – he had taught Bible for Morais, played a critical role in the reorganization of the post-Morais institution, and sat on Schechter's Board of Directors – he seemed a breed apart. His very appearance was different; the native-born president was clean-shaven, his mannerisms and accent were American rather than European. Unlike Schechter, Adler lived in Philadelphia and not Morningside Heights; he neither met the students in the classroom nor entertained them regularly at home; his closest associates were the Schiff-Marshall circle and not the faculty; and his scholarly expertise was in Semitics rather than rabbinic studies. Nor was Adler's daily routine confined to the Seminary, for he devoted at least as much time to Dropsie College, where he served as president, and to the American Jewish Committee. And, in contrast to Schechter and his faculty, Adler was a non-Zionist.

Adler's non-Zionism, Rabbi Israel Goldstein recalled, created an emotional barrier between the president and the Seminary family. But even if he had so desired, Adler was hardly in a position to sway the school to his stand on Zionism. Since the board appointed him temporary president (the temporary

was dropped only in 1924), his freedom to shape policy was significantly limited. Moreover, the faculty resented the appointment. Although the Schechter/Adler correspondence reveals Schechter's genuine respect for Adler's scholarly knowledge, those of the inner Schechter circle, notably Ginzberg, Marx, Friedlaender, and Davidson, could not understand how Adler's "un-Jewish" academic credentials allowed him to fill Schechter's shoes. A few had privately harbored hopes of succeeding Schechter. Mordecai Kaplan, whose pronounced dislike of the man lasted throughout Adler's tenure, dismissed the president as a mere flunky of the board. Seemingly cold and stiffly aloof, Adler worked neither at cultivating support among the faculty and students nor at generating the rapport that his predecessor had enjoyed. On the matter of Zionism, he never thought of tailoring his views for the sake of institutional unity. Nor did he labor, the way Schechter had, to integrate his views on Zionism with a philosophy of Conservative Judaism. While he formulated non-Zionist responses to new developments through the AJC, Schechter's Zionist legacy lived on. Borne by the early rabbinical graduates, it stamped the character of the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue, thereby sowing seeds for tension between Adler and the branches of the Conservative movement.

For a short while Adler seemed a likely recruit for the Zionist movement. When in 1891 he visited Palestine as American commissioner of the World's Colombian Exposition, his emotions were stirred by the beauty of the land, its antiquities, and the exotic customs of native Jews. Simultaneously, his practical sense, alert to the need of a haven for oppressed Russian Jews, led to conversations with the American Minister to Constantinople and the Turkish Grand Vizier on the prospects for expanded Jewish settlement in the Ottoman empire. Palestine was the "great hope" of every East European community, Adler said, and he even toyed with the idea that "the Jews of the world can now buy Palestine back." The twenty-eight-year-old American sounded very much a proto-Zionist when he deplored the fact that the destiny of world Jewry depended on the policies and vagaries of the European powers. That situation would persist, he stated, "until we have our own strip of land and our own gunboats." Seven years later Adler heard Herzl speak in London, and although somewhat skeptical of the message, he was charmed by the charismatic Zionist leader.

After 1900, however, Adler turned his back on the Zionist movement, and over the years gained the dubious distinction of being the only prominent Conservative leader unaffiliated with the nationalist cause. Why he became a non-Zionist, or one who outspokenly opposed Jewish statehood but loyally supported cultural and scientific projects in the *yishuv*, has called forth various explanations, some noting in particular his staunch American loyalties and the influence of the leaders of the German Jewish establishment with whom he associated. Those answers are partially illuminating, but only a greater

emphasis on Adler's strict religious principles resolves some of the seeming ambiguities of his behavior.

A traditionalist Jew, Adler prayed daily for a return to Zion. Since he believed that "Every good Jew longs . . . for the restoration of Palestine and the coming of the Messiah," he repudiated Reform's contradictory tenets. Adler never disputed the concept of Jewish peoplehood, but loyal to the teachings of his mentor, Sabato Morais, he refused to translate it into a movement for a modern Jewish state. The reader of his letters and speeches senses a pervasive distrust of man-made schemes, be they Reform or Zionist, that tampered with the traditional and divinely ordained roles for Judaism and Eretz Yisrael. Palestine was promised to Abraham for "a holy purpose," Adler once wrote, so that "there might arise upon it a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." He saw a "mystical" element in the hope for a restored Zion, a hope that bound Jews around the world and one generation to the next.

To Adler, Jews were essentially a religious community, one whose distinctive badge and sole justification for existence was its faith. In a dichotomy between Judaism and Jews, he ranked the former above the latter: "I know that we can have no Judaism without Jews," he told Israel Zangwill, "but I am very little interested in Jews, as Jews, without Judaism." For the sake of Judaism Adler immersed himself in numerous projects that aimed at promoting a Jewish cultural renaissance in the United States. Institutions of learning like the Seminary bore special responsibilities since they were the prime defenders of traditional religion. "The 'paramount' duty of the Jews in America," Adler insisted, "is the maintenance of Judaism in America."

But while his immediate focus was on American Judaism, he never lost sight of Zion. Different from other non-Zionists who contributed to Jewish settlement in Palestine out of sentiment or humanitarianism, Adler emphasized religious objectives: "The Jewish hope is for a restoration to Palestine where upon the historical soil of the Holy Land with the Holy City as its center, Judaism may be cultivated with renewed vigor, and from there as a center radiate out to the Jews of the entire world and revive the religion where it is growing cold or colorless." A defender of multiple centers for the growth of Judaism, he disputed the negation of the galut that deflected Jews from their religious obligations in the Diaspora. Besides, dispersion had enriched Judaism, and a Diaspora was necessary for the upbuilding of a Jewish Palestine. A contributor to a variety of cultural, religious, and even economic institutions in the *Yishuv*, Adler preferred the label of "pro-Palestinian" rather than non-Zionist. At times he distinguished between Zionists and nationalists (as Schechter had), implying that his kind and not the "radical" and religionless nationalists were the true Zionists. He long cherished the hope of making non-Zionism an organized cohesive force within the community, but his sporadic efforts along those lines proved futile.

In accordance with his deep religious convictions, Adler was repelled by Herzl's policies, and any youthful fantasies about gunboats or strips of land quickly evaporated. The Basle program was critically flawed precisely because it did not mention religion, and political Zionism, or a secularist movement for Jewish statehood, betrayed the essence of Judaism. Ignoring the existence of God, Zionism "has . . . promoted a pagan idea which deified the soil and the people." Nor had Zionists "discovered" Palestine for Jews. Rather, they were the upstart usurpers who laid fraudulent claims to a land that throughout history had belonged to all Jews. Since Zionism divided the community, shortchanged both Judaism and Jews, and threatened to derail them from their proper course, it boded only ill. "I would consider a settlement in Palestine on an anti- or non-religious basis the greatest misfortune that has happened to the Jews in modern times," Adler once stated. There was only one way for Zionism to establish its legitimacy – i.e., if Zionists acknowledged the importance of religion and indicated that their objective was the cultivation of Judaism on Palestinian soil. In that case, Adler later said, he would have favored the movement "even with the view at some future time of the creation of a Jewish commonwealth."

To be sure, Schechter too opposed secular Zionism, but he compromised in order to counteract Reform and assimilation. While he also emphasized the preservation of Judaism, he never subscribed to Adler's arbitrary distinctions between Jews and Judaism. Whereas Schechter linked nationhood with the enrichment of Jewish cultural creativity, Adler concentrated on the renewal of a religious tradition, be it in the Diaspora or Palestine, that was seemingly independent of territorial moorings. Schechter, an East European by birth, empathized with the victims of anti-Semitism; the American Adler understood their plight only intellectually. Since Schechter shared Jewish aspirations for political autonomy, which Adler did not, he was prepared to work from within the Zionist fold to correct perceived abuses. Adler, more rigid and uncompromising, and more bitter about Zionist heresies, stayed aloof. "The hope for a restoration of Israel to Palestine is a part of my Judaism and I do not have to join a party which has not recognized Judaism as a part of its platform in order to realize my own Judaism."

Practical considerations hardened Adler's opposition to Zionism. He long thought that Mesopotamia was a wiser choice for the beleaguered European Jews looking for a haven, and it is quite possible that he helped in the formulation of the early Mesopotamia plan, usually accredited to one of Adler's teachers at Johns Hopkins, Paul Haupt. Adler reasoned that Mesopotamia offered distinct advantages over Palestine – fertile land, far less chance of Christian, and hence Turkish, opposition, and a possibility of outright purchase from the sultan. Solely a pragmatic choice, Mesopotamia neither raised the dreaded specter of Jewish statehood nor interfered with the traditionalist hope

for Eretz Yisrael. Moreover, colonization there instead of in Palestine might easily win the support of anti-Zionist Jewish philanthropists.

Shortly before the Basle Congress of 1897, perhaps in a purposeful effort to defuse the popular enthusiasm generated by the nascent Zionist movement, Adler raised the matter of Mesopotamia with Herzl. But the latter failed to respond. The American was not a man who took such rebuffs lightly or readily forgave them, and although Herzl contacted Adler some two years later, he had little use for the Zionist leader from then on. Alluding to Jewish hopes raised and then dashed by false messiahs, he once referred to Herzl as "the *mashiach* from Vienna." Adler's interest in Mesopotamia persisted, and in 1909, encouraged by the appointment of a close friend, Oscar Straus, as Ambassador to Turkey, Adler and his circle seriously considered it again.

On a different level, but equally unpalatable, was the democratic format of the Zionist organization. (Herzl had initially hoped that Baron de Rothschild would underwrite his plans, but in light of the baron's disinterest he fashioned a democratic movement that was pitched to masses.) Although the American Adler gloried in the blessings of democracy for the United States, he was an elitist with respect to the Jewish community. One prominent Zionist complained that Adler "does not concede to the discussion of Jewish problems the same degree of freedom and frankness which he would concede to discussions of American policies." Adler's devotion to the AJC, a hand-picked group that arrogated to itself the right to speak for American Jewry, was accompanied by an aversion to democratic organizations and democratic political tactics on the part of the Jewish minority. Publicity and noise invariably accompanied mass meetings, popular elections, petitions, and demonstrations, and unlike quiet diplomacy they succeeded only in awakening anti-Jewish sentiments in the larger society. Personal resentment on Adler's part crept in too. To him and his associates, the untutored immigrant masses who used Zionist fronts for challenging the wisdom and practical experience of the AJC were foolhardy as well as ungrateful. Too thick-skinned for the give-and-take of a democratic forum, Adler would turn increasingly bitter in the open fight with the Zionists over a Jewish congress.

Unlike Reform anti-Zionists in the prewar era, Adler gave little credence to the charge of dual allegiance. His own "Palestinianism" neither contradicted America's definition of Jews as a religious community nor suggested any incompatibility with Americanism. When the Schiff/Schechter controversy erupted, Adler maintained that he as an American citizen was not obliged to account for the religious convictions that underlay his views of a restored Zion. Privately he defended the Zionists too. The ever cautious Adler feared a public uproar that could impact adversely on the Seminary, and although he admitted that Schechter may have erred in arousing Schiff, the latter's statement that Zionists could not be good Americans was "indefensible." His criticism of Schiff

proves that Adler's religious principles rather than the influence of his associates, or for that matter his patriotism, constituted the bedrock of his opposition to Zionism.

Adler assumed his Seminary post at a time when the crusade for Americanization, generated by the outbreak of the war, was reaching new heights. Jews and other minorities could not escape popular insistence on conformity and 100 percent Americanism. Some Jews, as Mordecai Kaplan recounted in his commencement address of 1916, expressed their ardent patriotism by ranking America above Judaism on their scale of loyalties. But others, like American Poles, Czechs, and Irish, were fired by the Wilsonian principle of national self-determination to press for the creation of an independent homeland. When, in the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, England vindicated Herzl by approving "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," Zionists were elated. They, as did many Christian Americans, regarded it as a promise of statehood.

At the Seminary, Israel Goldstein recalled, reaction to the Declaration was surprisingly low-keyed. The students, all Zionists, appreciated its significance, but Goldstein thought it curious that not one felt impelled to enlist in the Jewish Legion. Since the faculty for their part did not interrupt their scholarly pursuits, the normal routine prevailed. Outside the school's walls the Balfour Declaration elicited more animated responses. Israel Friedlaender, for example, publicly applauded the British statement, and along lines drawn earlier, underscored the need of a physical homeland for the recharging of Jewish unity and religious creativity. At the same time, through the AJC, Cyrus Adler and his influential board members responded differently, demonstrating that the Declaration had not closed the gap within the Seminary family over Jewish nationalism.

In 1915, acting as chairman of the AJC's executive committee, Adler had informed a senator from Arkansas that "although I am not a Zionist I think that it could easily be recognized that upon religious grounds, even without considering political grounds, the Jews have a claim to some sort of specially favored treatment in Palestine." He did not elaborate on what he desired, but in 1917 he didn't find the answer in the British statement. Practical obstacles stood in the way of its implementation, and even its very words were ridiculous – a national home, he once said, reminded him of "a big orphan asylum." At bottom, Adler was objecting to the politicization of Zion implicit in the Declaration and its recognition of the Jews as a political entity rather than a religious people. He reiterated his hope for a restoration to Zion, but again he insisted that Palestine belonged to all Jews and was not the exclusive province of the Zionists, again emphasizing the religious purpose of a Jewish home in Palestine: "Whether it be as an independent state or under English or Turkish sovereignty, Palestine is sacred and should be for those Jews who want to go to Palestine to practice Judaism."

The capture of Jerusalem by the British in December 1917, another boost to the Zionists, prompted Adler to push for an immediate response from the non-Zionists. He reasoned that if they failed to seize the opportunity, leadership on the Palestine question would go by default to the Zionist movement. Ever eager to legitimate non-Zionism as a viable option for American Jews, he drafted a statement again indicting the religionless Zionists and suggesting a Zionist-called conference representative of the major Jewish organizations to formulate common objectives. In deference to the AJC, which had yet to be heard from, Adler was persuaded, however, not to publicize his statement.

The formal response of the AJC to the Balfour Declaration, written by Adler and two others, gave the British pronouncement a bland non-Zionist endorsement. Expressing sympathy with the traditional Jewish hope for a home in Palestine, the Committee promised to cooperate "with those who, attracted by religious or historic association, shall seek to establish in Palestine a center for Judaism, for the stimulation of our faith, for the pursuit and development of literature, science and art in a Jewish environment, and for the rehabilitation of the land." The AJC narrowly construed the Declaration: it talked of "a" center and not "the" center, it limited its support to a religious and cultural center, and ignored the controversial word "national." The Committee's response signaled no retreat on Adler's part but merely reconciled his long-held convictions with the dramatic turn of events. His non-Zionism, or the pursuit of restoration for the sake of Judaism, remained very much alive. The coincidence of British imperialist interests with the Zionist hope dispelled some of his doubts about the practicality of the Zionist movement, and the ambiguous wording of the Declaration allowed him to interpret England's approval of Jewish settlement in Palestine to be as much a victory for his side as for the Zionists. To be sure, his aversion to Jewish nationalism increased during the war years, but like Schiff and Marshall he refused to endorse the plan of Reform Rabbi David Philipson in 1918 for a conference to combat Zionism.

The idea of a democratically-chosen congress to represent American Jews and speak on behalf of Jewish rights at the postwar peace conference challenged the elitist AJC and its self-assumed prerogative over Jewish diplomacy. Enthusiastically endorsed by the Zionists under the magnetic leadership of attorney Louis Brandeis, a congress readily appealed to the East European masses. Communal pressure and a fear for its very survival compelled the AJC to search for a compromise with the Zionists, causing Adler, who headed the negotiations for the Committee, to grow increasingly bitter. He had no respect for Brandeis, an "agitator" who had turned his back on the Jewish people until his mid-fifties and was unmoved by the plight of Russian Jewry "before we poor Jews attracted his august and interested attention." Adler strongly believed that the propaganda for a congress in the name of democracy, but which actually bore the stamp of radical socialist influence, was in fact a Zionist plot to capture control of the

Jewish community. Machine-like political tactics of the congress partisans disgusted him, and attacks on the Committee's leaders led him, along with Schiff and Marshall, to consider resigning from Jewish communal affairs. In the end, the AJC was forced to yield, and Marshall joined the delegation of the American Jewish Congress to the peace conference. Although Adler categorically refused to be involved with the new organization, he was persuaded to go to Versailles in 1919 as special representative of the AJC.

The congress issue exposed a major point of contention between Adler and the Zionists – Diaspora nationalism. Since Adler construed the words "national" and "nationality" narrowly, in the sense of discrete political identity and citizenship, he deemed them utterly repugnant to modern Diaspora life. Moreover, a congress that attempted to organize Jews along national lines appeared downright dangerous, particularly at a time when hyperpatriotism gripped the country. Objecting also to the Zionist demand for national rights in postwar Eastern Europe, he thought that proportional representation for Jews as a separate nationality was doubly impossible – it was impossible to achieve, and were it achieved, it would place the Jews in an impossible situation. After the war Adler blamed the idea of a separate Jewish nationality, a product of political Zionism, for contributing to the ugly wave of anti-Semitism in America.

The historic events of the war years mellowed the views of his friends, Schiff and Marshall, on Zionism, but Adler was unmoved. Indeed, the congress experience hardened his resolve to distance himself from the Zionists. Harboring a permanent grudge against Brandeis and his circle, he explained that he preferred not to associate with those who were indifferent or hostile to Judaism. Nor did he change his mind about Jewish nationality or any Zionist view that defined Jews as a nation. The Torah and not race or nationality was the true bond of Israel, he told the Seminary graduating class of 1920, but Zionism shifted the center of gravity from the Torah to the land and the people. The Seminary's president pledged his continued help in the upbuilding of Palestine, but he turned down an invitation to join the newly established Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) in 1918. Religion was still uppermost in his brief against the movement, and he charged Zionist unwillingness to interpret their program Jewishly with failure to secure the allegiance of American Jews. It was strange, he mused, that while Americans saw fit to recognize God in the Declaration of Independence, Jews, "whose specialty is religion," ignored God.

The Seminary still refrained from taking an official stand on Zionism, but as wartime events transformed Zionism from a largely theoretical to a real and immediate issue, Schechter's policy of institutional noninvolvement appeared increasingly illogical. Prominent members of the Seminary family in addition to Adler were very much involved in the congress episode. Zionist board member Harry Friedenwald, in opposition to the non-Zionism of the AJC and of fellow

board members Schiff and Marshall, resigned in protest from the Committee. Professor Israel Friedlaender, whose attempted reconciliation of the AJC and the congress supporters failed, washed his hands of both groups. Schechter himself had objected to the idea of a congress. He did not live long enough to fight alongside Adler, but nationalist agitation may have fed into the warning he gave of the potential "nightmares" in political Zionism shortly before he died.

Adler's activities through the AJC were bound to affect his influence within the Seminary community. True, he wore two separate hats, but assessments of the man who qualified the promise of the Balfour Declaration and who fought Brandeis, the American Jewish Congress, and national rights, hardly distinguished the non-Zionist chairman of the AJC's executive committee from the Conservative leader. Nor was it natural for Adler himself to put aside his views upon entering the Seminary's doors. The gap between the non-Zionist president and board on the one hand, and the Zionist faculty and students on the other, widened. As Seminary graduates went on to bring the Zionist message to the rapidly multiplying Conservative synagogues after the war, the differences with their president strained both Conservative unity and the Seminary's leadership of the movement.

A major crisis over Zionism within Conservative ranks erupted at the United Synagogue convention of 1917. Hitherto, the organization, controlled at that time by rabbis and faculty members, had glossed over Zionism. Now, in line with a community effort to show support of England's anticipated Declaration, it considered a resolution that would have formally joined it with the Zionists in endorsing the claim to a legally recognized homeland in Palestine. Adler, president of the United Synagogue, immediately protested, insisting that the matter lay beyond the constitutional purview of the organization. Furthermore, in all good conscience he could not vote for the Basle program. A stormy debate followed. Although the vast majority of delegates were affiliated Zionists, many found serious fault with Zionist leaders and tactics. (Samuel Cohen, class of 1912, who subsequently served as executive director of the United Synagogue, called the Zionist Organization of America "corrupt, atheistic, and anti-Jewish.") Some countered, however, that the issue was more important than the Zionists. How could they, men who prayed daily for Zion, not do a thing to help realize the restoration? Moreover, as Friedlaender insisted, many of them shared the conviction that there was no hope for Judaism without Zionism. Finally, the delegates agreed to a resolution couched in religious terms: "The United Synagogue of America reaffirms its faith in the fulfillment of our ancient Zionist hope in the early restoration of Palestine as the Jewish homeland as the means for the consummation of the religious ideals of Judaism."

Adler's defeat had been cushioned, but since the United Synagogue had in effect allied itself with the irreligious Zionists, it was nonetheless a defeat. The

convention dealt him a second blow by proceeding to elect a delegate to the American Jewish Congress. Adler had threatened to resign over the matter as early as 1915, and interpreting the convention's act in 1917 as a vote of no confidence, he carried out the threat. His words at the session betrayed a stubbornness and inability to compromise: "It seems that the Jewish people consider their interests at the present time differently from the way I consider their interests. But I still believe I am right. I can never believe in the majority. If I had believed in the majority, I should never have been a Jew." Convinced that the convention scenario had been written and executed by the "inner council" of Zionists, he bitterly contemplated the misguided delegates who had fallen into the Zionist trap. As in the AJC/congress controversy, he preferred to withdraw entirely if the game was not played on his terms.

Adler's wartime behavior, and his near paranoia about Zionist plots, accentuated the rift between him and the Zionist graduates of the Seminary. Sermons and articles by a few of the prominent Zionist rabbis – Solomon Goldman, Israel Goldstein, Israel Levinthal, Simon Greenberg – as well as *Proceedings* of the Rabbinical Assembly conventions, reveal some of the salient differences. The rabbis too aimed for a spiritual-cultural center in Palestine, but they did not limit their Zionism to that end alone. Enthusiastic about what a restored Zion could do for Jews and not only for Judaism, they optimistically viewed the Balfour Declaration as a license for a Jewish homeland. (Adler on the other hand insisted that the Declaration meant only "home" and not homeland.) It was incumbent upon American Jews, the rabbis said, not to let that license lapse but to turn their religious sentiments into concrete actions for the rebirth of Palestine. Buttressed by the philosophy of cultural pluralism, they did not fear the word "national," as in Jewish "national" homeland or Jewish "national" interest, nor did the bogey of secular nationalism deter them from positions of leadership within the Zionist movement. Solomon Goldman served as president of the ZOA (1938-40), and so too did Israel Goldstein (1943-45). Ironically, the Conservative rabbis, who ministered to an upwardly mobile middle class in the United States, supported a labor-oriented economy in the *yishuv*. In 1935 the Rabbinical Assembly, along with 241 Reform rabbis, publicly endorsed the programs of the Histadrut and the League for Labor Palestine.

During the interwar period the rabbis infused their congregations through the pulpit and Hebrew schools with strong Zionist sentiments. Opposition from congregants was minimal, usually limited as in the case of Goldstein's B'nai Jeshurun or Milton Steinberg's Park Avenue Synagogue to the older Germanic element in the community. The overwhelming consensus that the rabbis forged testifies to their own Zionist commitment and to the ethnic needs of their members. It also lends credence to the idea that Zionism in the synagogue filled an ideological void in Conservative Judaism. Indeed, so attractive was

Zionism to the congregations that even Solomon Goldman worried lest it secularize the synagogue. At the same time, the rabbis, the bearers of the two-centered visions, sought ways of making Zionism applicable and relevant for American Jews. At convention after convention the Rabbinical Assembly discussed not only the need to inculcate a *spiritual* Zionism among the laity but also ways of integrating cultural developments in the *yishuv* – Hebrew pronunciation, art, music – into American Jewish life.

To be sure, on certain key matters the rabbis and the Seminary president thought alike. Both stood for loyalty to America – the rabbis no less than Adler – and for the upbuilding of the *yishuv* – Adler no less than the rabbis. Both affirmed a Jewish future in the Diaspora; neither asked for *aliya* from America, which was "home"; and both preached an American Judaism that was synagogue-centered. The rabbis too opposed secular Zionism, and even those actively engaged in Zionist affairs insisted at almost every convention on a restored Palestine grounded in Jewish religious values. (Robert Gordis recalled how he and several colleagues belonged for a short time to Hapoel Hamizrachi just because it combined a loyalty to traditional Judaism with a progressive social orientation.) In 1937 the Rabbinical Assembly formulated its "Pronouncement on Zionism," a statement that stressed the spiritual and ethical essence of the Zionist movement. Since it skirted the issue of statehood, and like Adler, criticized Zionist bans on the use of Arab labor, the statement was hardly a challenge to the president's views.

Differences, however, outweighed similarities. Kaplan's characterization of Adler as a "fanatical anti-Zionist" who always found reason to complain about Zionism was exaggerated, but others agreed. When Adler delivered a glowing report to the Rabbinical Assembly in 1929 on the accomplishments of the *yishuv*, one rabbi wryly commented that the president's show of enthusiasm warranted the *she-hehiyanu* blessing. At bottom, Zionism was a "gut" issue, and deep emotions overlay reasoned arguments. Adler never shared the ethnic yearnings of the rabbis, and his religious and "mystical" bond with Palestine did not satisfy them.

On the surface, tensions between Adler and the Zionist rabbis eased in the 1920s. England's acceptance of the mandate over Palestine put the issue of statehood on hold, and the resignations of Brandeis and his lieutenants weakened the popular attractiveness of the ZOA. On both the world and American scenes political Zionism gave way to Palestinianism, permitting Zionists and non-Zionists to unite in the common goal of building up the land. Chaim Weizmann successfully wooed American non-Zionists like Marshall and Adler, in part by minimizing the importance of political agitation, and differences over matters like Jewish nationalism and the religious component in Zionism were suspended. Marshall, who more than anyone labored to establish a pro-Palestine consensus, argued that it behooved non-Zionists no

less than Zionists to provide a haven for Jewish immigrants, now barred by restrictive legislation, from entering the United States. Moreover, since the Balfour Declaration was written into the mandate and hence sanctioned by international law, American Jews, the most powerful Jewish community in the world, courted disgrace if they remained aloof or indifferent to the opportunity of establishing a home in Palestine.

Adler fully agreed, noting too that America's association with the Allies insured the compatibility of Palestinianism and American interests. He joined Marshall in support of economic ventures on behalf of the *yishuv*, including the Weizmann-sponsored Keren Hayesod, and ultimately in the formation of an enlarged Jewish Agency comprised of both non-Zionists and Zionists. To be sure, the non-Zionists were forced to accept the phrase "Jewish national home" in the preamble to the constitution of the enlarged Agency, but Marshall reassured them that the likelihood of a Jewish majority in Palestine, with the attendant possibility of calls for statehood, was unreal. While their goodwill was genuine, the non-Zionists doubtless also hoped that cooperation in the Agency and a course of active Palestinianism would help them regain the ground they had lost to the Zionists in the wartime struggle for communal leadership.

Palestinianism suited the rabbis too. Sermons that stressed the similarities between spiritual Zionism and American values, and hence the legitimacy of two centers for the American Jew, were now very much in place. At the same time, the Conservative message of spiritual Zionism injected a needed and meaningful ideological note into a cause that had lost the vigor and glamour of the Brandeis era and had become little more than a philanthropy. Palestinianism also spared the rabbis, who like American liberals, generally recoiled in the aftermath of the war from extreme nationalism and from the need to square their universalist ideals with the aim of Jewish statehood. Perhaps most important, a Zionism linked primarily to religion and the synagogue well served the wishes of the congregations. In a decade whose hallmark was national conformity, the Jewish masses, shedding their immigrant status and intent upon acculturation and mobility, were afraid to affirm more than a religious identity. To magnify separate ethnic or Jewish national interests would have fed into the ugly anti-Semitism that echoed at the time from the circulation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the Ku Klux Klan, and Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent*.

In the cooling-off period that Palestinianism provided, Adler found common cause with the arms of the Conservative movement in support of religious and cultural undertakings for the *yishuv*. One shared venture was a plan for the construction of Jeshurun, an American-like synagogue-center in the Rehavia section of Jerusalem. Before the war Adler had spoken of the need for synagogues in Palestine to represent religious Jews with "dignity," and in the 1920s, concentrating anew on the spiritual development of a Jewish Palestine, he

interested board member and philanthropist Felix Warburg in the Jeshurun idea. The United Synagogue enthusiastically sponsored the project, which secured endorsements from the Rabbinical Assembly, the Women's League, and from Jews in the *yishuv*. To the Conservative rabbis and the congregations Jeshurun presented a concrete answer to a much-discussed question: What can we contribute, other than money, to a Jewish homeland? Conservative leaders believed that it was their right no less than their duty to nurture religious life in the *yishuv*. Rabbi Max Drob, president of the Rabbinical Assembly in 1927, stated bluntly: Since our men bear the brunt of the United Palestine Appeal, "we are therefore justified in demanding that the upbuilding of Palestine should be spiritual as well as economic." In a sentence that Adler himself could have written, Drob added: "We should make it clear that a God-less Palestine is a contradiction in terms." The Jeshurun project dragged on, still unfinished at the end of World War II. Meantime, in 1935, the synagogue was donated to the *yishuv*.

Support of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem also united Adler and the rabbis. The idea of a modern university was first raised in the 1880s within the *hibat Zion* movement, and it slowly captured the interest of leading Jews. Adler too endorsed the idea shortly after it was discussed at the World Zionist Congress of 1913. The barriers against Jewish students in European universities, which, he predicted, would spread to the United States, called for the consideration of a university in Palestine. By the early 1920s the Seminary's president was fully immersed in overall planning for the institution – governance, budget and fund-raising, curriculum and faculty. Just as he believed that Palestine belonged to all Jews, so did he view the Hebrew University as an institution to serve Jews throughout the world.

Adler served on the university's board of governors and academic council, but his particular interest was the Institute of Jewish Studies. True to his principles, he hoped that rabbinic Judaism would be the regnant philosophy at the Institute and that Jewish studies would be "Jewish" as well as Hebrew. "The Institute," he wrote, "should not be a merely cold-blooded theoretical establishment, but one which in some way may tend to a religious and spiritual revival." As he explained in a statement prepared for the formal opening of the university: "The two thousand and more years of the development of the Jewish people as a religious people has created a point of view which has a right to find a place in all subjects where opinions play a part." At the inauguration ceremonies in 1925, Mordecai Kaplan spoke in Hebrew for the Seminary. He too expressed hope that the university would become a "spiritual center" where *torat Yisrael* would be joined with secular knowledge.

With Adler's blessing, other members of the Seminary family became involved in the operations of the university. Louis Ginzberg chaired a committee of the American Academy for Jewish Research (which included Adler) that

helped shape the character of the Institute, and in 1928-29, he began a tradition of service by Seminary faculty members as visiting professors in Jerusalem, when he taught Talmud at the university. The Hebrew University also gained the generous financial support of Felix Warburg, Jacob Schiff's son-in-law and friend of the university's chancellor, Judah Magnes. Warburg and his wife were captivated by Palestine and Chaim Weizmann during a visit in 1923, and the board member shared some glowing memories of the land in his address at the next Seminary commencement. (Nevertheless, he took care to add that his support of the university allied him not with the state-ists but with those who believed in Palestine as a center for Jewish learning.) Although his Jewish consciousness never approximated that of Adler or Schiff, it was Warburg ironically who suggested that rabbinical students spend a year in Jerusalem for religious inspiration. Opposition to political Zionism remained, but Adler and the board felt sufficiently comfortable with Palestinianism to relax their suspicions and display a warmer interest in the *yishuv*. In 1926 the Seminary voted an honorary degree to Hebrew poet, Hayyim Nahman Bialik.

Not all branches of the Seminary during Adler's tenure were content merely with Palestinianism. The Teachers Institute (established in 1909) and its affiliated department, the Seminary College of Jewish Studies (1931), which catered to men and women who sought professional training as Jewish teachers as well as those intent on pursuing a Jewish education for its own sake, were far more nationalistic than the administration and the Rabbinical School. Unlike the Rabbinical School, the Teachers Institute chose modern Hebrew as its language of instruction, and the students took courses dealing with Zionism and the "Neo-Hebraic Renaissance" as well as with the geography and history of Palestine. The popular extension classes of the Teachers Institute, the Israel Friedlaender Classes, which trained communal workers and leaders of Zionist youth organizations, also contained a strong Zionist component. The bent of the Institute's curriculum reflected the powerful Zionist commitment of the faculty. Indeed, Mordecai Kaplan, principal and later dean of the Teachers Institute, complained about those faculty members "who resent any kind of religious emphasis as being ecclesiastical and would have the Institute turned into a school for Jewish nationalism." He also charged that most of the staff dismissed his attempts to adjust Jewish life to American conditions, preferring, he said, "self-withdrawal" into a Hebrew ghetto and eventual *aliya*. Kaplan was himself an active Zionist, but he opposed both a secularist bias and the negation of the Diaspora. Simultaneously, he resisted the pressures of Adler and the board who questioned the curriculum's emphasis on modern Hebrew belles-lettres and who, according to Kaplan, would have preferred to see the Teachers Institute limit its instruction to prayer and religion. He, like Schechter before him, believed that Hebrew was an indispensable tool for cultivating Jewish consciousness and survival. The Hebraic and nationalistic core of the Teachers

Institute and Seminary College held fast, and it deeply influenced hundreds of students.

Moshe Davis, a distinguished alumnus of both the Teachers Institute and Rabbinical School, fondly recalled Kaplan's faculty of the 1930s – learned teachers who loved their students, American *maskilim* (followers of the Jewish Enlightenment), and all deeply "Zionist motivated." He singled out the foremost Zionists – Kaplan, Morris Levine (Moshe Halevi), Hillel Bavli, and Abraham Halkin. Halkin, for one, unabashedly used the classroom to preach *sh'lilat ha-golah* (negation of the Diaspora). Davis cogently contrasted the "two Seminaries" of his time: (1) a non-Hebraic Talmud-centered rabbinical department whose focus was on scholarship and where Zionism was passive, and (2) the Teachers Institute which emphasized Hebrew and Jewish nationalism and which propagated active Zionism among its students. (Indeed, as this writer recalls, Teachers Institute students boasted of such distinctions between them and the rabbinical students.) Davis himself was one of approximately 250 graduates of the Teachers Institute who, as of 1959, had gone on *aliya*.

Zionism at the Teachers Institute called down neither the wrath nor the censorship of the administration. Adler disliked Kaplan primarily for two reasons – his religious philosophy and, in the eyes of the president and the board, his attempt to carve out an independent empire on Seminary turf. Kaplan's Zionism did not enhance his palatability, but since Adler was squarely opposed to "heresy-hunting," he did not ban Reconstructionism much less nationalism from the classroom. The Zionist stance of the Teachers Institute left its mark on two generations of graduates who went on to each at Jewish day and afternoon schools, and like Schechter's legacy to the rabbis, it strengthened the ties between the Zionist and Conservative movements.

The deeper question of how Zionism was relevant to an American Jew of the 20th century was tackled by Mordecai Kaplan and his Reconstructionist philosophy. In early articles and in his magnum opus, *Judaism as a Civilization* (1934), Kaplan laid out a program that was eminently suited to the contemporary American environment. Influenced by American pragmatic thinkers, he consistently affirmed Diaspora survivalism as well as strong American loyalties. At the same time, however, Jewish peoplehood and Palestine were central to his thought. In the Reconstructionist formula, Palestine was the hub of the Jewish wheel, the source and inspiration for a vibrant Jewish civilization in the Diaspora. Kaplan once referred to himself as a "Judaist" rather than a Zionist, for he ranked cultural Zionism, a means of preventing Jewish life from being "submerged" in a non-Jewish environment, above *aliya* or political statehood. He also posited that a successful *yishuv* depended on a flourishing Diaspora. A center in Palestine that both nurtured and was nurtured by the Diaspora community constituted an elemental, and indeed unquestionable, component of Jewish survival: "Any healthy minded Jew," Kaplan wrote in

1929, "could not help but feel to the very marrow of his bones . . . that without Palestine reclaimed by the Jews there was nothing left for the Jews to do in the world."

Kaplan's popularity in more than fifty years of teaching at the Rabbinical School and the Teachers Institute crested between 1920 and 1945, corresponding roughly to Adler's tenure. An important study by sociologist Charles Liebman explains that his attractiveness to students, usually the best and the brightest, lay in his understanding of their problems with Orthodoxy and his willingness to address issues, religious and social, that the rest of the faculty avoided. Students of that generation found Kaplan "politically correct": he was unafraid to challenge religious traditions; he drew from the same philosophical, anthropological, and sociological ideas that they imbibed at secular colleges; he was the social justice liberal of the New Deal era. In short, Kaplan put Zionism in a context most meaningful to children of immigrants grappling with reconciling their American and Jewish identities and priorities. Reconstructionism bridged their two worlds, and Kaplan's Zionism, stripped of theological imperatives but buttressed by modern scholarship and encased in a larger philosophical framework, satisfied their ethnic consciousness.

The relative tranquillity of the Palestinian era was shaken by the Arab riots of 1929. American Jews united in a mammoth relief effort for the Jewish victims, but questions surfaced again within the community, as well as from the government and non-Jewish opinion makers, about the legitimacy of Zionist aims. Compounding the divisions of opinion on how to react both to the Arabs and the British, Chancellor Judah Magnes of the Hebrew University, a disciple of Schechter and close friend of the Adler circle, injected his own scheme for peace in Palestine. Independently of Weizmann and the Jewish Agency, Magnes called for direct negotiations with the Arabs for a democratic binational state. He defended his plan on the grounds of spiritual Zionism and Ahad Ha'amism; the choice, he said, was political, military Zionism – concretized in the imperialistically motivated Balfour Declaration and mandate that flew in the face of Jewish ethical and universalist principles – or "pacific, international, spiritual Zionism." The plan was well calculated to attract the American non-Zionists, providing them with a platform on which to support Palestinianism, decry the evils of political nationalism, and defend the liberal cause of Arab rights. Seminary board member Felix Warburg, for example, was one such supporter, since the plan jibed with his vision of Palestine as a vibrant interreligious center of Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Magnes's plan, which suited the anti-imperialist and pacifist mood of postwar liberal intellectuals, relates to the Seminary story precisely because it exposed a crucial juncture at which the Schechter legacy of spiritual Zionism diverged from political Zionism. Classical Zionists found the plan unpalatable and downright destructive. Was a Zionism predicated on the vision of a Jewish

state that functioned ethically as the "light unto the nations" realistic in a modern world where the amoral base of statecraft was the norm? Should a Jewish state judge itself, and expect to be judged, by moral standards that did not apply to other nations? The binationalist solution, failing to satisfy the Jewish nationalist impulse or the practical urgency that gave rise to Zionism in the first place, automatically dashed all hope for a Jewish state in Palestine, at least so long as Jews constituted a minority within an Arab majority. The plan also fell short of the dream of cultural Zionists, for it was hardly likely that a Jewish minority in a binationalist state, without ironclad guarantees of physical security, political equality, and economic opportunity, could create a culture vibrant enough to invigorate Diaspora Judaism. Magnes, however, who posed his solution in either/or terms of normative political Zionism or religious and ethical values, was not budged. Better to renounce a national home and to return Jews to the ghetto, he said, than to compromise Jewish spiritual integrity. Other spiritual Zionists may have not gone that far, but the tension between spiritual Zionism and pragmatic statecraft has sustained an ongoing debate in American Jewish circles ever since.

At the Seminary in 1929 opinions were also divided. Mordecai Kaplan and Louis Finkelstein, then a lecturer in theology, favored negotiations with the Arabs, but broaching the idea at that time aroused student resentment and ran the danger of being branded "traitor." Adler too desired a Jewish/Arab understanding, and he agreed, albeit vaguely, that Magnes's thinking was "on the right track." But, he was far less enthusiastic than Kaplan. The latter gave his "heartly approval" to the Magnes plan, and he even sought out Joseph Levy, the New York Times correspondent in Palestine who had acted as an intermediary between Magnes and the Arab side. Kaplan was also critical of the Balfour Declaration – "a foreign body in the system of Jewish revival . . . liable to set up a dangerous poison" – and of Zionist relationships with the Arabs. As in the case of Magnes, the principle of "ethical nationhood" qualified his Zionist vision.

In the immediate aftermath of the riots, Adler's importance in the Jewish diplomatic arena grew. He succeeded to the presidency of the AJC upon Louis Marshall's death, and on the enlarged Jewish Agency he and Warburg assumed Marshall's unofficial role as the ranking non-Zionist. (Adler was a member of the Agency's council and administrative committee, and Warburg chaired the administrative committee.) Both Adler and Warburg were committed to the upbuilding of Palestine, Adler from the vantage point of a religious Jew, and Warburg from an interreligious interest. Neither one possessed Marshall's statesmanlike abilities or his understanding of ethnic sensibilities. Of the two, Adler was more sympathetic to the *yishuv* and to cooperation with the Zionists. He was still critical of certain Zionist policies, particularly those that he thought contributed to the riots; but unyielding on the principle of free Jewish

immigration into Palestine, he pressured Warburg to resist any such curtailment by the British. Nor did Adler encourage Magnes, who was bitterly denounced by the Zionists, as Warburg had done. He found fault with certain points of the Magnes plan, and above all chided its author on the need for "corporate responsibility." It was inappropriate and ill-advised for anyone, particularly the head of the Hebrew University, to launch a course of independent diplomacy that bypassed Weizmann and the Agency executive. Adler was a legalist and strict constructionist; a team player in the Agency, he called for policy making through the proper channels.

Adler's role in the Agency brought him closer to Zionists and Zionist goals than ever before. Having voluntarily assumed responsibilities in that body, he felt honorbound to uphold its constitution, and no longer to question the wisdom of the Balfour Declaration or even the term "Jewish national home." To be sure, his support of the public campaign after the riots for the physical reconstruction of the *yishuv* did not weaken his personal religious sentiments regarding Palestine. Building up the land, he told a Jewish audience in 1930, transcended pragmatic concerns: "There are many more reasons in Jewish history, in Jewish sentiment, and in Jewish religious feeling, why it is a happiness for a person who really possesses these feelings to take part in the rebuilding of the Old Land." Nor did participation in the Jewish Agency alter Adler's priorities. The desire to nurture Judaism, and in Palestine too, remained primary. As he insisted when endorsing the need for religious schools in the *yishuv*, a Jew's religious duties were not fulfilled merely by settlement in Palestine. Nevertheless, responsibility to the enlarged Agency, which he regarded as pivotal for Jewish unity, mellowed his earlier criticisms of the Zionist movement. Adler also came to recognize, sooner than most, that the non-Zionist approach of separating philanthropic from political involvement was logically untenable. Economic aid, he told Warburg, could not but affect public policies regarding taxation, industry, and military security. Although he implicitly acknowledged that aid to the *yishuv* in whatever form contributed to the growth of an independent state, he personally was not deterred.

Adler's loyalty to the Agency was strengthened by Weizmann's request that he prepare a position paper on the Jewish right of access to the Western Wall. Rival claims to the Wall by Arabs and Jews had triggered the riots, and the League of Nations appointed a special committee to decide the issue. The task appealed to Adler; it drew upon his scholarship as well as his religious interests, and he liked to think that he was chosen because he was a "moderate" who headed a modern religious institution like the Seminary. In a well-researched memorandum, he showed the sanctity of the Wall to Jews ever since the destruction of the Temple. His argument was that the unbroken Jewish customs of pilgrimage and prayer at the Wall attested to in both Christian and Jewish sources had never been forbidden by Ottoman authorities and were therefore still valid.

A committee of the League ultimately upheld the Jewish right of free access, but the overall Palestinian situation ended on the gloomy note of the Passfield White Paper (1930). Recommending restrictions on Jewish immigration and land settlement, it outraged both Zionists and non-Zionists. Although Adler publicly counseled continued reliance on England's good faith, he shared the community's anger and despair. Very likely his feelings were echoed in a resolution drafted by his wife, Racie Adler, and adopted by the Women's League. Registering its "deep sorrow and bitter disappointment" with England's policy, the Women's League stated: "We had so completely trusted the oft-repeated assertion that the Mandate which embodies the Balfour Declaration would be fully carried out, that we had come to regard this as something fixed, the answer to our prayers for 2,000 years." Adler himself tore apart the major points of the White Paper. He reiterated at a council meeting of the Agency that the Jewish national home was internationally guaranteed – "We belong in Palestine of right and not on sufferance." Again he insisted that the honor of all Jews was at stake.

The problems of Palestine increased in the new decade. As the partners in the enlarged Jewish Agency squabbled over power, the fallout of the Great Depression threatened fund-raising and the very solvency of the Agency. At the same time, persecution unleashed by Adolf Hitler underscored the need of Palestine as a secure refuge. In Palestine itself, Arab riots broke out again in the mid-1930s. Admitting the unworkability of the mandate and the futility of seeking an Arab/Jewish modus vivendi, England's Peel Commission in 1937 proposed the creation of separate Arab and Jewish states. Against the backdrop of Nazi terror, Chaim Weizmann convinced the badly divided Twentieth Zionist Congress to give its qualified acceptance to England's offer. The plan, however, aroused the resistance of American non-Zionists and many Zionists. When the Rabbinical Assembly, for example, alluded to partition in its "Pronouncement on Zionism" (1937), it affirmed that no political settlement could be construed as a renunciation of the Jewish claim to "the whole of Palestine."

At the opening reception of the Seminary's academic year in 1937, Adler registered his opposition to partition, stating that it would not contribute to peace in Palestine. Like others, including Weizmann, he had never believed that a Jewish state was a foreseeable possibility, and now he was less than sanguine about its viability. He couched his objections in terms of practical fiscal and military difficulties that a Jewish state would face. Resistant to any radical change, he faulted England for failing to live up to the terms of the mandate and for failing to hammer out amicable relationships between the Arabs and Jews. As the alternative to partition he and his circle suggested that England fulfill its obligations as the mandatory power and that Arabs and Jews continue to negotiate a peace within a united Palestine. Toward that end they

mounted an aggressive campaign, cooperating with English non-Zionists and American Zionists to pressure Weizmann. Some held separate talks with Arab leaders in New York; others muttered about leaving the Agency. Desperately seeking to continue the mandate as it was created, their plan was at best a holding action.

The very idea of Jewish statehood alarmed some non-Zionists, but Adler now appeared less rigid. "As a non-Zionist," he wrote, "I do not at all deplore, or indeed did not deplore the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth." He didn't explain what he meant by a "commonwealth," but neither did he reject out of hand the mention of political autonomy. Agonizing over the plight of German Jewry, and as a loyal member of the Zionist/non-Zionist partnership in the Agency, he pledged continued financial support of the *yishuv* regardless of the outcome of partition. Nor did he fall back upon the binationalist solution that Warburg preferred. While the banker ranted about "that miserable Jewish state" which threatened all sorts of complications, Adler rejected permanent minority status for the Jews in Palestine or any stoppage of Jewish immigration, especially if similar bans were not imposed on the Arabs. According to Morris Waldman, executive secretary of the AJC, Adler resisted not statehood but Diaspora nationalism, or attempts to organize Diaspora Jews along political lines. While the expectation that Diaspora Jews would continue to fund what would become a foreign state might raise problems of divided loyalties, Adler denied that the status of Western Jews would be compromised. Under pressure of world events, and as a policy maker in the Agency, he had shifted his views considerably since 1917. Indeed, had England interpreted the Balfour Declaration and mandate along the lines laid down by Adler in 1937, an autonomous Jewish commonwealth might well have emerged. But after a year and a half of wrangling, England abandoned the Peel partition scheme.

The partition episode not only testified to differences of opinion within the non-Zionist camp, it also revealed the sentiments of the Seminary's board. Adler and Warburg, the leading American non-Zionists in the Jewish Agency until their deaths, were both life directors of the Seminary, and so were non-Zionists Sol Strock and Irving Lehman. The same men dominated the non-Zionist AJC, whose response to partition mirrored Adler's stand. In both the Committee and the Seminary, Adler was very much an influential policy maker and, Mordecai Kaplan's comment to the contrary notwithstanding, never a mere flunky of the board. Whereas Schechter officially had been only an employee of the board, Adler, a board member too, was a peer.

The non-Zionist views that Adler shared with the board made themselves heard on occasion within the Seminary's walls. On the one hand, the significance of Palestine as a Jewish center was always acceptable. At a Conference on Jewish Affairs which the Seminary sponsored in 1937 as part of its semicentennial celebration, one of the dozen roundtable discussions dealt

with "The Place of Palestine in the Development of Jewish Ideals." The very title reflected Adler's approach, and a paper delivered by Rabbi Abraham Heller, himself an ardent Zionist, emphasized the positive results of Zionism – the regeneration of Jewish values and Jewishness, a sense of Jewish unity, a haven for the persecuted – results that could hardly have offended the non-Zionists. On the other hand, the idea of a separate Jewish nationality was anathema, particularly at a time when Nazis were propagating racial theories, and the liberal *Christian Century* doubted that Jewish peoplehood made for proper Americanism. The drive for a World Jewish Congress, a body predicated on the assumption that Jews constituted a discrete national group, raised the hackles of Adler and the board, and both the president and director Sol Stroock used the podium at two Seminary graduations to counter the nationalists. Adler, who expounded on the dangers of claiming that Jews were more than a religious group, even faulted a student sermon for its discussion of Jewish nationalism. But the president never attempted more serious indoctrination within the Seminary, and the faculty and students of the 1930s – "We were *all* Zionists," Judah Nadich (class of 1936) recalled – continued to march to a different drummer.

The MacDonald White Paper of 1939, which drastically reduced Jewish immigration to Palestine, was bitterly condemned by both non-Zionists and Zionists. Unity was still elusive, but the Nazi terror compelled some non-Zionists to think more positively about a state in Palestine. Less than a year before his death, Adler and five other leading non-Zionists drafted a letter to Chaim Weizmann listing their criticisms of Zionist policies and setting forth their terms for remaining in the Agency. Since they disapproved of the White Paper and minority status for *Jews* in Palestine, they had little recourse but to accept the solution of statehood. They now called for a state in which all lived together as equal citizens free from the domination of any one group. However, how to achieve such a state that guaranteed political democracy when Jews were a minority, was perhaps intentionally left unexplained.

Adler headed the Seminary until his death in 1940, but his tenure of twenty-five years had no telling effect with respect to Jewish nationalism and Zionism on either the faculty or the students, much less on the affiliated branches of the Conservative movement. Although all agreed on the need to build up the *yishuv*, unity ended there. In a pattern fixed during World War I, when Adler was most resistant to political Zionism, the president and the board pulled one way and the faculty and students another. Meantime, the Rabbinical Assembly and United Synagogue charted their independent courses, looking sooner to the ideas of Schechter, the revered colleague and teacher, than of Adler, the aloof, part-time administrator.

During the interwar period, Adler dealt with Zionism through the AJC and the Jewish Agency, and his activities reflected upon the Seminary because he

happened to be president of the institution, not because he was *the* Conservative spokesman. The challenge of making the Seminary *in fact* the recognized leader of a unified Conservative movement devolved upon his successor. Like Schechter, Adler died at the beginning of a world war that dramatically altered the course of political Zionism. In the onrush of events the non-Zionist position of Adler and the board became increasingly untenable, and the next administration would be pressed to take a stand either for or against a Jewish state.

A Time of Crisis

The succession of Louis Finkelstein to the presidency came as no surprise to the Seminary family. Finkelstein had risen through the ranks; ordained in 1919, he left his congregation in 1931 to teach full time at the Seminary and to serve as Adler's assistant and provost. Recognized unofficially as heir apparent, he enjoyed a warm and congenial relationship with his chief. The two men shared a commitment to scientific scholarship and to traditional observance both as a personal and institutional norm. Even the sensitive issue of Zionism, which had aroused considerable anti-Adler sentiment among Finkelstein's rabbinical colleagues, did not strain the bonds of mutual trust and respect. To be sure, Finkelstein was a card-carrying member of the Zionist Organization, but since he was a staunch opponent of political as well as secular nationalism, his Zionism was purely of a spiritual nature. Indeed, an early statement of his, "We want to see Palestine rebuilt; we have for it . . . an intuitional, unreasoning, and mystic love" – could very well have been made by Adler. Finkelstein's stand on a Jewish Palestine presaged no significant change in administration policy, and had critical events between 1940 and 1948 not intervened, it would hardly have aroused any debate.

The new president had a passion for study and for scholarship – by 1940 he had produced major works on the Pharisees and Rabbi Akiba – but, so different from his oldest friend, Solomon Goldman, he took little interest in the politics or strategy of modern Jewish state-building. Unlike Schechter and Adler, Finkelstein neither engaged in public polemics on Zionist policies or personalities nor campaigned actively, the way the non-Zionist Adler had, for building up the *yishuv*. He followed Adler into the executive councils of the AJC but not into the Jewish Agency. His popular writings that touched on Zionism reveal how he concentrated on fitting modern Zionism into the religious chain welded by his heroes, the Prophets and the spiritual leaders of the Second Commonwealth. Seeking to apply his scholarship to this-worldly activities, he viewed the establishment of a Jewish Palestine through historical-religious lens.

Finkelstein began with two premises. One affirmed the need for Palestine for the religious Jew: "I believe that every Jew has a religious duty to strive to live in Palestine as the Holy Land of Israel; that because of the association of prayer and ceremonial with the Holy Land, he can worship God in Palestine in a manner in which he cannot worship Him anywhere else in the world." The second underscored the place of Palestine in a vibrant Judaism, in his words, "Judaism without Palestine is spiritually retarded." The land, he maintained, was necessary for the development of the prophetic teachings of peace, equality, and social justice. His objective was a Jewish community in Palestine dedicated to the observance of the Torah, the living word of God, and one that would, as the spiritual center of Israel, spark Jewish creativity. He spoke vaguely at times of a predominantly Jewish Palestine or of an autonomous community, but Jewish substance always took precedence over political form.

A religious community in Palestine had a larger purpose as well. Citing the views of Rabbi Akiba, Finkelstein insisted that nationhood had meaning only if Israel existed for an ideal outside itself. Upon a Jewish Palestine lay the responsibility of contributing to the survival of civilization by making God's reality manifest to the world and by transmitting the message of the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. He liked to think of a restored Palestine as the "third commonwealth," infused with the same spiritual vitality that inspired the deeds of Ezra, the Hasideans, and the Pharisees, and that molded the spiritual life of both Israelites and non-Israelites. It followed that if the world cherished the prophetic ideals taught by the Jews, it would help in the rebuilding of Palestine.

Finkelstein's form of spiritual Zionism emphasized the universalist role of Judaism but did not delimit it, as classical Reform did, to religious contributions. Israel as a kingdom of priests had more to impart than a message of monotheism. Positing the ongoing creativity of Israel, Finkelstein affirmed in an early talk that the people's historical contributions to civilization in prophecy, religious law, philosophy, and poetry had not exhausted their potential: "What future creations lie latent in the still growing mind of Israel we do not know." All attempts at creativity deserved encouragement: "Jewish art, Jewish music, the renaissance of the Hebrew language as the medium of daily intercourse, and above all the rebuilding of the Jewish homeland, all have our enthusiastic support." The Hebrew University, for example, to which he promised Seminary cooperation early on, illustrated his point. Zionism was therefore a good; itself a product of Jewish creativity, it held out the promise of renewed creativity for the benefit of mankind through a Jewish center.

Palestine as the spiritual hub of Judaism – and Finkelstein usually used the term "Judaism" in preference to "Jews" – never negated the viability or desirability of the American Diaspora. Jews had found spiritual as well as material well-being in America, for the ethical values of the Founding Fathers were

identical to those of the Pharisees. Moreover, American Jews too were called upon to render service to God, Torah, and mankind. The Seminary in particular, which Finkelstein likened to the academy at Yavneh, had a universal mission. Just as the spiritual influence of Yavneh transcended the material glories of the Hellenistic world, so might the Seminary (with Finkelstein perhaps as the American Yohanan ben Zakkai?) similarly serve mankind. Privately, Finkelstein may have agonized that he, an observant Jew, could not live a full religious life outside Eretz Yisrael, but his beliefs reinforced the two-centered vision of the Seminary.

Finkelstein's emphasis on universalism and on spiritual rather than political Zionism bore distinct traces of the American liberal creed. Coming to maturity during the Great War, his generation repudiated the militarism and hypernationalism that in their opinion had precipitated the world conflict. Their faith in a new postwar world was rudely shaken by the failure of the League of Nations and the rise of totalitarianism, but they held fast to the twin beliefs of universalism and pacifism. In the case of Finkelstein, who found reinforcement for them in rabbinic teachings, the ideals assumed even greater significance. They fed his aversion to power politics in general and to the politics of Jewish state-building in particular.

Finkelstein's refusal to make Jewish political sovereignty a Seminary objective never seriously undermined his control over the students and faculty. The more nationalistically-minded grumbled, but since the Seminary did not mandate conformity, they were free to act out their Zionist sentiments independently. Besides, the president had a singular ability to keep his institution in line. A forceful and magnetic leader, charming and hospitable, worldly but unassuming, he could reason, cajole, conciliate, and, above all, inspire loyalty. Unlike his predecessor he was a "hands on" president, a respected teacher as well as astute administrator, whose single-minded dedication to the Seminary was exemplary and whose scholarship earned universal admiration. Students and faculty neither rebelled against his determination to keep the Seminary more traditionalist than Conservative nor forced his hand on Zionism.

The Rabbinical Assembly and United Synagogue, despite some disaffection with Finkelstein's Zionist approach and administrative policies, were similarly captivated by the personality and achievements of their classmate and colleague. When the Seminary launched a joint fund-raising campaign, which gave the school the power to allocate funds to the arms of the movement, their submission to the president and the Seminary was virtually total. In fact as well as in theory the school under its fourth President spoke for a centralized movement. And, just as the Seminary was the fount of Conservative Judaism, Louis Finkelstein was the Seminary.

The Board of Directors of the Seminary also accepted Finkelstein's religious Zionism. No more representative of Conservative Judaism than their

predecessors, the members lacked the deep Jewish attachments of a Schiff and a Marshall. But although they were predominantly anti-Zionists or non-Zionists, they could empathize with the principles of universalism and mission that suffused the president's ideology and rhetoric. They genuinely revered Finkelstein for his piety and learning, and they too responded to his charm and charisma. To this author's knowledge, he functioned for some as personal counselor and spiritual guide. The board also saw that Zionism did not impede Finkelstein's major plans to broaden the institution's outreach to Christians, principally intellectuals, as well as to Jews. In 1937, when Finkelstein, then provost, coordinated the Seminary's semicentennial celebration that featured prominent Christian academics, he was chided by Solomon Goldman for "constantly running after the goyim." Finkelstein solemnly answered that American Jews were obliged to educate others in Jewish values, for without a relationship with American Christians, Judaism would survive only as a reaction to anti-Semitism. Nor did he find it inappropriate as Goldman had, for board member Lewis L. Strauss, a Reform Jew and anti-Zionist, to serve as chairman of the celebration.

The board cheered on Finkelstein's interreligious projects. Through ongoing conferences and institutes – the Institute for Religious and Social Studies (1938) brought together Christian and Jewish clergymen; the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion (1940) joined Jewish and Christian scholars – and by educational devices like *The Eternal Light* radio programs (1944), Finkelstein succeeded in stamping the importance of Judaism on the religious map of the United States. At a time when Americans invoked the religious roots of democracy to provide an antidote to totalitarianism, he taught that Judaism, at least as much as Christianity, deserved proper recognition. The man who did most to gain respectability among Christian leaders for the "Judeo" component of the "Judeo-Christian" tradition, Finkelstein strengthened the board's pride in the Seminary. Doubtless in their eyes he was transforming the institution from a parochial yeshiva geared to service East European immigrants into a creative intellectual center harnessed to the needs of the entire nation.

Zionism became a potentially disruptive force to the smooth administration of the Seminary only when demands for an independent Palestine resurfaced in the 1940s against the backdrop of the Holocaust. At that time Finkelstein was forced to confront the issue of Jewish political nationalism and somehow reconcile three discrete factors: his personal convictions, the board's hostility, and the Zionist loyalties of the students, faculty, and Conservative movement at large.

Finkelstein's views of Zionism did not arouse public comment before he became president. His interest after the riots of 1929 in Jewish negotiations with the Palestinian Arabs was a topic of conversation only among Seminary students; his opposition to partition in 1937 was voiced privately and merely

to show his support of the Adler-Warburg stand. Less than a year after he assumed office, however, Zionists pounced upon the man who now headed the Conservative movement.

In March 1941 Lord Halifax, British ambassador to the United States, invited three rabbis – David de Sola Pool, Louis Finkelstein, and Israel Goldstein – to a private conference on the issues facing American Jews. Halifax raised the subject of Zionism, and the rabbis assured him that while they differed on minor points, they were all Zionists. In the course of the conversation Finkelstein commented on the irreligiosity of modern Jews in Palestine which shocked Christian leaders but which, he had reason to hope, would change. Immediately after the meeting, when Pool and Goldstein rebuked him for those gratuitous remarks, he replied that he believed in being honest about such matters, and besides Halifax, a religious man, was probably well aware of the facts. Finkelstein may have felt that a defense of spiritual rather than political Zionism would appeal to the ambassador, but in Zionist eyes he had tarnished the image of a united Jewry in support of the *yishuv*. Although the conference was supposed to remain confidential, Goldstein leaked the substance to several leading Zionists, including Chaim Weizmann and Stephen Wise, and the Seminary's president became fair game for the nationalists.

A Zionist smear campaign ensued: Finkelstein had maligned the *yishuv*, and, at a time when the British White Paper had cut the sole remaining lifeline for Jews trapped by the Nazis, he was no better than a *moser* (informer against the Jews). Weizmann did not return Finkelstein's call; Wise refused to shake Finkelstein's hand at a social occasion. Furious with a now contrite Goldstein (who at once attempted to defend Finkelstein to Weizmann), the Seminary's president told his colleague that the "poison" was rapidly spreading. "If unchecked, the trouble will spread to Palestine; it is all over Brooklyn now, and will be told to Chief Rabbi Herzog." He claimed that he was concerned more for his institution than for himself. Different from Adler, Finkelstein wanted to be, and was, judged as the leader of the Seminary and the Conservative movement. His office gave him public recognition and clout, but as this episode taught, it put constraints upon his speech and behavior.

World War II radically changed the course of American Zionism. British intransigence with respect to Jewish immigration into Palestine, compounding the horrors of Hitler's war against the Jews, testified to the inadequacy of a passive Palestinianism or gradualist Zionism. The crisis demanded an immediate refuge for European Jewish survivors, and since refugees had long been a drag on the international market, Zionists focused on Jewish political autonomy as the one solution for keeping open the gates to Palestine. Under a new generation of leaders, David Ben-Gurion in Palestine and Abba Hillel Silver in the United States, they assumed a more militant approach. At a Zionist conference at New York's Biltmore Hotel in May 1942, more than six hundred delegates,

calling for unity within the movement, demanded free entry into Palestine, control over immigration and land development by the Jewish Agency, and the establishment of Palestine "as a Jewish commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world." In order to make support of a commonwealth coextensive with the Jewish community and to force the non-Zionists into line, the Zionists orchestrated the organization of an American Jewish Conference. At dramatic sessions in August 1943, representatives of more than a million and a half American Jews endorsed the Biltmore program and thus resurrected Herzl's call for a Jewish state. Their action, Mordecai Kaplan predicted, "will probably figure prominently in the annals of the modern Jewish renaissance."

The new Zionist militancy revitalized the die-hard anti-Zionists. In the summer of 1942 a small group of Reform rabbis initiated what soon became the American Council for Judaism. Embittered by the Biltmore program and by the action of Reform's Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) endorsing the creation of a Jewish army in Palestine to fight alongside the Allies, the dissidents published a statement in condemnation of political Zionism. It denied neither the plight of the refugees nor the admirable achievements of the *yishuv*, but contended that a nationalistic and secularist movement contradicted the cardinal tenets of Judaism.

Rabbi Philip Bernstein, also a Reform rabbi but an active Zionist, immediately consulted with several prominent rabbis, including the presidents of the Rabbinical Assembly, CCAR, and Rabbinical Council of America (Orthodox), who proceeded to draft a counterstatement. Arguing that Zionism was fully compatible with Judaism and its universalist teachings, that Jews like other peoples enjoyed the right to political self-determination, and that Zionism did not weaken the undivided loyalty of Jews to the United States, the statement lashed out at the anti-Zionists for their disservice to beleaguered Jews and for providing aid to the enemies of a Jewish homeland. Bernstein then called upon Finkelstein, along with twenty other leading rabbis, to sponsor a letter soliciting endorsement of the statement from fellow rabbis from all wings of American Judaism. Although several members of the Rabbinical Assembly signed that letter, Finkelstein refused. He said that the statement was open to misinterpretation and that it could trigger a full-blown controversy and thus actually harm the Zionist cause. Disturbed, however, that his refusal was construed by some as anti-Zionist, he wrote Bernstein a week later adding that he, as president of the Seminary, had been advised not to sign. Since the advice came from a Zionist, indeed a sponsor of the counterstatement, he labored to prove that his decision in no way reflected any personal opposition to Zionism.

Caught between Zionist pressure on the one hand and an unwillingness to ally himself with the statehood movement on the other, Finkelstein wrote

Bernstein yet again, stating that he was well aware of the "whispering campaign" against him, even though no American Jew had cause to presume "that I am not deeply concerned about the future of our homeland in Palestine." He reiterated his fear of communal disunity generated by the controversy and its adverse effect on Jewish restoration to Palestine. Perhaps the American Council for Judaism was not totally in error; he noted that some of his Christian friends had modified their views on Zionism under the influence of the organization's propaganda. Calling for Zionist patience and *heshbon ha-nefesh* (soul-searching), he urged above all the need to square Zionist thought with religious principles. Only a Zionism grounded fully in religion stood the chance of furthering Jewish aspirations in Palestine. It could possibly win over many anti-Zionists – and here he referred to private conversations with members of the Council – and thereby achieve a basic unity among American Jews. In no way did Finkelstein condone the Council's activities (despite a Council newsletter that once "welcomed" him into their ranks), but clearly the principal culprit in his analysis was the Zionist movement.

The letters to Bernstein reveal how Finkelstein groped for a way out of the conflicting pressures that beset him. His validation of Zionism solely on religious grounds, and largely ignoring the factors of Jewish peoplehood and creativity, became the most expedient way for him to operate publicly. It involved no compromise of principle on his part, and neither Zionists nor anti-Zionists could very well dispute his vision of a Torah-true community in Palestine. Perhaps too, as he suggested, Jewish consensus on a religious homeland would more readily evoke a positive response in Christian circles, doubtless the same circles to which he turned in his outreach programs. As a spiritual guide who tried to stand above the contending factions and judge them according to religious norms, Finkelstein donned the mantle of arbiter, pleading for Jewish unity and chiding those whose communal in-fighting injured the cause of a legitimate (read: religious) Jewish homeland.

Zionists were persuaded neither by appeals for a transcendent Jewish unity, unattainable in the best of times, nor by what they regarded as pious platitudes. World Jewry in crisis could not afford the luxury of religious visions, and after Biltmore, a true Zionist did not equivocate about statehood. In the flare-up over the Council, Bernstein never even acknowledged the receipt of Finkelstein's letters. While the Seminary's president genuinely believed that Zionist attacks on him were totally unwarranted, his attempts to appear as the principled Zionist ended in failure. Moshe Davis once explained: "He tried to straddle, . . . to stick to both sides of the issue. And . . . that's why there is to this day the recollection on the part of many students at the time . . . of his non-Zionism and anti-Zionism."

The counterstatement of the Bernstein group eventually garnered more than eight hundred signatures. Attacks on the Council followed from the Rabbinical

Assembly, which called upon rabbis to repudiate and frustrate the purposes of the organization. The Seminary's rabbinical students followed suit; allied with students from Orthodox and Reform seminaries, they unanimously endorsed a program advocating Jewish membership in the United Nations, a Jewish army, and the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Publicly, however, the Seminary's administration kept silent. Virtually the only rabbi who refused to sign the Rabbinical Assembly statement, Finkelstein attempted to placate both sides. He explained to a Zionist colleague: "I, of course, agreed with my colleagues in their basic strictures against the Council. . . . On the other hand, I simply could not sign a statement which equated Judaism with American, British and French nationalism." At the same time, when board member Arthur Hays Sulzberger of the *New York Times*, a rabid anti-Zionist, wondered suspiciously what the connection of the Rabbinical Assembly was to the Seminary, Finkelstein assured him that although the Rabbinical Assembly "as a whole is very much under the influence of the Zionist Organization," it had no control over the policies of the Seminary. He added that the statement of the students, who were caught up in a Zionist-fomented "wave of hysteria," was considerably stronger and "more foolish." He had convinced them, he claimed, that they had misunderstood the situation, and had they not already sent their statement to the Zionist Organization, they would have withdrawn it. Sulzberger's sympathies with the Council notwithstanding, Finkelstein mildly criticized the anti-Zionists for their "injudicious" behavior, but conforming to his role as spiritual arbiter, he preferred to stay above the controversy. He suggested that the situation called for an "educational effort," perhaps along the lines of a new religious journal.

Where the Seminary stood on the fight between the Zionists and the Council became a public issue when the Independent Jewish News Service reported that several board members were associated with the Council. (A story in the Zionist *New Palestine* purportedly exposed secret meetings of the Council members included Sulzberger. A letter by Finkelstein, citing the same report, mentioned Henry Hendricks, Edgar Nathan, and Alan Stroock as well as Sulzberger.) Finkelstein called the report "unscrupulous propaganda," charging that it contained "misinterpretations" if not "actual falsities." He explained to the faculty that none of the board members under attack was, or intended to become, associated with the Council. Moreover in no way, was the Seminary obligated to defend the statements of any individuals connected with it.

That Finkelstein felt impelled to offer an explanation suggests first, a widespread awareness of the positive interest in the Council on the part of several board members (notably Sulzberger, Strauss, and Stroock), and, second, a fear on the part of the faculty that Council sympathizers would attempt to impose an anti-Zionist policy upon the Seminary. At this juncture the respected talmudist, Professor Louis Ginzberg, intervened. He called the incident "much

ado about nothing," but reminded Finkelstein that Schechter's answer to Schiff back in 1907 had shown American Jews where the Seminary stood on Zionism. Implying that Finkelstein could take similar action with respect to his board, he hoped at least that the Seminary's laissez-faire policy on Zionism would prevail and "that the members of the Board will . . . not object to any pro-Zionistic declarations by members of the Faculty expressed by them as individuals."

A few months after the uproar over the Council for Judaism, another crisis erupted, this one concerning the withdrawal of the AJC from the American Jewish Conference. The non-Zionist Committee, a reluctant participant from the beginning, suffered a major defeat when the Conference dismissed its pleas to defer the issue of Jewish statehood and roundly endorsed the Biltmore program. The Committee's executive voted in October 1943 to leave the Conference, thereby breaking the impressive show of Jewish unity on the Palestine issue. The action called forth torrents of abuse, and ten percent of the Committee's membership resigned in protest.

The organizations of the Conservative movement stood in the forefront of the opposition; the Rabbinical Assembly, United Synagogue, and Women's League all dissociated themselves from the Committee. From Conservative rabbis and congregations came cries for Louis Finkelstein, a member of the committee's executive, to follow suit. Milton Steinberg, rabbi of New York's Park Avenue Synagogue, called the Committee's withdrawal "an expression of the most deJudaized and detraditionalized elements in American Jewish life" that fed into the hands of the anti-Zionists. The president of a congregation in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, similarly inveighed against the Committee's "irresponsible" action "which flouts those very religious principles and democratic ideals to which we in our small way are dedicated." Both the prestigious rabbi and the obscure layman, allied in a movement that had from its inception linked Zionism with Judaism, asked Finkelstein to resign from the Committee. As Steinberg diplomatically put it: "You do serve as spokesman for Conservative Judaism in this country. And, ideally, there ought not to be a sharp dichotomy between the leadership of a movement and the overwhelming sentiment of its following."

Again Finkelstein was forced to balance institutional pressures and personal beliefs. He had stated his own views at a meeting of the Committee's executive; he was against the White Paper and in favor of a refuge in Palestine but against Jewish statehood. He argued that if a commonwealth meant a less-than-equal political status for Christians and Muslims in Palestine, then he opposed it. Furthermore, he thought it bad statesmanship to ask for the unattainable: "There isn't one possibility in five hundred that there will be established in the course of the next twenty-five years what is called a Jewish state in Palestine." Jewish political impotence did not trouble him. In line with earlier remarks he now

stated: "It is not a fact that Jews have been praying for two thousands years that there should be a Jewish president in Palestine. What the Jews have been praying for two thousands years is that the Kingdom of God shall be restored in Palestine." Finkelstein abstained on the vote to withdraw from the Conference. Emphasizing the need for communal unity, he preferred to negotiate further with the Zionists. If they refused to change the statehood resolution, only then was withdrawal in order. Except for that qualification, his spiritual Zionism along with his suspicions of nationalism led to a conclusion identical to the Committee's.

Seminary tradition also worked to keep Finkelstein loyal to the AJC. The school and the defense agency had been closely linked throughout their histories. In the days of Schechter and Adler the same prominent few who ran the Committee sat on the Seminary's board; Adler was a lynchpin of the Committee while he headed the Seminary. During Finkelstein's administration traces of the interlocking directorate persisted, most notably in the persons of Sol Stroock and his son Alan. Finkelstein himself served on various committees of the latter, and the AJC in turn helped fund the Seminary's Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion. Were Finkelstein to resign from the committee and thereby sever the long-standing relationship, he doubtless would have precipitated a major crisis with the board.

Nevertheless, the president could not ignore the pressures from his own rank and file. Milton Steinberg, for one, probed beyond the Conference episode and asked for answers to a series of pointed questions: Did Finkelstein envision a Jewish Palestine solely as "a community of saints such as that of Safed in the sixteenth century" or as a home for "many Jews even if not all of them are saints and scholars"? On what basis did Jews have the right to demand free entry into Palestine? Was the Western world still bound by the promises of the Balfour Declaration and mandate? Did Finkelstein deny Jewish nationhood? Would he favor Jewish political self-determination if Jews constituted a majority in Palestine?

Finkelstein answered forthrightly: Palestine was not only for saints and scholars; the Balfour Declaration and mandate were permanent covenants; the right to enter Palestine stemmed primarily from the right of any Jew to fulfill a religious obligation: "The question of whether the Jew who comes to Palestine is himself religious in other respects, is not a relevant issue . . . His desire to come to Palestine is a desire to perform a religious act." Yes, he believed in Jewish peoplehood ("nation" was too loose a term), but he did not regard Jews as a political group. Nor did present circumstances warrant statehood:

I believe the interest of Palestine and the world requires that for the time being, it should remain under international control. If, at sometime in the future, the Jews constitute a majority of the land, and as such a majority desire that the land be reconstituted as the Republic of Eretz Israel (with guarantees of full and equal rights to all individuals and groups), I would regard it as the duty of the world to grant that request,

inssofar as it will grant similar requests to other small countries.

Although Steinberg the Zionist concluded that at least for the moment Finkelstein's response "leaves little to be desired," the question of why the president opposed the Conference resolution and sided with the AJC remained unanswered. Finkelstein explained at length to the rabbi that since the Committee's attempts at unity had been rebuffed, the fault for the rupture lay with the Zionists. He personally was dismayed by Zionist tactics at the Conference and the fact that sessions were held on the Sabbath. More important, he thought the Palestine resolution was intrinsically flawed. The word "commonwealth," which connotated an arrogation of political power on the part of Jews at the expense of non-Jews in Palestine, was morally and religiously indefensible as well as potentially harmful to Diaspora Jews. Long the universalist, he was also concerned lest the resolution, drawn along lines of narrow nationalism, cause Jews to forget their mission to the world at large. He had suggested, Finkelstein said, that the word "homeland" be substituted for "commonwealth," but the Zionists turned him down.

Finkelstein's explanations jibed with his remarks at the AJC meeting and his article in the *New Palestine*. But a private letter to Steinberg illuminated more clearly than before the essential distinction drawn by Finkelstein between his spiritual Zionism and political Zionism. "The primary question is not one of political control of the land," he said, "but whether the Jews are given the opportunity to perform their religious duty, and to develop their spiritual and cultural life in the Holy Land; and whether they are there in such numbers and preponderance as to make the development of their religious and spiritual life basic elements in the civilization of the country." It followed, therefore, that a Jewish majority in Palestine might be desirable, but the concept of a majority in the political sense carried no special merit. Finkelstein held fast to his principles, but his position on "political control" hardly endeared him in 1943 to the American Zionist rank and file.

The Seminary's president discussed the AJC/Conference rupture with a hand-picked committee that consisted of four board members, four alumni, and four faculty members. The group, of whom he said "virtually everyone . . . is an ardent Zionist," agreed that he should remain in the AJC with a view towards achieving collaboration between the Committee and the Zionists. There the matter was dropped, and a letter of resignation from the AJC, which Finkelstein had drafted earlier, was never sent. Nevertheless, disaffection with his close ties to the Committee lingered.

By 1943, as thoughts turned to plans for a postwar world, Finkelstein's universalist and antinationalist leanings grew more pronounced. In articles that appeared in the *New Palestine* he ranked national sovereignty well below internationalism: "The creation of an enduring peace presupposes an active cooperative relationship among nations and peoples, which makes the question

of statehood less and less relevant, while emphasis on national sovereignty anywhere must be fatal to civilization." He spoke on the need for a restored Jewish homeland – never did he use the words "state" or "commonwealth" – but again he depicted a center through which a revitalized Judaism (not Jews) would effectively disseminate the spiritual values required for the survival of civilization. The political contours of that center remained fuzzy. Emphasizing the need for a postwar association of nations committed to the prophetic ideals of peace and justice, he saw a Jewish homeland under the "aegis" of that association. A restored Palestine and a new world order were interlocked. Indeed, the former was "indispensable to a reformation of world culture as well as one of the major expressions of that reformation itself." Since he decried secular Jewish nationalism in particular, the editor of the *New Palestine* pressed him for a similar denunciation of anti-Zionism. All Finkelstein agreed to, however, was one mild sentence in strict keeping with his religious focus: "To oppose this effort to restore the Jewish settlement of the Holy Land," he said, "is to repudiate a cardinal tradition of Judaism."

Spiritual Zionism grounded in a universal mission and laced with internationalism did not satisfy the Zionists who looked rather for a positive endorsement from the leader of Conservative Jewry. They had drawn the line between Zionist and anti-Zionist on the issue of Jewish political autonomy, and a "homeland" or "settlement" under international control fell short of that objective. Yet, out of principle as well as healthy fear of antagonizing his board, Finkelstein would venture no further. Sulzberger's behavior, for example, proved that antinationalists were at least as uncompromising as the political Zionists. Moving from non-Zionism to anti-Zionism in response to nationalist militancy, the publisher aired his bias publicly through the powerful *New York Times*. Privately, he needled Finkelstein repeatedly whenever he suspected Seminary identification with Jewish nationalism. On one occasion Sulzberger mistakenly detected a Jewish flag in a *Times* photograph of a Seminary convocation, and he protested that the display of a flag "which is not my national emblem again raises the issue which has so much disturbed me."

The president trod warily with the board. As early as 1941, he began to clear with members of his board matters that smacked of Seminary involvement with Palestine or Zionism: Should he sign a statement in support of the Hebrew University? Should he attend a luncheon tendered by Chaim Weizmann? At one faculty meeting he described his difficulties with individual board members after the initial two-year honeymoon period and the countless hours he was forced to spend in placating them. Since financial pressures fostered a dependence on the goodwill of Sulzberger and Lewis Strauss, the two most likely to expand the Seminary's circle of large contributors, it was also politic to keep any Zionist sentiments in check. Mordecai Kaplan reported that the president agreed to certain conditions that Sulzberger thought would help

chances of reaching the "big money": the Seminary would not limit itself to servicing Conservative Judaism; it would continue its interfaith work; and, it would not commit itself to political Zionism. The cynical Kaplan suspected that Finkelstein himself and not the two board members had formulated these conditions.

Finkelstein loyally sprang to Sulzberger's defense in a dispute between the publisher and Abba Hillel Silver. In the wake of the American Jewish Conference, the Reform rabbi, now the recognized voice of an aggressive Zionism, publicly denounced "the spirit of Arthur Hays Sulzberger" which had turned the *Times* into "the channel for anti-Zionist propaganda." Finkelstein, who claimed both men as his friends but deplored the injurious effect of such quarrels on the causes of both Jews and Judaism, blamed the Zionist leader. He told Sulzberger that Silver had chosen a path of "violence and vehemence." Perhaps recalling that Silver was most responsible for the passage of the Biltmore resolution and hence for Finkelstein's own difficulties after the AJC/Conference rupture, the Seminary's president may have unconsciously identified with Sulzberger: "It is obviously the fate of the men who try to civilize the world to be misinterpreted and maligned by their contemporaries who resist being civilized." Nothing from "our hysterical friends," he assured his board member, could undermine "your place in American religious life and in Judaism, and your magnificent contributions to civilization in our time." Writing to Silver at the same time, Finkelstein also called Sulzberger "a loyal and devout Jew trying to serve his faith and his people" whose outlook on Jewish life was, indeed, not that different from the rabbi's. He did not neglect, however, to lavish equally high praise on the Zionist leader: "There are few men in public life for whose abilities I have greater admiration, and of whose wholehearted devotion to the service of the God and the Jewish faith, I have greater certainty."

Again, as in the episodes of the Bernstein letter and the AJC's withdrawal from the American Jewish Conference, the Seminary's president attempted to juggle conflicting pressures – his own principles, his dependence on the board, and the need to appease his Conservative constituency. Again, professing simultaneous loyalty to both Zionists and anti-Zionists, he sought a way out of the maze by shifting the focus from political Zionism to Jewish unity. Finkelstein failed to defuse the Sulzberger/Silver controversy, and the publisher and the rabbi exchanged heated letters replete with accusations and ad hominem attacks. (A near-hysterical Sulzberger even charged that the Zionists, who perverted and distorted facts, were employing "Goebbels' tactics.")

When in 1945 the board officially considered the president's view on Zionism, it showed how sensitive the entire body, and not just Sulzberger and Strauss, had become to the subject. Finkelstein drafted a frank statement:

He described his attitude toward the reestablishment of a Jewish settlement in Palestine as being precisely that of Doctor Schechter,

and wholly within the Jewish tradition. He stated that it was his conviction that in this sense, every member of the Faculty, every alumnus of the Seminary, and he believed also, every member of the Board, was a Zionist. On the other hand, while he did not wish to make a public statement on the subject, . . . he wished the Board to know what he believed had been made obvious from all his writings over many years, . . . namely, that he does not regard the Jews of the world as a political unit. He considers that the effort to describe them that way is extremely dangerous, not only to the Jews but to democracy, generally, and that, though he hopes that events will prove him wrong, the concentration of the Zionist effort on the conception of Palestine as a "Jewish Commonwealth," rather than on widespread immigration will have a harmful effect on the future of the *Yishuv*.

The board accepted the president's statement. They may have thought that his spiritual Zionism posed no immediate challenge, or they may well have assumed, as did some faculty members, that he was not a Zionist.

Meanwhile, Conservative Jews waited in vain for Finkelstein to endorse the Zionist demand for statehood. A cover story featuring Finkelstein that appeared in *Time* reported that at least one large contributor to the Seminary "tore up his usual check." Within the Rabbinical Assembly rumblings of discontent with Finkelstein's attempts to keep one foot in both the Zionist and anti-Zionist camps were also heard. As Milton Steinberg put it, "I want Dr. Finkelstein . . . to stop pussy-footing on Zionism." The opposition came to a head in 1944-45 when several prominent rabbis, led by Steinberg and Solomon Goldman, prepared a list of grievances against the Seminary's president. Their lengthy indictment criticized Finkelstein for initiating new programs of an interfaith or public relations nature that had little relevance to the Seminary as a seat of learning, for ignoring the need to formulate a Conservative theology, and for wielding too much power over the Rabbinical Assembly and United Synagogue. Furthermore, and this was the heart of their complaint, they charged that Finkelstein's board was a body unrepresentative of, and unsympathetic toward, Conservative Judaism. Although Zionism was not specifically included as a grievance, it was implicit in the bill of particulars. One could well deduce from the rabbis' brief that if the Seminary stayed on a proper course – committed to the interests and spirit of Conservative Judaism and heedful of its rabbis and congregations – it would emerge as an active supporter of the Zionist program.

Steinberg and Goldman presented harsh criticisms to Finkelstein privately. Steinberg, who canceled the annual appeal for the Seminary at the Park Avenue Synagogue, also aired the charges publicly in three sermons entitled "Crises in Conservative Judaism." Not only did he pointedly question Finkelstein's power but he lashed out against the board, men "who are anti-traditionalist, anti-Zionist, even assimilationist" and "flagrantly out of harmony with everything

the Seminary represents." Finkelstein handled the dissidents with consummate skill. He patiently answered them individually; he arranged meetings where he, flanked by senior members of the faculty, entertained their complaints; and he flattered them with friendly invitations. In the end, his strategy wore them down. That plus a genuine loyalty to their teacher and friend on the part of the rabbis broke the back of the "Steinberg-Goldman revolt." In the long run not all was lost. The administrative organization of the Seminary was modified to include a larger Board of Overseers representative of Conservative Jewry, that would share some authority with the Board of Directors. Finkelstein also promised that so long as he was president no one would be appointed a director without the endorsement of the Rabbinical Assembly's executive.

For the time being, the president and the Board of Directors reigned supreme with respect to political Zionism. Indeed, at the very moment that he was negotiating with the rabbis, Finkelstein again refused to sign a Zionist statement responding to charges from the American Council for Judaism. This time he explained that if the text of the statement were properly altered, he might be able to induce Lessing Rosenwald, president and strong financial backer of the Council, to withdraw his support of that organization. He did meet with Rosenwald, but his attempt at peacemaking between Zionists and anti-Zionists failed. Whether in the interest of Jewish unity, or merely "pussyfooting" as Steinberg had said, Finkelstein refused to burn his bridges to either group.

Within the walls of the Seminary, faculty and student anger also smoldered. Finkelstein's approach to Zionism was never debated publicly; in Moshe Davis's words, it generated only "corridor, cafeteria and house talk." On several occasions, however, the opposition surfaced. In 1944 the Seminary awarded an honorary degree to Chaim Weizmann, but to the consternation of the students the citation made no mention of Zionism. It referred to Weizmann's scientific contributions to the cause of democracy in World War I and his lifelong struggle to alleviate the sufferings of Israel and the world. A mirror of Finkelstein's own views, the citation compared the Zionist leader to Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, commending his efforts through the founding of the Hebrew University to further the "development of the spiritual values of Israel." "His pursuit of the prophetic vision," the text concluded, "is motivated by an earnest conviction that a Jewish community, reestablished in the Holy Land, can once more be a source of inspiration and moral strength to all mankind." In the eyes of the students, "spiritual values," "prophetic vision," and "Jewish community" ignored Weizmann's herculean tasks on behalf of Jewish nationhood. More important, the citation could hardly be construed as a message of encouragement to a *yishuv* bent on political independence. Several students complained jointly to the administration, but Finkelstein offered no explanation. Student bitterness mounted when the class of 1945 requested and was denied permission to sing "Hatikva" at their commencement.

Aside from his sensitivity to the board's outlook, Finkelstein's own opposition to political Zionism had not changed as the war wound down. He confided to board member Frieda Warburg in October 1944 that "I sympathize greatly" with Judah Magnes's binationalist scheme for Palestine. Moreover, he thought that the "temporary difficulties" in Palestine were overshadowed by larger issues – like "seeing that the Jews shall be the best kind of people possible" – to which the Seminary was committed. The letter coincided in time with student reaction to the Weizmann degree and the onset of the confrontation with Goldman and Steinberg. In spite of, or perhaps in answer to, the challenges from colleagues and students, Finkelstein stiffened both his resistance to statehood and his determination to launch projects beyond the conventional parameters of a rabbinical school.

Nor did Finkelstein emend his position in the final months before the state of Israel came into being. The United Nations had voted for partition in November 1947, but diplomatic shifts until the very last days threatened to jettison international approval of a Jewish state. Meanwhile the *yishuv* was caught in a stranglehold between Arab guerilla warfare and British restrictions on Jewish self-defense. On all levels – political, material, and moral – it desperately needed American Jewish support. Finkelstein, the confirmed pacifist, recoiled at the thought of a Jewish-Arab war. Like others, he believed the warnings from high American officials that the establishment of a state might actually lead to the military destruction of a Jewish Palestine. If a state was not viable at that time, there was no imperative for altering his course.

On the eve of Israel's independence, Zionist members of the faculty stood up to the president. A dispute over a seemingly trivial issue, an honorary degree to be awarded at commencement, captured the bitterness that had built up over the years between the Zionists and Finkelstein. At a meeting in January, the president's recommendation of the AJC's president, Joseph Proskauer, drew opposition because of the latter's anti-Zionism, and a compromise was reached whereby an award would also go to Moshe Shertok, head of the political department of the Jewish Agency and a leading force for statehood. Unhappy with Shertok, Finkelstein tried a month later to substitute Paul Baerwald of the Joint Distribution Committee, also an antinationalist. Although the president promised a special convocation to honor Zionist leaders if and when partition was favorably resolved, Professors Hillel Bavli and Shalom Spiegel argued that it was the Seminary's duty to take an immediate public stand on the side of the *yishuv*. Mordecai Kaplan's diary provides a detailed description of how tempers flared: "Both Bavli and Spiegel spoke sharply and bitterly of the ivory tower attitude of the Seminary, an attitude that is responsible for the tendency on the part of the Jewish masses to ignore the Seminary. At one point Finkelstein screamed at Bavli, and Bavli paled with anger." Not only had faculty members worked individually for Zionism, the president shouted, but

no group in America had done more for Zionism than the Rabbinical Assembly. When Shertok's name was brought up once more in April, Finkelstein again lost his temper. Maintaining that it was a matter of conscience, he said that "he had no faith in the Zionist leaders who have made the issue of Jewish statehood paramount." In the end, honorary degrees went to both Zionists and anti-Zionists but not to Shertok.

Barely a month after the birth of Israel, the Seminary held its graduation. On that day the students rebelled. As the popular story goes, they draped an Israeli flag on the Seminary tower only to have it whisked away by the administration before the ceremonies began. Since their request for "Hatikva," in which Professor Bavli joined, was also turned down (a foreign anthem, nonreligious to boot), they arranged with the carillonneur at Union Theological Seminary, across the street, to play the melody during commencement. Elated and triumphant, the students heard the bells formally announce their identification with the new Jewish state.

The birth of Israel brought a dramatic shift in Seminary policy. Like its affiliated branches, the school now stood proudly behind the Jewish state. In 1952 the Seminary in conjunction with the Jewish Agency launched the Seminary Israel Institute, and that same year it awarded an honorary degree to David Ben-Gurion. Ten years later the Seminary opened a *priniyah* (dormitory) in Jerusalem, thereby establishing a permanent presence in the land.

Finkelstein, still very much the spiritual Zionist, warmly endorsed the ties of active cooperation. The very existence of a state recharged his vision of a third commonwealth committed to the universal ideals and mission of Judaism, a vision in which American Jews also played a part. The latter, he said, like Babylonian Jewry of old "who brought the vision of Judaism to bear upon the practical affairs of the world," were fully prepared to help their Israeli brethren in the service of God. "If we can labor with them toward a solution of the vast human problem, that in itself will be a privilege." At Finkelstein's suggestion, Chaim Weizmann presented President Truman with a *sefer Torah* as a token of gratitude from the people of Israel. No other object could have better conveyed Finkelstein's view, unchanged over many years, of the *raison d'être* of a Jewish state.

Finkelstein openly emended his position after 1948 in one significant respect. Now, for the first time, he articulated a belief in a special bonding between Conservative Judaism and Zionism. Reverting to the theme of Jewish creativity which he had raised before the Rabbinical Assembly in 1927, he explained that a common base of self-confidence generated by that creativity underlay both ideologies. The self-confidence born of Zionism, he said, allowed Conservative Judaism to take root and flourish in the United States. "That enormous faith in ourselves and in our tradition – which has enabled us, like our predecessors, to assert that . . . we can participate fully in the life of America and yet hold fast to the traditions of our fathers; the faith that convinced

Solomon Schechter that the Seminary he was reorganizing was at once a Jewish Seminary and an American Seminary . . . this faith and self-confidence were, in my opinion, by-products of the vast effort which had already begun to lay the foundations of a resurrected Jewish commonwealth in *Eretz Yisrael*." According to that reasoning, he concluded, "In a certain sense, it may be said that Conservative Judaism is itself the first-born child of the marriage of Zionism and Americanism." Thus, Finkelstein put himself and the Seminary squarely back on the track originally laid by Solomon Schechter.

The three men who headed the Seminary from 1902 to 1948 were all imbued with a love of Zion. Against the backdrop of an evolving Zionist movement, each affirmed the centrality of Palestine in Jewish religious thought, and each envisioned a modern Palestine that would serve as a spiritual center for observant Jews throughout the world. Although they also shared a dislike of Jewish secular nationalism, they differed on basic issues of Jewish peoplehood and political Zionism. Schechter, concerned with the survival of his people, saw in Zionism a weapon for battling Reform and assimilation. Adler, whose chief priority was the survival of Judaism, found the concept of Jewish nationality distasteful if not dangerous to Diaspora Jewry. Finkelstein, preferring to skirt the subject of peoplehood, opposed Jewish nationalist activities that contradicted his universalist and pacifist principles.

Of the three, Schechter's Zionist stand commanded the strongest and most lasting support from the Seminary family and the Conservative ranks. Even his dispute with Schiff, at a time when the Seminary was at its weakest and most vulnerable, ended in a victory for the president. By contrast, Adler and Finkelstein often stood at odds with the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue as well as the faculty and students. Yet, even from a position of non-Zionism or Zionism with qualifications, each president contributed to the course of Zionism in the United States: Schechter pioneered in the Americanization of Jewish nationalism in accordance with the sentiments of an immigrant generation; Adler mobilized non-Zionists to contribute to the upbuilding of the *yishuv*; Finkelstein, notably after 1948, cemented a spiritual partnership between American Jews and Israel. In their separate ways they defended the compatibility of Jewish interest in Palestine with Americanism.

The legacy of religio-cultural Zionism bequeathed by Schechter and never supplanted by his successors irrevocably stamped the character of the Seminary and of Conservative Judaism. It lent substance both to the Seminary's two-centered vision and to the institution's role as propagator of historical Judaism. Outliving political Zionism and the attainment of Jewish statehood, it promised a permanent relationship between the Jews of Israel and America whereby each center would continue to enrich the other. □