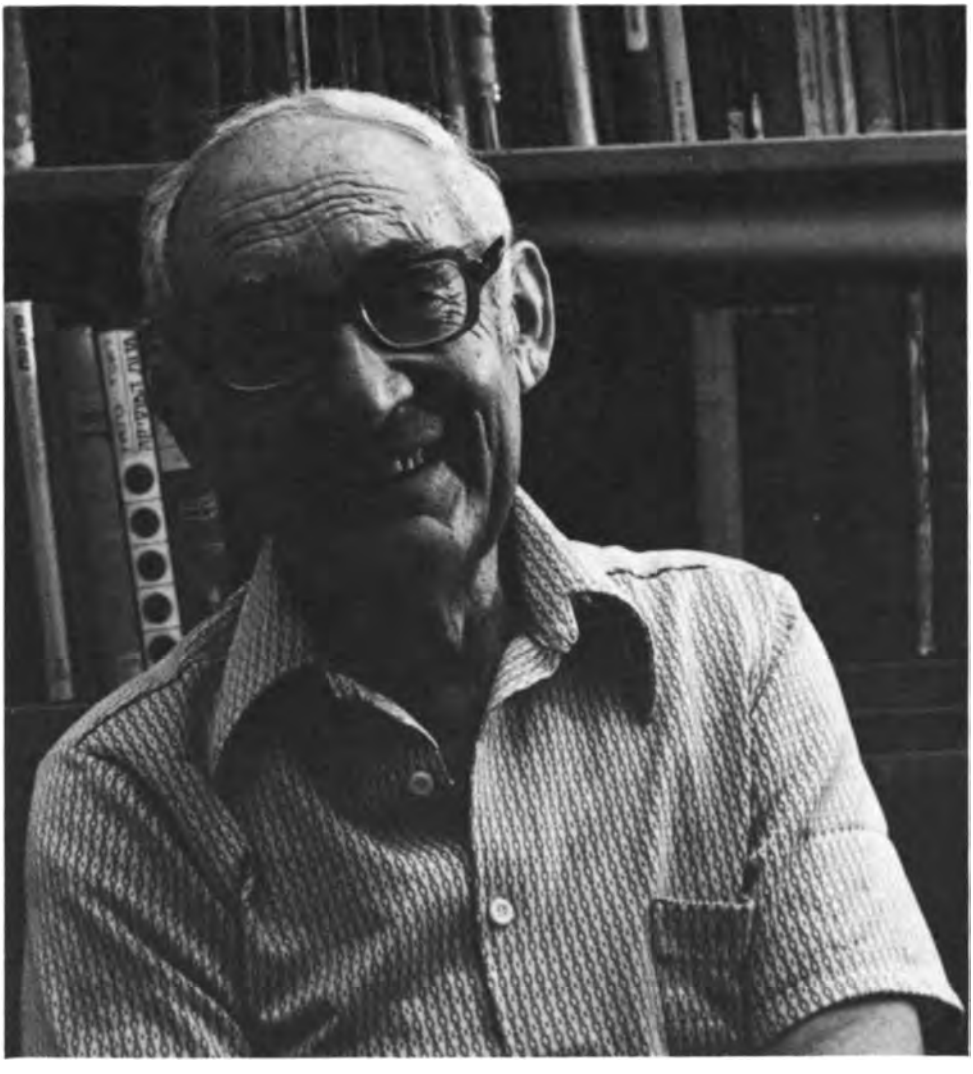
# ISRAELI PACIFIST

Syracuse Studies on Peace and Conflict Resolution

HARRIET HYMAN ALONSO, CHARLES CHATFIELD, AND LOUIS KRIESBERG
Series Editors



Joseph Abileah in his study.

# Israeli Pacifist

## THE LIFE OF JOSEPH ABILEAH

Anthony G. Bing
Foreword by Yehudi Menuhin

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Except where otherwise noted, photographs are from the collection of Joseph Abileah.

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# Contents

# Illustrations

ANTHONY G. BING has spent considerable periods of time living and working in the Middle East for the past twenty years. He has set up academic programs in Lebanon and Israel. An active member of the Society of Friends, he has worked with the American Friends Service Committee and other Quaker organizations and serves on the executive committee of the Peace Studies Association. Professor of English and Director of Peace Studies at Earlham College, he is currently working on a book concerning the role of the Middle East and the American peace movement.

# Foreword

As one who has repeatedly nominated Joseph Abileah, musician of Haifa, for various peace awards, I am particularly grateful to Professor Anthony Bing for having singled out this unique, committed character. Professor Bing's timely biography conveys the very ancient struggle between the real and practical imperative of moral conduct—as deeply understanding of others as it is determined in its fierce espousal of truth—and the mirage of worldly power and materialistic ambition that have caused man's overwhelming urge to dominate and humiliate distinguishable and competitive brethren.

It is a deadly and tragic struggle that has marked for thousands of years the rich history of the Holy Land. Although this severe and obstinate land has seen the emergence of monotheistic faith from the pluralistic pagan idols and gods, ironically the acceptance of the one binding universal truth by different tribes has led to the renewed betrayal in human hands of the one to the many. Each tribe has seized on the exclusive nature of its own unitary truth and has become intransigent in its opposition to the truths of others. This intransigence argues that the "one and only truth" cannot be whole unless all believers are unanimous.

Today we witness the intolerable consequences; a war between peoples, religions, and states played out on a very small strategic and hallowed site—the "Holy Land"—and carrying disastrous, worldwide implications.

Joseph Abileah stands modest and unassuming in a long and revered tradition of spiritual Zionism, as opposed to the national and political Zionism of Israel today, as every reader can learn from Professor Bing's admirable and sensitive book. He

is a frail figure, unarmed and vulnerable, yet spiritually and intellectually strong, standing, as already quite a number of our coreligionists have stood, against tanks, poison gas, and gas ovens.

Can the example of men and women like Joseph Abileah confront and transform the violent forces at work in our world? Though I cannot answer that question, I am humbly content to be a colleague of Joseph Abileah, a fellow violinist.

Yehudi Menuhin

# Acknowledgments

IN GATHERING INFORMATION for this book, I have spent many hours at Joseph Abileah's dining room table, listening to his stories, meeting his friends, and eating his food. Whatever the activity, I learned to expect the interruption of the telephone. To whomever called, Joseph offered the same greeting—"Abileah, shalom"—before conversing in whatever language—Hebrew, Arabic, English, German, French—the caller preferred. It was at these times, when "shalom" as a greeting came also to signify an invitation to a way of life, that Joseph's network was opened up to me. I would like to take this occasion to thank the members of that network for helping me to understand Joseph's life and its significance.

To Adi and Dani, his sons, to Benjamin and Rudi, his brothers, to Wajdi-Farid Tabari, Hannah Rubinstein, Ibrahim Sima'an, Aaron Kamis, Elias Jabbour, Cathy Bergen, Elias Chacour, Mary Bergman, Adnan Beidoun, and Landrum Bolling, his friends, I owe thanks for their time and insight. To other frequent visitors at 55A Rehov Hillel I owe different kinds of thanks—to Mrs. Gamzu for fixing our lunches when our interviews ran on too long; to Yossi Yarmus for his photographs of his uncle; and to the hundreds of Joseph's friends I met only through their letters to him.

Above all, I want to thank Joseph himself for opening himself up to me in so honest and straightforward a manner and with a respect for truth about himself that is consistent with his dedication to truth in general. This remarkable man has deserved a better biographer, but I could not have asked for a better subject.

I began this work to understand better what it takes to be

a peacemaker and to see what chance for peace there is in the Middle East today, when voices of reconciliation are either unheard or ignored. Among the many things I learned is that no one can succeed who stands alone. For this reason, my book is dedicated to two women, Dinah Yarmus Abileah and June Woodward Bing, the wives who made our work possible and who have helped to give it whatever value it may possess. Dinah Abileah passed away in May 1986, but her spirit continues to shape Joseph's life now as it did in the past. The gratitude he feels to her for having sacrificed so much in order that he could pursue his dream has informed all of our conversations about his life. He deeply feels that whatever he may have achieved in his life owes its success to their partnership.

# ISRAELI PACIFIST

# 1

# Introduction

"JOSEPH ABILEAH IS PERHAPS the most famous pacifist in the Middle East," I recently said to a friend who had asked about the subject of the book I was writing. He replied, "I shouldn't wonder. He must be the *only* one."

To some extent, such cynicism is understandable. The history of Arab and Jewish relations in the twentieth century is a depressing one, and peace between Arabs and Jews seems farther away now than it did seventy years ago when the Balfour Declaration (1917) established some sort of international basis for a national home for the Jewish people in the Arab land called Palestine. Seventy years of distrust and betrayal have deepened into hatred on both sides. The fears generated by threats to the very survival of both peoples have created high barriers to communication, despite a longing on both sides for an end to the conflict. A period marked by wars and interludes between wars has never known a time of genuine peace. Many dreams of coexistence in a moral and just society have been shattered by events that someday may even lead to mutual destruction.

Many dreams, but not all dreams. The life of Joseph Abileah reveals a commitment to a dream of reconciliation that shines with a clear and steady flame through all these years of darkness. There are elements in his life that have led many who have known him to consider him a sort of prophet and saint. This indeed characterizes his standing in the international peace community, where for more than thirty years he has been in demand as a speaker, bringing his optimistic message that peace is possible to groups who hunger for some sort of hope to hang on to as they feel more and more impotent and depressed about what can be done in the Middle East. The peace

community, like the rest of the world, loves its saints, and to many people in Europe and America, Joseph is known as the "Jewish Gandhi" or the "Israeli Schweitzer."

It is sad that, in his own country, Joseph Abileah is much less well known than he is abroad. Although he has worked for reconciliation for more than fifty years and has persisted when many others gave up the struggle or moved abroad, many more people have listened to him play the viola than have heard his views on peace. Although he has been involved in almost every group that has worked for peace, groups like the War Resisters International, the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights, Shutafut (Partnership), the Ihud, the Service Civil International, and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, and has lectured about his activities at Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, and Columbia, the University of Haifa, located in the city in which he has lived for sixty years, has never invited him to give a lecture. Since he has most often appeared in the public eye on occasions of protest against his government's attitude, policies, or actions, he has not been publicly revered as either prophet or saint, but criticized or, more often, ignored by the government and the press.

While these comparisons to saints and prophets are not inappropriate, they are not the focus of this book. Some may feel that the world needs saints, but many more would regard sainthood as a handicap, if what we would learn from a reading of another's life is how we might be able to transform our own. The problem with saints is that they set some pretty high standards. Sometimes these standards are so conveniently high that we can take comfort in the inertia caused by our own imperfections rather than be aroused to meaningful action. The excuse we give ourselves is that only saints can perform saintly deeds. A world already skeptical about human beings' ability to live in peace as members of the same human family is likely to say, "Well, if we were all Gandhis, Sister Teresas, Albert Schweitzers, and Martin Luther King, Jrs., then what you propose might work. But we aren't saints, so be realistic—there will always be people and nations to take advantage of the naïve goodwill of peacemakers."

Joseph Abileah, musician of Haifa and Secretary for the Society for Middle East Confederation, is not a saint. He is an ordinary man who has been made extraordinary by his steadfast fidelity to a vision of peace. While the attainment of this peace has proved elusive, the vision itself is not that of a latter-day Don Quixote, out of touch with a world in which gas ovens have replaced windmills. This vision, which has its roots deep in a tradition of Jewish universalism and messianic humanism, has shaped Joseph's life and given it unity; and this wholeness has had a deep effect on those who have come in contact with it. What this vision is, how it evolved, and what it has cost and meant to him and to those near to him lie at the center of this biography.

I believe that his life and vision are of interest in themselves and deserve to be better known than they are. However, I also chose to write about him because I believe that his ideals and the actions inspired by these ideals are not beyond ordinary men and women. It will be ordinary men and women who will create real peace. Perhaps the great statesmen of the world can come up with quinine tablets to stave off the malaria of war, but can they keep up with new strains of the carriers of this disease? As Joseph says, perhaps there ought to be masses of ordinary people working to dry up the swamps where the mosquitos are bred. If we cannot get at the reasons for the fear and hatred that exist between people, then no arms buildup, no defense strategy, no border fences will ever provide real security. When proponents of security systems tell us to be realistic, it may be that they are the ones who have a limited view of reality. Their view is limited to the "what is," revealed to us in history and politics. Martin Buber, who was fully aware of the "what is," called people to a higher reality—"what could be." Joseph Abileah's vision calls us to this same higher reality, and his ability to *embody* this vision gives us some reason to believe that what "could be" already "is." That is, because peace and reconciliation have substance in his life, they can also have substance for the rest of us.

Actually, my friend who dismissed Joseph as the only pacifist in the Middle East was mistaken. There are and have been

many peacemakers in the Middle East. The history of Joseph's life is also an encounter with these individuals and with the groups they formed. Often far from the public eye, these groups have been working for reconciliation between Arab and Jew. Joseph's struggles, his hopes, and his disappointments have been theirs as well. Therefore, his personal history is in some respect a window through which can be viewed an alternative to the accepted histories of Israel and Palestine, one which is not very well known and seldom described. Yehudi Menuhin, in his autobiography, *Unfinished Journey*, writes of Joseph, "Were the Nobel Peace Prize mine to give it would be his: once in a while it should go to those in obscurity who devote their lives to reconciliation." In a letter to Menuhin, Joseph replied, "You are right to say that the Nobel Peace Prize should go to those in obscurity working for peace. I myself know hundreds of such people who should receive the prize before me."

I would like the reader of this biography to come away from it feeling that what is true of Joseph could become true of many more of us. He may have been unduly modest in stating that hundreds of people are more deserving than he, but unless he is fundamentally right, true peace, the positive peace that does not mean just the absence of war but the creation and preservation of harmony and cooperation between human beings, will never come to the Middle East, or anywhere else for that matter.

Joseph believes in harmony. As a musician, he creates it all the time. As a peacemaker, who has tried to bring music to the lives of those in conflict, this harmony has been much more difficult to achieve than that found within the score of a Beethoven quartet. But Joseph is convinced that this harmony will come—that if one is attentive to the means, if one strives to be harmonious in all human relationships, the end will be assured. Perhaps those who hear and remember the music of Joseph Abileah's life will come to believe that the harmony he has sought his whole life will one day indeed be possible.

# 2

# A Return to the Roots 1915–1936

> The Jew has remained an Oriental. He was driven out of his land and dispersed throughout the lands of the Occident; he was forced to dwell under a sky he did not know and on a soil he did not till; he suffered martyrdom, and worse than martyrdom, a life of degradation; the ways of the nations among which he has lived have affected him, and he has spoken their languages; yet despite all this, he has remained an Oriental. . . . The Jew can truly fulfill his vocation among the nations only when he begins anew, and, with his whole, undiminished, purified original strength, translates into reality what his religion taught him in antiquity: rootedness in his native land; leading the good life within narrow confines; and building a model community on the scanty Canaanite soil.
>
> —Martin Buber, 1916

FIRST THERE WAS MUSIC, and with music came dreams. As the harmonies expanded, the dreams became visions. Because the visions contained the harmonies, they were of peace.

There is a stream that runs by the little town of Mödling, Austria. Beside this stream, Beethoven is said in 1808 to have received inspiration for the "Brook" section of his Sixth Symphony (*Pastoral*). Beethoven had very early turned his back on the organized religion in which he had been raised, but the religious longing and sensibility remained; and he discovered in nature then expressed in the magnificent Sixth Symphony his belief in the immanence of God in all living things, a be-

lief that sustains the symphony through periods of storm until the last movement, the coming of the sun, when the shepherds sing a song of thanksgiving, not only that the good has reasserted itself in the face of evil, but that the good is confirmation that God exists within the human heart. Beethoven the man was never at ease in the world in which he lived, but his works of art are prophesies that evil need not prevail and that one day human beings will live according to their hearts.

The same faith that good will triumph, even in the midst of terrible evil, has sustained Joseph Abileah, a musician from Haifa, Israel. He has found corroboration for this faith in his study of Beethoven's music and life. But the faith itself has come from his direct experiences with life, a life that began on April 25, 1915, in Mödling, Austria, and that, like the structure of Beethoven's symphonies, has gained strength in its final movement, the period since 1967 when he has devoted himself to working for peace in the Middle East. Though he has been neither a member of the Haifa Symphony Orchestra nor a music teacher since 1972, he has not given up music but has extended its meaning. Beethoven drew inspiration for his music from life. Joseph has drawn inspiration for his life from music. His quest for harmony is the focus of this biography. The value of his life is not to be measured by whether the goal has been attained. It is the way to that goal that holds our interest. The architects of the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages never lived to see the finished, concrete embodiments of their dreams. As Joseph himself says, he will never see the fruits of his labors, or perhaps he will never even sit in the shade of the trees whose seeds he has planted. Nevertheless, he has clung to the belief that if the way is right, the goal is assured; and he has made hard life choices based upon the obverse of this maxim: that is, that a just goal demands just means and that compromise on the means must inevitably compromise the goal itself.

Music was in his blood. Joseph's grandfather, Eliezer Niswizski (1840–1906), was a famous cantor in Russia and was among the first to collect and transcribe traditional cantor mu-

Joseph's father, Ephraim Abileah, né Niswizski, and mother, Miriam Abileah, née Mosabowski.

sic. He added to this tradition by composing music of his own. After a long career, his voice began to give out and he became a *shochet,* one who in Jewish communities supervised the ritual killing of animals. It is thought among his family that the combination of watching so much death and losing his song caused him to lose the will to live. Eliezer's son, Ephraim (1881–1953), became a prolific composer of over seven hundred works, half of them religious and half secular. In 1898, Ephraim left Russia for Warsaw where he became band master in the Russian Army Band and a teacher of theory and composition at the Warsaw Conservatory. In Warsaw, one of his piano students was Miriam Mosabowski (1886–1960), daughter of Sadek (1859–1929) and Nehama Helena (1863–1943) Mosabowski, whom he married just before he left Warsaw in 1905. Ephraim's reasons for leaving Poland involved Russia's war with Japan. As a pacifist who would not cooperate in any way with the war, he fled to Vienna where he had to begin a new life with a new language and with new credentials from the Austrian authorities. The pacifist beliefs that brought Ephraim Niswizski to Vienna were not changed by World War I. He was exempted from Aus-

trian army duty because he was not a citizen, but even if he had been one, he would not have served. During the war years, Ephraim would spend what little free time he had from a busy music career walking in the woods above his home in Mödling. In these woods, he sketched out a utopian romance, *Die Macht der Liebe* (The Power of Love), a blueprint for a society ruled by universal love and justice. He felt no deep roots in any of the three societies in which he had lived, but did find a harmony between his dreams and those of Zionism. The kind of Zionism that appealed to him was a sort of messianism that had strong links with the spiritual Zionism of Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginzberg 1856–1927). Like Ahad Ha'am, Ephraim was not religious in a traditional sense and had trouble with the rituals of Judaism, even though he celebrated its spirit in his music and in his life; but like many members of the Hibbat Zion (Lovers of Zion) movement, he deeply believed in the spiritual renaissance of the Jewish people. Thus, while none of his three sons who were born in Austria received religious training or had a bar mitzvah, all three were exposed from their earliest memories to the idea that Jewish roots were, in Buber's words, sunk deep in the "scanty Canaanite soil."

The Niswizski family settled in Mödling, a small township from which it was possible for Ephraim to commute to his job as choirmaster in several of the large synagogues in Vienna. Mödling was a cosmopolitan sort of life, with only two hundred Jewish families in the town, but the family, which grew rapidly, was very self-contained. Julia, the oldest child, was born in 1906; two children followed who died in their infancy. Then Hans Aaron was born in 1912, Joseph William in 1915, and Avshalom Rudolph (Rudi) in 1916. In keeping with most Jewish families of the time, each male child was given a national name and a Hebrew one. Also in keeping with the times, the sons were called by their national names, and so it is as Willi that most of Joseph's family have known him throughout the years.

The household was made fuller by three grandparents who lived near them and were partially supported by Ephraim and by two nieces, the daughters of Ephraim's younger brother Leo.

Leo's wife, Fée Helles, was as free a spirit as her first name implied and could not be tied down to educating her children, nor, fairly soon, even to her husband, with whom she stayed on friendly but distant terms, preferring to run her famous dancing school on the Champs-Élysées soon after her husband and she had emigrated to Palestine after World War I. A seventh child, an Italian girl named Gisette Vadash, stayed with the Niswizskis in pension. Keeping her helped relieve some of the strain on the family budget, which like that of most families in postwar Austria was severely strained. Miriam's parents had come to Austria from Poland but were unsuccessful in finding work. Ephraim, exhibiting a financial resourcefulness that was to be the hallmark of his whole life, had been reduced during the war to selling pianos in Budapest in exchange for meat and was constantly having to find additional work to meet his financial responsibilities.

When the spiraling inflation fully hit Austria, Ephraim found himself reduced to selling property he had acquired by skillful management of a burgeoning music business simply to pay his taxes. By 1923, the financial situation was so desperate that Ephraim, after weighing the possibilities of emigrating to Italy or to the United States (where five of his siblings had gone), decided to explore the possibilities of making a life for himself in Palestine. Miriam was reluctant to leave Austria, especially when it was unknown how they would survive in Palestine, and so in 1923 Ephraim went to Haifa by himself. Leo, his brother, who had preceded him to Palestine, had changed his name to Abileah, a name that signified he was the father (*abi*) of Leah, his youngest daughter. Leo, who also changed his first name to Arie, asked his older brother to accept the same family name, so when the Niswizski family landed in Jaffa in 1926, it was as the Abileah family.

Since Ephraim, like other members of Hibbat Zion, was committed to a spiritual and cultural Zionism and not to the political Zionism espoused by the followers of Theodor Herzl, he thought it important to build a nation side by side with the indigenous Arab population. Martin Buber had not been quite

accurate in his 1916 article because what he in Europe thought to be the "scanty Canaanite soil" was in fact home to more than six hundred thousand Arabs. Ephraim thought it was quite natural to live with Arabs as brothers, and after living for a while in a cave in the Arab district of Mount Carmel, he established himself in a music school in the house of an Arab family, the Domets. Aziz Domet was to become a famous poet, and he and his German wife visited Mödling while the rest of the Abileah family still lived there. It is a measure of the strong Arab-Jewish ties among large segments of the Haifa population that Aziz Domet wrote a play about Joseph Trumpeldor, one of the early Zionist martyrs killed in Tel Chai in 1920, a play for which Ephraim composed the music.

Not only were the Domets his business partners and many of his students children of wealthy Palestinians, but from the outset Ephraim worked for Arab-Jewish cooperation and, when needed, reconciliation. In 1925, for example, he played at the concert inaugurating the Railway Workers Trade Union, which up to 1948 was the only integrated Arab-Jewish union in all of Palestine. When he became a Freemason in 1929, it was in an integrated lodge that was under the jurisdiction of Egypt. Cosmopolitan in outlook, and already having lived in Russia, Poland, and Austria, Ephraim never thought that the Jewish home promised by the British in their Balfour Declaration of 1917 had to evolve into an exclusively Jewish state. His views were shared by many Jewish immigrants to Palestine at this time, though his views, like theirs, were to be modified through time and by historical circumstances.* Still, in the three years he was separated from his family and in the following years when they were all together, Ephraim was caught up in trying to turn into reality the ideals of universal brotherhood he had dreamt of in the woods above Mödling. Joseph, of all his sons, most fully shared the dream.

*Jewish views were not the only ones to change through time. Aziz Domet, author of the play about Trumpeldor, was later accused of being a German collaborator during the war and of having made broadcasts for the Nazis. Joseph believes he was forced to do so.

For Ephraim his sons' musical education received the first priority. In addition to being a choirboy, Joseph began violin at the age of six. His brother Rudi took up the cello, while Hans, who had suffered the loss of parts of his fingers because of an early childhood illness, was a reluctant pupil of the trumpet. Hans had a great deal of trouble accepting the arbitrary decisions of his iron-willed father and left home soon after the family moved to Palestine. Joseph himself was, initially, a reluctant music student and feels that he really only came to be truly interested in the violin when he was ten. As is often the case with a child whose father is absent for important years in his or her development, Joseph and his brothers were not easy to raise, especially when their care was largely in the hands of their older sister Julia, who ran the household when their mother made an extended trip in 1924 to visit their father in Palestine. Julia married in 1925, a year before the family moved to Palestine, and she stayed behind with her husband, Rudolph Seiden, until they emigrated from Austria to the United States in the thirties, barely escaping the horrors brought on by Nazism.

Joseph's memories of his years in Austria are all happy ones. He loved the crowded household and constant activity. At the same time, he developed a taste for adventure and solitude. His brother Rudi remembers him taking long trips on his tricycle, which in one case led to him disappearing altogether for an alarming period of time. The comfortable boughs of the fruit trees at 7 Spechtgasse were good places to read, to plan, to dream. When his mother told him they were moving to Palestine, Joseph looked upon the trip more as an adventure than as a fulfillment of some Zionist dream. He, at the age of eleven, would have been just as excited about moving to Australia. This does not mean, however, that he was unhappy where he was. In 1926, when the family made their move, he had been studying the violin with the concertmaster of the Tonkünstler-Orchester in Vienna, and it was clear that if he fulfilled his early promise, his career as an Austrian musician would be assured. At the age of eleven, it did not occur to him that he would not get equal instruction in Palestine; and while it was hard

Joseph (Willi) and Avshalom (Rudi) on violin and cello.

to say good-bye to Julia, he loved helping his mother pack and move the family belongings to the boat in Trieste, Italy, and from there, traveling fourth class on deck and feeling a bit isolated as the only Jewish immigrants on board, making their way to Alexandria, Port Said, and finally to Jaffa, the major port of Palestine.

When the Abileah family landed, they were part of eighty thousand Jews who came to Palestine between 1924 and 1929, making up what is called the Fourth Aliyah (Ascent). While they did not face the hardships endured by the visionaries of the Second Aliyah (of the fourteen thousand who came between 1903 and 1914, in 1909 there were only 165 left), life was still very hard, and perhaps 40 percent of the immigrants soon left Palestine. Life had been hard for Ephraim in the three years he was separated from his family. Many times he carried his harmonium on a four-hour walk to give concerts and lessons, and few people in the little port town of Haifa had money to spend buying musical instruments or providing their children with lessons.

Perhaps because Haifa had not been transformed by the British into a major port, it had the atmosphere of a small town. Unlike in Mödling, where the Jewish families kept pretty much to themselves, Haifa was a center where members of all faiths freely mixed. There had for a long time been a strong Christian community among the Arabs, and on Mount Carmel, overlooking the town and port, were to be found strong concentrations of Druze. The Baha'is, whose gardens and buildings are still the city's most notable architectural achievements, revered Haifa as the center of their faith. There was a strong German colony, connected with the Knights Templars, and the new Jewish immigrants from Europe found it easy to mix and settle. Many Jewish immigrants, especially those of a secular frame of mind, found the physical beauty and integrative atmosphere appealing, especially because they were fleeing restrictive ghettos in Europe.

Linguistically the town was as varied as its religions. It would have been possible for families like Joseph's to continue to

speak nothing but German (as did many Jewish immigrants just up the Palestinian coast in Nahariya), but the cosmopolitan atmosphere seemed to encourage all Haifa citizens to speak two to four languages with great ease. The interaction of cultures and openness of neighborhoods had an important influence on Joseph, and this interaction seemed to be strengthened by the habit of changing apartments every year. In his first three years in Haifa, Joseph moved three times—once into a flat vacated by the deposed Shah of Iran, which had a living room so large that the intrepid tricyclist learned to ride a two-wheeled bicycle in it! While increased Jewish immigration had caused problems in Jaffa and Hebron, Haifa appeared to be a spot where Arabs and Jews accommodated each other easily. Joseph's belief that Arabs and Jews can live together now is based on his experience of this having been true sixty years ago. Even today, the least amount of friction among the two bitterly divided communities is to be found in Haifa. Joseph has had many opportunities to move from Haifa, such as when he was offered a place in the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra in Tel Aviv, but he has always felt that there was something special about Haifa and its people.

Because of their straitened circumstances, the family music business was almost always in their flat. But to Joseph, used to the bursting house in Mödling, there was a great joy in being surrounded by music. He has a vivid memory of watching piano movers taking a piano up the two hundred steps to the Stanton Street flat, one person doing all the lifting while two others sang on each side of him to encourage him in his effort. For Joseph, all Haifa and indeed all Palestine were full of song, and at least in the neighborhoods in which he lived, the many songs were in harmony. His own musical training proceeded well, thanks to a gifted teacher, Mrs. Velikovsky, who guided his development from 1927 to 1934. He also had the opportunity of studying with the famous teacher Henri Marteau; for four months Joseph commuted to Tel Aviv for eight-hour master classes. Mrs. Velikovsky inspired him to progress rapidly, and her concern for his talent caused her to waive tuition for him in 1929, when his family was having severe financial problems.

Willi and Rudi at work in Ephraim's music business.

These financial problems forced Ephraim to accept work in Tel Aviv as choirmaster in the Great Synagogue that had recently been built. Since he had received shipments of pianos from Vienna to enlarge his music business, he hoped the move to Tel Aviv would be temporary, but in the end, the family spent the better part of five years there.*

Although Ephraim was a man of immense energies, sleeping no more than four hours a night and composing and working on his Hebrew long after others had gone to bed, it was all he could do to keep the family fed. When a member of his choir

*These five years included an important interlude in 1933–34, when Ephraim moved the family to Safad. Sarah Levy had constructed an artist colony on Mount Kena'an, and Ephraim was offered one of the houses. In this mountain retreat, he dreamed of curing wood for fashioning musical instruments, but he returned to Tel Aviv after a time. The houses in this artist colony were pretty much destroyed during the 1936 disturbances, but the family continued to go to Safad for vacations and eventually put up a small house to which they could retreat.

discovered that Miriam cooked on the Sabbath, Ephraim was asked to resign his job in the synagogue. For a while, Miriam took in boarders at lunchtime and in the evening joined her husband to play in the silent cinemas around the city. Ephraim had been comfortable working in the synagogue, although his own family was not observant, because he had always regarded his own commitment to music a religious one. It was with regret and out of some desperation that he began to put together bits of work that would allow him to continue to compose and his family to live. The family itself had been increased with the birth of Benjamin in 1930 and with the arrival of Miriam's mother, Nehama Mosabowski, in 1930. Nehama's husband Sadek, who had never really found work in Austria, became despondent when it was discovered that his son Heinrich (Hirsch) had a terminal illness. In 1929, no longer able to bear the pain of watching his son die, he committed suicide. When her son died soon after, Nehama had nowhere to go except to her daughter in Tel Aviv.

Joseph and Rudi often accompanied their parents to the films. One evening Joseph saw *Les Misérables*. Forgetting his parents' musical accompaniment, transported almost beyond himself, he became engrossed in the story of Jean Valjean, the repentant thief. At the point in the story when the priest gave the remaining silver to the thief, the camera focused on the priest's eyes, filled with sadness and compassion, and then on a broken flower in his garden. The image of the eyes and the flower haunted the young Joseph and remains with him still. What he witnessed was not just the conversion of the thief but the source of the conversion, the expression of compassion in the eyes of one who, while suffering, established contact with the suffering of another and aroused in him hitherto hidden feelings of goodness. From that moment on, human eyes became windows to the soul for Joseph, and this image from a silent film, where his parents played to eat, has assumed more and more importance over the years as it has been reinforced by other eyes made incandescent in their longing for hope in the midst of suffering.

One of the jobs Ephraim obtained was as a teacher of music in the Collège des Frères, a Christian school in Jaffa where Muslims, Christians, and Jews all shared the same school bench. Because he was a teacher there, he could send Joseph and Rudi there for greatly reduced fees. Joseph was aware of the sacrifices made to secure his place in this famous school and so applied himself diligently in the three years he spent there. Unlike his robust father, Joseph had a rather delicate constitution, and it was difficult for him to be up at six, walk the three kilometers from Tel Aviv to Jaffa, then return home on foot and work as a musician at parties until midnight.

At the Collège des Frères, Joseph's education was not only in the academic subjects at which he excelled. There was a great separation between the Jewish community of Tel Aviv and the Arab community of Jaffa. Jaffa, like Hebron, had been the scene of riots in 1929, when Arabs began to resist Jewish immigration as a threat to their own dreams of national sovereignty. Thus, it was somewhat unusual for Jewish children to be educated alongside Arab children. For Joseph it seemed natural, and forever after he referred to Arabs as his brothers. It was also at the school that he developed his amazing facility for languages. He had missed a half year of school when he arrived in Haifa in order to learn Hebrew, and he had a similar half year to make up in order to learn French, the language of instruction at the Collège des Frères, and English, the secondary language taught. Thus by fifteen, he was speaking German, Hebrew, French, English, and rudimentary Arabic. While it was understood that he would be a professional musician, his father wanted him to find work and so urged him to take the course in commerce to develop accounting, bookkeeping, and typing skills. Joseph showed a real aptitude for this work, and it has been the foundation for many nonmusical jobs he has had in his life.

One of the reasons his Arabic was only rudimentary was that he and other Jewish students were excused from the daily two hours of Arabic instruction at the school. During this time, he continued his work with the violin. He also was not forced to

have religious instruction, but he was not immune from the religious atmosphere of the school and participated in numerous musical performances of requiems and masses. For Joseph and Rudi the Collège des Frères was an altogether happy time, and through their school contacts they moved freely in both the Jewish and the Arab communities, especially in musical circles. Joseph is particularly proud of his membership in the Jaffa Music Club and of the many friendships he established there.

When Joseph finished school in 1933, he received a special award in typing and languages and decided to look for work in commerce that would also allow him to continue his promising musical career. He often practiced up to six hours a day, but when he moved up to seven and one-half hours, he strained a muscle in his arm so severely that he was advised to ease back to four hours. At the age of eighteen, he was already assisting Mrs. Velikovsky in her lessons and playing in many musical groups, including the family quartet—his father on the harmonium, Rudi on the cello, and his mother on the piano. The family was in demand, and when his first job, with I. G. Farbenindustrie Pharmaceuticals, did not allow enough time for music, he used a contact with an Arab friend from school to get a job in the British Mandate Survey Department, where he finished work by two o'clock and then continued with his music.

At first the work in the survey department was just a job, though the exactness appealed to Joseph's orderly mind. His concern for order and delight in figures became a lifelong preoccupation. Anyone working through Joseph's files today is convinced that he has never thrown anything away, from ticket stubs to dinner menus to letters from an active file of fifteen hundred correspondents. Not only that, he knows where everything is. In Israel, such a person is called a *yeke*, and Joseph, even at an early age, was a *yeke* par excellence. It became clear, however, that he could not keep up with his music and with his clerical work without great danger to his health. His already-delicate physical constitution was worn down to the point that he failed the medical examination that would have made his

job in the survey department permanent after the first year's probationary period. His supervisor did not want to lose him and so suggested that he take a leave of absence from the office to rest and build up his strength in a field camp. This decision to go into the field was one of the most important, in retrospect, in Joseph's life and explains a great deal about his later development.

In the camp, Joseph discovered two things: his affinity with his Arab coworkers and his affinity with the land. In some sense, 1934, not 1926, was his real "return" to Israel (in the sense of return mentioned by Martin Buber in the epigraph to this chapter). Joseph was the only Jewish member of his crew and so learned colloquial Arabic quickly. He came more and more to believe that he was being transported back to biblical times as he moved about Palestine. Amidst the Arabs and especially the Bedouin of the Jordan Valley, Joseph, not unlike many spiritual Zionists, experienced a profound discovery of his oriental roots. In Buber's essay "The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism," note is taken that "the Jew is not the same person he once was; he has passed through every heaven and hell in the Occident, and his soul has come to grief. But his original strength has remained unimpaired; once it comes into contact with its maternal soil, it will once more become creative."

"The Jew is not the same person he once was." Joseph came more and more to feel that his time in the camp, and especially in the desert, was a time of discovering his true origins. In this discovery, he became physically and spiritually strong. The Bedouin he spoke with, their values and way of life, were to him an encounter with his own early ancestors. The fundamental brotherhood of Arab and Jew appeared to him as an almost mystical union, and his experiences with the land on both sides of the Jordan River convinced the young Abileah that the land should be as undivided as the kinship.

Joseph's sense of freedom, wonder, and strength led him to spend every free moment from the survey camps hiking and exploring the Jordan Valley and the hills beyond. Twice he went on walking tours around the Dead Sea. He saw the beauty of

Joseph's walking tour of the Dead Sea. Joseph third row at left.

the sun bringing to sparkling life the great salt mountain at Sodom and saw the changing landscapes of the Jordan Mountains as the setting sun revealed their hidden colors and life. Though at first one sees no life, hears no birds, and feels no flies, there is the throbbing presence of life. When learning of the vast chemical riches of the sea itself, Joseph came to feel that the sea, like his own past, was far from dead but was endowed with continuous, if hidden, life. In caves in the Jordan Mountains, he was thrilled to find, as at the Cave of Tuvia, traces of Hebrew written two thousand years ago, tracings that were a confirmation of Buber's claim for common roots. The quietness of the desert made him think, especially when he made his trips alone. At these moments, he heard what was really important in the silence. Beethoven had moved beyond the words of the choral part of the Ninth Symphony to the profundity of his string quartets. Joseph, the master now of many languages, began to sense a reality that lay beyond the scope of words and almost communication.

As important as his contact with the land was, it was even

more important for him to encounter the souls of its inhabitants. In these people, he found traces of his past and a foundation for his hopes for Arab and Jewish reconciliation in the future. Near the end of 1935, on a seven-day trip around the Dead Sea, Joseph and thirty companions came to the police outpost at Ghor es-Safia in the Wadi Hasa. At the outpost were two Circassian policemen who welcomed their guests by cooking for them their entire stock of provisions. When it became clear that there would not be enough food for thirty guests, one of the men made an hour's trip on horseback to bring back some more eggs. Such an example of spontaneous generosity and welcome made a profound impact on Joseph, though he had experienced many similar acts among his Arab coworkers in the survey camp.

He also witnessed the darker side of this humanity. At Es Salt he found people imprisoned like wild animals in outdoor cages. He was told that such cruelty was necessary to provide example to others and that people learned through fear. His experiences in the desert, however, led him to the conviction that fear and hostility could be overcome. Once, when approaching a Bedouin tent, he saw a fierce watchdog running towards him. Overcoming his initial reaction of fear, Joseph sat down in the path, his face level with that of the snarling dog. When the dog sensed that Joseph was not afraid and was not going to try to harm him or his master, the snarling stopped. During this time, the dog's Bedouin owner had been quietly watching from the threshold of his tent. When the dog accepted Joseph, the master received him also. While desert life could be cruel and violent, it was clear that all danger had its basis in fear and that, when fear was absent, danger was absent as well. Joseph also sensed that fear might have something to do with hatred.

In 1936, at a time when the waves of Jewish immigrants escaping from Europe were causing real tensions in Palestine, Joseph decided to go on a four-day holiday to the country of Gil'ad (Jebel Ajlun). Though the times were tense, travel was easy and cheap. No passports were required to cross the Jordan River; and in a matter of a few hours, Joseph and a friend he

had met in the survey camp, Hussein Khalaf of Kfar Aboush, were in Amman. These four days commemorated an important Islamic feast, and at its height, Emir Abdullah received guests from many nations. Young Joseph and his friend were dazzled by the pageantry as embassy after embassy sent its cars up the road to the palace, following the emir's car when he left the mosque after his prayers. As he watched the cars pass by, Joseph noticed there was not one from Palestine representing the Jewish Agency. Overcome by a desire to be a part of the celebration and feeling the need to express the best wishes of the Jewish people to the emir, Joseph rather impulsively went up to the royal palace, forgetting that his shorts and hiking boots offered a strange contrast to the formal attire of the other dignitaries. Not surprisingly, he was stopped at the doors of the palace and asked his purpose. Although Joseph's Arabic had improved immensely in his year in the survey camp, he realized that his grasp of colloquial Arabic was not suitable for the occasion and so asked his friend to translate. No less a person than First Vizir Ibrahim Pasha Hashim asked him who he was. "Are you a Jew?" he asked. When Joseph replied affirmatively, the vizir said, "You are a hundred times welcome, please come in." This welcome has stayed in Joseph's memory for more than fifty years. To him, it is remarkable that a young hiker should encounter such a courteous reception. More importantly, when he revealed his Jewish identity, there was not a trace of animosity in the vizir's response. On the eve of an Arab revolt that was to last for three bloody years, a high Jordanian official stood ready to welcome a Jewish youth into the presence of Emir Abdullah. Years later (1944), in a report he sent to the British high commissioner, Joseph still marveled at what he thought was a real promise of Jewish and Arab coexistence. "I could not accept his invitation because I was not well dressed, but asked him to pass His Highness our best wishes in the name of the Palestine nation. So His Highness has never seen me but my heart was beating for him since in love and gratefulness, and I always felt that a day would come when I would be able to show myself grateful in action. I pray God that He

will let me live so that I can say one day to His Highness: 'Welcome in Palestine, a hundred thousand times, please accept me as your faithful subject.'"

It is an interesting sidelight on history that Joseph was the only Jew to offer greetings that day. Emir Abdullah had been one of the Arab leaders most open to coexistence with the Jews. In 1926, almost precisely when Joseph landed in Palestine, Abdullah had stated to Dr. Saul Mizan, head of the Jewish Unions for the League of Nations, "Palestine is one unit. The division between Palestine and Transjordan is artificial and wasteful. We, the Arabs and the Jews, can come to terms and live together in peace in the whole country, but you will have difficulty in reaching an understanding with Palestinian Arabs. You must make an alliance with us, the Arabs of Iraq, Transjordan and Arabia. We are poor and you are rich. Please come to Transjordan. I guarantee you safety. Together we will work for the benefit of the country." In 1933, Abdullah said, "The Jews of the whole world will find me to be a new Lord Balfour, and even more than this: Balfour gave the Jews a country that was not his: I promise a country that is mine."

To be sure, there were Jewish hands that reached out to Abdullah, but they worked in secret, and those like Chaim Arlosoroff, who attempted at a secret April 1933 meeting at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem to lay the groundwork for future cooperation in throwing off the British yoke, often paid the price for it. In June 1933, Arlosoroff was killed while walking on the beach at Tel Aviv. By 1936, despite efforts of such Jewish groups as Brit Shalom and Kedma Mizracha, few Jews, even those theoretically interested in Jewish and Arab rapprochement, ventured into Arab territory.

Joseph's parents were convinced that he was foolish to take such risks, and in an effort to ease their minds about his safety, he wrote them the day after his experience at the palace. "The whole atmosphere is wonderful. In Amman people kiss each other in the streets and despite my glasses and my Jewish nose, I have not seen one hateful eye." In this letter, he begged his fellow Jews to experience for themselves the hospitality offered

to those who come not as conquerors but as friends. It is often claimed that during this period Zionist leaders did all they could to establish friendly ties, but Joseph's experience in Amman confirms the words of H. M. Kalvarisky who, when chronicling the 1930s, wrote: "It turned out that though we stretched out our hand in peace, we withdrew it immediately when the other party expressed a willingness to take it. This dangerous game did not help to raise us in their estimation as honest people, and their charge, that we are pursuing a two-faced policy,—on the one hand pretending to seek an accord and on the other merely biding time—is not groundless." Joseph approached Transjordan with both hands out, and he did not return empty-handed.

It was not only from the palace that Joseph received this spirit of welcome, generosity, and brotherhood. On the evening before the ceremony, excited about the prospect of seeing Emir Abdullah, Joseph decided he wanted to visit the famous Crusaders' fortress high on one of Amman's hills. Since he had made many moonlight excursions during his year at the survey camp, he did not hesitate to strike off at night to make his visit. On the way, he asked directions of a well-dressed man who advised against going alone at night to the fortress because of the danger of robbers and wild animals. When he saw Joseph was determined to go, he stopped at a nearby shop, purchased bullets for his revolver, and insisted on accompanying Joseph to the fortress. By moonlight, he explained the Roman origins of the site, as well as the Crusaders' additions to the fortress, and then guided Joseph back to town through the cemetery. Joseph never even learned his name, but the memory of his kindness is sharper than the impressive outlines of the fortress silhouetted against the clear moon. The whole four days' journey was full of similar actions on behalf of the solitary traveler, and many times Joseph wondered if such actions would be reciprocated should an Arab be a wanderer in the Jewish sector of Palestine.

After the ceremony, Joseph said good-bye to Hussein Khalaf, giving him a letter of introduction to his family in Haifa. Jo-

seph set out for Jerash, to visit the family of the cook from his survey camp. In Jerash, he was passed from family to family and had to eat many times and drink innumerable cups of coffee. At one of the families' homes, he heard a story that touched him greatly and caused him to be optimistic once again that the growing hostility between Jew and Arab in Palestine might one day be amicably settled. It seems that two families in the village had sons who were inseparable. One of them received the opportunity to study in Damascus. When he returned, he was anxious to show his friend what he had learned in school. One of the physical skills he had picked up was boxing, and while demonstrating how it was done, he delivered a blow to his friend's stomach that killed him. One can imagine his grief, but his friend's father was able to rise above his own sorrow to go immediately to the house of the accidental murderer. There, he offered the family forgiveness and consolation. By doing so, the villagers claimed that the father of the dead boy discovered consolation himself. Such an example of goodness residing in the human heart made Joseph sense even more deeply the falsity of the stereotype of the bloodthirsty, vengeful Arab and filled him with a reservoir of hope from which he was able to draw time and time again in the years ahead.

When he left Jerash, Joseph made his way through the mountain forests to the Crusader castle of Ajlun, stopping by small villages that showered him with hospitality. By his reckoning, he ate five lunches that day and drank fifteen cups of coffee. When he reached the castle, he climbed its ramparts to gaze westward over the Jordan Valley. The oneness of all Palestine came home to him once again, and he looked down on the Jordan River not as a border, but as a vein running down the heart of the country. While he was dreaming about perhaps one day settling in these hills, establishing ties with ancestors who had lived in Gil'ad, he was approached by soldiers and asked to accompany them to their headquarters. Once there, he was interrogated by an officer who seemed to know every one of his movements since he had left the royal palace. There had been

a recent Druze uprising in Syria, and Jordan feared spies and agents provocateurs. In a way, the police were like the Bedouin man and his dog. When they were convinced by Joseph's openness and candor that he meant them no harm, they entertained him, found him a comfortable bed, and the next morning, gave him two escorts in civilian dress to accompany him until he could reach the other side of the Jordan.

His adventures were not yet over. As they left Ajlun, Joseph's escorts suddenly broke from him and began running toward an approaching shepherd. When Joseph caught up with them, they said that they had disarmed the shepherd, who had come up from the direction of the Jordan. After the escort explained that they feared the shepherd might shoot Joseph, Joseph took the rifle, returned it to the shepherd, and said to him, "I hope the day will come when you can go back to the Jordan, and throw your rifle in the river." The shepherd sighed, held on to his rifle, and said, "*Inshallah*" (if God wills).

The trip to the Damiya Bridge in the Jordan Valley was extremely exhausting. Once down from the mountains and the protection of the forest, the party was exposed to the severe desert sun. The policemen, one of whom had served with T. E. Lawrence, kept up an unrelenting pace. Jospeh, despite being in much better physical shape than he had been two years earlier, when he joined the survey office, was no match for his companions and, by mid afternoon, was dehydrated and exhausted. The three providentially came upon a Bedouin family who took one look at Joseph and gave him all the water and coffee they had in the tent. Then they forced him to rest until evening. This act was especially meaningful since Joseph learned they had to walk four hours each way to replenish their water supply. Once again he wondered if he would be able to reciprocate if he were in the other's position. His moral education was continuing. As he crossed the Damiya Bridge, he was reminded that Joshua had crossed at that very point. As he crossed into the Promised Land, Joseph promised to redeem the land, but not in the way of Joshua, that is, not through conquest but through cooperation.

# 3

# Not in the Joshua Way
# 1936–1947

> You know, too, that in my opinion, if we cannot find ways of peace and understanding, if the only way of establishing the Jewish National Home is upon the bayonets of some Empire, our whole enterprise is not worthwhile, and it is better that the eternal people that has outlived many a mighty Empire should possess its soul in patience, and plan and wait. It is one of the great civilizing tasks before the Jewish people to try and enter the Promised Land, not in the Joshua way, but bringing peace and culture, hard work and sacrifice, and a determination to do nothing that cannot be justified before the conscience of the world.
>
> —Judah Magnes, 1929

AFTER HIS RETURN FROM AMMAN, Joseph decided that music could never be the sole focus of his life. He had experienced an almost mystical union with the land of the Jordan Valley and with its inhabitants. In a manner reminiscent of Aaron David Gordon, one of the founders of labor Zionism who saw the attainment of personal redemption through redemption of the land, Joseph determined to work the soil. He was also in agreement with Gordon's belief that there was a connection between redeeming the land and cooperating with the Arabs, the Jews' fellow inhabitants. Gordon, writing in a Tolstoyan vein, had said, "Our road leads to nature through the median of physical labor. The return to nature through labor will enable man to rediscover religion and to regain a sense of cosmic unity and

holiness." Gordon saw that the treatment of the indigenous Arab population would become one way to test how pervasive this unity really was. "Our attitude towards them must be one of humanity, or moral courage which remains on the highest plane, even if the behaviour of the other side is not all that is desired. Indeed, their hostility is all the more a reason for our humanity."

Joseph resigned from the survey department and attempted to join a kibbutz, Giv'at Brenner, but was told there was no room for him. He then obtained a job picking oranges in Rehovot and on May 2, 1936, wrote his parents, who were desperate to hear from him. His mother wrote back immediately, begging him to come to Haifa and telling him that he was not made to be a farmer. Her letter was reinforced by one from Rudi, who gently upbraided him for not informing the family of his whereabouts. Exhibiting a stubborn streak that has always characterized his commitment to what he believes, he turned a deaf ear to their appeals and, through the offices of musician friends, gained admittance to the agricultural school at Ben Shemen. It was there that he had an experience that changed his life. Having in his first years in Palestine come to believe in Arab and Jewish rapprochement by experiencing it in all phases of his daily life, he could now, as a result of this experience, see that the basis for that rapprochement lay in goodness and compassion on both sides, which could be awakened only through nonviolence and love. Fourteen years before he read a word about Quakerism, he experienced the reality of the Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light, what he calls the "divine sparkle of God in the human heart."

Joseph's three weeks in Ben Shemen coincided with the outbreak of what is known as the Arab Revolt. For almost three years, the Arab and Jewish communities withdrew into themselves, and only the foolhardy ventured out alone and without weapons. But at twenty-one, it is difficult to suppress love of adventure, and after the experience in Jordan, Joseph saw no need to curtail his activities. While at Ben Shemen, he decided to visit the tombs of the Maccabees, some two and one-

half hours' walk to the east. The night before his walk, he slept very soundly and was surprised when he awoke to find that the trees and grass were all burned around the agricultural settlement. He was told that he had slept through an Arab attack. With the rest of the settlement preoccupied with cleaning up after the night battle, no one seemed to take any notice of Joseph as he slipped outside the gates to begin his hike. He had not gone a hundred yards before he met an old Arab on a donkey. After an exchange of greetings and comments about the burned grass and trees, the old man asked Joseph why he was alone and where he was going. Joseph replied that he was on his way to Modi'in, and the man told him to turn back. Joseph thanked him for his warning but continued on his way. The man became highly agitated and followed him and, when Joseph refused again, threw him on his donkey to take him back to Ben Shemen. Joseph, once again displaying the stubbornness that is as much of his temperament as his gentleness and patience, demanded to be set free. After a further exchange, the man let him go but not without a last warning about the hostile reception Joseph was likely to receive.

In some ways, it was difficult to take the warning too seriously: it came from a man who in 1936 was supposed to be his enemy. If he were so anxious for his safety, why would he not receive the same treatment from other Arabs he met on the way? When he visited the graves of the ancient Hebrew warriors without incident, Joseph was beginning to feel he had made the right decision. All along the way, he had greeted Arabs working in their fields, and when he stopped in a village, he was given breakfast. At the village, he was warned not to go farther by himself, and they prevailed upon him to join a passing camel caravan that could escort him to safety. The leader of the caravan was reluctant to take Joseph, but could not, with honor, turn down the villagers' request. As soon as the caravan left the village, however, he pointed to a fork in the road and told Joseph to take the way not used by the camels. He assured Joseph that he was not abandoning him but showing him a shorter way back to the settlement.

As he walked towards the west, Joseph came upon about thirty men at work in the fields. The gap narrowed between them, and Joseph called out in Arabic, "*Salaam aleikum*" (peace be with you). The men paused in their work to ask who he was. He replied, "A man like you." After a brief but friendly conversation covering several topics, one of the men asked, "Are you a Jew?" When Joseph said, "Yes," the atmosphere became charged with tension, and the men gathered round him, their tools now being handled as weapons. He was told that, at the Friday prayers, their imam (religious leader) had laid upon all his listeners the duty of killing every Jew they met. To the amazement of his listeners and to some extent to himself as well, Joseph heard himself saying, "Very well, if it is your duty, perform it." The men drew aside, and Joseph could hear them debating how they should kill him. When he heard them talk about taking him to a nearby well, where they could dump his body and cover it with stones, he interrupted them to ask where the well was and how he should get there. He walked towards it, believing his life was lost but also experiencing a strange sort of calm. Upon reaching the edge of the well, he turned to those following and asked, "Who wants to throw me in?" The men surrounded him, but as he looked into the eyes of each man, he became aware that no one, individually, had the desire to kill him. The men stood as still as statues, not knowing what to do next. Joseph knew that their duty was a matter of honor to them and that they were now caught between the dictates of their heads and those of their hearts. At that moment, a voice Joseph felt must have been God inspired said, "Our commandment was to kill Jews. Are you willing to become a Muslim? If so, you can go free." Joseph asked what that conversion entailed, knowing that the offer was made in an attempt to resolve the matter honorably. He was told that, if he repeated the formula "There are no gods but God and Mohammed is his prophet," he would be set free. As Joseph puts it, he had no trouble accepting the formula, and after repeating the words in Arabic, he was released.

This incident, in which the power of nonviolence awakened

the good instincts of the oppressor, proved incontestably to Joseph the ability of the human heart to overcome hatred. The silent strength of the heart in stilling the voices of hostility set the course of Joseph's life. Whatever else happened to him, he remained loyal to the truth he met on the road to Ben Shemen. Many times his nonviolent response to threatened violence has saved his life, but what remains important is not so much that his life has been saved as that, even in the most tense situations, the power of love could assert itself.

When Joseph's parents heard of his narrow escape at Ben Shemen, they were alarmed both for his safety and for his sanity. When they finally enticed him back to Haifa and saw his highly agitated state, they put him under psychiatric observation for two weeks and extracted a promise from him that he give up thoughts of farming and of surveying. While he was frustrated that his family showed so little interest in what he had learned, Joseph nevertheless agreed to change his profession. His brush with agriculture actually had convinced him that he could not be both a farmer and a musician. To give up music entirely seemed not only to betray his talent but also to take away a vital source of life's meaning. But what to do? His dreams of an undivided Palestine and Transjordan were still vivid, and his lust for travel and adventure made him contemplate a lone journey to Iraq. He spent the late summer of 1936 in Haifa, wondering what he should do next.

His parents' hopes for a return to normalcy seemed to be fulfilled when Joseph took a job in October 1936 with the Holland Bank Union in Haifa. His skill in languages opened up for him a responsible job handling the bank's foreign correspondence. Most of the bank's employees spoke French, so Joseph's school skills were sharpened even further. Working at the bank left him time for music, and the man who was by day a simple clerk could be seen playing chamber music with the wife of the bank's director at night. Just as he felt he became a good musician because of his dedicated practice, so did he become respected in the bank for his thoroughness and methodical approach to all things. He had won the typing prize in school,

not because he could type the most words per minute, but because he made the fewest mistakes. It is curious to reflect that these were qualities in the same person who a few months earlier had excitedly ventured on solitary romantic journeys to Jordan, but this combination of vision and exactitude is a key to understanding his character. Like his father, he is a dreamer, but also like his father he is a practical person, whose clerical cast of mind seeks to translate dreams into reality. It was as if he had read Henry David Thoreau's dictum that there is nothing wrong with building castles in the air—the task of those who dream of them must be to build foundations under them. The same combination of the ideal and the practical was the hallmark of the man who was to become Joseph's spiritual hero: Dr. Albert Schweitzer.

At this time, however, Joseph had few spiritual mentors and heroes. One of the remarkable things about his life is how isolated he was in his spiritual and political growth. He knew of few groups like Brit Shalom or other organizations working for Arab-Jewish cooperation. Nor was he aware of the philosophical controversies raging in world Zionist circles. While he was struck by the geophysical indivisibility of Mandated Palestine and Transjordan, he knew nothing of Zionist arguments on the issue of pushing for a Jewish state on some or all of the land. His dedication to his music left him very little time to read books about persons with whom he later felt great fellowship: Gandhi, Schweitzer, Buber, Gordon, Ha'am, and Magnes. At age twenty-one, he formed his remarkable philosophy of life by drawing almost exclusively on his own experiences. While it is undoubtedly true that his father's pacifist and universalist ideas had an important influence on him, his family seemed more concerned with his economic stability than with his spiritual growth. Outside the family, there were few with whom he could discuss the significance of what was happening. His mother, with whom he felt great temperamental affinity, never understood his wanderings and naturally enough seemed solely concerned for his safety and for his future as a musician. One might have thought that his parents could have under-

stood what he was going through, but for some reason, they appeared to have misunderstood him. Despite being idealists in their own right, they preferred to think of Joseph at twenty-one as one who would outgrow his foolishness. Even his brother Rudi, who was so close to him in so many ways, appears to have been unsympathetic to Joseph's burgeoning pacifism. As we shall see, this isolation continued for Joseph, even in the context of his own wife and children. It seems to have had both good and bad effects. On the positive side, by living his ideas as opposed to receiving them uncontested from others, he became unshakeable in his commitment to them. On the negative side, he failed to receive, on the deepest level, confirmation by others at a time (1936–41) when he was struggling into adulthood. How he might have changed under the early tutelage of people like Martin Buber and Judah Magnes will never be known, but his pursuit of his solitary way undoubtedly affected his relative lack of success later in winning over Israeli public opinion to his ideas. Against his own profoundest wishes, he has been regarded as a one-man movement. Even those who have respected his courage and integrity have failed to be challenged by his ideas because they could tell themselves that he was the only one who held such ideas.

So the man who appeared to pass such an uneventful existence at the Holland Bank Union continued to meditate in private on the significance of the royal palace visit and the Ben Shemen encounter. There was, moreover, no real chance for the normalcy his parents had hoped for in a city that was about to explode. In 1936–39 Arabs and Jews who had been friends for years were being pitted against each other. This was a time when Joseph had to go to work in an armored bus, when he had, at times, to crawl across streets to avoid sniper fire. Dreams of a united Palestine and of hikes to the mountains east of the Jordan had to be put on hold. Joseph did not interest himself in politics, though it gradually dawned on him that the British were not playing a very constructive role in the civil strife. It seemed as if the British were deliberately keeping Arabs and Jews from realizing what they might have in common, using

their division to pursue their own imperialist objectives. The hostility fostered in the 1936–39 disturbances had certainly not been inherent in Arab-Jewish relations in Haifa before that period, when Joseph and his family had lived with Arab families, rented flats from them, played music with and taught music to most of the well-known Arab families of Haifa. Joseph firmly believed that the separation need not be permanent and that the hostility was to some degree artificial. When the British put an end to the disturbances in 1939 and the Arab boycott was ended, Jews and Arabs mixed as before. One Jewish shopkeeper told Joseph that Arab customers, who had come into his shop on a daily basis up until 1936 and who had then passed the shop without a single greeting for more than three years, suddenly reappeared as if nothing had happened. It may be argued that Joseph's view of the British was not fully appreciative of the difficulties they faced, but his reaction was of one who saw the evil of politics in destroying in a moment relationships that had taken years to develop. Joseph's anger increasingly came to be directed at Jewish and Arab nationalists as well, but in the years 1936–39 it was difficult for him to watch the British helping both the Arab Defense Force and the Jewish Defense Force while claiming to support neither.

Because he was convinced of the threat to the Jewish community, Joseph briefly served in 1936 in the special police, composed solely of Jewish civilians, but he discovered that it was being organized like an army preparing for a war to claim its own national state. Like Judah Magnes, he was convinced that Jewish life should not be established on the basis of violence. Magnes in 1933 had written that Jews should establish their life "not on the basis of force and power, but upon that of human solidarity and understanding. . . . Is our nationality like that of all the nations, pagan and based upon force and violence, or is it a spiritual nationality?" His brief stint with the police force, which purported to be defensive but was planning for offensive activity, convinced Joseph that pacifism was the only legitimate stand for him to take. By 1941, when he was pressured to join the Jewish Brigade to fight alongside the Brit-

ish army in World War II, his convictions were secure. He knew then that all wars were basically civil wars because all men were brothers. The memory of all his earlier experiences allowed him to overcome the fear that gripped both Arabs and Jews during this period, a fear that often led to hatred.

Having explored the early stages of his reaction to hatred, it is now time for us to turn to love. All through school, both Rudi and Joseph had had very little romantic involvement with the young women they met, most often in musical settings. Joseph's colleagues at the Holland Bank Union used to kid him about his lack of a girlfriend and were quick to point this out when he blushed in the presence of an attractive client. If he lacked much real contact with young women, he nonetheless had many dreams. Most of the time, he found himself falling in love with the same girl fancied by Rudi, and he laughingly recalls how their same tastes in women often led to three-person dating. Most of Joseph's social contacts were in musical circles; one in particular deserves mention. Rudi and Joseph were fond of playing trios with Therèse Jaber, a talented pianist from one of the leading Arab Christian families of Haifa. Therèse had received her musical training in North Africa. Both Rudi and Joseph were attracted by her talent and beauty. When Rudi spoke to Joseph about having a romantic interest in "Rezi," Joseph discovered that he, too, was falling in love with her. She was unaware of it and had given him little encouragement. Therèse was darkly handsome and advanced in her outlook and dress. For Joseph there was no problem in their different family backgrounds but a very real obstacle in her modern views, especially in her use of makeup. Joseph, who liked all things natural, had never become accustomed to lipstick. On a 1937 trip to Alexandria, Egypt, and Athens, Greece, he had seen many young women wearing considerable amounts of makeup. In a letter home, he said that perhaps he was getting used to lipstick but that it still offended him. One evening in 1939, Joseph asked Therèse to walk with him on Mount Carmel. It was the first time they had ever been together without playing duets

or trios. They walked in silence along the Panorama Road overlooking Haifa Bay. His heart beat quickly as he watched her lovely dark hair catch and reflect the light of the moon. He was just about to ask her to marry him when she turned and smiled, revealing lips whose makeup shone in the moonlight as well. As he stared at her lips, he could not bring himself to ask the question that was on the tip of his own. It was probably a good thing that he did not, because she said to him, "I'm tired and want to go home." Therèse Jaber left Haifa in 1948 and has not been permitted to resettle there. Joseph remained loyal to her family and was present at the bedside first of her dying father and later of her dying mother, who spent her last years in Haifa cut off from her sons and daughters.

It was just at this time that Joseph was getting to know Dinah Yarmus, the daughter of a man who had been a Hebrew teacher in Poland and a farmer after arriving in 1926 in 'Afula, the first Jewish development town in the Galilee. After she had received her secondary education in Haifa, Dinah had gone to work at the Manufacturers' Association, located on the fourth floor of the same building in which Joseph worked. In the disturbances of 1936–39, employees who worked in downtown Haifa had to meet at a certain bus stop to board the armored bus that would take them to work. When groups arrived late for the bus, they would walk together for protection. Dinah and Joseph met in these groups and often walked together. He discovered that she loved music but had never been able to afford music lessons. Her father had never made the transition from teacher to farmer and had died prematurely, leaving the family rather poor. Dinah sang and played the mandolin, and Joseph made arrangements for her to take piano lessons from his mother. As she had no piano, she came daily to their studio to practice. Mrs. Abileah liked this gentle and unassuming young woman, who was clever in her work as a secretary and who would provide stability to her wandering son. But, while Mrs. Abileah had her eye on Dinah, Dinah herself had many suitors. Though Joseph pursued her relentlessly, she was not anxious to commit herself. In the end, he won her through music.

Because of his reputation as a musician, many doors of Haifa high society were open to him. The Moller family in Kfar Ata, for example, had many musical evenings. Alice Moller, the mother of the famous textile manufacturer, was an accomplished pianist and loved to arrange chamber-music concerts. Dinah was impressed that Joseph knew such people. She also liked his playing and his singing of Schubert songs. It is interesting that Schubert composed many of these songs while sitting by the same stream at Mödling from which Beethoven drew his inspiration. When Joseph became the conductor of the student orchestra at the Haifa Technion in 1939, Dinah attended rehearsals and concerts. Before each concert, Joseph often gave some introductory remarks to explain the music he was about to conduct, involving a great amount of research on his part since he had received no real training as a musicologist. In preparing a lecture on Bach, he began reading Dr. Albert Schweitzer's famous study. This reading was to be his first contact with the man whose philosophy of life was a parallel and at the same time an extension of his own. In what is a recurring motif in Joseph's life, music opened up large vistas of humanity, religion, and philosophy as it had for Dr. Schweitzer.

Charles-Marie Widor, Schweitzer's famous organ teacher, wrote the introduction to Schweitzer's work on Bach. In his remarks, Widor acknowledged that the teacher had learned from the pupil when Schweitzer showed him the connection between the German words and the music of the Bach chorales. Schweitzer was as keen as Joseph on connections and parallels, and it was out of gratitude for being shown a new dimension to Bach that Widor ended his preface by saying, "What we enjoy together unites us." Joseph later used these words to introduce a Bach concert when Dinah was in the audience. This concert took place in 1947, just before the War of Independence, and Joseph hoped to alert his audience to the fact that the orchestra was composed of Arab, Christian, Muslim, Greek, Armenian, and Jewish students who, by their example of creating harmony together, could serve as a model for broader Arab and Jewish reconciliation.

Joseph and Dinah were primarily united by their shared love

Joseph and Dinah Yarmus Abileah.

of music because there was little else in Joseph's way of looking at the world that appealed to Dinah. Her father had been a strong nationalist and a personal friend of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the leader of the World Union of Zionist Revisionists. She could not understand Joseph's feeling for the Arabs and was upset by his oft-stated conviction that the establishment of the Jewish state would be a disaster for Palestine. It took her a great while to accommodate herself to Joseph's way of looking at the world, but after two years of courtship, she agreed to marry him. Joseph's colleagues at the bank had warned him that she was getting serious when she decided to buy a secondhand piano, but he could scarcely believe his good fortune when she agreed to marry him. In the middle of an air raid, they were married on July 8, 1941.

When Joseph moved out of his parents' home, he moved into his father's business. To care for his new household, which

also included his mother-in-law and her son, Joseph had to find a better position than the one afforded by the Holland Bank Union. Therefore, while Dinah continued her work with the Manufacturers' Association, Joseph formed a partnership with his father—teaching violin and selling music and instruments in the store. His pupils, as always, included many Arabs. It was at first difficult for Dinah to get used to social interaction with the Arab citizens of Haifa. When Joseph and she spent their first seder (Passover meal) with his parents, she was surprised to find that an Arab Anglican pastor and his wife had been invited. It had always been a custom in the cosmopolitan Abileah household to welcome at Passover guests from other faiths. Ephraim had put the Passover Haggadah to music, but there was one traditional phrase he would neither read nor put to music: "Pour out thy wrath upon the gentiles." Dinah not only became accustomed to having social intercourse with those of different faiths, she also became fast friends with the couple she met at that first Passover meal: Reverend and Mrs. Farah. Her warm and generous personality could never harbor prejudice for very long.

From 1941 to 1944, Joseph worked with his father, but the tension in Haifa, caused by the frequent air raids, the news of the Holocaust in Europe, and the growing military preparation of the Jewish population of Palestine, put strains on all phases of life, including business and family. Soon after his marriage, Joseph was visited by about ten young Jewish militants who ordered him to enlist in the Jewish Brigade or face a possible beating. Joseph asked for some time to think over their "offer" and left the next day for Jerusalem, where he hid with his uncle for about three weeks. Many people had moved to Jerusalem from Haifa during the war, and as Joseph began to look for work in Jerusalem, he found that no one would hire him because he had not done army service. It is important to note that under the British Mandate Administration there was no draft for the British army. Nevertheless, the Jewish Voluntary Enlistment offices were very busy. Only the most extreme right-wing followers of Jabotinsky (and later Menachem Begin) felt that

they should not serve with the British. There was considerable Jewish resentment at the British White Paper of 1939, which severely limited Jewish immigration to Palestine when Jews were desperate to leave Europe, but most Jews heeded David Ben-Gurion's advice to fight the war "as if there were no White Paper, and to fight the White Paper as if there were no war."

The Jewish Defense Force, which now included Rudi, was very active in Haifa. Under the British, Haifa had become a major port. All through the war, efforts were made to smuggle in illegal refugees, especially when all the major allied powers closed their doors to Jews. This situation led to incidents like the May 1940 sinking of the *Patria*, a ship in the Haifa harbor. The *Patria* had arrived with hundreds of refugees aboard and had been ordered to turn back by the British. To keep the boat in the harbor and to prevent the forced return of hundreds of Jewish refugees to Europe, the Haganah (Jewish Defense Army) had sought to disable the engines. In a tragic miscalculation, the boat itself was sunk and 260 lives were lost as hundreds of spectators lining the slopes of Mount Carmel watched helplessly.

The desperate plight of European Jewry almost silenced debate in Zionist circles about the advisability of a Jewish, as opposed to a binational, state. Then when the World Zionist Organization met at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City in 1942, there was near unanimity expressed for the creation of a Jewish state. The adoption of the Biltmore program, which made statism the only acceptable form of Zionism, left people like Joseph in a real dilemma. Members of organizations like the Ihud, which had evolved from Brit Shalom in the early forties and had worked for Arab-Jewish cooperation, were effectively silenced. Joseph joined the Ihud at the time of the Biltmore program, his first significant membership in such an organization, but it was a Jerusalem-based organization and Joseph felt always a bit intimidated by towering figures like Martin Buber and Judah Magnes. The group in Haifa took some time to gain strength and were fairly quiet during World War II.

When a Jew was beaten to death in Haifa by persons who

unsuccessfully pressured him to join the Jewish Brigade, the British closed down the recruiting offices. Joseph returned from Jerusalem, yet with a heavy heart because he felt that his own life was now spared only because of the death of another. He was concerned about the atmosphere of hatred in Haifa and saw an impending disaster unless something were done quickly.

In 1944, he quarreled with his father because his father had asked him to sign some income-tax forms that did not accurately report their full income. Joseph had always been particular about the truth, and in a world of chaos, when one had to find stability somewhere, he had sworn to find his by never compromising the truth. Rather than sign the forms, he resigned from the family business and broke with his father. He did not speak to him for months and was only reconciled to him during the seder.

It was precisely at this time that Dinah and Joseph's first child, Adiel (Adi) was born (March 18, 1944). The responsibilities of fatherhood made Joseph even more desperate about the world his son would inherit. Dinah and his mother were much more concerned with short-term security, for the loss of income from the music business was a severe blow. But Joseph threw himself into political activity, seeking ways to hold Arabs and Jews together while begging the British to take a more constructive role. In November 1944, Lord Walter Moyne was assassinated in Cairo, allegedly by one of the persons who had watched the sinking of the *Patria* in the Haifa harbor. The murder of Lord Moyne, who was perceived as being sympathetic to the Arab plight and whose murder would thus inflame the tensions, almost drove Joseph mad.

In September of that year, his family talked him into taking a rest and going to Beit Daniel, a retreat center in Zichron Ya'acov for artists, endowed by the Bentwich family. His uncle Leo (Arie) had made the arrangements, but despite the beautiful and restful surroundings and the availability of good and nourishing food (a rarity during wartime rationing), his spirit was not at rest. His letters to Dinah reveal that he was still angry and disappointed with his father over the tax matter and

that he desperately wanted her to be with him. Her letters to him urged him to "put on weight and don't think too much," and she put off his requests for her to visit him by writing about how busy she was with her work and with the baby. The rest at Beit Daniel did not cool the fires in his brain as his quarrel with his father gave way to attempts to counteract the nationalistic direction Zionism was taking. Judah Magnes had written, "The Jews have more than a claim upon the world for justice. But as far as I am concerned, I am not ready to achieve justice to the Jew through injustice to the Arab. I would regard it as an injustice to the Arab to put them under Jewish rule without their consent. If I am not for a Jewish State, it is solely for the reason I have stated: I do not want war with the Arab world." Like Magnes, Joseph felt that this war was coming.

In November, Joseph left his family and went to Jerusalem. While staying at the YMCA, he began a document on November 11, Armistice Day, which he delivered to the British high commissioner. Bishop Stewart of St. George's Church helped him with his English. He probably also should have edited the document, which was a rambling and intemperate excoriation of the Jewish Agency, political Zionism, nationalism in general, and contained accounts of his trips to Jordan. He pleaded with the British to unite all of Mandated Palestine under King Abdullah before a civil war would tear it apart. From the notes the British commissioner wrote in the margins of the document that was returned to Joseph, it was clear that the British dismissed him as a crank, although they did acknowledge the accuracy of some of his observations and did express interest in some of his proposals, especially the one to dissolve the Jewish Agency. Joseph now wishes he had not written such a negative document, but it mirrors well the despair he must have felt as his dreams of a Zionist homeland that could be a light of justice and equality for all nations were being shattered.

His sole source of optimism during this period seems to have been derived from his contact with Arabs, who, he was sure, did not want war and who could be persuaded to govern jointly with Jews once Mandated Palestine was finished. Given his an-

tipathy to all forms of nationalism, it is a bit strange that he tends to discount strong Arab nationalism as merely the influence from other countries in the East. His own experiences in these troubled years had sustained his faith in the Arabs' instinctive generosity and warmth. He was convinced that it was still not too late for Jews to come to the Arabs as brothers, asking for a common home where both had roots and where both could jointly govern.

To those who are skeptical that such cooperation was still possible at this time, Joseph offers the following story. Shortly after a terrorist bomb had gone off in the Haifa railway station, Joseph went for a hike on Mount Carmel with his brother Benjamin and some music pupils. On the way, they encountered a young Arab boy who greeted them and, according to custom, asked them back to his father's tent. Although he invited them, he also warned them that his father was very sick. When the bomb went off, his father had feared for the life of his brother, who was employed at the station. When the news of the explosion hit the village, he had run down the mountain in a state of panic to look for his brother. On the way to the station, he collapsed and had to be taken to the hospital. Since that time, he had been paralyzed, unable to move from his tent. With the knowledge of this story, Joseph entered the tent and said in Arabic, "Please, my brother, don't stand up and please remain comfortable." To his amazement, the man stood up and returned his greeting and later even posed for a photograph with Joseph and his group. To Joseph, it was clear that fear had caused the paralysis but that the man had been liberated from his sickness by his joy at being able to receive a visitor in his tent. Joseph remained convinced that, if the causes of fear and hatred could be lessened, the latent good instincts in all human beings could come to the surface and prevail.

From 1945 to 1947, life was taking a violent turn in Haifa even though the world war had ended. Joseph continued to give music lessons and Dinah continued with her job while her mother took care of Adi. Streams of illegal aliens poured into Haifa. Joseph had always argued for unlimited immigration for

Joseph, his brother Benjamin, and the "paralyzed man" of Mount Carmel.

Jews but never at the expense of the Arab inhabitants. It was for this reason that the idea of a Palestine including Transjordan appealed to him, because there would then be ample room for everyone. Even in the forties, he thought of opening a music store in Amman, and his 1936 view from the Jordan Mountains looking westward from Ajlun was now a vision of an undivided land stretching from the sea past Amman to the desert. He had read Walter Lowdermilk's *Palestine: Land of Promise* and was a disciple of his plan. Lowdermilk had been the man behind the Tennessee Valley Authority in the United States, and his 1939 visit to Palestine convinced him that a similar "Jordan Valley Authority" could reclaim the land for the benefit of all the inhabitants. Lowdermilk proposed channeling water from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea and sharing the freshwater resources of the Sea of Galilee, which would be diverted for agricultural purposes. Though Lowdermilk himself did not propose it, Joseph saw in his plan the geopolitical

logic for an undivided nation. Throughout the forties he tried to convince people of his plan and goal.

He also tried to convince people to use nonviolent means to attain that goal. On the occasion of Albert Schweitzer's seventieth birthday in 1945, Joseph sent the famous doctor birthday greetings in Lambaréné, western Africa, inviting Schweitzer to the Holy Land, thanking him for his writings and marking the birthday by his own decision to become a vegetarian. Joseph was beginning to feel that he was not alone in his way of looking at the world, and he not only read more of Schweitzer but began a serious study of Gandhi. His first book on Gandhi had been a 1945 birthday present from his mother-in-law! However, he still drew most of the material for his philosophy of life not from books, not from the examples of others, but from his own life. He wore himself down in his efforts to keep Jews and Arabs from fighting one another and made many journeys throughout the land, often when giving music lessons to Arab families, who sometimes told him of being forced to supply food, money, and support to secret fighting groups. The penalty for noncompliance would have been to have their houses burned. Joseph himself knew of the pressures on the Jews. He was confronted with a situation in which no one really wanted to fight the other, but all were being drawn toward a conflict. He was convinced that the British were continuing to play a duplicitous role. They pretended to be concerned, as they had in 1936–39 with the buildup of arms, but secretly they helped both sides. In a report he made in 1947 to the Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), set up by the United Nations, Joseph tells the story of how the British were dealing with illegal arms. It is worth quoting in full because it reveals his anger and anguish.

> The following happened to me in March of this year (1947) and will help illustrate the conditions of illegal armament in this country.
>
> After a visit to the infant welfare centres of the Government Hospital at which I was accompanied by a doctoress of the Mos-

lem community, we had a conversation about the most deplorable conditions in Palestine and I wanted to prove to her that the illegal armament is not severely suppressed by the Government. We went together to a Military Post and I reported to the first man I met an address of an illegal Tommy-gun hidden in a well in a Jewish quarter. The man instead of taking immediate action remitted the plan to another soldier and the latter to a third one, who in turn went away to report the matter to the Officer in Charge of the area. After half an hour, which was sufficient time to remove the arm in case information had reached the responsible persons that it had been reported to the authorities, the man came back to call me to his O/i.C. The latter started asking my about my personal data and about the reason for reporting the address to him. I replied that it is my moral duty to report a Tommy-gun with which ten people can be killed at one shot and asked him to take action at once so that there would not be time to remove the weapon. Worried about my personal safety, the O/i.C. gave orders to dress me in a soldier's uniform and took me in a Jeep with three other men to collect the firearm. But instead of going to the place indicated, he went to another camp and from there to a third one, in order to add to the party five more soldiers. Afterwards, he drove over to the Police Station and at last, back to the first camp. It took four and a half hours, sufficient time to transfer a whole magazine of illegal arms and bring the responsible persons to safety. While arriving back to the office, the following conversation took place between the O/i.C. and myself.

THE O/I.C.: It is not the matter of the army to collect illegal arms, but the matter of the police. The police know the address you indicated to us and we have further found ten other plans in their files, but they do not think it necessary and prudent to collect the arms just now at the present situation.

ME: I insist upon this firearm to be immediately collected. It had perhaps been used against our Arab brothers, now it can be used against you and tomorrow it may be used against Jews if quarrels occur between the different parties. You are responsible for the order and safety in Palestine. It is an illegal arm and has to be forthwith transferred to safe hands.

THE O/I.C.: We have also to consider your personal safety.

ME: I sacrifice my life if it is to save some of your soldiers' lives. You are not my enemies. I consider every man as a human being like me.

(Indeed, thinking about the lovely boys who were killed some days before just around the corner of the street I am living on and giving my lessons, I cannot but feel with their mothers and sisters abroad and join in our common mourning for the precious lives lost. In a country where our greatest moral teacher of all times lived and preached love for the enemy and forgiveness, I cannot consider the English my enemies even if they killed my countrymen some time ago at Tel Aviv.)

THE O/I.C.: Wherefrom do you know the address of the firearm?

ME: I was myself using it illegally for exercises at the "Hagana" in the days of the disturbances.

Then we had some further talk of a more friendly character and I was released and seen home.

Some days later I called to the police and reported the address. The police inspector told me that he has no special orders from higher places to collect the arm. Who is going to give an order to collect the firearm? The police inspector will ask it from a higher ranked officer who will ask it from the High Commissioner. His Excellency will ask for instructions from Mr. Bevin and Mr. Bevin will never give such an order. We do not want to be armed with semi-legal arms which are obviously also found within the Arab sector and use these arms against each other for the interest of a third party. We must of course understand and support the needs of the English as regards the Oil and the Port which is a vital necessity for them and not menace them that they will be sent away from the country, thereby forcing them to take such means as dissociating us in order to maintain their position in the Middle East.

As is clear from the quoted passage, Joseph felt that only by binding together could Arab and Jew survive the intentions of both the West and the reactionary regimes of the East. As a protest against the British desire to divide Arab from Jew, he


IDENTITY CARD

No. 5280

Name of holder WILLIAM ABILERH

Place of residence Haifa

Place of business Haifa

Occupation Bank Clerk

Race ~~Jew~~ Semitic

Height 5 feet 10 inches

Colour of eyes Brown

Colour of hair Black

Build Slim

Special peculiarities

Signature of holder

Signature of issuing officer

Appointment ASSISTANT DISTRICT COMMISSIONER HAIFA & SAMARIA DISTRICT

Place Haifa Date 5/11/38

Joseph's altered identity card. Courtesy of Yossi Yarmus.

took his identity card in 1946 and crossed out the word *Jew* under *Race* and wrote in *Semitic*. He convinced a few others to do the same thing, although it must be said that more Arabs responded to his suggestion than did Jews. The British chastised him for tampering with his identification but tolerated his idiosyncrasies because they did not appear to draw much of a following. The man who had a desire to redeem the land, but not "in the Joshua way," was left to his ramblings through the land. His family, as they had done in 1936, worried much for his safety and for his sanity. They might have done well to heed the words of Rabbi Benjamin (Yehoshua Radler-Feldman): "If a man doesn't lose his mind these days, it's a sign that he has nothing to lose."

# 4

# Fanatic for Truth
## 1947–1950

Truth has no special time of its own. Its hour is now—always, and indeed then most truly when it seems most unsuitable to actual circumstances.

—Albert Schweitzer

But he who knows the truth, the truth that alone can help us, is compelled to speak out, no matter whether a whole people is listening or only a few individuals.

—Martin Buber

Insanity is a rare thing in individuals, but habitual to groups, parties and ages.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

THE CHAOS AND CRAZINESS of the decade of the forties in Haifa and elsewhere throughout Palestine are certainly mirrored in Joseph's personal life. There were times when he appeared on the edge of a nervous breakdown, such as in 1944, and his memories of the period lack the clarity necessary to work out an orderly chronology of events; but it is doubtful that his aberrations ever matched the madness that gripped the entire world during this period. Indeed, when viewed against the background of the Holocaust, the terror and bloodshed attendant upon the partition of Palestine, and the fear-inspired hardening of lines drawn in the cold war, his life has a consistency and sanity and logic that are remarkable—at least when viewed in retrospect.

Establishing rights on "the point of a bayonet" had suddenly become the only option open to those wishing national liberation, despite the agonies endured during the long world war. Great Britain had no stomach for further military conflict and was anxious to give up its mandate in Palestine. The Haganah and the Irgun sabotaged the railways, killed British soldiers, and destroyed British ships. In late June 1946, the British tried to suppress all illegal Jewish activity, activity that was generated largely by their unwillingness to open up the gates of Palestine to unlimited Jewish immigration. In July, Begin's terrorist organization, the Irgun, blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, the headquarters of the British Mandate. Scores of Arabs, Jews, and British were killed. The British looked for a way to withdraw that would not bring total chaos to the region, but perhaps by 1947 it was already too late.

Great Britain welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), which was assembled to determine the fate of the region. When he heard that the committee would be conducting open hearings in Jerusalem, Joseph threw himself into political action as never before. The threat of partition meant that his longed-for united Palestine would be broken up. This potential breakup was accompanied by the near breakup of his own family, his career, and his own sanity. Nevertheless, as the clouds of war loomed on the horizon, he still caught glimpses of the sun of reconciliation and peace.

One group that had never been reconciled to the Biltmore program was the Ihud, centered in Jerusalem under the leadership of Martin Buber and Judah Magnes. Joseph attended their strategy meetings as they planned their presentation to UNSCOP. The group as a whole was convinced that the binational solution, a state of both Arabs and Jews ruling jointly, was the only way that bloodshed and chaos could be averted. Magnes was selected as the spokesman. Joseph attended most of the meetings without speaking anything, but when the Ihud's program excluded any mention of the fate of Transjordan, he raised an objection. From his experience, he said, he did not see that binationalism was comprehensive enough, because

Transjordan needed access to the sea, and Zionism would one day need further space for immigrants. Then too, the development of the Jordan Valley, the key to the future development of the country, required the cooperation of the peoples living on both sides of the Jordan. While there were those in the Ihud who agreed with him, the majority felt that introducing Transjordan into the deliberations would only complicate matters. The important thing in their eyes was to avoid the tragedy of partition. When Joseph refused to withdraw his objection to the Ihud proposal, the other members urged him to submit his own plan to the committee.

With characteristic single-mindedness, Joseph set to work to update his 1944 memorandum to the British high commissioner. While his proposals did not vary greatly from that earlier document, he tried to tone down its negative character and to stress positive reasons for a united Palestine and Transjordan. The Nassar family of Haifa, owners of the largest hotel in the city, gave him a room for four days where he could isolate himself from everyone, including Dinah, who had just given birth in May to a second son, Daniel (Dani). As was the case with Adi, this new responsibility in the family made him more determined than ever to secure a peaceful future for his family and country. If it appeared (as it did to some members of his family) that his activities caused him to abandon Dinah and her babies at a time when he was most needed, he remained convinced that all his actions were taken for them. He submitted his memo on June 11, 1947.

It was a surprise to a great many people when he was informed on June 28 that his memo had been read with interest and that he had been chosen as one of only three individuals to appear before the committee. The other invitees were official organizations. The *Palestine Post* of June 29 contained the following notice:

UNSCOP DECIDES ON TESTIMONY

After a private meeting on Friday, it was officially announced that the organizations and individuals to be heard will include

the Agency, Sec. Chaim Weizmann, the Vaad Leumi, the General Federation of Jewish Labour, the Agudath Israel, the Ashkenazic Jewish Community of Jerusalem, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Palestine, the Ihud (Union) Association), and Mr. J. W. Abileah, of Haifa, a teacher of violin.

Requests from other individuals and organizations to appear before the Committee will be considered at another meeting.

Josef Wilhelm Abileah has submitted three points in his memorandum to the Committee—Arab-Jewish collaboration; a united Palestine and Trans-Jordan under King Abdullah; and free immigration. Mr. Abileah, who is 32, was for two years an official in the Government Survey Department and submitted a similar memorandum to the Chief Secretary in 1944. The burden of his submission is that the Arabs can be educated to work in cooperation with the Jews.

Victor Hoo, the personal representative of the secretary general before UNSCOP, had written Joseph on June 28 asking him for thirty copies of the memorandum he was preparing and also inviting him to make an oral supplement to the memorandum before the committee. On July 15, Joseph wrote the following letter:

c/o Y.M.C.A.
Jerusalem — Jerusalem, 15th July 1947

Dr. Victor Hoo
c/o U.N.S.C.O.P.
Y.M.C.A. Bldg.
Jerusalem.

Dear Sir,

re: my memorandum of the 11.6.47.

I thank you for your letter of the 28th June inviting me to make an oral statement before the Committee with regard to my above memorandum and beg to apologize for the delay in my answer.

The detailed memorandum you requested me to submit in thirty copies is not ready as yet for technical reasons which I have explained in my letter addressed to the Chairman on the 11th instant. I have already remitted three chapters thereof to Mr. Stavropoulous and the remainder is ready, partly in draft and partly in conception. It is supposed to contain the following chapters:

1) Constitution.
2) Conditions of illegal armament and means to fight against.—Abolition of Jewish Agency.
3) Differences in standard of living and social relations between the Arabs and Jews in Palestine to be considered as the main reason for struggles.
4) My first visit to the King's palace at Amman.
5) How my confidence in King Abdullah's personality is based.
6) Information on present conditions in various government departments and hints for re-organization.
7) Education.

My relative speech will start with a few introductory words on Schweitzer's Philosophy of Civilization [*sic*] and his principle of reverence for life which is the basis of my world-view. Thereupon I will show in the darkest colours the political and economical danger of the partition plan pointing out the principal aims of Abdullah's politics in the M.E. The Arab Legion whose force is growing from day to day is making its manoeuvres now at the Syrian boundary. King Abdullah is fighting for the formation of Grand Syria and will succeed by convincing the governments concerned of the economical advantages to form this federation together with the Arab part of Palestine which will comprise the hills in the Eastern part of the country. Haifa will be an international port for the English, the Arabs and the Jews. King Abdullah will ask for a corridor through the plain of Esdralon to connect Grand Syria with the port by a great commercial road along which strategical points will be situated to guard also the pipe-line for the English with whom he is in very good relation. This will devide [*sic*] the Jewish settlements and take the possibility of a united military power. Even if the Negev will be added to the Jewish State it will not be possible to popu-

late it at a large scale because no central irrigation work could be carried out, the Jordan being part of the Arab State. Thereupon, the Arab Legion will start its manoeuvres in the Palestinian hills near Nablus and Hebron. The army will be enlarged by recruits from Syria and Lebanon. The slightest provocation of a man killed in Jaffa or something else will be reason for an ultimatum by the Arab state to join Grand Syria or they will start coming down from the hills and finish once for ever the Zionists' aspirations for a Jewish State in Palestine. King Abdullah being a great hearted man will have a terrible fight with his concious [*sic*] to exterminate a nation which has suffered so much up till now. But if King Abdullah will not do it, some of his followers may do it and there is a constant danger for the future peace of the Holy Country. Thereagainst I will show the economic and cultural advantages a co-operation with Grand-Syria can give.

Regarding the abolition of the Jewish Agency, I ask only to take its power as a political representation and it will continue to exist as a welfare institution as proposed by Mr. Ben-Gurion in his evidence. At the same time it will be necessary to suppress the political representation of the Arab Higher Committee and the Moslem Supreme Council who are using their religious authority to stir up the people to kill non-Moslems. I myself ought to [had] be[en] killed in the year 1936 under this influence and was only saved by a wonder. The English government could not suppress such an authority as it would make a noise in the whole Moslem world and endanger their position in the Middle East. But King Abdullah who is himself a religious authority being a Hashimite will send these people to the mosque and ask them to comment [on] the Kor'an: Din Mohamed b'ilikna'a and not Din Mohamed b'isseif (which means: the religon of Mohamed by conviction and not by the sword) as it was originally conceived. The Jihad was already a danger during the war 1914–1918 and can only be avoided for future generations by a great hearted man like King Abdullah who is himself a poet and an artist with a human feeling heart and there is hope that during the period of his reign such basic comments on the Kor'an will be done.

Commenting [on] the third chapter, I will give striking examples from daily life and show that the Arabs in this country have been treated by the Jews as a despised race throughout the

period of the Mandate and they have no confidence that they will enjoy equal rights should they come under Jewish rulership as a minority.

In completion of Chapter four, I will relate some stories of my trips in Trans-Jordan and Palestine, how I was treated and what I spoke with the people. I will draw therefrom the proofs for my unlimited confidence in the loyalty and high moral standing of King Abdullah who will protect the Jewish as well as the other minorities better than any European ruler has done up till now. Passing to the 10th point of my memorandum I will try to prove that there is no religion whatsoever in the world which has not got social elements in itself. Socialistic and Communistic governments having failed, we must try to take a religious socialism as the basis for a future legislation. This paragraph has been dealt with in the Bishop's evidence last week.

The information on conditions of Government departments and hints for re-organization will mainly be taken from my memorandum of the year 1944 omitting chapters which had relation to war-conditions.

A great part of the speech will be devoted to the problem of education. I will speak about my experience as a teacher for both Arabs and Jews, about my common orchestras, the common excursions made and other opportunities of educating the children together. Anything proposed will be based on facts out of my experience as a teacher in this country.

Replying to the last paragraph of your letter, I think that one morning session of 4 hours will be amply sufficient to give you the required information. A good deal of this time should be devoted to questions. I could however also summerize [*sic*] and contract my speech to a shorter duration should your time table not provide a full morning session.

With further reference to the fourth paragraph of my letter addressed to the Chairman, I hereby irrevocably declare that I agree to appear before the Committee in republic [*sic*] session.

I am looking forward to your communication with regard to the date and time of the hearing which communication can reach me at the Y.M.C.A. or St. Julian's Hotel, Jerusalem, and beg to remain, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,
[signed] J. W. Abileah

This letter was preceded by a shorter one on July 11, whose interest lies in its revelation that Joseph was now operating under a threat to his life and under very straitened circumstances. He later learned from his brothers, who were in the Haganah, that his name was near the top of an assassination list compiled by the Irgun; so the threat mentioned in the following letter was not an idle one.

The Chairman of the United Nations
Special Committee on Palestine
c/o the Secretariat
Y.M.C.A. Building
JERUSALEM

Dear Sir:

re: My memorandum of 11.6.47

Enclosed I beg to hand you a copy of my letter addressed to Hani Bey Hashem, Master of Ceremonies, Amman, on the 22.6.47 for your perusal.

I have received in the meantime a communication from Dr. Victor Hoo informing me that you have honoured me with an oral statement and have taken up matters with the departments concerned to prepare everything for my relative speech.

Being aware that it is of the utmost importance that the Boycott of our Arab brothers be stopped before you leave the country, I am doing my utmost to bring about a relative decision by visiting my friends in the Arab towns, handing them copies of my memorandum and calling at every opportunity for cooperation. I have also handed a copy to the Arab Higher Committee at Jerusalem and intend to ask for an interview with Jamal Bey Hussein to whom I will be introduced by his cousin who was my colleague in the Survey Department many years ago. My former school fellows of Jaffa, most of whom are now people of influence in the town, are delighted at the solution submitted by me and are ready to support same in order to have at last peace in the country.

Thereagainst, I have received a letter from an unknown man of Tel-Aviv advising me that my life is in danger should I not

withdraw the decision to appear before the Committee. I have not withdrawn this decision as I hope to have the public opinion on my side until then. Anyhow, I will be obliged not to do it in the last minute if I still see that there is any danger. In this case you will have to be satisfied with my detailed memorandum of about 25 pages and written comments thereon.

As regards the detailed memorandum at which I am working now, I must inform you that the work is progressing very slowly owing to financial difficulties which I have been entrained owing to the fact that I was obliged to take unpaid leave from my students for several months. I have already sacrificed my own little fortune and cannot accept financial support as people already expressed the opinion that Arab or English money is working in the matter. I must be very careful in such delicate things to be free from accusations. I have, therefore, applied for a job as interpreter and guide in your Committee, which, up till now, was not granted to me. Anyhow, any support you could give me in form of office work to be done by your staff or a car put at my disposal would facilitate my work considerabl[y].

Another most important thing would be to grant me an immediate interview to explain to you the various points of my memorandum verbally prior to my speech so that you will have the full information in case something happens to me and this information will go with me to the grave.

Looking forward to your early news, I beg to remain, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

[Signed] J. W. Abileah.

A preliminary interview was in fact granted to Joseph, and he talked with one C. Stavropoulous in private at the UNSCOP office in Jerusalem about his memorandum. After Stavropoulous made a report to the committee, Joseph was told on July 17 that his testimony would no longer be needed.

It is impossible to know what was in the Stavropoulous report, but it is not hard to guess that Joseph's agitated state of mind was clear to this UN functionary. Perhaps the committee was trying to guard his personal safety, but it is more likely that they had already decided against giving serious consideration to his proposal. In any case, Joseph was not in the best of

shape to make the public presentation. One day in June, after the memorandum had been completed at the Nassar Hotel, Joseph went for a walk, but he was suddenly seized by two men, who took him to Dr. Blumenthal's sanatorium (where he had also been kept for observation in 1936). Joseph was furious to be held in the sanatorium against his will, especially when he thought he would be testifying in Jerusalem. He blamed his family for doing this to him, though he later discovered that his doctors, consulting with Dinah's obstetrician, had ordered it. In the end, the enforced two weeks' rest did him a great deal of good, and he felt vindicated when the chief doctor's diagnosis was that there was nothing mentally or physically wrong with him except that he was, in the doctor's words, "a fanatic for truth." This phrase was a particularly apt one, especially if one remembers Joseph's quarrels with his father over the 1944 tax returns or those with his mother-in-law, who once had deceived him about the wages she was paying an Arab servant girl. She knew that Joseph insisted on paying Arabs wages that were equal to those of Jews, and she told him when she hired the young Arab girl that she was following his instructions. When he discovered that Mrs. Yarmus had not told him the truth, he moved out of the house for three weeks.

In the hospital, feeling betrayed by his family and fearing that his vision of a united Palestine would be shattered by the obvious preparations for civil war, he was lifted from his own problems by his attentiveness to the problems of others. The problem of one particular patient is worth mentioning because it reminds us that music continued to be a powerful, peaceful force in his life at this time. A young woman had entered the hospital and had not spoken a word for more than a month. Doctors feared that her condition might become permanent. Her doctor told Joseph that she had loved music but that her parents had kept her from it. She especially loved to play the violin, and when her father in a fit of rage had broken her violin before her eyes, something in her snapped as well. Knowing that Joseph was a musician, her doctor asked Joseph to talk to the girl. Joseph entered her room with his violin under his arm

and placed it between them on the table. As she looked at it, her eyes lit up, much as the eyes of the shepherd on the top of Mount Carmel had done. When Joseph held out the violin to her and asked if she would like to play it, she said, "Yes," the first word she had spoken. This one word of affirmation seemed to unlock a torrent of other words, and they spoke together for more than three hours. Thereafter Joseph gave her lessons every day until she was released. Soon after he received word from UNSCOP that his oral testimony would not be required, he received a letter from her, dated July 21, stating that her father was very angry with Joseph's meddling and forbade any further communication. Her heartfelt thanks to him for understanding how important music was to her was further proof to Joseph that there must be a link between music and the human heart. He wrote back to her on July 30 and told her, "a hurt heart can feel your heart," but this letter was intercepted by her father, who wrote a sharp response to Joseph, with a thinly veiled threat to his family if he persisted in communicating with his daughter. Joseph realized that his intercession on her behalf had strengthened him in dealing with his own troubles and disappointments. Further, her appreciation for his act of kindness balanced his outrage at having been committed against his will.

The threat made by the girl's father was an unnecessary complication to the very real threat already present. Joseph was not the only one to suffer during these months. Dinah had had a rough time giving birth to Dani and felt deserted by Joseph when she needed him most. It was cold comfort to her that he was working on his memorandum to UNSCOP while she was so weak that she could not care for her own child. She had to leave him in the care of a nurse to go to a rest home in Ramat Gan. From there she wrote Joseph, confessing that his activities had taken a great toll on her emotional and physical resources. She wrote of the need to rest "in body and in spirit," and longed for the time when Joseph would cease his mad activities and return to build a life for his family. Plaintively she ended her letter with concern about when she could be a real

mother to Dani and when she would regain strength from the blood she lost "for him and for" Joseph.

When Joseph was released from Dr. Blumenthal's sanatorium and went to Jerusalem instead of returning directly to Haifa, Dinah wrote to Joseph on July 23, in a weary tone, that she was not strong enough to accompany him to Jerusalem; she needed rest before returning to work on August 1. On top of her physical problems, she now had to worry about how to feed her children since Joseph had suspended all his music lessons and had used up his little savings so that he could devote himself to gathering information for his UNSCOP presentation. While she sensed a real crisis in their marriage and urged Joseph to contact Bishop Stewart to be a sort of intermediary between them, Dinah had little energy for confronting the problem directly. She ended her letter by wishing Joseph success in his work, stating that she was taking up the piano again, and finally reminding Joseph that he had not yet arranged for Dani's birth certificate. Joseph was not unaffected by the sorrow that was transparent in the letter, but he stayed in Jerusalem, doggedly pursuing his activity.

Everyone in his family criticized him for his neglect of Dinah and the two boys. He wrote angry, often-defiant replies to them. One to his sister Julia reveals his passionate hatred of all forms of nationalism, a hatred that led him to commit himself to political activity. Joseph told Julia in this letter that he was about to become more public and vocal in his criticism of the form of nationalism espoused by both Arab and Jew. He went on to say, "A prominent doctor of Haifa called me a fanatic for truth. This I am and shall remain all my life even for the price of my head, fortune and family. I will not change and will fight my work of peace with the fanaticism of a semitic person.

I have much to report [to] you on my private life too, but there is no time now for such things. We have to avoid the partition plan at any rate, otherwise the country will be in fire very soon and no future for our children here."

On October 28, 1947, Joseph expanded on the remarks in

the August letter, referring to his relatives now as "dear opponents." His anguish had not in any way diminished.

> You asked me if I have ever stopped to think whether I have the right to devote my life to my ideas. Has any man of my age stopped to think about his family when he enrolled in any of the different armies which fought during the war? He was sent to Egypt, embarked for different countries of the continent to carry a rifle and kill other fathers of families or to lose his own life for the sake of imperialistic interests of some great powers and for the prosperity of the war industry. As time has shown, these "Idealists" of our country have not even fought for their own nation. Nationalism as a whole is an idea of egoism enlarged to a great scale and I would never agree to educate my children as Jews in the sense of Judaism as it is understood in our generation *viz* a national unit. A religion must not be confounded and mixed with national ideas as it has always been done, bringing with it so much suffering to the people who belonged to this community. Our greatest true Jew, Jesus of Nazareth, was the highest ethical genius who ever lived and he preached against the national religion. I am very much in his line and nevertheless not a Christian, as the European churches failed to accomplish the spirit of his high ideals to influence the ways of living and politics effectively. We must try in this country to revive his true spirit and so live according to a complete and developed religion and not transplant the spirit of Hitler to this country. A man who has much influence on my thought and conception of matters is the great living musician and philosopher, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, of Lambaréné (Gaboun [*sic*], Equatorial Africa), previously of Alsace. I range among his numerous disciples and admirers. Occasionally I will send you his Philosophy of Civilization [*sic*] and if I will have more leisure to write, I will also send you an essay on my religious philosophy.
>
> You can easily understand that with the above convictions I have difficulties with my wife, who is of a nationalistic family who previously belonged to the Revisionist party. I have been away from home for the last few months in order to be able to

work. In the meantime I have lost a number of my students and am in a worse financial position now. I want to find a new job but am pending the decision of my physician regarding an operation on my appendix which worried me several times this year. I am back at home now but despite the kind treatment and love I enjoy am not feeling well in the atmosphere and therefore accepted some students at Jerusalem in order to respire from time to time and keep up my connections in the capital. . . .

As regards my personal safety I emphasize again that all what I am doing is not more dangerous than to enroll in an army or participate in the Haganah or be stabbed down or bombed unconsciously as a civilian. The partition plan is good for you Americans who are safe in your country and will not be present at the terrible bloodshed and/or economical depression which will follow its realization. I will write more about it to Rudi [Joseph's brother-in-law].

I thank you for the congratulations for the birth of Daniel. He is not brought up at home because his mother is obliged to continue to work until I find a proper job. But if I will see him grow up as a good Jew in your nationalistic sense I would rather never see him at home at all.

I am annexing some parts of my detailed memorandum to the UNSCOP and will send you further stuff later. I am doing almost all the typing work by myself in the houses of my Arab friends and other persons who encourage me in my work.

I hope to hear from you soon so that our correspondence will be maintained and remain with all my love

Your
[signed] Willi

The month of August was spent in continued activity in and around Jerusalem. Almost in desperation, he wrote the following letter to King Abdullah. As was the fate of all his letters sent to Jordan, this one received no answer. It it worth including here for what it reveals about his frame of mind as he made a somewhat-exaggerated appeal to the King's emotions—an appeal that reveals Joseph's conviction that people of the Orient are best appealed to through their hearts and instincts.

To His Majesty
King Abdullah I of Trans-Jordan
Royal Palace
Amman, Trans-Jordan.

Haifa, 16th August 1947.

Your Majesty,

At the occasion of the blessed Feast please accept, Majesty, my hearty wishes to you and to my dear brothers, your esteemed subjects.

I had the opportunity to visit your palace in the year 1936 and to present my wishes personally for the Great Feast. Your first vezir, Ibrahim Pasha Hashem, then told me after a short conversation: Are you a Jew? I answered: Yes, Sir. Then he made reply: You are a hundred times welcome, please enter. These words and the extraordinary kind treatment I enjoyed from the part of your subjects the following days, inspired to me the idea that your people might be ready for a co-operation with your Palestinian neighbours should the approach be gentle and made with mutual understanding.

With this conviction I have been working now since at the idea of uniting Palestine and Trans-Jordan under your most esteemed leadership.

We have seen in the course of this time the disturbances of the years 1936–1939, then came the war and we also took a small share in the sufferings of the world. We are not yet cured from the great wounds these hard years inflicted to us and the country is again in fire.

Please accept this letter as a cry from your neighbours. Come to our help and restore peace in the country. Please help us to fight the undesirable institutions as the Zionist movement and the like.

It will not be necessary to pour the blood of your men. The fear your well trained army will inspire to the people will make them stop instantly the hostilities started.

We will then form a Palestinian government under your most distinguished rulership, a government based on religious principles.

The trust and confidence many people have in your loyalty and democracy which you have shown so many times during the period of your reign will help to bring about the so long awaited peace to the Holy Country.

The present Mandatory government will withdraw its intern[al] administration as soon as the Haifa port and the Oil concessions are assured to them. In this respect they only trust your Majesty as you have shown to them your faithfulness in their hardest days of wartime.

You are the only king at present in the Middle East who is able to save the situation and help [in] founding a great and prosperous kingdom based on the wisdom of the prophets.

Dear King Abdullah, hear our cry for help. Save us in this difficult situation and God will reward you and your people. You are the man chosen by God to accomplish this hard task. Follow the cry of a sinking people and help to bring them back to their God whom they have left and who has left them.

At least allow me to mention a phrase said by the late King Feissal to Samy Shawa, the famous musician: The language of the violin is the language which all people understand.

Being myself a musician, I hope one day to visit you again in your palace and if I will not be able to speak to you in Arabic, I will communicate you in sounds the immense sufferings of our people and pray you to save us. Your heart of a poet will hear this language in which we speak from heart to heart and will induce you to listen to its commands which is the order of God to us.

May God give you many years of good health, to you and to all those who will accomplish the task of bringing peace to the Middle East and give an example to the fighting nations of the world to solve their problems in peace.

Your great admirer in Palestine
[signed] J. W. Abileah

Although he returned to Haifa in August, he was uncomfortable at home and spent a great deal of time traveling to propagate his ideas. In September, on the eve of Yom Kippur, he decided to make another trip to what is now known as the West Bank. He began his trip with a visit to Mrs. Arafat of

Nablus, a woman he had met in the hospital in Haifa. While in her home, he asked about the possibility of visiting the hot salt springs at Wadi Maleh, a spa going back to Roman times, which lay almost in the Jordan Valley, some fourteen kilometers east of the small town of Tubas. He had no other reason for his visit than curiosity stemming from an insatiable thirst for sight-seeing. His friends were horrified. Nablus was not on the best of terms with the Jewish population, but the villages and countryside were very hostile indeed, especially since recent clashes between Arabs and Jews in Jaffa and Tel Aviv. When it became clear to the Arafat family that Joseph could not be dissuaded from his journey, they told him that they knew a certain Abu Hashem in Tubas who would guarantee Joseph's personal safety. Joseph believed that he was perfectly safe under the Arab code of safety for guests and had no hesitation in immediately setting out for Tubas. By chance, he and his host met Abu Hashem in a café in Nablus. Mr. Arafat explained Joseph's desire to visit the springs, and Abu Hashem rather reluctantly offered to take him to Tubas.

When they arrived at Tubas, Abu Hashem took Joseph to his home, but when they sat down, Joseph noted that he was offered neither coffee nor tea. For the first time, he began to feel uneasy; such a breach in the rules of hospitality could only mean that he was not fully accepted as a guest. His apprehension increased when Abu Hashem advised against the excursion to the springs because four people from his village had just been killed in Jaffa. When he went on to say that one of the men killed was his own cousin, Joseph became truly worried, knowing that the responsibilities of hospitality were in conflict with those of revenge. Furthermore, as a leading citizen of Tubas, Abu Hashem was closely observed by the villagers, who by now must have been aware that the stranger in his home might be Jewish. In spite of his apprehensions, Joseph drew himself together and accepted calmly, as he had done at the well in 1936, whatever fate awaited him. It crossed his mind that, in some ways, his death might atone for the murders caused by his Jewish brothers. He reached this sense of calm

while resting alone in a room in which he had been put. But the fragile nature of this calm was made clear to him when he jumped as the wind banged a door shut. Thinking it might have been a shot, he was startled when his host entered the room immediately after the sound. However, when he was simply asked to join Abu Hashem for a cup of coffee, his fears began to dissipate. These fears were aroused again toward evening when several merchants from Transjordan arrived, each accompanied by two Bedouin guards who were heavily armed. The guards kept their hands on their daggers and stared at Joseph, who by now was sure he should never have left Haifa. With the approach of night, and with only one flickering kerosene lamp to light the room, huge shadows ran up the walls and gripped Joseph's imagination as tightly as the Bedouin had their daggers.

Joseph knew he was in no imminent danger when his host asked him to break bread with all those assembled in his house. Sharing bread and salt traditionally indicated acceptance of the code of hospitality, and Joseph began to relax and enjoy his food as Abu Hashem proposed to drive him to the spring that night and to leave him with a guide while he himself transacted some business with the men from Transjordan. When Joseph boarded the truck that was to take him down into the valley, his guide told him to tell anyone who asked that he was Armenian. For once, Joseph's fanaticism for truth did not keep him from telling a lie. Joseph suspected that the men were going to collect an arms shipment in preparation for their war with the Jews, but all they told him was that they were "doing some work against the government." Joseph tried to make light conversation and told his host that this was the first time he had ever taken a desert bath at midnight. His host turned to him sharply and asked if he were afraid. Joseph replied without hesitation that he put his complete trust in his host's protection. The host looked away, staring in silence into the night.

The road from Tubas to Wadi Maleh drops about twelve hundred feet, and after they passed the small village of Tayassir,

the barren land stretched out before them in the bright moonlight. Joseph's mind wandered back to the Roman times when the bath was built in Wadi Maleh, and the ruined terraces he passed reminded him that there was a time in the past when men had carved an existence out of hostile terrain. If they had done so, he mused, could not this same land support a more dense population in the future?

Joseph and his guide were dropped off, and the truck, with its smugglers aboard, rattled off towards the Jordan River. It occurred to Joseph that perhaps he knew too much about the village's activities, but he joined his guide as they followed the light of a small kerosene lamp and approached a modern concrete structure built over the Roman site. Before entering the water, the guide boasted to Joseph that he was a great user of hashish then burst out in a song in honor of his guest. When he finished, Joseph said, "*Salem tummak*" (blessed be your mouth), which pleased the man so much that he sang the song again as Joseph let himself down into the Roman basin. The harmony of the song, echoing in the concrete shelter, made Joseph once again aware not only of his affinity with the Arab people but of his affinity with all men and women once differences in religious, national, and social backgrounds could be stripped away. His nakedness did not make him feel defenseless but, in fact, more at one with all living things. He felt separated from the other man only by skin color, a color that his own forefathers must have shared before their diaspora in the cold and sunless countries of the north.

Thus, when the man broke off his singing and unexpectedly asked Joseph to dive underwater, Joseph did not hesitate for a moment or show any fear at the strange command. If it had been a test of trust, he must have passed it, for his guide asked him to get dressed to meet the truck. When the truck did not appear, Joseph curled up in his towel and *khaffieh* (Arab head cloth) and slept, confident that he would be safe and at one both with his guide and with the land that stretched to the hills of Gil'ad, where more than a decade before he had experienced

a similar feeling of union. The turmoil of the previous months seemed far removed, and the dark rumblings of the coming months seemed not quite so ominous.

The truck came at dawn and took them back to the village. His host still seemed uneasy and asked Joseph if he would mind having his breakfast in the village square. Joseph agreed and proceeded to share his meal with any who passed by. There were many passers-by since the whole village seemed curious about the stranger. His time there was marred by a man who approached him with a rope in his hands. It was clear that his intention was to harm Joseph, perhaps even to hang him, but when Joseph looked into his eyes and welcomed him as a brother to share his bread, the man dropped the rope and disappeared. Thereafter, Joseph entertained the villagers by reading his August letter to King Abdullah, which was greeted with great enthusiasm by the villagers, who by now knew they had an unarmed and solitary Jew in their midst. When Joseph left the village with his host, he felt he had made many friends. As he walked the road from Nablus to Jenin, he was happy that, in the midst of such upheaval as the end of the mandate was causing, he had once again tapped the roots of hospitality, friendship, and brotherhood and that he had found that the nonviolent ways of love were the means by which these roots could grow.

This feeling was deeply religious for him, as if he had discovered the flame of God burning within the hearts of those who knew what it was to be fortunate to live in a holy land. This spiritual experience sustained him in the weeks and months ahead and became a strong foundation for the sort of religious socialism and spiritual Zionism he later espoused so wholeheartedly. His brand of socialism was a simple sharing of the more fortunate with the less so, not a socialism in which the less fortunate sought to expropriate the position of those who were better off. As before, what struck him most from this experience was not the goal so much as the importance of the way to that goal.

Hans Kohn, one of Martin Buber's closest friends and his

biographer, had left Palestine in 1929, after the riots in Hebron, because he felt that Zionism as a spiritual movement was dying. He had come to the conviction that Zionism no longer believed that a good and just end required good and just means. It is worth quoting some of his letter of farewell to Zionism, because he articulates well Joseph's own belief both in 1947 and now. The crucial difference is that Joseph stayed to fight for another way, truer to the goals of spiritual Zionism.

> The means determine the goal. If lies and violence are the means, the results cannot be good. . . . We have been in Palestine for twelve years without having even once made a serious attempt at seeking through negotiations the consent of the indigenous people. . . . I believe that it will be possible for us to hold Palestine and continue to grow for a long time. This will be done first with British aid and then later with the help of our own bayonets—shamefully called Haganah—clearly because we have no faith in our own policy. But by that time we will not be able to do without the bayonets. The means will have determined the goal. Jewish Palestine will no longer have anything of that Zion for which I once put myself on the line.

Almost twenty years later, Joseph Abileah was fighting to convince those already sharpening their bayonets that it was not too late to renounce the means of violence. When he suffered appendicitis later that November, right before the fateful UN decision to partition Palestine, he had time to reflect on all his experiences and began an autobiography, which he called "My Faith in the Human Heart." The autobiography was never completed, but his faith in the human heart continued to give direction to his life. His journal entry of November 15 and 16, 1947, has a quality that is as true for him today as it was forty years ago. That the hope expressed there has not been fulfilled reflects more the nature of the world than the quality of the vision itself. Like Beethoven's music, Joseph had faced the sadness and chaos of the world directly. This period in his life was like the early part of a Beethoven symphony, when the

conflict is articulated but not yet resolved. He ended his hospital reflections in the following way:

> What is the use of arms nowadays when one atomic bomb can destroy a whole well-fitted army? Is it not time to turn to spiritual powers which are stronger than arms? We are competing in a senseless armament, killing from time to time people in order to test arms and keep them working. The end will be that we shall send all our money to the arms factories of Europe and America, kill one another and be defenseless as soon as the great powers see *we* are too strongly armed and disarm us by using an atomic bomb. What is that hatred preached throughout the country to two peoples of the same race? One group of people must put down their arms first. Let us be heroic in this. If we have the power to forgive and forget everything and stretch our hands for peace, we shall have given an example to the world which might lead to disarmament and world peace. We can then say that the people of Israel are people chosen by God to save the world by their example of love and forgiveness, as one of us had done—over 1900 years ago.

The conditions of November 1947 made the fulfillment of this hope seem very distant indeed. On November 29, the United Nations accepted the UNSCOP recommendation to partition Palestine. Thirty nations had been represented on the committee. Of these thirty nations, eleven were commissioned to formulate the proposal to be put forth to the UN General Assembly. One of the eleven, Australia, withdrew, and of the remaining ten, three commissioned Dr. Ralph Bunche, secretary of UNSCOP, to draft an alternative to the partition plan. This proposal, the Minority Report, called for a confederation plan. The Minority Report lost November approval, and partition was accepted by the UN. Joseph greeted the news not with surprise but with sadness. All his frantic activity had failed to prevent what he foresaw would be a tragedy. Still, he did not stop his struggle against the partition, hoping that somehow it might not be implemented.

Within his family, Joseph's father too feared the outbreak of war and hoped it could be averted; but unlike his son, he welcomed the partition. Not unlike Joseph, Ephraim was fond of constructing detailed plans on how states might function in an era of peace, and in his unpublished writings, he makes it clear that the utopia he devised in the Mödling forests in World War I could be applied to the Middle East as well. Though he held a patronizing attitude towards the Arabs, who he felt stood in great need of the benefits of the "higher" Hebrew culture, Ephraim was generally interested in reconciliation, certainly on a person-to-person level, especially as it might be achieved through the activities of the Freemasons.

Ephraim expressed this opinion in a piece he wrote in September 1947, perhaps as an address to his lodge, in which he was a master. In this short prose work, he describes a vision he said he experienced on the balcony of the home of one of his piano students, an Arab woman named Mrs. Tumah. Looking from her balcony, Ephraim saw a great light, like that from the atomic bomb, appear over Haifa Bay. In that light, he saw the figures of Jesus, Moses, and Mohammed coming towards him. Jesus spoke to him first and urged him to be active in the formation of the new nations, because he had much to offer them. Jesus reminded him that three major events in his life had prepared him to strive for cooperation now between the new Jewish and Arab states. The first was his writing of "The Power of Love." There he had learned of the unity of all human beings, and that lesson should enable him now to see that Arabs and Jews, people of the same race, should be able to cooperate with one another. The second event was the visit in 1921 that Ephraim made at the age of forty to his father's grave. This visit occurred before Ephraim left for Palestine in 1923, and at the graveside, Ephraim had promised his father that he would act in his spirit once he had arrived in the Holy Land. The third event of which Jesus spoke was Ephraim's composition of three songs—"You Love Your Neighbor as Yourself," "God Will Be King of the Whole World and His Name Will Be Love," and "Love of the World, the House of Israel." Because of these

three experiences, Jesus said that he had chosen Ephraim to act in the language of love. He approached Ephraim as a master in the Freemason's lodge and gave him the craft's traditional kiss. After Jesus spoke, Moses and Mohammed approached Ephraim and affirmed the words of Jesus. Moses stated his intentions of working with the Jews and Mohammed his of working with the Arabs.

This "vision," probably a metaphorical one only, was intended to encourage the Arab and Jewish members of all the lodges in Palestine to work in a common effort. The ideas informing this vision are very much Joseph's own, but Joseph saw the partition plan as the gravest danger to the sort of union the vision talked about bringing into being. Instead of a place of refuge and light, Joseph's fear was that the creation of two states would make Palestine a place of enmity and fire. In the end, he was more right than his father, though he took no pride or joy in the accuracy of his predictions.

Even though the partition plan was passed, Joseph worked for its repeal, especially when the violence he so clearly saw coming began in earnest and when the clandestine arms he had urged the British to control were brought out of hiding. Though his brothers had joined military units, including seventeen-year-old Benjamin, Joseph steadfastly refused to take up arms. At the end of December, he issued "A Call," in which some of his longings are set forth. In it can be seen the strands of a spiritual Zionism that link him clearly with Ahad Ha'am, Judah Magnes, and Martin Buber. What cannot be seen in this call is the torment he was undergoing. With this call, the year of madness, 1947, came to an end; but the madness remained.

### A Call

Written in Haifa on the 31st of December 1947

A well-known German writer living in Haifa once told me: "Why, when speaking of Arabs, you say "cousins" and not "brothers"? Investigations made by scientists have aroused the supposition that the Palestinian Arab population is in the main part

composed of remnants of the ten tribes of Israel lost and scattered many centuries ago."

I have always felt such an inclination towards the Arabs which cannot be explained but by blood relation. And so are many like me who are only ashamed to confess because of the nationalism taught to them from early youth which stops and kills all natural feeling.

If the case stands so, let us not hesitate to embrace them, kiss them and cry aloud: "Oh, our dear brothers and sisters, now we have found you, those tribes we are longing to meet for 2500 years. When we came to Palestine, 30 years ago, we did not recognize you. You were so poor, so neglected. How is it that we did not know you? Oh, dear brothers, take what we have of money and education. We will teach you technics and arts, languages and sciences. Your forefathers brought them to Europe through Spain some centuries ago and we have brought them back to you, farther developed and more advanced. Europe is not able to develop them any more. It is too poor now. Let us stick to the common inheritance and continue to build the civilization with our semitic energy and revive it by the spirit of the prophets who lived centuries ago in this country. Let us start the common work and look forward to a prosperous future when we will be able to feed Europe also with our surplus."

The reply of the Arabs to our call will be:

"Oh, dear brothers and sisters! Yes, we recognize you now. But how did you change while you were away! Your skin is white and your languages are different from our language. We did not know that you were our brothers as your manners were so strange to us. We welcome you now. Please sit down and have a coffee with us. We will then teach you to live according to the law of our common forefathers, to eat and dress according to the climate and economical possibilities of the country. There is no question of buying land. There is plenty for all of us; it must only be watered properly. Let us make a common irrigation system with the money with which you intended to nationalize areas of the Holy Country and we will be able to settle the Bedouins and the needy immigrants alike. Take off your hats. Cover your heads with "Hatta wa'agal" and let your thoughts be directed by hearts warmed in the Eastern sun.

"PALESTINE IS THE PROMISED LAND FOR HUMANITY AND NOT FOR THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL ALONE. IT IS THE PARADISE LOST BY THE SINFALL OF ADAM AND EVE, AND WILL BE REGAINED BY OUR COMMON WORK OF SOIL RECLAMATION AND RECONSTRUCTION, SACRIFICING OUR EFFORTS AS PENITENCE FOR THE REDEMPTION OF THE SINS OF THE WORLD!"

Joseph W. Abileah

By February 1948, Haifa and all of Palestine were being ripped apart, far in advance of the May 15 target date for the end of the British Mandate. The British forces were caught in the middle as Arabs and Jews battled for strategic positions that would give them some advantage when what appeared to be inevitable and full-scale war took place. Joseph continued to try to draw the attention of the United Nations to the mistake it had made on November 29. There were in fact many nations who were having second thoughts, but the letter Joseph sent the secretary general on February 4, containing the following twelve points, did not have much effect.

J. W. Abileah
1, Herzlia St.
Haifa (Palestine)

Haifa, the 4th of February 1948

To the
Secretary General
U.N.O.
Lake Success, N.Y.

Re: *Palestine Problem*

Dear Sir,

With a view to the present dangerous situation in this country aroused by the decision in favour of the partition plan I beg to draw your kind attention to the memorandum submitted by me to the UNSCOP at the sojourn in Palestine and which met their consideration.

I have now amended my suggestions to read as follows:

1) Re-consideration of UNO decision and rejection of partition plan.
2) International and interconfessional immigration according to economic capacity.
3) Union of Palestine and Transjordan in one area under rulership of King Abdullah in order to enable the immigration.
4) If percentage of Jewish immigration will be too high, military precautions are to be taken in order to avoid possibility of proclamation of a Jewish State in the future.
5) King Abdullah may accept members of any community in his advisory council in which an adviser of international reknown appointed by the UNO will participate for control of external politics.
6) Complete disarmament of local population including discharge of Palestinians serving at present in police and military units, operations to be carried out solely by military units actually stationed in the country and/or international reinforcements from abroad in cooperation with the Arab Legion.
7) Execution of great soil conservation and irrigation works (Lowdermilk scheme) which may serve as example for other countries in the M.E. as for Iraq in diverting the Euphrates to the Syrian desert.
8) Present and future interests of foreign nations in Palestine to be secured by concessions as regards exploitation of natural resources and building of factories.
9) Representatives of all religious communities in governmental body.
10) Abolition of Jewish Agency as political representation of the members of the Jewish community as well as restrictions of Moslem Supreme Council to religious duties.
11) Large scale educational scheme having for aim a common education to all Palestinians with full consideration of the religious peculiarities of each community. Such education should begin with common art lessons, common sports, common Scout movement, playgrounds for children and common Kindergartens. Further common agricultural schools.

12) Health department and social welfare to be put entirely under Government control.

I hereby, beg you to re-consider the above in the light of the present situation.

Upon your request I shall be glad to furnish you with further details and documents as well as information regarding my activity in connection therewith.

Looking forward to the honour of your reply I beg to remain, Dear Sir,

Yours very respectfully,
[signed] J. W. Abileah

Copy to:—
The Chief Secretary
Government of Palestine
Jerusalem.

A reading of these twelve points shows how Joseph thought not just in terms of stopping war—what one might call a negative approach to peace—but also how he looked towards the future, especially in his irrigation schemes and in his desire for a common education, one stressing mutual respect for religious differences.

Joseph wrote letters in a much sharper tone to his own family. One written on February 8 gives a good idea of the situation in Haifa. It is also remarkable in that it reveals the only time when Joseph seriously thought about leaving the country. He soon gave up thoughts of emigrating and resolutely decided to stay to fight for his ideals and for what he in "A Call" termed "the redemption of the sins of the world."

Haifa, February 8th, 1948

My dear folks,

I have not yet received your answers but am nevertheless writing you again as events in Palestine have justified the views expressed in my previous letters.

Where are the Americans who wish to avoid the bloodshed of "Jewish Blood" as Rudi says? Is it a consolation for us that also Arab citizens are killed and their families destroyed?

The situation is horrible. People are killed every day in every part of the town and the country. We are living in a Ghetto in order not to expose ourselves to danger but are neither safe here. Papa and Mama keep their shop closed since the beginning of December 1947 (and so many other business men). They have lost 20 students and I myself have less than half of my previous income. I am earning approximately the cost of living for one of my children. For the other four heads of the family Dinah must provide with her salary. To earn this she exposes herself every day to danger going down town to the office. A bomb exploded some weeks ago near her office at the bus station where she is waiting for the bus and several people were killed—one hour after she left the station. Rudi lives at Neve Shaanan quarter and the convoy going there was attacked and several people killed some days ago just one hour before he had to go home. So Clara was in a bus which was attacked by a bomb and she was saved by a wonder. We are living by chance and do not know what will happen tomorrow—and with all this Ultra-Nationalistic aspirations are enhanced by the UNO and the U.S.A. in order to aggravate the situation and have a chance to sell more arms.

Regarding myself you can imagine that I am in a terrible situation. I cannot co-operate in the up-building of a national state as it is entirely contrary to my convictions. So I am fighting against it—on the paper. I have written a number of letters and essays and will send you by ordinary mail a copy of the fifth part and closing chapter of my "Call for Arab-Jewish Collaboration" which I intend to publish in three languages. I urgently ask Rudi to offer the travelling stories to some paper if it is only for a few dollars. It will be some help for me in my difficult financial situation.

Now regarding my future in this country, it is obvious that I have nothing to do here if—God beware—the Jewish State becomes a reality. The Nationalist groups will try to put to trial and condemn persons who publicly fought against the National State. So I must escape from here as soon as possible. I am trying to have a job with the International Red Cross Society as

interpreter but am not sure to be accepted there. Could you take me over to the U.S. to try my luck there as clerk or—musician? There, of course, I think I will stop my political activity as nobody will oblige me to participate in the up-building of a nation-state. Think it over please and send me your opinion as soon as possible. I could take over my family later if I am successful until I will have the opportunity to immigrate to Transjordan where I am sure to find good jobs as teacher for languages or something else.

I am awaiting your early reply which I hope will still reach me at home and remain with all my love

Your
[signed] Willi

As Joseph points out, the turmoil in Haifa had left him almost without pupils. Because of his bookkeeping skills, he was able to get a job in the early spring of 1948 with the railways, figuring out pensions for employees who would be paid by the British once the mandate had ended. The dangers of getting to work, mentioned in the February 8 letter, were multiplied now because his office was in the Arab section of town. As he had done in 1936–39, Joseph had to crawl across dangerous street intersections to get to work. So did his Arab coworkers, who explained to him that much of the firing came from Arab irregulars who had slipped into Haifa from villages in the Galilee and, in some cases, from other Arab countries.

The eighty thousand Arab citizens of Haifa had had a harmonious relationship, by and large, with their Jewish fellow citizens, and the Sephardic mayor of Haifa, Shabetay Levy, spent a great deal of time and energy urging both sides to remain at peace. Since Haifa was, even at this time, being "liberated" by Jewish forces, even before the official beginning of the Jewish state, it was difficult for the Arab residents to stay as calm and steadfast as Mayor Levy had requested. Most feared for the safety of their families and left the city, hoping to return when the troubles were over. In the end, only five to ten thousand stayed, and the houses of those who fled were savagely plundered and

then confiscated. Families like the Farsoons, the Nassars, the Jabers—the parents of more than half of Joseph's pupils—left Haifa with little more than they could carry. When visiting a Baha'i house in Acre, Joseph found that even the copper tubing in the walls had been ripped out.

Of course the robbery and looting were not one-sided. When Joseph was shifted from the accounting office to the railway stores, soon after independence, he discovered while taking inventory that Arab workers had stolen as much as they could before leaving the stores. As he inventoried what was left with other Jewish workers, he saw the robbery continue. War seemed to be breaking down all the civilized restraints under which society normally operated. For example, if there were three hammers in stock, one would be taken and two would be officially listed as inventory. One day his colleagues came up with two whistles and told Joseph to take them to his sons. Joseph said that, if he wanted whistles, he would stop at a toy store. This made him the butt of many jokes at work—the man who would not even take whistles for his children. Those at work did not seem to realize that Joseph's honesty, his commitment to truth, gave him stability, an anchor in a world that seemed to be slipping towards chaos. Ironically, this story of the whistles was responsible for him being offered the position of first deputy in the stores' management: the Israeli chief storekeeper said that Joseph was the only one whose honesty was unquestionable.

This same officer came to Joseph one day in June to tell him that he had received orders to list all men working for him who had not yet done military service. The new state of Israel was now at war with the surrounding Arab nations and needed to mobilize all men. Even though a law had just been passed on conscription, the officer offered to lie for Joseph because he knew that, if he wrote Joseph's name down, it would cost Joseph his job and possibly lead to a term in jail. Joseph refused to have anyone lie for him and prepared himself for what he knew was coming—his confrontation as a pacifist with the state whose existence he had so long opposed. It did not occur

to him that there were others in his situation, and he later learned that most pacifists had either left the country or had had quiet trials. One of his former students was being tried for resistance to war, and Joseph was asked to appear as a witness. The lawyers warned Joseph that, if he expressed his own views in court, he could expect immediate arrest. As one would expect, Joseph insisted on testifying. In court, the defense lawyer told the judges he had warned Joseph not to appear, but that, since he had known the risk and yet appeared, the court would have to admit that his evidence was credible. The young man, Eric Schiffman, was found guilty and sentenced to an indefinite period of hard labor—until the end of the war.*

Just as he was warned, Joseph's arrest followed on the heels of the Schiffman trial. Joseph's reaction to his arrest is revealing. He was taken to a small police station on Khoury Street and was told he would be spending the night. He did not argue or resist arrest but only asked the guard for a blanket and asked him if he "would be so kind to call my wife." The guards were moved by his gentleness and ended up bringing him seven blankets, which he shared with others in his cell. The quality of meekness, which seems to strike Joseph's opponents in almost every situation of potential conflict with him, has often disarmed his most angry critics. But it must be said, also, that his meekness is not submissiveness but rather the quality described by Aristotle as *proates*, the mean between excessive anger and submission, a quality that allows one, as St. Paul put it, to waive one's rights but to hold on to principles. Moses, in Numbers 12:3, was called the meekest man on earth, and

*Actually, Schiffman's case was very interesting. He had maintained his Austrian passport and asked to be repatriated rather than serve his prison term. The court granted him his request, but when he returned to Austria, he discovered that anti-Semitism had not died. In a despairing mood, he went to Switzerland and got a job instructing young European Jews about to make *aliyah*. After a few years, he changed his name and returned to Israel as a new immigrant. He performed military service and now lives in a kibbutz in the Galilee. Like many Israelis, he honors Joseph without necessarily believing in his ideas any longer.

it is in that tradition of meekness that Joseph must be placed. If meekness is the mean between hot temper and submission, then it is also true that Joseph is the mean between the temperament of his father and of his mother.

Schiffman had been an obscure waiter, whose sentence probably reflected his having gone into hiding to avoid conscription. Joseph's views were widely known, and his family was a prominent one in Haifa. The authorities decided to publicize his trial to show everyone that even the most privileged persons could not avoid the draft. Many lawyers came to Joseph's house to ask to handle his defense. His reply to each of them was, "If I plan to tell the truth, why do I need my own lawyer?" On August 30, 1948, before a tribunal of five judges, in a hot room packed with spectators, Joseph's trial took place. No one from his family attended the trial, except for a cousin of Dinah's. As he had done so many times in the past, Ephraim tried to protect Joseph by contacting a doctor who worked at the recruiting office and who then offered to declare Joseph medically unfit. Joseph indignantly refused this offer and, in fact, revealed that it had been made to him (without mentioning the doctor's name) in his opening statement in court.

He went to court fully expecting to go from there to prison. When he met Dinah's cousin in the corridor outside the courtroom, he was carrying a small bag. In response to the cousin's query about its contents, Joseph replied that he was taking his pajamas with him to jail. What he did not tell the cousin was that he had also packed several books on Hebrew grammar and on music theory. For a long time, Joseph had been trying to develop a theory regarding the connection between the laws of spoken language and the laws of harmony—perhaps building on what Dr. Schweitzer had done with the connection between words and music in Bach chorales. It says much of Joseph's calmness, determination, and sense of priority that he was almost looking forward to prison so that he could devote more time to his music. In an almost metaphorical fashion, he was also trying to find a harmony in the act of oral communication and self-expression that he knew existed in music.

On that sweltering August day, Joseph began his defense by noting that he was being accused of not serving in the Haganah even before there was a state of Israel and before Israeli law was in force. By not joining a clandestine military organization, he was merely obeying British law. Further, there was a municipal law in Haifa that he also would have broken had he participated in an armed struggle. Nevertheless, he agreed that after May 15, the birthdate of the nation-state of Israel, he had refused to appear at the recruiting office. He pointed out that he was not basing his defense on his compliance with British law, he just wanted to make the court aware of that fact. He continued by stating that, because of his work in Haifa, his appearance in 1947 before UNSCOP, and his refusal to help construct defense fortifications around Haifa, his pacifist position was well known. Having established that he had made no effort to conceal his objection to what he called the "unhappy war of brother against brother," Joseph went on to confront what he thought was a more serious, if unspecified, accusation than the one of merely avoiding service in the military. In anticipation of a line that the prosecutor would take later in the trial, Joseph rhetorically asked himself how he could stand by while the nation itself was imperiled, even at the moment of its birth, and while others were dying so that he could live in safety.

His answer to the accusation he made to himself involved establishing for the court how he came to his own worldview, a view he described as "Gandhism without the nationalistic component." Before a now-hushed court, Joseph recounted those experiences of his life that brought him to where he was in 1948. He began by mentioning Dr. Albert Schweitzer, whose philosophy of reverence for life had struck such a deep chord in him. When he read Schweitzer for the first time, he noted, he found expression for all the feelings that had been fostered in him by music and the natural world. As he explained it, Schweitzer had touched something hidden in his soul, put there by the experiences of his life in this holiest of all lands. Espousing a sort of universalism, at one with the kind of religious socialism in which he had always believed, Joseph went

on to explain that his belief was consistent with what he saw to be the line of development in Jewish ethics from Moses through Jesus. He made it clear that he responded to the ethics of the Jesus of Nazareth not to the divinity of the Jesus of the Catholic church. Furthermore, he was especially drawn to the nonviolent personality of Jesus as it was manifested in the modern personalities of Schweitzer and Gandhi.

As he attempted to show for the court how the power of nonviolence had been revealed to him, Joseph drew upon his experience with the savage dog in the Jordan Valley, went on to the story at the well near Ben Shemen and at the springs of Wadi Maleh, and ended with a story of a recent episode near Um el Fahm, where he was stopped by a man as he walked with his brother Benjamin. This Arab, who had approached Joseph with a wrench raised in his hand, feared that Joseph had a bomb in his knapsack. Knowing that he was in some danger, yet not fearful of the man, Joseph reached into his pack and drew out some chocolate, which he offered to the menacing figure. "Please, my brother, help yourself," had been Joseph's first words. Immediately, the wrench had been lowered when the Arab sensed that he was neither in danger himself nor in the presence of an enemy. From this experience, Joseph told the court, he was confirmed in his belief that everyone possesses both a "good and a bad heart," that is, is capable of responding either to the good or to the bad. He was convinced that those who trust their instincts and feelings are more likely to respond to the good than are those who make decisions based solely on their intellect. Although some might find his Rousseauism sorely strained by modern history, he still feels that civilization, especially the sort that produces structures like the nation-state and exalts the life of the theorizing intellect and science, is more likely to stifle the spark in the human heart than to help make it glow. This belief is why he felt at home in the desert with the Bedouin and why he talked so animatedly about the Arab's ability to sense the truth intuitively, much as the desert watchdog sensed that he had nothing to fear from the man who sat down quietly before him.

Joseph's passionate defense of nonviolence and the obvious sincerity of his beliefs made an impression on the judges. Nonetheless, as the following verdict, presented in its entirety, reveals, they were not persuaded that there was much hope that his worldview could prevail in a world still numbed by the horrors of the Holocaust. Joseph had tried to explain that those who were fighting for the nation were not fighting on his behalf; rather, they were fighting for the benefit of some abstraction called *the state.* But the judges saw the case differently and ordered him to report for national service, though in a noncombatant capacity.

File No. 8/48

In the Supreme Court of the Recruiting Centre, Haifa.

SENTENCE

given at the session of the Supreme Court on the 25th Av 5709 (30.8.48)

The Judges: Adv. J. Klebanoff (Chairman), Dr. B. Avniel, Sh. Goldberg, J. Aharoni & Dr. S. Greenwald.

Public Prosecutor: Adv. J. Halevi.

THE PROSECUTOR AGAINST JOSEPH W. ABILEAH.

a) The Court after hearing the accusation and the defence of the defendant decided that the way of the defendant is erroneous and could, beware God, bring a disaster to the population if his way would have been followed. The defendant was also obliged to agree in reply to the questions of the judges that in our situation and special circumstances the population cannot take this way. However, as the whole nation, except of some outsiders, realize the situation, we can indulge ourselves to treat with utmost tolerance single cases of these erring people.

b) The Court disapprove the behavior of the defendant who up to today, over half a year, has found the courage not to participate in any form in the nation's struggle to stand for their life even in a form which is not opposed to his "conscientious" views of not using force. It is only by the great bravery of our fighters and soldiers that the defendant, his wife and his children

could remain alive and that he could continue his regular way of living here in this situation.

1.—In view of the above we fix that the defendant is to be punished for his evading up till now to participate in a vital service in favour of the nation even not as a fighter. Therefore, the Court fine the defendant with LP.50. (Fifty Pal. Pounds) to the treasurer of the state. However, considering the special circumstances of the case, we postpone the execution of this judgment until he will have fulfilled his duty of national service and we allow in case of good behavior whilst in the service, according to our following sentence, to forgive this punishment.

2.—The defendant has to enter in the course of one week from today the recruiting centre and present himself for full service in a non-combatant charge as first aid, essential auxiliary service, etc.

3.—We fix that no use of arms and force has to be imposed upon him and he has to be released from any military training.

4.—If the defendant will not fulfil this judgement the Court order hereby to treat him as it is used to treat any shirker or deserter whose fault has been proved.

Sgd. [the above judges]

30.8.48

After the judgment was read, Joseph was given the opportunity to comment. He stated in clear tones that he did not accept the verdict. He could not accept noncombatant service, which he likened to the case of a thief who watched for the police while another thief performed the actual robbery. He then warned the court that, if he had to be on telephone duty as a noncombatant in the military and had to pass on a message that would involve him in the possibility of creating violence, he would not transmit the message. The judges, one of whom had been with Joseph's uncle in Russia, another of whom had been Dinah's employer, and a third of whom was later to serve on the governing board of the Haifa Symphony Orchestra, were unmoved by his response. They had already been as le-

nient as they felt they could and had disregarded the prosecutor's demand for a heavy sentence to discourage others from taking such a stand. When Joseph had finished his response, the judges ordered him to report for a medical examination.

Within a short period of time, Joseph was examined in a room of specialists, each of whom wrote a report on some aspect of his physical health. When he approached the final desk, reports in hand, the doctor in charge looked at him and said, "Oh, you're Abileah?" and without looking at the reports, stamped "unfit" on his health form. Joseph took this exemption and, a few days later, threw it in the wastepaper basket. He was not bothered again by the military until 1956, when he was once more examined by a panel. He agreed to this later appearance after the authorities had agreed that they would allow him to do civilian service and would give him a serious and objective physical examination. The second examination found him fit but deferred him for one year. At the end of this year, he received another deferment, and this series of deferrals continued until he was past the age of military service.

There had been several reporters at Joseph's trial, and most of the newspaper accounts were highly sarcastic, perhaps reflecting the fact that, in August 1948, Israel was still fighting for its right to exist as an independent state and did not want to give serious attention to dissidents. The August 31 edition of *Ha'Aretz* ran a story with the headline "A Jew, an admirer of Abdullah, refuses to register for reasons of conscience." Other papers referred to Joseph as one who talked about dogs and Gandhi. Several persons, not reporters, had followed the trial a little more attentively. One such person, Nathan Chofshi, the famous Tolstoyan pacifist from Nahallal, wrote Joseph to tell him of a group of people like himself who were members of the War Resisters International. He invited him to learn more about their group. On April 29, 1949, after meeting with Chofshi and beginning a friendship that was to last more than thirty years, Joseph wrote to the War Resisters International in England to apply for membership.

As 1949 drew to a close, Israel had established itself as a

state. The costs had been great. More than six thousand Jews had lost their lives, and more than seven hundred thousand Arabs had become refugees. The cosmopolitan world of Haifa no longer existed. Though the binational dreams of the Ihud had been shattered, there was still work to be done. This work could be done neither alone nor outside a political frame. It was time for the fanatic for truth to join forces with like-minded men and women.

# 5

# A Task Worthy of Jews
# 1950–1967

> But the time has come for the Jews to take into account the Arab factor as the most important facing us. If we have a just cause, so have they. If promises were made to us, so were they to the Arabs. If we love the land and have a historical connection with it, so too the Arabs. Even more realistic than the ugly realities of imperialism is the fact that the Arabs live here and in this part of the world, and will probably be here long after the collapse of one imperialism and the rise of another. If we too wish to live in this living space, we must live with the Arabs, try to make peace with them. I do not know if this is possible. But this is a task worthy of Jews.
>
> —Judah Magnes, 1939

THE YEAR 1949 MARKED A CHANGE in Joseph's life. From the obscure violin teacher who pursued his quest for peace in a solitary fashion, unsupported by friends or family, he became one who sought the fellowship of like-minded thinkers and activists. Having been sought out by Nathan Chofshi and his small coterie of pacifists, Joseph soon assumed responsible positions in many organizations. He describes the years from 1950 to 1967 as being full of peace activities, not of political ones. By that he means that, during this period, he worked for reconciliation between individuals and small groups and not for a change in the political system.

For sixteen years, he was secretary to Nathan Chofshi, going to his home once a week to handle his English correspon-

dence or accompanying him on trips to Arab villages as his translator. That Nathan Chofshi, a great man of peace, had come in the early part of the century to Palestine with other "vision-ridden" (Uri Davis's term) members of the Second Aliyah and had never learned Arabic reveals much about the development of the country. It might have been true that Chofshi's heart went out to all the oppressed, but he never learned how to communicate with them in their own language.

There is a beautiful story that illustrates the sad history of Arab-Jewish relations. Shortly after Joseph met Nathan Chofshi, Chofshi asked him to accompany him to Nazareth, where some Arab families had been sent after their village was taken over by new Jewish immigrants, who flooded the country after 1949. The inhabitants of this village had, in 1910, taken into their homes for a whole year the Jewish pioneers who were struggling to establish the settlement later known as Nahallal, when the pioneers were devastated by an epidemic of malaria. Chofshi never forgot this act of kindness and was full of remorse and guilt when the new Jewish state forced the inhabitants of this small village in the Galilee to leave their homes after the War of Independence. No one in Nahallal had spoken up for these villagers. For that matter, few Israelis spoke up for any of the villagers of the more than 390 Arab villages within the borders of the new state that were destroyed in these years. Joseph, the translator, had to be the one to find the language to express the remorse and to ask for the forgiveness. He was happy in this role, though not in his task, because he liked the idea of bringing two peoples together. This role of mediator, reconciler, and translator became one he assumed more and more in the following years.

It was also in 1949 that Joseph first learned about the Quakers from meeting Quaker volunteers who had come as relief workers to Acre ('Akko) soon after the cease-fire. The more he learned, the more he was drawn to the Quakers, especially to their commitment to nonviolence and constructive social action. As the following letter states, he also interested Chofshi

in the Quaker movement, and in 1950, they both decided to join the Wider Quaker Fellowship.

1, Herzliah St.

April 8th, 1950

Wider Quaker Fellowship
20 South 12th Street,
Philadelphia 7, Pa.

Dear Friends,

Your papers about the Wider Quaker Fellowship have been handed to me by Eng. E. A. Glueckauf of Tel-Aviv.

In the sheet about Purpose, Membership and Program you say that many members have enrolled desiring to have the spiritual foundation of their Peace Testimony strengthened. Others because of the manner in which Friends express their religious faith in a program of social action. Still others to whom the Quaker mystical approach to God appealed. I should say that I [would] like to join the fellowship for all the three reasons which are in conformity with my philosophy and ways of life.

I am in close contact with the unit of the American Friends Service Committee working at Acre since over a year and although the people are exchanged there from time to time, I have had the opportunity to make good friendship with a number of Friends and their co-operators at the unit. I have further been acquainted with the Quaker principles through the reading of literature received from the Friends' Home Service Committee, Friends' House, London.

Mr. Nathan Chofshi of Nahallal Nr. Haifa (Israel) who desires also to enrol in the Wider Quaker Fellowship asks if you could send to him some literature in German language as he does not read English. Have you possibly some information in Hebrew language for Hebrew speaking applicants?

Regarding my share in bearing expenses, I regret to inform you that at the present moment I will not be able to contribute anything because of the foreign exchange restrictions ruling in

this country. I hope, however, to cover at least your postage expenses by International Postage Coupons as soon as these will be available at the local post offices.

I wish to add that I am an active member of the Israel branch of the War Resisters' International. Apart from the Quaker Peace Testimony it is their adherence to truth which appeals to me so much and which makes this Religious Society so attractive to me.

I am looking forward to your news and remain with many thanks in advance and the best greetings of peace,

Yours cordially,
[signed] J. W. Abileah

When reading through the Quaker literature, which was sent to him in German translation, Nathan Chofshi was excited to read about how William Penn approached the matter of colonization when he settled in what was to become the state of Pennsylvania. When Penn and his fellow refugees from European religious persecution approached the Indian inhabitants, they asked their permission to settle and to live in peace. They asked permission, even though the king of England had granted them deed to the land. Furthermore, they came without a single gun. Chofshi and Joseph were struck by how similar this situation was to the coming of Jews to Palestine after the Balfour Declaration, and yet how different had been the consequences when the argument for legal and historic rights had been substituted for the permission of the native inhabitants. Both Chofshi and Joseph believed that it was not too late to learn from the example of Penn, and Chofshi fulfilled a long-held dream when he translated, in 1968, these Quaker documents into Hebrew. The following introduction to this translation is an important example of the kind of thinking that kept both Joseph and Chofshi active in international peace movements. In this introduction, translated into English by Joseph, is to be found reference to the "divine sparkle" that lies at the center of Joseph's continuing faith in the power of the human heart.

## The State of Peace, Justice and Truth Which Was Founded by the English Quakers in North America in the 17th Century

Translated from German sources and provided with an introduction by Nathan Chofshi (By the Translator)

Is there in our generation, filled with reciprocal mistrust between men and nations, a generation torn by bloody world wars and hate, fear from the approaching most terrible of world wars, a war of total destruction for all inhabitants of this planet—is there still a hope, a possibility, that man will return to an inner repentance, to an increasing faith in a flame of the brotherhood of man created in the image of God? Will man devote himself to a life of justice, compassion, love and goodness to everything? Has mankind this inner power, or is it, God beware, doomed to final destruction by its own hands without a saviour?

These are the doubts and questions which befall in our days anyone who looks at the happenings of our wonderful and deplorable world and does not see a salvation from the general folly which has attained and hurts everything.

However, there is a strong basis for faith and hope. There are still people who, despite powers of hell, fears of destruction which the inhabitants of this globe draw upon themselves by order of Satan—have not darkened and extinguished in their hearts the ray of faith and hope that not everything is lost. They believe that the divine sparkle is still alive deep in the heart of each man, conscious or unconscious. It is still whispering and quivering and sometimes it awakens and takes shape of a flame and accomplishes great things, so that the people who were in the darkness see a great light.

The facts related in this small booklet give an encouraging, positive and soothing answer to all these questions and doubts.

A terrible situation ravaged in the 17th century in the "New World" of America, in wars of blood and fire and reciprocal destruction between the white race which came there from Europe and Indians, the redskins, who were the inhabitants of the country. These latters waged terrible wars of revenge against their white conquerers and destroyers. In all this confusion, the community of the "Religious Society of the Friends" or with their

abbreviated name "Quakers" appeared without weapons, great or small, and with their strong religious conviction in the sanctity of the life of every man. They refused to use any violence and had a strong faith in the divine sparkle which whispers and lights in the heart of every human being, without exception. They established friendly relations with the Indian tribes who lived in the area called today Pennsylvania and there founded a State of peace, justice and brotherhood which became exemplary.

The story of the foundation of this State, its functioning for a period of over 70 years, all this is related in this little book according to sources of old, reliable Quaker books, founded on the faith and way of life of the members of this religious movement since three hundred years and until our days.

I have translated its contents from the following books in German language: 1. Die Weise Feder—Verlag, Neu-Sonnenfelder Jugend—Collection of Quaker stories, 1930; 2. Die Weise der Quaker, by A. Ruth Fry—2 Auflage 1946, Verlag Leonard Friedrich, Bad Pyrmont; 3. Unter Freunden, by William Wistar Comfort—Christlicher Zeitschriftenverlag, Berlin 1950.

The history which is told here is a living testimony for the force of the goodness, truth and righteousness, and it constitutes an encouragement and strengthening for every man and nation which accepts the divine destination, the calling of which is the driving force of all their deeds in this world. With the conviction and inner force and faith they walk and swim against the gray stream, without fear of failures, difficulties or dangers, for a new world of true peace, true brotherhood of man, for the life of man created in the image of God.

Nathan Chofshi

For Joseph, Nathan Chofshi was more a support than an influence. It became clear to Joseph that his experiences up to 1945 had formed his way of looking at the world and that later contacts and friends merely confirmed and strengthened what he already believed to be true. Thus, he is fond of saying that he was a Quaker fourteen years before he even knew the Quakers existed. Likewise, he never read the Sermon on the Mount until 1963, when at a Baptist convention he played a chamber-

music concert outside the Church of the Beatitudes, which overlooks the Sea of Galilee. On the wall of the church are inscribed the key words of Jesus's sermon, and Joseph listened in stunned admiration as one of the Baptists recited them. For years, he had believed in these words without ever having heard or read them. He had exalted Jesus as the man of ethics, but now he saw the precise language in which that ethic had presented itself to the world. Of the Sermon on the Mount, Joseph was later to say, "In the ethical relations toward our fellowmen we must not be short of what is required in the Sermon of the Mount. It is only by taking the way of most radical love, up to love of our enemy, that we can expect the same attitude from the other side. The strongest hate splits and melts in a sincere sun of love. We can walk along this path more than we believe to be possible. The Sermon of the Mount was not written for angels but for humans."

One important idea that Nathan and Joseph came to share was the belief that the Zionist dream had not been a wrong one. There was a time in 1944 and 1947 when Joseph took a very anti-Zionist posture, especially when he saw the coming of the nation-state. In some of his letters, he even mentions a "blue-white Nazism." But in the company of Chofshi, and aided no doubt by a more settled family and professional life, Joseph came to see that there are many Zionisms and that one could be comfortable in calling oneself a Zionist if one linked oneself to the fulfillment of the Second Aliyah's vision of a just and peaceful society. From the time of his contact with Chofshi, Joseph has felt a sense of discomfort at being dragged into an alliance with those whose only interest appears to be the destruction of the state of Israel.

The focus of Joseph's activity in Israel in 1950 was working for minority rights within the state of Israel, hoping that, through cultural transformation, there might be a change in the structure and purpose of the government. He is often a reflection of the change that took place within the Ihud, which, after the binational idea was defeated in 1947, continued to exist in order to press for equality for all Israeli citizens. Such

pressure was extremely important because the lot of those Arabs remaining in Israel after 1949 was not a happy one, though their condition was not widely known and at times was deliberately misrepresented.

One clear example of this misrepresentation occurred in 1950 in an article written for *The Jerusalem Post* about Arabs leaving the town of Majdal (later called Migdal Gad by the Israelis), on the southern coast of Israel near the Gaza Strip. Judging from the article, it would seem that the inhabitants were happy about being relocated in Gaza refugee camps, and in general, this picture was the one the world chose to accept, just as they had accepted the now-discredited contention that three hundred thousand Arabs living in what the UN partitioned as the Jewish state left it of their own free will between November 1947 and May 1948. There were those in Israel who knew otherwise and dared to speak out. One of these, Yehoshua Radler-Feldman, better known as Rabbi Benjamin, was the editor of the Ihud paper, *Ner*. Even before the story of Migdal Gad came out in *The Jerusalem Post*, Radler-Feldman had asked Joseph to investigate Migdal Gad (Majdal) on his own. It is interesting to juxtapose the article in the *Post*, written on October 25, 1950, with Joseph's letter of December 1, 1950, which was based on his visit to Majdal on October 8. The *Post* did not print Joseph's report, but *Ner* published a version of it on January 6, 1951.

"Arabs Leave Migdal Gad with Cheerful Goodwill"
by H. Ben Adi

Despite claims made by Egypt in the United Nations regarding the eviction of Palestine Arabs from Israel into Egyptian territory, the recent evacuation of the final group of Migdal Gad's Arab population to the Gaza Strip was carried out in an atmosphere of order and general cheerfulness.

The group, which expressed anxiety only as it moved into the alien territory, bore with it a total of IL22,000 [in the old Palestine bank notes] which had been exchanged for Israel currency.

A total of LP.170,000 was taken out of the country altogether

by the transfer of the Migdal Gad families which was undertaken at their request. During the noon hours I watched the evacuees, who had been transported in the 45 minute journey from Migdal Gad to the boundary post in 17 trucks piled high with household goods, being transferred across the border with a minimum of formality. Baggage was not inspected, and papers had been ordered beforehand.

*Transport Shortage*

The main difficulty confronted during the transfer was one of transportation. The large convoy bearing the Israel expatriates was met at the border by four small Egyptian army vehicles. The lack of adequate transport was explained by an Egyptian army officer with the words, "It will do for them."

The Israel truck drivers, many of them immigrants from Poland and Rumania, expressed surprise at the simplicity and order of the procedure. Their exit from the countries of their origin was not so easily effected, they said.

Most of the evacuees planned to join their families in Gaza. Arabs who remained in Migdal Gad, whose Arab quarter had a deserted look after the series of evacuations, explained that hardships in the town, and desire to reunite families which had broken up during the war had motivated those who left.

If there were complaints about the circumstances of the transfer or the economic conditions which led to the request for evacuation, none were made during the operation. Good cheer reigned till the last minute, and a number of the departing Arabs shook hands with the Military Governor before leaving and thanked him.

And Joseph's reply:

To some they may have appeared leaving with cheerful goodwill, those late Arabs of Migdal Gad, just as people do who, having no choice, put a good face on the matter. To me who has spoken to them and seen them in their distress, they were embittered, pitiable people. A Jewish immigrant living in Migdal for eighteen months knew to relate that it was the "Sochnuth" who sent them away and that against their own free will they

left the Ghetto into which they had been penned. The houses of the Ghetto were already being allotted to new immigrants while the last inhabitants left. I saw them busy in the Ghetto setting, ready for the exodus. In the street one sells a writing desk, another various other belongings: Tomorrow they have to go, there is no point in taking with you all that belongs to you. Soldiers patrol the streets. They keep order. In one solitary weaving workshop two workers keep the shuttles running until the last minute and in the small coffeehouses a few guests sit idle in their doom just as some believers who squat motionless at the gate of the mosque.

The remarkable number of 12,000 Arab inhabitants had dwindled down to 2,700 after the Arab-Jewish war. Of these 2,700, a great number had been promised Israel citizenship with full civil rights. Instead they were now served with notices to leave Migdal. This was done diplomatically. Every citizen was requested to fill in a questionnaire and state whether he wants to leave for Egypt or Jordan or for another place in Israel where he would have to live as a refugee. Almost all of them chose Egypt or Jordan and consequently were urged to sign an application, addressed to the military governor, for permission to leave Israel. Thereupon they were allowed to take their belongings and money and also given transport to the frontier.

Their immovable property, put in the custody of the Custodian of Abandoned Property, they could not sell, but on application they could take title deeds with them. The income from these and other sources would be placed to their credit—but this will be counterbalanced by the dues for the administration of the properties and taxes.

To end the preliminary formalities they had to sign a declaration that they do not intend to return to Israel.

The role of the military governor in this foul play was to "advise" everybody to sign, for after October 15th, 1950, the remaining inhabitants would be removed by force and driven out of the country in destitution, and then, of course, "he would be unable to help them." So in the first days of the action when their consternation was great, they sold their belongings with great loss; now, with government assistance, they get reasonable prices.

Within 3½ months this episode had been brought to an end.

> Migdal is now "araberrein." We shall not forget the "cheerful goodwill" with which these unfortunate people bade farewell to their town, the town of their fathers and forefathers, where they were to become Israel citizens with full civil rights.
>
> Joseph Abileah
> Haifa 1.12.50.
> (based on a visit made 8.10.50)

To the student of history, such a juxtaposition of reports is an important microcosm of the whole problem of equal rights for Arab citizens in the construction of a Jewish state. It raises the question of whether what Joseph calls "full civil rights" can ever be truly possible for non-Jews. For example, Joseph's report mentions the "Custodian of Abandoned Property." This custodian, more properly called *custodian of absentee property,* was a position created by the Absentee Property Law passed in March 1950, before the exodus from Migdal Gad. Under this law, more than 70 percent (estimates range as high as 88 percent) of the territory of pre-1967 Israel was classified as absentee property. At the time of the partition plan, Jews owned about 7 percent of the land granted them as a Jewish state and perhaps as much as 10 percent of the land they added as a result of the War of Independence. The property of those Arabs who became refugees passed to the care of the custodian of absentee property in 1950. By law, it was to remain in his hands until the state of emergency was declared to be over. (As of 1987, this state of emergency was still in effect.) Those who were classified as absentees were excluded from citizenship.

In 1950, there were still villages like Majdal that were predominantly Arab. When their lands were given over to the custodian, the inhabitants became absentees. Those who remained within the borders of Israel were called *present absentees* because, while they were absent from their land, they were still within the borders of the country. Many Arabs living in Israel in 1987 could be said to fall into this present absentee category. Joseph and others like him fought during these years for the rights of these people who chose to remain in Israel. It was

an uphill fight for equal rights because their land was effectively lost. Don Peretz states that, between 1948 and 1953, of the 370 new settlements built in Israel, 350 were established with the permission of the custodian on absentee property. Many of those settling there came to Israel under the provision of the Law of Return, passed in July 1950, *after* the Absentee Property Law was enacted. The Law of Return gave any Jew anywhere in the world the right to immigrate to Israel—but it did not include in its definition of *return* the seven hundred thousand Arabs who had become refugees in 1947–49. Later, the Israeli Lands Law of 1960 apparently sealed the fate of the refugees, as far as a return to their homes was concerned, by excluding non-Jews from ownership of about 92 percent of pre-1967 Israel.

The case of Majdal (Migdal Gad) is not as well known as that of the villages of Bir'am and Ikrit, whose Christian inhabitants did not fight against Jews in the War of Independence but whose lands were taken for security purposes in 1950. Ever since that time, the inhabitants have been given assurances that they could return (chronicled in *Blood Brothers*, the autobiography of Bir'am's most famous son, Father Elias Chacour), but as of 1987, the promise had yet to be fulfilled. In the summer of 1986, Father Chacour organized a work camp in the now-ruined village of Bir'am. Those who participated were the children and grandchildren of those evicted in 1950. Two hundred four of these youngsters pitched their tents on the places where their houses once were. "You would think the authorities' hearts would melt," said Father Chacour, "but it has produced no change. Still we do not hate them, because when we hate we lose our dignity."

Joseph approached both Migdal Gad and other subsequent alleged human rights violations, not with the view of using them to condemn the government, but with positive feelings for those being oppressed. He has never allowed his love for his fellow human beings to be contaminated with hatred for what human beings are sometimes capable of doing to one another. "Why waste time in condemning, when what is impor-

tant is to create for the future?" is his reply to those who have asked him why he does not express more righteous indignation at flagrant human rights abuses.

This outlook is the reason that during these years he spent less time investigating abuses than he did in building bridges between the Arab and Jewish communities. He enjoyed his work with the Quakers in Acre, where he came to know Frank and Pat ("she was part angel") Hunt. With the Hunt's help, he planned and participated in the first international work camp in Israel, held at Kfar Vitkin in 1952. The choice of Kfar Vitkin as the site for the construction of the first youth hostel in Israel, built by and open to young persons of all nationalities, was a significant one—Kfar Vitkin has an interesting place in Israeli history. On June 11, 1948, the day the UN achieved a temporary cease-fire in the War of Independence, a ship, the *Altalena*, left the port of Marseilles loaded with weapons and with almost a thousand volunteers who were coming to aid the Irgun, the terrorist military organization headed by Menachem Begin. The regular Israeli army, the Haganah, feared that these weapons and men might be used by Begin to take over the provisionary government, so they laid a trap for them. David Ben-Gurion arranged for the ship to land on the beach at Kfar Vitkin, a *moshav* (agricultural settlement with private ownership of property) south of Haifa. When the Irgun began to unload the ship, regular Haganah units surrounded them and asked them to surrender. Begin and some others escaped to the ship and sailed for Tel Aviv. In the Tel Aviv harbor, Ben-Gurion demanded that the *Altalena* surrender. When it refused, the Haganah opened fire and sank the ship, killing at least sixteen members of the Irgun. Begin escaped by swimming ashore. While this incident meant that the Irgun would no longer exist as an independent fighting force, the defeat was never forgotten—especially by Begin. Kfar Vitkin stands for a deep division among the founding fathers—a split that is still present today.

By erecting a youth hostel at the *moshav*, Joseph and his friends were able to participate in an activity that united, not divided, people. Jews, Arabs, foreign volunteers worked side by

side, creating something for the future, hoping to overcome the divisions of the past. From 1952 to 1960, Joseph participated in fifteen work camps, eleven in Israel and four abroad, and for some years he served as secretary to the work-camp movement. Many of his friends in the War Resisters International were also active in the work-camp movement. One of the chief forces behind the movement was another pacifist from Haifa, Meir Rubinstein, who with his wife, Hannah, gave to the movement the sort of dedication that Joseph was later to bring to the Society for Middle East Confederation. The Rubinsteins worked out a system whereby the work camps would alternate between Jewish and Arab villages. A loyal core of Jewish and Arab volunteers was supplemented by young people from abroad, and the work camps became linked with the Service Civil International (SCI), which had been, with the American Friends Service Committee, instrumental in organizing the camp at Kfar Vitkin.

While the international work camps were a successful venture for more than thirteen years, not enough of the participants were brought to them who shared the same commitment to the ideals of those who began them in 1952. Then, the main purpose had been to help overcome prejudice and to make friends of enemies. Joseph threw himself into the movement because it was a perfect example of the practical idealism he espoused. By cutting across national lines, especially in the SCI, who went wherever they were needed, the work camps made those who participated in them feel like world citizens. There was another reason, however, for Joseph's participation. Because his country had denied him service outside the military, he settled with his own conscience by looking at the time he spent in the camps as his form of national reserve duty. Thus he laid the groundwork for one of his life's guidelines—"True defense of one's country lies in winning the trust of one's neighbors." In the genuine Arab-Jewish rapprochement that grew from the work-camp experiences, Joseph hoped to be preparing for an Israel its founders had dreamed of, an Israel that, in Joseph's eyes, had suffered a terrific setback by the partition plan and

the subsequent War of Independence. He often remembered Schweitzer's dictum that "nationalism is an ignoble patriotism" and was convinced that movements like the work camps could be a more inclusive and creative expression of one's patriotism than could service in the military.

A good example of what the work camps could accomplish can be seen in the work camp of 1955, held in Rame, a small Arab town in the Galilee. Here, young Jews and Arabs worked alongside international volunteers, and a frail but genuine harmony began to develop. This harmony was broken when the work-camp director announced one day that the military governor would like to come to visit the group. One must remember that all Arab towns in Israel were under military law until 1966, and so the military represented to them not so much defense as oppression. One fiery young Arab stood up and demanded that the invitation be withdrawn or else the Arabs would leave the camp. What happened next shows the good such work camps were capable of achieving.

The young Arab expected to be confronted with angry objections from the Jewish volunteers. He was convinced that the work camp itself was an unreal interlude, almost a subterfuge, in a long history of enmity and oppression and that his objection would reveal how this romantic notion of cooperation could not stand the test of reality. Instead of the argument he anticipated, he found that a man rose on his left to support his view and then another did the same on his right. Turning to see who they were, he found that one was a Jew, Joseph, and the other was an Englishman. As he describes it today, more than thirty years later, he is still amazed that the two bitter enemies of all Palestinians should be the ones supporting him. From that day on, the young man's life was changed. Today, Elias Jabbour of Shefa Amr (Shefr-Am) operates a community center, the House of Hope, and he has dedicated his life to reconciliation and justice. He is absolutely convinced that, if he had not experienced that moment when human beings reached over national and religious boundaries, over barricades erected and maintained by the forces of hatred, to embrace the human-

ity of another of God's creatures, he would have been shaped by his own bitterness and, in the end, would have been destroyed by it. It is not without reason that, when Joseph Abileah visits the house of Jabbour, he is always given the seat of honor. Elias Jabbour has never recovered the lands taken from his father in 1949, and every day he must pass the kibbutz that was built there. But his heart, though saddened by the injustice of the world, is not full of hate. Elias Jabbour feels that he has been able to fulfill the biblical injunction to choose life, not death, which is why, in 1987, he still remained one of the centers of hope for those who desired peace in the Middle East.

Almost all the work camps experienced moments of tension. One in 1954, at Ein Tsurim in the northern Negev, had to build a regional school for thirteen new immigrant settlements. Here, the Arab participants were troubled about building a home for people newly come to the country, when hundreds of thousands of refugees enjoyed no similar right of return. That the work-camp committee was committed to alternating sites between Jewish and Arab communities eased the situation, as did the presence of compassionate persons who listened sympathetically. In the end, the Arabs were able to reconcile themselves to working to help fellow human beings, and many of them participated in later work camps.

While Joseph had received little support from his family in most of his other peace work, he found that Dinah and his sons were enthusiastic about the work camps, especially because they could be with him in his activities. The bar mitzvah celebrations for Adi and Dani culminated in the experience of a European work camp run by the SCI. Even though Adi had the misfortune of having a grandfather clock fall on him in Stewart Castle in Cove, Scotland, he still remembers the work camp with great fondness; and Dani, whose views on the Arab question are now diametrically opposed to those of his father, clearly values the time spent working in the Arab village of Sha'ab, as well as the summer he spent in Santa Maria, Switzerland, where in 1959 the SCI constructed a road to the mountain village.

Joseph at an international work camp in Israel. Joseph in back row, far right.

Dinah, in particular, saw work camps as constructive. Having worried over Joseph's peregrinations and having never been completely in sympathy with his political views, she valued the first family work camp held in Nazareth in 1958, where the campers constructed the foundation for Dr. Bernath's outpatient clinic. Dr. Bernath of the Edinburgh Mission Hospital (now called the English Hospital) is a legendary figure in Nazareth, and this work camp began his long friendship with the Abileah family. It was he who came to Dinah's rescue in 1973 when she suffered intense pain from a nail that had been inserted into her leg to help it heal after she was struck by a car in late 1972. Although the country was in a state of upheaval over the October War with Egypt, Dr. Bernath dropped everything he was doing to remove the nail from her leg—after which Dinah's health improved greatly.

It was at the Nazareth work camp that Joseph had the pleasure of giving a farewell concert with his son Adi, by now a gifted fourteen-year-old horn player, and with Meir Rubinstein, who in addition to being a fine painter was a gifted amateur pianist. Whenever possible, Joseph liked to inject music into the work-camp activities since he saw both the music and the work as accomplishing the same human purpose.

Music remained Joseph's vocation. In 1949, he became a founding member of the Haifa Symphony Orchestra, where he headed the viola section. In the same year, he also joined the staff of the Haifa Conservatory of Music, teaching violin, viola, chamber music, and theory. In each group, he also undertook some administrative duties, including bookkeeping and, for a while, keeping program notes for the symphony. Among the musicians themselves, he was recognized as a peacemaker, often soothing bruised egos and settling quarrels. One such incident is revealing. A string player had broken his bow and asked to borrow another while his was being repaired. When he returned the borrowed bow, its owner found it had been cracked and accused the borrower of causing the crack. The borrower replied that anyone could see the bow had been cracked in the past as it still retained traces of old glue. Joseph was asked to mediate and, after some discussion, suggested that each player pay half the cost of the repair. This was not satisfactory to either party, each of whom felt he was completely innocent. Joseph then suggested that he himself pay one-third (a substantial sum for a professional bow), and the two parties were shocked that one who had had nothing to do with the bow would actually pay one-third. This offer made them ashamed of their own selfishness, and they accepted the original compromise. Further, they forgave one another for the heated words and remained good colleagues in the orchestra. This habit of not giving way to blame and recrimination is a fundamental part of Joseph's strength as a peacemaker. The incident with the musicians also indicates that this strength has a suggestive force in others, just as it did with the startled Arab near Um el Fahm who, in the shadow of impending war, was offered a piece of chocolate.

When asked why he moved in his adult life from the violin to the viola, Joseph explained that he did not like to be in the limelight, carrying the melody, but preferred to provide the harmony.

As Joseph felt more financially secure because he was teaching and performing in the orchestra, he sought the means to leave the crowded apartment at 1 Herzlia Street, which had been rented to his mother-in-law and where he had lived since his marriage. It had three rooms. In the early days of the marriage, when Joseph's differences with his father meant he had to rely on Dinah's job with the Manufacturers' Association and on his own lessons, one room had been let out to supplement the family's meager income. Later, his researches in the mid and late forties, as he scrambled frantically to find a way to avoid the coming bloodshed, meant that he was on the move all the time and could not teach as much as he would have liked. When the two boys were born, they took over the third room (though the renter left only after a court case over his tenant rights). The cramped space made for family tension, and Mrs. Yarmus, a nationalistic and religious woman who kept a kosher kitchen, had a hard time tolerating Joseph's eccentric behavior. Nevertheless, she was a source of support for Dinah during the years of upheaval and helped care for the children when Dinah went back to work. The flat itself was owned by a Mr. Halaby, an Arab from Jaffa. Right after the war, Joseph was asked if he wanted to buy the flat at a very low price. When he asked, "From whom?" he was told, "The Custodian of Absentee Property." He replied that he would only buy the flat from its rightful owner and continued to rent at a time when ownership would have eased his financial situation considerably.

In 1956, a third child, Efrat (Effie), the daughter Dinah had prayed for, was born, which meant that the family had outgrown their living quarters. Joseph and Dinah looked for months for a home, and after rejecting a large flat on the top of Mount Carmel because it would be too far from his pupils, they found 55A Rehov Hillel. They decided to buy it outright. Dinah, who felt that Joseph was at last secure in his profession, quit her

job to raise Effie and took her compensation from twenty-two hard years of work to buy the apartment. This sum was supplemented by the sale of a piano and of Joseph's expensive viola. Selling the viola was a sacrifice but a sacrifice that turned out well for them because it made it easy to live when they had no rent to pay. Joseph often jokes about his simple life by saying it never matters how much you make, only how much you spend. Dinah had learned to be an economical housekeeper. The excitement of moving into the flat (which has remained the family home to this day and in which statesmen and kings have been entertained) was marred by the death of Dinah's mother just a short while before the move. What was to be her room was turned into a room for Effie; Joseph and Dinah's bedroom was not only their sleeping room but also their living room and the room in which Joseph taught and played quartets with many different Haifa musicians, professional and amateur. Here, Adi played the horn and Dani the bassoon. When the boys were older and left the room they shared, Joseph transferred his files and office from a tiny pantry off the kitchen into the boys' former room.

This domestic order and stability—with the boys in school and with Dinah a full-time mother for Effie—freed Joseph (not always to the delight of Dinah) for more and more travels. His extensive involvement with international work camps has already been discussed. A related activity was his growing responsibilities in the War Resisters International (WRI). In 1957, he was elected to the International Council of the WRI. While on this council, he attended all the triennial meetings. In 1957, they were held in Roehampton, England; in 1960, Gandhigram, India; in 1963, Stavanger, Norway; in 1966, Rome, Italy; and in 1969, Haverford, Pennsylvania, United States. Though somewhat removed from the central activities of the WRI in London, Joseph diligently tried to keep up with their activities. Reading twelve years' worth of minutes of the Executive Committee of the International Council of the WRI is a mixed experience. While the idealism that created this group remained intact, the group itself has been torn from within. This same

pattern is repeated in almost every group Joseph joined in these years, including the work-camp movement, though it must be said that he was never one to contribute to the groups' tensions. One of the retiring members of the WRI Executive Committee claimed that no one could be an effective peace worker for more than five years because of the frustrations created by an unresponsive world and the subsequent tensions these frustrations produced in the small band of men and women who faced a battle that yielded few victories. A great many men and women gave up the struggle when the world and their expectations did not correspond. Joseph had no illusions about the ethical nature of the world. In this view, he was like Dr. Schweitzer, who in the epilogue to *My Life and Thought* stated,

> I am pessimistic in that I experience in its full weight what we conceive to be the absence of purpose in the course of world happenings. Only at quite rare moments have I felt really glad to be alive. I could not but feel with a sympathy full of regret all the pain that I saw around me, not only that of men but that of the whole creation. From this community of suffering I have never tried to withdraw myself. It seemed to me a matter of course that we should all take our share of the burden of pain which lies upon the world. Even when I was a boy at school it was clear to me that no explanation of the evil in the world could ever satisfy me: all explanations, I felt, ended in sophistries, and at bottom had no other object than to make it possible for me to share in the misery around them, with less keen feelings. That a thinker like Leibnitz could reach the miserable conclusion that though this world is, indeed, not good, it is the best that was possible, I have never been able to understand.

Schweitzer still did not give up the struggle. It is a tribute to Joseph's quiet heroism that he, too, though people have called him a dreamer, harbors no illusions about the world. Like Schweitzer, he accepts that the world is not what we would dream it to be, yet he does not give up in his efforts to change it. His efforts for peace did not die out after five years but have

been sustained for more than fifty. He knows that peace is not the result of a single action, which is why he avoids most demonstrations like those called for by *Shalom Achshav* (Peace Now) in Israel. Instead, he has settled in for the campaign.

In this campaign, lonely as it has been for him, he has been sustained by many of those he has met in the WRI. Three of the most important of these men have been Abbé Pierre, the resourceful creator of the idea of the working priest; Vinova Bhave, the disciple of Gandhi; and Danilo Dolci, the man who brought dignity back to the peasants of Sicily. All three labored for peace in their attempts to create a practical idealism, working on everyday problems like housing for the homeless, land distribution for the poor, or land reclamation for farmers.

The trips connected with Joseph's work for the WRI have also appealed to his sense of adventure and love of sight-seeing. He sees the world with all the wonder of a child and remembers what he sees in Baedeker-like detail. He crisscrossed Europe twice on his motor scooter, once with Adi and once in 1959 with both Dinah and Dani. When Joseph first bought his scooter in 1952, there were only three people in Haifa who owned them. For thirty years, he was linked in many people's minds with his scooter, and his adventures through torrential rains in Switzerland and England still bring smiles at family gatherings. He proudly boasts of having traveled four thousand kilometers in Europe one summer with only one map-reading mistake.

One part of his sons' European experience was a visit to Dr. Schweitzer's home in Gunsbach, France, tucked into the foothills of the Vosges Mountains. A visit to Gunsbach today reveals great similarities between the Schweitzer and Abileah homes. Not only are there letters from thousands of correspondents in neatly ordered files, but one is also struck by the similar commitment to living simply. Joseph's and Schweitzer's luggage are almost interchangeable, and Schweitzer's habit of carrying money in a plain cotton bag is similar to Joseph's bag of scraps of bread, which he saves from one meal and consumes at the next. In each home, the most spartan of furnishings

Joseph, Dinah, Adi, and Dani on the family scooter.

contains one group of items on which no expense is spared—musical instruments. So important are musical instruments to Joseph that, while he never gave his sons pocket money for candy or other treats, he would go fourth-class deck passage to Europe to buy the right instrument for them, or he would go without luxuries to provide them with the best instruction. Schweitzer would use packing crates as writing tables, but his organ, lead lined to prevent jungle rot, was carefully boxed and lovingly transported to Lambaréné. It might be said that, for each man, music was never seen as a luxury but as the necessary foundation on which all social action and concern for peace was based.

Many of the pacifists in the WRI were also musicians, and Joseph's later friendship with Yehudi Menuhin brought together

two musicians who from their music learned to dream of a world suffused with harmony. Each man acknowledges the dream and challenges those who claim that dreams can never be realized. Once, when Menuhin was defending Joseph against charges of being a dreamer, he pointed out that Israel itself was created by those persons the world regarded as ineffectual dreamers. If their dreams could one day have substance, was there not a chance for his?

Joseph's dream in the power of the human heart was put to the test during his WRI visit to India in 1960. After completing an especially difficult work camp in the village of Sha'ab, Israel, where the workers were not able to handle the strains of very hard physical labor and the villagers themselves failed to enter into the work, Joseph was a bit discouraged. He remembers having to carry away heavy poles and support scaffolding used for roofing a community center, while people in the village looked on. After this experience he was anxious to go to India, though he knew that the 120 dollars of foreign currency he could take outside Israel would make it difficult for him to travel for a whole month. To economize, he went third class on Indian trains. Traveling third class on Indian trains is an experience virtually unknown to foreigners, yet he traveled this way for eight days and covered eight thousand kilometers. He was awestruck by the unbelievably crowded conditions on the trains. Getting a seat was impossible. Eight to ten men would be found standing together in the men's toilet. He sat on his suitcase in the corridor much of the time. The people he met on the train were also those whom most foreigners successfully avoid. Huddled together were to be found the poor of India, their faces marked by generations of hunger; their bodies, scarred by skin diseases, leprosy and other ailments, were barely covered and foul smelling. And yet Joseph drew strength from being with them. To his incredulous listeners, he has explained that he survived this trip by looking into the eyes of these destitute Indians. There he found the "divine sparkle," their souls shining through their dark pupils as bright as the soul shining in the eyes of the priest in *Les Misérables*. Their eyes made

him forget all his discomfort as he came to realize the definitive difference between the world of the spirit and the world of the flesh. Though he was overwhelmed at the sight of the Taj Mahal, nothing matched the beauty of the light in those eyes.

A memory from this time that ranks next in importance was Joseph's walk with Vinova Bhave. Bhave, it will be remembered, walked all over India, asking for the rich to redistribute their lands among the poor. Disciples and foreigners drawn to this nonviolent approach to social change would join him for portions of these walks. After inquiring where he could be found, Joseph joined Bhave at Bihar. He was content to fade into the crowd of about two hundred but was surprised to be summoned by one of Bhave's assistants. "The master [*acharia*] would like to talk to the man from Israel." Joseph joined Bhave at the head of the procession, and as was Bhave's custom, he took Joseph's hand and held it as they walked. Bhave asked him many questions for more than two hours, though he revealed that he had little knowledge of the complexities of the Middle East situation. For example, at one point he said, "Why can't you settle your differences peacefully?" As they approached a village, children brought out flowers to welcome the *acharia*. Bhave asked Joseph to remain with him, but Joseph asked to be allowed to go back into the crowd, saying that the honor was for Bhave, not him. As he has done so often, Joseph left center stage to walk just as happily with the masses in the audience.

He performed much the same role at the WRI Triennial Meeting at Gandhigram, India. There, although he was a member of the executive committee, he worked as a translator, using both his considerable language skills and his ability to communicate with all sorts of people. He spent much of his time helping others learn what was going on during the proceedings. Still, he found time to spend with other delegates, and it was here that he began his friendship with Danilo Dolci. To find out more about Dolci's work, he made a special trip to visit him in Sicily in 1961, when the International Council of the WRI met in executive session there.

It is hard to find two men so physically dissimilar yet so alike in spirit. Joseph is about five feet, eight inches tall and has always been very slight. Dolci is a comparative giant, well over six feet tall and weighing close to 250 pounds. One of the great untaken photographs of all time is that of Dolci perched on the back of Joseph's scooter in 1962, driving from Ben-Gurion airport to Tel Aviv, where visits had been arranged for him with Israeli experts on soil conservation and reclamation. Dolci appealed to Joseph immediately because Dolci was a man who would not let an idea remain a dream. Setting himself up in Sicily, Dolci probed the roots of corruption and Mafia dominance. After generations of neglect by absentee landowners anxious for a quick return, the land had lost its sustaining power. Dolci had to win over the peasants by making them believe both in themselves and in the land's ability to sustain them. He created a dam, and with the water he conserved, he began irrigating fields that were fertile but neglected and unproductive. The fields represented the state of the peasants themselves. Dolci worked patiently and hard convincing the peasants that they had within them both intelligence and a grasp of the truth and that these needed only nourishment to spring to life. Dolci called his educational philosophy a sort of midwifery—helping to bring to birth the life that each person, however ignorant she or he might be of it, contained within. When the peasants believed this, they would be freed from the power of the Mafia. This shared belief in the innate power of the human spirit established a great bond between Joseph and Dolci, as did their desire to find a practical means for giving it expression. When Abraham Lotan, an Israeli soil expert, arrived in Sicily to spend his three-week vacation helping Dolci, he was greeted in the following fashion: "You are three times welcome—first as my guest; second because you come from Israel to help Sicily; and third because you are the friend of Abileah." Dolci's success in giving the people of Sicily courage to face the Mafia, when everyone else in the world thought the Mafia's grip was so strong that no one could dare break the code of silence and speak out against it, gave Joseph courage to continue his work in Israel,

where he confronted the same sort of skepticism that Arab-Jewish enmity could ever be overcome and a common community be established.

Joseph had received similar inspiration from Abbé Pierre, whom he met in 1953. Abbé Pierre had struggled for the homeless who had to sleep beneath the bridges of Paris. He achieved amnesty for them from petty offenses and found places for them to live, yet he was threatened with excommunication from his order because he had left the walls of the monastery. In a similar fashion, Danilo Dolci and Joseph himself had been threatened for daring to challenge the mores of their own, more secular, society. Yet the pope himself said that, while Pierre had transgressed the rules of his order, he had remained true to the religion that lay behind that order. Many in Israel regarded Joseph as disloyal to the security of the state, but he hoped one day to be judged as one who, despite attack and ridicule, remained true to the ideals that gave justification for that state's existence. "A traitor," he claimed, "is one who is disloyal to his ideals."

Joseph's efforts in the WRI were not limited to attending international conferences. Indeed they are characterized by his careful records as secretary of the Israeli branch and by his patient work with young conscientious objectors who sought the WRI's support and advice. Connected with this work was his participation in the League for Human and Civil Rights (LHCR), which he joined in 1950. Though his most notable work with the league took place in 1970 and will be discussed later, between 1950 and 1967 he went wherever he was needed in Israel. One such trip, to Migdal Gad, has been discussed. He was also an active participant in the Karmiel affair of 1964. Karmiel is a large development town that was constructed in the Galilee for new Jewish immigrants, largely coming from Muslim countries. While Joseph had always been in favor of enlarging the absorptive capacity of the country and was not in principle against the idea of development towns, he was not in favor of confiscating Arab land to build these centers. He accepted the Balfour Declaration's desire for creating a home for the Jews

in Palestine, but he also accepted the often-forgotten second part of that declaration, which protected the civil rights of the non-Jewish inhabitants. It was clear that Karmiel might easily have been built one or two kilometers away from the chosen site and would not have then involved expropriation of land belonging to nearby Arab villages. But it was also clear to Joseph and others that the choice of that particular site was a deliberate attempt to drive a wedge between Jews and Arab villagers and to encroach on the livelihood of the Arab towns by constructing the town on olive groves and on a productive stone quarry. When a small group of protesters began a protest walk from 'Akko (Acre) to Karmiel, they were set upon and severely beaten. Joseph had started off with the group but had left it to give a music lesson just before the arrest took place. He later rejoined them, bringing them replacements for their banners and signs that had been ripped savagely from them outside 'Akko. The young leader of that group, Uri Davis, was placed in jail. Joseph then joined four hundred other artists and public figures in a demonstration against the arrest and against the construction of the town. They deliberately sought arrest, but their numbers were too great to be rounded up for the small prison available. While they were not successful in stopping construction, they achieved some success in alerting Israeli public opinion to the long-term dangers of land expropriation. How could these new immigrants hope to live in peace with their neighbors when the houses they built rested on terraces that had been tilled for generations by the Arab inhabitants? The problem of Karmiel was the problem of Israel, and it was one Joseph had been struggling with his whole life.

During the period of 1963–66, Joseph worked with others to abolish the reign of military law in the Arab towns within Israel. Because the Arabs were under military law, they lacked fundamental civil rights guaranteed to every other Israeli citizen. These rights included freedom of assembly, of movement, and so on. In 1966, military law was lifted. Joseph joined less successful fights against other laws he found discriminatory, such as the Law of Citizenship (1952) and the Absentee Prop-

erty Law (1950). As we have seen, the latter law created people like those he had found at the Sha'ab work camp in 1960. It was not simply that the village had not shared in the work. More than two-thirds of the village did not really feel that Sha'ab was their home. This group were present absentees, Bedouin who had been displaced from the Huleh area north of the Sea of Galilee or groups from other villages who had left their homes in 1948 but had stayed within the 1948 borders of the state. Sha'ab had been a village of two thousand before the war, and only 10 percent of the original inhabitants had stayed. The town of six hundred that Joseph worked for in 1960 was more a group living in what they hoped were temporary quarters than a village with its own pride in its identity. It is not difficult to see why it was an uphill struggle to get them to participate in the completion of a road that would link them to the main road and thus to other villages and towns.

The path to reconciliation was a rocky one during this period. People have difficulty remembering the small forward steps taken when incidents like the massacre at Kfar Qasim take place. Kfar Qasim was especially painful because it so easily could have been avoided. Kfar Qasim is a small Arab-Israeli town near the green line, a line drawn in 1949 to separate Israel from the land controlled by Jordan. In the early days of the Suez War of 1956, Israelis were uneasy about the loyalties of their own Arab population and declared a state of emergency in Arab areas. This declaration led to the imposition of a strict curfew in Arab border villages. The curfew imposed stated that, between five in the afternoon and six in the morning, all the inhabitants had to be in their homes or else they would be shot. Having decided on the curfew, it took some time for word of it to get to the many villages. The *mukhtar* (head man) in Kfar Qasim was informed of the five o'clock curfew just thirty minutes before it was to go into effect. He informed the authorities that more than four hundred villagers were at work in the fields, that they were ignorant that such a curfew had been imposed. They assured him that those working would be permitted to return in safety, but when they came back to the village,

forty-nine were taken off their bicycles, trucks, or carts and shot at close range between the hours of five and six that afternoon. Orders were then given to stop the shooting. To those who had been struggling for Arab-Jewish reconciliation, this massacre was a severe setback, but almost equally depressing was that, within three years, all those found guilty had been pardoned, and the man who initiated the order to shoot everyone not in his or her home at five in the afternoon, Brigadier Shadnir, was found guilty of "a technical error" and fined one pound. The one glimmer of light to be seen in the incident was that it had been Israelis who forced the news of the massacre into the open, thus bringing about the trial of those who otherwise might not even have been prosecuted.

The period 1950–67, which saw Joseph's emergence as a pacifist dedicated to concrete action in solidarity with such groups as the WRI, the SCI, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights (ILHCR), also reveals that Joseph was thinking of himself more and more as a world citizen. In 1961, he joined Dr. Hugh Schonfield's Mondcivitan Republic, a group promoting world citizenship, and he has been an important Middle Eastern link with them since that time. He also decided to learn Esperanto, a world language, and joined several groups and societies promoting its use. Finally, he is proud of his membership and work in the International Vegetarian Society. It is hard to believe that he found time for all these activities and also for his work with the conservatory and with the orchestra. His energies were, however, enormous, and the strength he drew from his music always seemed to give him the ability to hold his life together.

Before ending this chapter, it is important to turn to his family. The years 1950 through 1967 were those in which his children grew to become adults, his own parents died, and his own marriage held together after the crisis in 1947. A simple description of the family's life is impossible, yet some idea of the complicated relationships (and in this respect, Joseph's family is no different from any other family) is important.

Two things are often true for peacemakers who are also par-

ents. First, persons who are successful as public peacemakers are often less so within the structure of the family itself, despite their own recognition that true peacemaking should begin at home. Erik H. Erikson's disturbing study of Gandhi (*Gandhi's Truth*, 1969) reveals a man who was successful as a proponent of nonviolence on the public front but who was guilty of severe psychological violence with his own family. Erikson traces this to Gandhi's belief that he alone possessed the truth, and perhaps without knowing it, he imposed his idea of truth on those near to him without paying full respect to the truth that they might possess in themselves, thereby committing an action of psychological violence against the integrity of people for whom he genuinely cared.

Second, because relations between parents and children are extremely complex and at times irrational, we often interact with our children in ways we vowed we never would after our experiences with our own parents. Within the family, we often face our most difficult task in reconciling our intentions with our deeds. For peacemakers in particular, it seems to be difficult to make the move from public to private success. They are often like physicians who, after being treated in their clinics and hospitals as gods, come home to families wanting them to be merely fathers or mothers, not wanting to be healed but only to be loved. It is indeed more ambitious to be an ordinary, whole, human being than to be a saint, as Camus pointed out in *The Plague*. Joseph's human and fallible qualities, which he shares with numerous other husbands and fathers, are revealed in his interactions with his wife and children.

After 1950 and especially after the move to 55A Rehov Hillel in 1957, Joseph's extended family life went more smoothly. After being reconciled at the 1944 Passover seder with his father, he continued on good terms with him until Ephraim's death in 1953. In 1950, much to his father's delight, Joseph became a Freemason, and they worked together to use the lodge as a place where barriers of religion and race could be dismantled. Ephraim had taken a partner in the music business, Arthur Sawady, but Joseph continued to do the bookkeeping, and after

his father's death, worked with his brothers on the board of directors of the firm. He found at times that he had to function as a peacemaker when arguments about the business came up, but generally the brothers worked well together, even when they had to split up the fifty-seven pianos they inherited. Joseph's mother continued to live in the flat above the music store until her death in 1960 and had a warm relationship with Joseph and her grandchildren. Dinah's mother died in 1957, and at her grave, Joseph acknowledged that he had not been easy to live with, but he expressed great appreciation for all she had done for him and his family during the sixteen years they lived together.

Joseph had done his best to fulfill Dinah's request for a happy home, though he had trouble convincing her that all his trips abroad were necessary. He tried to tell her that he spent no more time away from his family than other Israeli men who had to perform reserve duty every year, but she remained skeptical and often complained that he should include the family in more of his travels. At the same time, she continued to worry a great deal about their financial security, even when he explained that one of the reasons he made so many solitary trips abroad was that there was no money for more than one of them to go. These trips abroad did seem to have some adverse effects on the children as they were growing up. It may have been true that his own father's absence in the formative years of 1923–26 did not have a bad effect on Joseph, but Adi, in particular, suffered much from his father's absences from home and, for that reason, treasured the times (like 1957 in Europe and the family work camps in Israel) when he could be with his father.

As a child, Joseph had watched with discomfort as his father's explosive temper often erupted within the family, usually to be absorbed by his mother, who most often suffered in silence. Not unlike Gandhi, perhaps, Ephraim Abileah had been a man of peace who ruled his house with an iron will. While Joseph's manner was neither explosive nor violent, he did seem to inherit from his father a tendency to make unilateral, nondiscussable decisions for the whole family. The boys often felt they were hearing lectures not being invited into conversations

where their views might be respected. Joseph freely admits deciding what was best for his children while they were growing up, but he is perhaps unaware of how that affected them.

For example, Joseph decided that neither of his boys should have military training while in school, which meant that the boys would be excused during certain periods of the day when military exercises took place. But it also meant that they would not go to summer camps with their friends, since all the camps involved some sort of military training. The Leo Baeck School, where Adi was enrolled, complied with Joseph's request, but Dani's school, a vocational training center, refused. Adi felt singled out during this time, and it was doubly hard on him because nonparticipation in military training was not something he freely chose to do. This lack of choice probably accounts for why Adi had no compunction about joining the army when he became eighteen. Likewise, neither Dani nor Effie chose Joseph's path of conscientious objection, which was a disappointment to him. He seemed particularly upset with Adi's decision. During Adi's first months in the army, Joseph would not even read the letters he sent home. Joseph told Dinah, who begged him to read them, that the letters had been screened by a military censor and hence would not be truthful accounts of army life, but this reason thinly masks the disappointment he felt.

Dinah did not disapprove of her children's military service, though she was constantly concerned for their safety. She strove to mediate between her children and their father, just as Joseph's own mother had done, and in the end, family harmony was established. One of the components of this harmony was music. Adi was a skilled horn player and once played the horn solo in Joseph's beloved Sixth Symphony by Beethoven. Dani was a bassoonist, who still plays in a wind chamber group and at times plays with the Haifa Symphony Orchestra.

The children had parted company with their father's politics and pacifist philosophy by 1967, but they respected his commitment to his ideals and were beginning to understand the sacrifices he was willing to make for them. Nevertheless, it had not always been easy for them to reach that understanding

while they were still children and wanted their father to spend more time with them and less with his peace work.

When Dr. Magnes in 1939 talked of peacemaking between Jews and Arabs as a "task worthy of Jews," he was well aware of how difficult this task would be. But neither he nor Joseph felt it was impossible. The years 1949–67 are marked by Joseph's tireless efforts as a peacemaker but often with such activities as work camps, which were far from the public eye. In Uri Davis's *Dissent and Ideology in Israel*, a study of conscientious objectors in Israel from 1948 to 1973, we learn that many pacifists of Joseph's generation are now severely criticized by those on the left, as well as by those who support the military establishment. Davis charges these pacifists with too often making a separate peace with the state, of being passivistic, not pacifistic. This description would be unfair to Joseph's efforts during this period, as we have seen, because he worked for peace in an active manner and in all phases of his life.

At the same time, it is true that he did not fully plunge into the political arena, though plans for a political resolution to the conflict were much on his mind. When the June 1967 War took place, the situations of Arabs and Jews drastically changed. An opportunity was then presented for those who would turn from private to public peacemaking. The opportunity had to be seized, even if it meant a disruption of the fragile stability Joseph had worked so hard to achieve in his private and domestic life. Joseph did not enjoy being thrust into the role of prophet. Still less did he enjoy the many consequences he warned of in 1944 and 1947 that had in fact taken place as a result of partition. But the truths he encountered in 1936 kept their grip on him. Time and time again he had fulfilled Ahad Ha'am's definition of a prophet: "He tells the truth not because he wishes, but because he is forced to do so. It is a trait characteristic of his nature, from which he could not liberate himself, even if he would. The prophet is an extremist. He concentrates his mind and heart upon the idea in which he finds the purpose of life. He would subjugate life to this ideal."

# 6

# Isaiah's Teaching 1967–1972

> Will the Jews here, in their efforts to create a political organism, become devotees of brute force and militarism, as were some of the late Hasmoneans, and will they, like the Edomite Herod become the obedient servants of economic and militaristic imperialism? It is among the possibilities that some day it may become political treason for someone sincerely to repeat in the streets of Jerusalem Isaiah's teaching that swords are to be beaten into ploughshares, and men are to learn war no more.
>
> —Judah Magnes, 1923

LIKE MANY ISRAELIS who were struck by the suddenness and completeness of their nation's victory in the June 1967 War, Joseph was filled with optimism that peace was closer. The dramatic shift in configuration of the map of the Middle East opened up new possibilities for peace, and Joseph felt that his own dream of uniting Jordan with Mandated Palestine had moved one step closer to being realized. Israel found itself with over one million more Arabs within the borders of the new cease-fire. The country was genuinely puzzled about what to do with the West Bank and Gaza and seemed open to discussing a wide range of options. While Joseph saw clearly the danger posed by a heady and victorious nationalism that wanted all the conquered territories, including the Sinai, he felt some hope that his own plan of twenty years might be given a chance. For the first time, he found himself in demand as a speaker. The year 1967 was to be a turning point for him as a public figure.

It was a turning point in other ways as well. The history of his life showed remarkable points of intersection with the history of his country. We have seen how in 1936, at the beginning of the Arab Revolt, he discovered his belief in the power of nonviolence and in the idea of a land that could be holy for both Arab and Jew. Likewise, the assassination of Lord Walter Moyne in 1944 coincided with the birth of his first son. We have seen how these new responsibilities as a father led Joseph to want to see a land where his son could be raised in peace. His frantic activity and the UNSCOP appearance in 1947 were triggered by the birth of his second son, and Effie's birth in 1956 coincided with the Suez War. The 1967 war was immediately followed in August by the sudden death of Joseph's older brother Hans. Although Joseph did not agree with the political views of Hans, his brother's death at the early age of fifty-five inspired Joseph to make a vow that whatever years were left to him would be spent in the pursuit of peace. He made this vow at the graveside of his brother, in a manner reminiscent of the vow Ephraim had made in 1921 at his own father's grave. This graveside pledge had momentous consequences.

Despite his great love of music and despite his being the sole means of support for the family since Dinah's 1957 decision to leave her job, Joseph determined to leave the Haifa Symphony Orchestra and the conservatory and to cut back gradually on his private lessons. Dinah was in a state of panic about how her family would survive, especially when Joseph announced that 1968 would be a sabbatical year for him. After seventeen years of relative stability, the family was, in her opinion, being returned to the chaos and uncertainties of the 1940s.

It was then that Joseph felt what he has termed the "finger of God" on his fortunes. Within a week after having made the pledge to his brother, Joseph received two gifts of substantial amounts of money. The first came from Yehudi Menuhin, who had met Joseph and was so moved by Joseph's peace efforts that he placed a substantial sum at his disposal to use as he saw fit. Almost on the same day that Joseph received the money, he received notice from the lawyer of Fred Steingardt that pro-

ceeds from the sale of a tractor were to be given to Joseph for his peace work.

Fred Steingardt had come to Palestine from Turkey. He was a brilliant engineer who helped lay plans for the National Water Carrier, a major engineering achievement that took waters from the Sea of Galilee and pumped them into the arid regions of the south. Steingardt was also an ardent pacifist, and when the government attempted to force him into the army, he left the country. He left behind some property, including a tractor that was on loan to a *moshav.* After years of not receiving rent for the tractor's use, Steingardt decided to sell it. He instructed his lawyer to give some of the proceeds from the sale to Joseph. Steingardt also made Joseph his agent for supporting his nephew in Israel, on the condition that his nephew adopt a pacifist position with respect to military service. When the nephew, as Joseph's own sons had done, went into the army, his allowance was withdrawn. Steingardt's commitment to his principles later caused him to resign from a prestigious position with the Port Authority in New York: he discovered that some of his fellow engineers were skimming money from an important project by shaving on specifications in the building plans. He felt that weakening the strength of the construction was endangering human lives, and he wanted nothing to do with it.

The gift from this friend who shared his uncompromising attitude towards the truth almost equaled the amount of Menuhin's contribution, and Joseph approached his new peace activity with confidence. He cited these gifts to the doubting Dinah as examples of how they would be taken care of in the years ahead. The first thing he did with some of the money was to rent a truck and collect furniture, clothes, and tools for Palestinians along the green line who had lost their homes and possessions in the June 1967 War. But where should he deliver the goods? He contacted the UN relief team, who advised him to contact their local center in Qalqilya. When the UN official there did not show up for their scheduled interview, Joseph struck up a conversation with a young Palestinian working in the office, who said, "Why bother going through the UN and

their bureaucracy? My village, Habla, is just a few kilometers away and desperately needs help."

The small village of Habla lay almost directly on the border. For security reasons, twenty-two houses in the village were demolished, and others severely damaged soon after the war, in an effort to make it impossible for the villagers to return, since their presence might one day pose a threat to Israel. It seemed as if Habla would be like 390 other Arab villages that were destroyed after the founding of the state of Israel, although this time the village was located in land on the other side of the green line. Habla was like the villages of Amwas, Yalu, and Beit Nuba, which were located near Latrun near the Tel Aviv–Jerusalem road and which in 1967 were totally destroyed and replaced with a park. However, the inhabitants of Habla had no intention of becoming refugees, or even present absentees, and remained in the hills surrounding their village. After a month in the hills, they returned to the ruined village and stayed among the rubble, even though the military denied them permission to repair or rebuild their homes. The military had also denied the villagers permission to go out to find work.

When Joseph reached the village in late 1967, just as winter was setting in, the village was at a low point and desperate. Joseph drove the hired truck, full of goods collected from sympathetic Jewish citizens of Haifa, into the middle of the town square and began to distribute its contents. As might be expected, people began to fight over the few bits of furniture, despite Joseph's pleas for them to be considerate of one another. He told them how people in India had taken land given to Bhave, but when one man arrived too late to get any, another had asked that half his portion be shared with the latecomer since he needed it so badly. But India was not the Palestine of 1967, and the arguments continued. Two men began to fight over a bed, and one raised a rock to hit the other. Joseph interposed and was ready to take the blow. The man did not strike, but Joseph said he would not leave the village until the two men had made peace. Although they agreed to make peace, Joseph left the village with a still-heavy heart, knowing that one truckload of

goods did little to solve the problems of Habla, though it did strengthen the will of the inhabitants to remain in their homes.

Joseph was determined to see the village rebuilt and went to the military governor to get permission to hold an international work camp there. The military governor told him it was against military law for the homes to be rebuilt, and Joseph acknowledged that this law made strategic sense. But Joseph told him that his own purpose was strictly humanitarian and stressed that he regarded it as a duty to help his fellow human beings, especially since the 1967 war had left him with a roof over his own house. Because the governor felt that Joseph was not criticizing him and had acknowledged the strategic need for the law, since Habla was just a few meters from the border and a few kilometers from heavily populated Jewish areas, he could respond more generously to Joseph's humanitarian appeal. He said he could not break the law but that, since the law said that only destroyed houses could not be rebuilt, Joseph could repair the ones that had not been destroyed. Joseph was convinced that once again his thesis about the human heart's ability to respond with goodness was confirmed in the governor's decision, and he rushed back to the village to tell them the news.

When he arrived at the village, however, he saw that they had an even more urgent need for funds to purchase tools and seeds, since without crops and without permission to leave the village to look for work, the village was doomed. He took more of the Menuhin-Steingardt money and bought tools and seeds and then left on a summer 1968 lecture tour of Europe to see if he could raise more money. On his return, he saw that the village, unlike Sha'ab, had taken the situation into its own hands and was helping itself. The military governor had seen that the villagers were not going to leave. Rather than let them starve, he had given permission for 10 percent of them to leave the village to work. Further, he granted the village permission to use the Jordanian pumping station to bring water for their crops. With these concessions, the village was slowly able to reestablish itself.

When Joseph took to the *mukhtar* of the village a check he

had received from the Mennonite Central Committee for his peace work, he was told that, rather than distribute the money, he should give it for the construction of a school for girls in the village. After eight or nine months of petitioning, Joseph got the village permission to build their school. Not only that, but the Israeli government agreed to bear half the cost of its construction.

Jospeh looks upon this incident as an example of what is possible between people of good will who develop a small amount of trust in one another. For example, the day he received permission to go ahead with the school, he telephoned the village *mukhtar,* Abu Hashem, to say that the Mennonite funds were now at his disposal. The *mukhtar's* son was sent to Haifa to get money. Joseph went with him to the bank, counted out the money for him, asked for no receipt, and told him to take it to his father. Later in the year when Joseph visited Habla, Abu Hashem asked what he could do to repay Joseph for all he had done for the village. Joseph mentioned that he was making a trip to Europe that summer but would not have money for the boat fare until he received the honoraria connected with his speaking engagements. Abu Hashem went to his own home, gathered up his money, which he gave to Joseph, and never asked him when or how he would be paid back. "When you treat your enemies like brothers," Joseph asserts, "they become your brothers," which is why he always replies to questions concerning the issue of secure borders for Israel with the words, "the friendship of my neighbor is the only true security border."

From being a witness at Migdal Gad, Joseph had become an active participant at Habla. After seventeen years of fighting for equal civil rights within the state of Israel, he was now ready to launch his greatest project, the uniting of both banks of the Jordan. It was time once again to try to make an impact at the UN, although his faith in that organization was considerably less than total.

In the summer of 1967, while vacationing at the family house on Mount Kena'an, Joseph made the acquaintance of Anwar El-

Khatib. El-Khatib had been the governor of the Jerusalem district, and after the June war, he had been exiled to the city of Safad where he was placed under town arrest. While he had to report three times daily to the police station, El-Khatib's movements in Safad were not otherwise restricted, and after being introduced to Joseph through a letter from Joseph's friend, Wajdi-Farid Tabari, the two often met together in El-Khatib's hotel. They discovered that they had much in common, and as Joseph unfolded his dream to El-Khatib, the latter encouraged him to make a presentation of his ideas to the UN once again. It was with El-Khatib's encouragement and approval that Joseph drew up the following ten-point solution to the conflict:

POINTS FOR A SOLUTION OF THE ARAB-JEWISH PROBLEM

1. Union of both banks of the Jordan (the original mandatory area) under one common government. (*)
2. Central irrigation scheme (Lowdermilk or any other plan) and soil reclamation for immediate settlement of all refugees.
3. Representation in parliament without distinction of national, religious, racial or ethnical affiliation, preferably on personal merit but, if not feasible, in party system.
4. Second house of a religious council in which all monotheistic religious communities are represented to deal with holy places and matters arising in legislation on ethical principles.
5. Another house of specialised scientists in various fields where bills dealing with economics have to be sanctioned before becoming law.
6. The personality of H. M. King Hussein of Jordan to be safeguarded by preserving his title, with powers limited by parliament, or by allowing him to head a list in democratic elections.
7. The sovereignty of the state of Israel and of Jordan being automatically cancelled and the refugee problem settled, the Arab population will demand the neighbouring countries to stop their belligerent attitude and invite any state to enter into federation.

8. After success of the irrigation scheme, steps should be taken to irrigate the Syrian desert with the Euphrates and Tigris. Enjoying prosperity while neighbours are poor is not ethical and not practical in the long run. The same with Egypt, offering our help in building dams. This will avoid interference of far away powers in the region and our obligation to serve their interests when occasion arises.
9. Special emphasis on common education of the next generation, pointing out affinities of semitic languages.
10. Encouragement of tourism with other countries.

Joseph W. Abileah
(55A Hillel Str., Haifa)

Mt. Canaan (Safed), 10,8.1967

(*) After the conversation with Mr. Yofe suggesting a Federation as a first step, this point would read as follows:—"Federation of three states, viz. Jordan, Arab Palestine (West Bank) and Israel with respective capitals in Amman, Nablus and Tel-Aviv, and with Jerusalem as the Federal Capital."

As is clear, these points differ very little from those Joseph had presented to UNSCOP in 1947, but having reformulated them, Joseph was buoyed by the support of such an important political figure as El-Khatib. Six months later, he wrote to King Hussein and asked for his opinion of the ten points. In this January 4 letter, Joseph recounted his visit to Hussein's grandfather back in 1936. The letter closes in the following fashion:

Dear Brother Hussein, may the bitter tears I wept in compassion with the refugees and the warm tears of love and reconciliation which I poured on the manuscript of this letter move your great heart inherited from your forefathers of Mecca and our common father Abraham.

I am enclosing the 10 Points of my plan and a call which I wrote in the year 1947 and which constitutes its spiritual foundation.

The words of Ibrahim Basha at the palace are still ringing in my ears and I pray to God that I may live to say to Your Maj-

esty in my little home at Haifa: "Welcome a hundred thousand times."

I await your encouraging reply and remain,

Your faithful and devoted,
[signed] Joseph W. Abileah

In December 1968, Joseph followed up his earlier letter with the following letter, written in his role as "Special Commissioner of the Mondcivitan Republic for Middle East Mediation."

Joseph W. Abileah
Special Commissioner of the Mondcivitan
Republic for Middle East Mediation
55a Hillel St.—Tel.521794—Haifa
4th of December, 1968

To His Majesty King Hussein,
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
Royal Palace
Amman

Your Royal Majesty,

On the 4th of January, 1968, I have ventured to address a letter to Your Majesty and, in absence of regular mail service to Amman, have sent same by various ways. It eventually became an open letter, as it had been printed abroad and in summary also in the local press.

Assuming that contents of the said letter have come to your knowledge, I now avail myself to the kindness of Dr. Schonfield, President of the Mondcivitan Republic (Commonwealth of World Citizens) of which I am also a member, who offered to personally transmit another letter to Your Majesty.

Since January I have been active in propagating the idea of a Confederation of Jordan, Arab Palestine (West Bank) and Israel, with a federal capital in the Old City of Jerusalem. This I have done within the country, amongst Arabs and Jews, and by a lecture-tour in European countries. Being a musician by profession, I have taken a sabbatical year in order to be able to de-

vote my whole time to the implementation of the project. Here are some points which emerged from numerous discussions in Israel, in the West Bank and abroad and which I wish to submit to Your Majesty's consideration:

1) The federal government should deal for the time being, only with foreign policy and economic integration.
2) The economic integration will enable us to solve the refugee problem almost without the help of foreign nations.
3) The help of the UNO is required for an immediate irrigation system in the Syrian desert with the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris, in order to put irrigated land at the disposal of Iraqi and Syrian soldiers, so that they can leave your country and return to their families.
4) The pressure put on your country by the Egyptian government can be lessened by a scheme of economic recovery in which we will share and which will enable the Egyptians to shake off their obligations towards the Russians.
5) A religious council, which will form a second house in the federal parliament, should be composed of representatives of all faiths and religious communities in the area. The ethic principles contained in the code of each religion which have so many points in common, will eventually form a basis for a constitution.
6) The Federation should be open for any other country in the Middle East to join and is formed with a view to create a United States of the M.E. which, though welcoming trade with other countries, will be able to refuse serving political ends of the power blocks.

These constructive proposals have been submitted to many groups, have appeared in the press and were broadcast over the Israeli Radio. They have met no opposition and many members of Your Majesty's government living in the West Bank have personally given their full agreement. In my representations to the Prime Minister's and Israeli Foreign Office I have received "green light" for action and I have the feeling that in a debate it will be accepted in the Kneseth.

The question of the many doubters whom I encounter is always: Where is the other side? This is the reason why I am applying today to Your Majesty and beseech you to give serious consideration to this exceptional opportunity. Please help me

in breaking the ice, and brotherly love will warm the waters underneath. We all together, repentant sons of Abraham, will fulfill our mission in giving an example to humanity and create a beginning for a wave which will bring about world federation and world peace. Your Majesty's favourable reply will be a great encouragement and set a possibility for me and my co-workers to form the necessary public opinion in Israel and abroad which will lead to success.

I remain, Royal Majesty, respectfully

Your devoted and grateful
[signed] Joseph W. Abileah

It is a good thing that Joseph did not wait for the king to reply before continuing with his own activities because, more than twenty years later, he still has not received an answer. In the letter of January 4 he proposed a trip to Dr. Gunnar Jarring in Cyprus, and after his work with Habla had been completed, this trip took place.

Dr. Jarring had been proposed by the United Nations as a mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and for almost two years, he shuttled back and forth from country to country looking for a solution to the new problems created in the aftermath of the June 1967 War. As he stated in his letter to Hussein, Joseph decided to take his plan directly to Jarring's headquarters rather than work through intermediaries. Dinah was delighted when he suggested that she and Effie accompany him for a small holiday. Before he left for Cyprus in the spring, he spent time reflecting on his past life and took up again his projected autobiography, "My Faith in the Human Heart," which unfortunately had to be set aside in the flurry of activity created by his determination to work for a political solution to the Arab-Jewish problem. He realized that Israel was sensitive to world opinion and perhaps would take ideas from abroad more seriously than those proposed by some of its own citizens, so he decided to try to get support for his ideas there. He began the lecture tours, which were to gain him worldwide attention, with 1968 visits to Switzerland and Germany, immediately following the spring visit to Cyprus.

One would have to say that the visits to Europe were more successful than the one to Dr. Jarring. While he was treated cordially when he showed up at the UN's door in Nicosia, Cyprus, he was also told that no private individuals could see Dr. Jarring. Indeed, only those officially appointed by their governments could meet with him. Some of Jarring's assistants met with Joseph and took careful notes on his plans. When Joseph took a look at the bureaucratic machinery in place, he despaired of his ideas ever filtering through to Jarring himself. Moreover, this man who shared Schweitzer's belief in material simplicity was repelled by the lush arrangements for the UN staff and with how they seemed more concerned with having the best hotel accommodations in Nicosia than they were with the task confronting them. The contrast between the two men of Habla, who struggled over a used bed, and the UN diplomats, who each had a private limousine and chauffeur, offended Joseph, but it also showed him what he would be up against once he dared to take his ideas into the public arena. Joseph might have wasted precious personal funds on his trip to Cyprus, but this waste did not begin to compare with the amount wasted by Jarring's fruitless mission.

The encouragement Joseph felt in Europe, as a result of his forty speaking engagements, caused him to plan an even larger lecture tour for the following year in Europe and America. People seeking solutions for what appeared to be an intractable dilemma were impressed by his simple and logical approach, the strength of his own convictions, and his way of remaining optimistic about what could be achieved. Viewing a person who so obviously believed in the oneness of the human community appeared to make his audiences sense that peace and reconciliation in the Middle East might one day be possible. Excerpts from some of the press reviews of his speaking tour of 1969 give a good indication of the effect he produced.

KUNSELSAU: 'Israel and the problems of the Middle East' are treated very often in the mass-media but there is seldom an opportunity to hear on these matters an objective picture, free from

emotions. A few days ago, Joseph W. Abileah, member of the War Resisters International Int. Council and Israeli citizen gave us such a description at a short visit in Kunselsau. . . . At this junction, the discussion necessarily turned to his basic world-view which is non-violence. Abileah, who has the title of "Mediator of the Commonwealth of World Citizens" considers his task to bring the message to people that no problem of our time can be solved with violence. In his conversation with Arab refugees, who, in the fatalism of their faith, accept everything as predestined by fate, he said the following: "War is not an unavoidable natural phenomenon. It is made by man and man has the mental power to prevent it if he wants to." His challenge to mankind is again and again not to preach love to fellowmen but to practice it daily. His motto is: In order to prevent violence, we must awake the good sparkle which exists permanently in every human being.

J. W. Abileah tries hard in travelling all over the world to find adherers for his idea. Now he is again on a lecture tour which brings him through Germany, Holland and England to the USA. On his journeys he makes contacts in order to obtain financial support for his plans. He shows his principles in practice by small services, as the reconstruction of an Arab village destroyed during the war.

He is not in agreement with the deeds of his government and hopes to induce the leaders to a new policy by intensive work at grass-roots level within the population.

In conclusion, one must say that Jos. W. Abileah devotes all his powers to promote peace in the world. Some may admire him and many smile at him—as a Utopist. However, his leading principle to devote his forces and mental power to reconstruction and reconciliation should be preferred to serving destruction of man through man.

—*Hohenlocher Zeitung,* July 12, 1969

Abileah, a convinced and convincing disciple of nonviolence, is proposing a federation plan for Israel, Jordan, and a still-to-be-formed Arab state for the West Bank of the Jordan.

Paraphrasing a Quaker aphorism, Abileah says, "Many good things have not been done in the world because people thought there was not time enough."

Many people feel that the plan to reconcile the Jews and the


Joseph lecturing the War Resisters International.

Arabs in the Middle East is too idealistic and will take too much time to accomplish. So military solutions are followed.

But this has been going on for forty years, observes Abileah, because most people feel there is not enough time. Efforts for reconciliation must begin now.

—*The Mennonite*, August 15, 1969

On the local Israeli level he has been propagating his ideas through the press, radio, public interviews, and lectures. He is frequently called on to participate in symposiums and discussions. He has made numerous lecture tours through Europe, England and North America.

"I cannot say that public opinion has been changed," Abileah

says, "but at least a public discussion is taking place. Arabs on the West Bank are still reluctant to join, lacking the conviction of nonviolence and fearing pressure from their surroundings. However, a recent five-day inquiry in towns and villages of the West Bank revealed full consent and even enthusiasm for a solution according to the principles I have outlined."

—*Lancaster Independent Press*, August 16, 1969

The lecture tour to the United States enabled Joseph to attend two Quaker conferences as well as the War Resisters International (WRI) triennial conference in Haverford, Pennsylvania. The first of these Quaker conferences was held at Grindstone Island, on the St. Lawrence River. This was to be an Institute on Nonviolence to which Joseph, accompanied by Dinah and Effie, had been invited as a resource person. Although the location was lovely and the chance for recreation and good family time was much appreciated, Joseph was disappointed with the conference as a whole. It was his first encounter with peace researchers, and as we might expect, he found their theoretical approach to nonviolence far too abstract for his tastes. Many of the participants had never really practiced nonviolence, instead they argued in a lofty manner about its merits and shortcomings. When he wrote a report to the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), who had sponsored him at Grindstone Island, he gently criticized the academic approach the institute took, saying, "Scholars used statistics, diagrams, and other scientific devices to explain theories, tactics, and systems to follow in nonviolent group action. I wonder if this branch of science will not develop to end in scientific research like philosophy and theology, detached from everyday life. It must remain the concern of the man in the street."

Joseph's approach was not so much anti-intellectual as it was pragmatic. He, like Gandhi, knew the urgency of the situation in his country. In 1969, with the chance for a permanent and genuine peace slipping through the hands of recalcitrant Israeli and Arab governments, it was difficult to get too excited about complex theories and diagrams. Joseph's approach, directed to-

ward what was possible for the man or woman of the street to do or understand, ran the risk of appearing simplistic. As Joseph himself acknowledges, it is difficult to be simple without sounding simplistic. Yet the simple truths are the most complex. Reducing complex issues to their basic components is one of Joseph's gifts, though it has been one that has often been misperceived and undervalued.

What was not misperceived or undervalued by audiences who heard him on this and subsequent lecture tours was that he was a man who narrowed the gap between his words and his actions. As he calmed down often-hostile audiences, as he did a group of Arabs and Palestinians at Columbia University in 1969, one could sense that nonviolence was truly a way of life for him. He not only believed in harmony but was able to produce it.

When a lecturer at an AFSC family camp in Colorado later in the summer of 1969 failed to show up, Joseph gave an impromptu talk on the connection between aesthetics and ethics. Using Bach and Beethoven as his examples, he stressed the idea that music was made more deeply meaningful by the worldviews of the composers, and he reflected that the creation of musical harmony was a way of restoring the dominance of love in the world. He told his audience that, while he loved Bach, he preferred Beethoven because the latter's music came more seriously to grips with the notion of evil in the world and yet, in the end, was able to assert the supremacy of love. Joseph might well have been talking about his own music and life. That he was able to project his own music, his own harmony, made skeptics take his viewpoints more seriously, and even those who rejected his idea as utopian had respect for the passion and obvious sincerity with which he put these ideas forward. Even to seasoned peace workers, it must have been thrilling to hear someone who believed there was a dynamic connection between beauty and peace.

At the WRI conference at Haverford, Joseph declined to accept a fifth term on the council. He felt that it was time for younger people like his nominee, Uri Davis, to be involved in

the central committee, but he also felt that he needed to cut down on his involvement with any group whose main purpose was not Middle East peace. Just as he had done with the SCI and other groups in the past, he gave up leadership positions but continued to support local activities in any way he could.

Having now tried out his ideas on a wide variety of audiences at home and abroad, Joseph was determined to found a society to promote his ideas and to work for their implementation. In 1970, the groundwork was laid for what in 1971 was to become the Society for Middle East Confederation. Joseph cut back even further on his concert and teaching activities, and Dinah, who had always had to run an economical household, was asked to be even more creative with the meager funds now placed at her disposal. Joseph continued to be absent from home, gathering support for his ideas throughout the country and in the Occupied Territories. Some of the initial 1967 interest among the Israeli population was diminishing as occupation became more and more accepted, and the status quo appeared to be stable. As the occupation hardened, so did the treatment of those occupied. Joseph's plans for the confederation were postponed for a while in 1970, when he was asked by the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights (ILHCR) to represent them at the special hearing of the United Nations, set up to examine alleged Israeli violations of human rights in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza.

On December 19, 1968, the United Nations General Assembly, through Resolution 2443 [XXIII], established the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories. The actual appointment of the members of this committee did not take place until September 12, 1969, when Ceylon, Somalia, and Yugoslavia were asked to send representatives to the committee. Part of the reason for this delay was the death of Dr. Emilio Arenales, the president of the twenty-third session of the UN General Assembly; but part also was caused by the delay tactics of those who did not want to see the committee created in the first place. On January 6, 1970, Israel replied to

the request to cooperate with the committee first by referring to its original rejection of Resolution 2443, then by objecting to the way the process was taken over by the secretary general, and finally by protesting the composition of the committee itself, which included one state, Somalia, that refused to recognize the state of Israel, another, Yugoslavia, that broke off diplomatic ties with Israel after the June 1967 War, and a third, Ceylon, that Israel accused of "generally" voting in favor of Arab resolutions at the UN.

The committee thus worked under the cloud of Israeli allegations of bias and of Israeli determination not to cooperate in any way with a committee it feared had already prejudged the outcome of its hearings. Israel has always believed that UN resolutions have been extremely one-sided, and Israeli hostility to the idea of the hearings made it particularly difficult for Israeli peace and civil rights groups to think about submitting evidence, either as individuals or as organizations. Nevertheless, after a great deal of internal debate, the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights responded to the UN's invitation to submit evidence and on April 24, 1970, sent a memorandum to the committee. They were then invited to appear in person during the June 10 to June 15 hearings at the UN headquarters in New York City.

How it happened that Joseph represented the league in New York is an interesting story, surprising in one way because he had not been involved in drafting the April memorandum nor even in the league's recent activity. The league itself, which had suspended its work for three years after the June 1967 War, had recently been revived under the controversial but dynamic joint leadership of Israel Shahak and Uri Davis. The pressures, on these two men in particular and on the league in general, *not* to appear were immense. The debate within the league itself was made public on May 7, 1970, in an article in the influential *Ha'Aretz* paper, which showed that much of the league's membership was against the direction Shahak was taking them.

One gathers that it was out of a desire to have someone represent the league who was not connected with the infighting

or connected with any political party that Shahak and Davis turned to Joseph, a man whose integrity would not be questioned. The first problem to be confronted was that Joseph felt uncomfortable with the April 24 memorandum, which was largely based on newspaper evidence as was the later, fuller June 8 memorandum that he eventually took with him to New York. Joseph informed Shahak and Davis that he would testify about human rights abuses, but he would do it only on the basis of what he himself saw and knew. His lifelong distrust of the news media made him skeptical about any evidence based upon newspapers, and his unwillingness to compromise with truth made him hesitant about committing himself to evidence presented by those he did not know. As he told Davis, "The press is never a serious matter in any country. You can never take a press report as evidence." Finally, his lack of recent active participation in the league itself made him uncomfortable about being its representative. When Shahak and Davis agreed to let him speak as an individual as well as their representative, he agreed to go, though it left him with less than a month in which to gather his own evidence.

Joseph's reluctance to represent the league should not be interpreted to mean that he was in any way skeptical about alleged abuses. He knew that human rights were being violated in Israel and in the Occupied Territories. In 1968, his had been the first signature affixed to a public petition calling for an end to these abuses. The strong tone it adopted shows how serious those who signed it thought the situation was.

*End the Violations of Human Rights in Israel and the Administered Territories*

The papers have published details concerning events taking place in Israel and the occupied territories; orders of confinement, limitation of travel and arrests without trial have been issued recently against Israeli citizens, Arabs and Jews.

Collective punishments of curfew and blowing up houses in towns and villages in the occupied territories continue at a disquieting rate. Families of workers and peasants, children, women

and aged are left without shelter and without means of subsistence. The stream of refugees and escapees from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank continues incessantly. The number of Arabs expelled from the West Bank by order of the Israeli Military regime is increasing. In a petition of protest published in the West Bank it is noted that this policy contradicts international norms (and violates) the fundamental rights of a resident to live on his land and in his home. The expulsion of a resident against his expressed wish and on political grounds brings to mind the days of the British colonial regime.

Where does this policy lead to other than an abyss of hostility? These acts will strengthen the resistance and rebellion movement, will increase the casualties of both parties and will lead to the eruption of another war. And who knows who will be its victims? The domination of one people over another will of necessity lead to moral degeneration and to the undermining of democracy in the ruling people as well. A people oppressing another must end in losing its own freedom and the freedom of its citizens.

Jew! Remember the righteous among the nations who stood at our side in times of disaster. When disaster meets a neighbouring people—will you stand aside and remain silent?

*Raise your voice and act against violations of human rights!*

This petition had received wide circulation in Israel and abroad. When *Pravda* published it, the petition became known as the *Pravda* Letter, a description intended to discredit it in Israel and in the West. The USSR's role in the 1967 war had created a strong anti-Soviet bias in Israel, and rather than deal with the substance of the letter, people tended to pass it off as the work of communists and to regard those who signed it as traitors. Lines were being drawn in Israel, and those seeking reconciliation ran a great risk of being thought disloyal to the state. Because Joseph's name headed the alphabetically arranged list of signatures, he perhaps received more notoriety than others who signed the letter, who included some of his old friends like Meir Rubinstein, Yeshayahu Toma Shik, Uri Davis, and Edith Wolff.

Threats were made to Joseph, telling him not to go to New York, once his representative status and time of departure were made public; and while he was gone, Dinah received many crank calls. Still, he never hesitated about where his duty lay. We should remember that in agreeing to go, he was making it hard for the Society for Middle East Confederation to get the initial Israeli support it needed. He could have been political and kept in mind his larger objective, but he did not. In his marvelously simple and clear-sighted way, he told the UN committee on June 12 what it was that ultimately caused him to make the trip. "The very first thing is to protect human rights, and this thing I put in the first place, even if my loyalty to my Government will be disturbed or infringed by this. I think this is the most important thing. The loyalty to humanity is the first thing and your loyalty to your nation the second thing."

Joseph was no fool; he knew the risk he was running in making his appearance. Because of this risk, he was scrupulous when gathering information. If he were to suffer from his testimony, he wanted to make sure that he would at least be suffering for what he believed to be the truth. Collecting the relevant information was difficult. Members of the league were banned from prisons, where they had hoped to collect evidence regarding alleged acts of torture and brutality towards political prisoners, so they had had to rely on newspapers. No Israeli officials in the Occupied Territories were allowed to cooperate with them at all. Then, as was mentioned, the league's general reputation in Israel was not good, which restricted more unofficial contacts. As he had done so often in the past, Joseph dropped everything he was doing and made daily trips to the West Bank and Gaza, building on trips and contacts he had made before, talking to trusted Arab friends, and using them to make contacts with alleged victims and their families. He himself talked to attorneys and inspected housing demolitions, attended military court hearings, and once even used his Masonic connections to talk with a member of his lodge who was also a military judge.

Joseph testified at both a morning and an afternoon hearing

Joseph interviewing an inhabitant of the occupied West Bank.

on June 12. From the transcript of the hearings, it is clear that the members of the committee were no more used to dealing with someone like Joseph than many Israeli governmental figures were. They chafed at his unwillingness to say more than he saw or to corroborate evidence of those he personally did not know. At one point, the chairman, H. S. Amerisinghe of Ceylon, had the following interchange with Joseph in the afternoon session:

JA—On a personal basis, not as a member of the League, I myself would not like to testify to something which I have not seen myself.

CHAIRMAN—With respect to the position of this special Committee, if we were to rely merely on newspaper reports, then we would not have any need to get a member of the League to come and speak to us.

JA—I am very sorry I disappoint you in this part of my mission.

CHAIRMAN—Yes, I must confess that some things are a disappointment in this respect. I will not conceal that.

Joseph's fact-finding mission during the occupation.

The transcript from these sessions reveals Joseph as he always presents himself—simple, direct, modest, yet ready to launch off on favorite topics of nonviolence, the evils of the nation-state, the need for a federal political solution to the Arab-Israeli problem, and the testimony to the goodness of the human heart. There are times in the testimony when one gets the sense that he was, at best, merely tolerated by an increasingly frustrated committee, anxious to wrap up its 1970 hearings, at which he was the one hundred forty-sixth and last witness. Yet in the end, his manner prevailed, so much so that in its final report to the twenty-fifth session of the UN General Assembly in 1971, the committee singled out his evidence as being particularly effective. Perhaps remembering the Israeli UN delegate's January 6 charge that the committee could not render an impartial report, the committee said,

> There were other witnesses from Israel who corroborated the general evidence of systematic violations of human rights. The special Committee would refer in particular to the evidence given

by a representative of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights on behalf of that organization, Mr. Joseph Abileah, an executive member of the League who was authorized by the League's executive to testify before the special Committee. He presented on behalf of the League a memorandum dated June 8, 1970, which forms part of the records of the Special Committee. In this memorandum the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights refers to alleged instances of breaches of human rights, such as collective punishment, blowing up of houses, administrative detention, expulsions and torture, killing during curfew, and supports these allegations with statistics and names of persons affected. Mr. Abileah supplemented the memorandum with oral evidence.

In an effort to eliminate any possibility of political prejudice or any other form of bias on the part of Mr. Abileah and the organization he represents, namely the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights, against the Government of Israel, the members of the Special Committee subjected Mr. Abileah to a thorough and exhaustive cross-examination. Mr. Abileah withstood this cross-examination without faltering, and left no doubt in the minds of the members of the Committee as to his credibility.

What was the importance of the picture of the occupation from 1967 to 1970 that one gets from reading Joseph's testimony? By discounting exaggerations and hearsay, by refusing to use loaded language like *terrorist* or *racist*, he was able to make a statement that was at once accurate and, as the Israeli newspapers later acknowledged, true. He may not have pleased those anxious to make Israel appear the arch-criminal of the world, but he made it clear that the occupation was far from benign and that its abuses, if not as flagrant as many Arab witnesses had claimed, were nonetheless serious and clear violations of the Geneva Accords of 1949. When presenting his evidence, he often first gave the rationale of the occupying forces for the acts of violence, such as the explanation that house demolition was preferable to killing the house's inhabitants, but then quietly said, "This is a justification which I don't accept, but it is their justification." In his testimony, he never pic-

tured his fellow countrymen as brutal monsters but regarded them as potentially good men and women held hostage to a worldview and a political structure that made brutal actions unavoidable. He never lost his ability to separate the actors from the actions, whether they were Palestinians or Israelis. He described his interview with Arkin, the military governor of the West Bank, as an interview with a man who was "kind and helpful," though the actions for which he was responsible Joseph found reprehensible. He maintained his commitment to the humanity of both the oppressed and the oppressor all through the hearings.

Perhaps this commitment to humanity is why his evidence was so convincing. No one could avoid coming to terms with his charges by dismissing his evidence as obviously biased—a technique most of us use when confronted with unpleasant truths about ourselves. Note the disarmingly simple and direct way he refers to the death of an old woman in the demolition of Habla, a statement which is also a powerful testimony against the horrors of war.

> I made some distribution of clothing and all these kind of things to keep the people on the place, to help them in their first difficult situation. Then I went around the village with all the people. They showed me the destroyed houses, because I had promised to help them. So everyone said, "This is my house; this is my house." And the whole village was around me, and once we came to a heap of stones where there was a big hole in this, and you could see a part of the pavement of the house. I asked the Arab man "Why did you do this? Why did you make a hole here to clear this pavement?" He said, "This is the place where my mother died under the rubble." You see, he said this in a way, not that he accused me of something, he had a look, you know, that he was not complaining anything against me. He said, "I have to keep this place, just to remember my mother." The case happened that they had to leave very quickly and this woman was sick. They could not take her along. They didn't know what would happen to their village. They thought they would be able to come back very soon. So they gave her food and they gave

> her everything she needed for a number of days and left her in her bed. But when the shooting and the destroying started, and the bombing and the exploding of everything, the Israeli Government was sure that all the people had left.

Joseph was careful in telling his stories. He had read earlier evidence presented to the committee and was anxious to strip his own testimony of excessive rhetoric and emotion. "I tell you all these things because the report which you receive[d] from Arab evidence might be true things—I don't want to say that their reports were not true—but it has an undertone of hate, propaganda and some political opinions. It is mentioned, but it has that undertone. In reading this I felt that the emphasis is always put only on the negative and not on the positive." Some Palestinians, hearing these words, might wonder where the positive elements in their situation were to be found, but the words are proof of Joseph's commitment to a humanity that knows no national boundaries, one that stresses links, not differences. Later in his testimony, Joseph explained his method of getting information. "If I go, I go and drink coffee in this restaurant and then I go and visit a friend, who gives me some information. You know, I don't go even with the purpose of investigating. But, of course, I hear many things and I am very concerned about them. I am less concerned about criticizing and finding out injustices than in putting right injustices—that's what I am most concerned about . . . and that was the reason I went to the village, to the rehabilitation village."

Israelis who followed his testimony closely or who might have feared that his participation would condemn Israel even more in the eyes of the world were reasonably satisfied that, on the whole, Joseph's testimony had been temperate. U.S. Jewry were less sympathetic and tried to discredit the league itself. Thus, while *Ha'Aretz* conducted a lengthy, fairly positive interview with Joseph on his return, an anonymous "analyst" investigated the league and sent a damning report of its activities to all the league's European affiliates. Mordechay Avi-Shaul, vice-chairman of the league, sent an angry December 1971 re-

ply to the director of the International League for the Rights of Man, quoting from this secret analysis. "The present status of the Israeli League is in some doubt. It is not clear whether the present Executive Committee was properly elected in accordance with the by-laws of the Israeli League and there is some information to the effect that the election is being contested. We understand that some individual members of the Israeli League had advocated activities of violence, but to our knowledge the Israeli League has not done so." Avi-Shaul could not let such slurs and innuendos pass, especially when they appeared to challenge the accuracy of the league's findings. His long, angry letter ends in the following manner:

> While analysing the "Blowing up of Houses" Mr. Analyst does not understand the chart that shows the number of the destructed [*sic*] houses, because some of them were blown up as *"part of a military operation."* He singles out the destruction perpetrated in Qalqilya—a nice "military operation," after the cease fire: And what about the obliteration of the villages of Imwas, Beit Nuba, Yalu, the stigma written on our face? What about the barbaric revenge in Halhul? Study, study Mr. Analyst, what "neighborhood punishment" means in practice:
>
> And what about the refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, where 6360 dwellings of human beings have been demolished and tens of thousands [of] inhabitants uprooted? Will he argue against the "chart" of Sir John Rennie, Commissioner General of UNRRA, because of lack of "supporting data"?
>
> Army units (of a Military Governor) laid siege to two villages, Beit Iqsa and Nebi Samwil. Very few of the inhabitants of Nebi Samwil remained in their home after June 1967. They were now driven out. Those of Beit Iqsa were kept in quarantine. The two villages were surrounded—the siege lasted 5 days. At the end of 5 days the siege was raised and 30 houses on the top of the hill had been razed, i.e. made level with the ground. It happened in March 1971. Why? The greater part of the land of the fellahin was long ago "taken over" by the Jewish National Fund.
>
> Can you explain such bloodless, but bloody, robbery? Almost idyllic. . . . Very simple. The land is needed for sight-seeing and

. . . building villas. . . . It is very easy to understand—naturally. The villas will be built for my Jewish brethren, whereas the demolished houses were "taken over" from only Arab fallahin. What do they know about the beauty of the Biblical landscape . . . !

Now, is it my patriotic duty to remain silent?

There has been in Israel and in the Occupied Territories political oppression; there have been collective punishments on a grand scale, blowing up houses of *suspects* and of parents, brothers and other relatives of *suspects*—I don't remember whether a single house was ever destroyed on strength of a verdict of a court of law. There have been administrative detentions, expulsion of individuals and masses; there have been torture during interrogation and killing during curfew and in broad daylight. Just, while I began the writing of this letter (on the 15th of December, 1600 o'clock) I hear on the Israeli Broadcasting: A Beduin boy was killed in the North-Sinai; an army patrol perceived at 11.30 o'clock a *suspect figure*, which started to run away when called by the patrol. He was fired at, and died before he could have been taken to a hospital.—Yesterday and to-morrow—the same, or a similar, story. No advocate can quibble away the horrors of Gaza and of the rest of the Occupied Territories.

I am reading the threats of the Gentleman "Analyst": "Serious consideration (of the International League) should be given to whether there should be a continued affiliation with any body which has not demonstrated its willingness to act in a studied and reasoned manner. The current record of the Israeli League leads one to believe that it is more interested in serving as an organ of political propaganda on behalf of the interests of some of its members than in ascertaining the facts"—etc.

"Of course," says the analyst-moralist, "If endorsement of violence were an official position of the Israeli League, a re-examination of the affiliate status of the Israeli League certainly would be in order."

Poor analyst: "Certainly."

No threats will silence us:

On the strength of my recommendation the Committee of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights authorizes our chairman Dr. Israel Shahak—at present a visitor lecturer in the Imperial College, London—who prepares for a trip in the U.S.A., to represent there our cause, the cause of Human and

Civil Rights, vis-à-vis any forum, in any form he considers necessary.

Despite the angry rejoinder, the league lost its international affiliation a short while later—the reason given being that they had ceased to be objective and were using their investigations for political not humanitarian aims. Like the labeling of the *Pravda* Letter, this charge of lack of objectivity had the effect of obfuscating the issues and perhaps was intended to silence the league.

While Joseph's reconciling manner might have been useful to all parties during this angry interchange, his own involvement with the league was diminishing. It was not that he objected to the nature of its activities, but rather that his activities on behalf of the Society for Middle East Confederation were now becoming all consuming. These activities allowed him a role he always found more natural to his temperament because they involved building something positive rather than tearing down or criticizing. For this reason, Joseph valued his meeting with Dr. Ralph Bunche at the United Nations the day after he gave his testimony. Dr. Bunche, who had taken over from the assassinated Count Bernadotte in 1948, remembered Joseph's 1947 proposals and now encouraged him to go ahead with his work, even as Anwar El-Khatib had done in 1967. Bunche told Joseph that he regretted the partition plan and revealed to Joseph that he had been the author of the Minority Report of UNSCOP, which argued in favor of the confederative solution.

The conversation with Dr. Bunche meant a great deal to Joseph. He felt he had done his duty to the league and to truth by his appearance at the UN, but what was needed was not only an exposition of the problems in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza but also a plan for remedying them. Dr. Bunche had strengthened Joseph's resolve that the plan he had in mind for twenty-five years could solve the dilemma of two peoples with two senses of justice and rights who wanted the same piece of land. Joseph was willing to run the risk about which Judah

Magnes had warned in 1923 when he said that it might one day become political treason for "someone in the streets of Jerusalem" to repeat "Isaiah's teaching that swords are to be beaten into ploughshares, and men are to learn war no more." Joseph had, in fact, been accused of political treason for his pacifist ideas, but his actions in 1967–70 echoed Isaiah's words 62:1. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

# 7

# Society for Middle East Confederation 1972–1987

> Today it appears absurd to many—especially in the present intra-Arab situation—to think now about Israel's participation in a Near East federation. Tomorrow with an alteration in certain world-political situations independent of us, this possibility may arise in a highly positive sense. Insofar as it depends on us, we must prepare the ground for it. There can be no peace between Jews and Arabs that is only a cessation of war; there can only be a peace of genuine cooperation. Today, under such manifoldly aggravated circumstances, the command of the spirit is still to prepare the way for the cooperation of peoples.
>
> —Martin Buber, 1958

THE FINAL PHASE of Joseph's peace activity has found him more convinced than ever that the structure of society is largely responsible for determining its response to conflict. His ideas about the potential goodness of the human heart have not changed, but his conviction that political structures can often keep that goodness from finding expression has led him to pursue single-mindedly a new political configuration for the Middle East. He looks at most of the wars since 1948 as having been inevitable once Israel opted for the structure of the nation-state and bought into the notion of right of conquest. There is a calmness in his voice that belies his sadness when he notes that the doctrine of might makes right has won over Israel as it has all other nation-states. Often in his correspon-

dence, one comes across the following description of his addresses to audiences in Israel and abroad: "I said to these people that the structure of the nation state will not survive the 21st Century. It is obsolete for our lives. We must plan new ways for relating. When will it happen? It could happen tomorrow or in the future, generally. But the alternative is mutual annihilation."

Joseph knows the uphill fight his plan for confederation has before it. It challenges not only the present political structure but, in some ways, five thousand years of human history, which claim that winners are the ones to determine the definition of what are rights. As he ruefully observes, Israel won its historical rights to the land with the conquest of Joshua; the Muslims with the seventh-century conquest of Jerusalem; the Christians with the Crusades of the Middle Ages; the Ottomans with the military conquest of their empire; and the British with the victory over Germany in World War I. If might makes right, how is a confederation possible, where winners would be asked to share with losers? Joseph's answer is that a political superstructure need not be built over a base of the violence of conquest. If one changes the base, certain political structures seem more natural than others. The base of nonviolence makes logical a system of government that stresses cooperation, the sort of cooperation mentioned by Martin Buber in the epigraph to this chapter. For Joseph, the most logical choice of system is the one of confederation.

Buoyed by his lectures abroad and *still* convinced that the June 1967 War presented a unique opportunity for putting forth creative long-term solutions, Joseph realized part of his dream by forming on May 26, 1971, at the Pension Wohlman in Haifa, the Society for Middle East Confederation. Present at the meeting were longtime friends Edith Wolff, Wajdi-Farid Tabari, Reverend K. Musallem, and about forty others. The American, Landrum Bolling, then president of Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana; Yehudi Menuhin; Dr. Hugh Schonfield, founder of the Commonwealth of World Citizens; and Hein van Wijk, a member of the senate of the Netherlands, agreed to be inter-

national sponsors. By August, fifty members had enrolled, and the first governing body was elected. Wajdi-Farid Tabari, a well-known Haifa lawyer and later a *Qadi* (judge) in the Islamic courts of Jaffa and Jerusalem, agreed to be the first chairman. Joseph assumed the post he has now held for more than fifteen years, that of secretary. Edith Wolff is a good example of the people who were early drawn to this new society. She was a German, who during World War II, wanted to show her solidarity with the oppressed by publicly converting to Judaism. During the war, she served as a member of the German underground, hiding many Jews in her Berlin flat. She was arrested and spent time in ten different concentration camps. Like so many other unconquerable spirits, she had survived to come to Israel after the war, and there she continued her work for the oppressed of the world. She was drawn to Joseph and his work because she saw in him her own commitment to a humanity that knew no national borders nor acknowledged any religious barriers.

Joseph's plans for the confederation have changed little since 1972. He has been a strong advocate of a particular goal. He has been equally strong as an advocate of a certain means to that goal. The means involve a definition of the worldview he has held for such a long time. Before seeing it in its most complete form, we should examine in more detail the plan for confederation, and there is no better way to do so than to reproduce a 1977 interview Joseph had with Dr. Jeffrey M. Elliot, an award-winning scholar and journalist. This interview has been published by the society and is sent out regularly to those wanting to know more about its aims. In it are to be found themes that have been part of Joseph's political thinking for a long time—his distrust of the nation-state, his disappointment with the UN and the role of the superpowers, his belief in learning from geophysical realities, his compassion for Arabs, the pragmatism of his idealism, and his unfailing optimism.

ELLIOT: What is the Society for Middle East Confederation?
ABILEAH: The Society was conceived as a forum for the discus-

sion of constructive ideas which aim at solving the Middle East conflict by cooperation of Arabs and Jews on the economic and political level. These range from a BENELUX pattern (economic cooperation) to a full confederation of states, providing equal status and representation to each of the member-components.

ELLIOT: When did the group first come into being?

ABILEAH: The founders' meeting took place on May 26, 1971, at Pension Wohlman, Haifa. It was called by two Arab citizens (a Moslem advocate and a Lutheran pastor) and two Jewish citizens (an immigrant from Germany and myself, who was locally educated). In a second general meeting, the rules were established and the official registration with the District Commissioner of Haifa was confirmed on January 9, 1972, by a notice in the press.

ELLIOT: Who comprises the membership of the Society?

ABILEAH: The Society consists of both registered members as well as sympathizers. The total of registered members exceeds 150, including Israelis, Jews, Arabs, and nationals of other countries. The sympathizers, mostly abroad, number between 400–500. All professions and walks of life are represented. The international sponsors include: Dr. Landrum Bolling (United States), Yehudi Menuhin (England), Dr. Martin Niemöller (West Germany), Dr. Hugh Schonfield (England), and Adv. Hein van Wijk (Netherlands).

ELLIOT: What is the thrust of the Society's peace initiative?

ABILEAH: Having lived in the region for almost 50 years, I have become very concerned about its future. As a convinced pacifist, I have always advocated peaceful solutions based upon a common homeland for Jews, Arabs, and other people who would like to share our fate. The Society has not adopted a definite plan. My own program includes six points: (1) A confederation composed of three states, viz. Jordan, Arab Palestine (West Bank), and Israel, with a federal capitol in Jerusalem. (2) The federal government should deal, at least in the beginning, with foreign policy and economic integration. (3) Economic integration would enable the confederation to solve the refugee problem without massive foreign aid. (4) The help of the United Nations is required for an enlargement of the irrigation scheme in the Syrian desert with the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates. This would provide the Iraqis and the Syrians with irrigated land. (5) A reli-

gious council, which would form a second house in the federal parliament, should be composed of representatives of all faiths and religious communities in the area. This council would be entrusted with the creation of a federal constitution based on ethical principles. (6) The confederation would be open to any country in the Middle East to join. It should be formed with the idea of creating a United States of the Middle East in the future.

ELLIOT: Why should Israel, under your proposal, give up its status as a sovereign nation?

ABILEAH: Like the other member-states, Israel must be willing to limit its absolute sovereignty if we are to become a tripartite confederation or even a binational constellation. We cannot expect our neighbor to do something which we are not prepared to do ourselves. Besides, this fact only reflects the realities of the situation, as Israel has become entirely dependent on the United States. In this regard, it lost its independence and sovereignty some time ago. It is important to challenge the notion of national sovereignty as such. In our century, with the advancement of technology, improved living standards, and mass communications, this political term has lost its meaning in a practical sense. It has become an anachronism, one which has encouraged the outbreak of war owing to the semantic weight of the word as myth. Similarly as Israel has lost her sovereignty, so will a sovereign Palestinian state lose her independence as one of the super-powers or an Arab state in the area. It cannot hope to survive with limited natural resources and lack of access to the major seaports. The establishment of an Arab-Palestinian state without close ties to Israel or Jordan or both is precarious at best. Add to this the law of return for refugees, and you further increase the risk of war. It is clear that Israel will do her utmost to remain in a position of readiness and will escalate an endless arms race with the result of economic decline for herself and the whole region.

ELLIOT: At the heart of your proposal is the concept of confederation. What kind of confederation do you envision?

ABILEAH: The answer is to create a confederation, very loose in the beginning, of perhaps two or three states which would depend on each other in a geo-political way. This would encompass the areas on both banks of the Jordan, the present state of

Israel, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the creation of a new member-state on the West Bank and the Gaza area reserved for the Palestinians. Each state would establish a local government as well as send representatives to the confederative government on a parity basis. The central government would deal with common concerns, chief of which should be the rehabilitation of refugees. This task must be viewed as a shared burden and responsibility.

ELLIOT: What do you see as the geographic boundaries of a Middle East Confederation?

ABILEAH: The smallest Middle East Confederation which could meet the present needs would comprise the territory on both banks of the River Jordan. This would provide the Hashemite Kingdom and the new Palestinian state with access to the seaports of the eastern Mediterranean, vital to their respective economies. The state boundaries would be roughly those of June, 1967, it being understood that these would constitute ethnic-cultural divisions and not strategic frontiers to be defended. There exists the possibility of a division into smaller states according to the majority of inhabitants of one ethnic group or another. This approach resembles a plan proposed by Yitzhak Hayutman in 1975, which would establish three types of sub-states based on ethnicity: Arab, Jewish, and mixed. There could be as many as twelve or more of these states, each of which would be represented in the confederative government. A similar approach was advanced by Professor Johan Galtung, Oslo, and would address the problem of the large minorities in preponderantly Jewish or Arab states.

ELLIOT: In what ways will a confederation turn enmity into friendship in the Middle East?

ABILEAH: Enmity and hate are created by fear. At present, the Arabs are as much afraid of being pushed into the desert as the Jews are afraid of being thrown into the sea. The Jewish immigration is opposed by the Arabs for fear of being outnumbered. The return of the refugees is opposed by the Israelis for fear of the Arab majority. If we could agree on the principle of parity-representation in the constitution, this mutual fear would be eliminated and a new bond of trust created in its place. This is the difference between a confederation which is merely a military alliance and one which has a common constructive purpose.

ELLIOT: How will a confederation improve the economic posture of the area?

ABILEAH: Under a confederation, the present population of 500,000 unemployed people who live in the camps would be made productive, which would substantially benefit the economy of the new confederation. I do not envision one industrialized member-state, with the other member-states providing the manpower. Each member-state should make use, as much as possible, of local natural treasures and available potential in agriculture, crafts, and industry. Israel has utilized, to a great extent, her various natural resources, employing reclamation, irrigation, and other methods to improve her yield. The other two member-states could likewise be developed and their resources increased. Stone cutting is a specialty of the east. There are quarries of many different kinds of stones and marble available in the West Bank and Jordan. The existence of one or two family houses in the area with ornaments of differently colored stone is very attractive. An industry of stone buildings of diverse architectural designs with ready stones to be assembled could be a valuable source of income for the local artisans. It is also an excellent way of providing decent housing for newly settled refugees who, with their unique brand of individuality, would not be happy living in big apartment buildings without aesthetic appeal. Numerous olive trees provide the raw materials for the soap industry which has an old tradition in Nablus. The vineyards of Judea and Gilead provide the material for outstanding wines. The chemical treasures of the Dead Sea have supplied the Israeli as well as the Jordanian potash works. Spa springs abound in the valley of the Jordan and the eastern parts of the Dead Sea. Add to these the agricultural products which a developed West Bank could yield, as well as the advantages of a coordinated tourist trade, and it would be quite possible to eliminate the present negative trade balance. With all of these possibilities, I would not be so eager to accept the achievements of western technology en bloc, as have many people in the world without regard for the environment or future growth.

ELLIOT: What are the basic advantages of a confederation?

ABILEAH: A confederation is a partnership, a safeguard of common interests. The existing state boundaries cease to be strategic "security borders" and become merely ethnic cultural

frontiers designed to keep various groups apart. All military fortifications and armaments could be gradually reduced and eventually abolished, and the resources used instead for the rehabilitation of refugees, creation of infrastructure, and improvement of social welfare. The greatest advantage of a confederation is a geopolitical one. The distance from the sea to the edge of the desert is less than 100 miles. It is inconceivable that in this narrow stretch of land, where geographically one region complements another, there should be three national sovereign states with separate, competing economies.

ELLIOT: What common Arab-Israeli interests make a confederation possible?

ABILEAH: In addition to what I have already mentioned, a confederation would enable us to shake off our present dependence on foreign aid and the political strings connected therewith. A well-knitted partnership would encourage the super-powers to maintain a hands-off policy and no longer view us as a pawn in their rivalry for spheres of influence. It is vital that we do everything possible to avoid a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. A confederation would help make that possible.

ELLIOT: How would you deal with the problem of the Palestinian Arabs?

ABILEAH: According to our proposal, the Arabs would have their own member-state within the confederation. If Jordan became a constitutional monarchy, it might be possible that the Palestinians would form a common Arab member-state on both banks of the River Jordan. This would be an important step forward in terms of parity-representation in the federal government. The law of return must be extended to include the Arabs, and the returning refugees should be permitted to settle in a member-state of their choice. Family affiliations, cultural surroundings, economic opportunities, and nostalgia for the past would be the determining factors in such a decision. Based upon these considerations, we could expect as many as 250,000 returnees to each of the three territories (Jordan, West-Bank, and Israel). These would be people who still reside in the refugee camps. The remaining 650,000 people with refugee status, who have been able to rehabilitate themselves in the United States, Canada, various European countries, or the neighboring Arab states should

be given the option of leaving their present positions and returning to one of the territories. In the event that they opt to stay in their host countries, they should be fully compensated for their property as were the Jewish immigrants who came from various Arab countries in the past decades. If the Jewish inhabitants of the new settlements in occupied territories wish to stay (provided that these settlements were not built on confiscated land) or if religious zealots wish to live in Hebron or other places connected with Jewish history, they should be allowed to stay, but they must be aware that they will have to respect the civil laws of the respective Arab member-states the same as we expect Israeli Arabs to abide by Israeli civil law. I believe that the present attitude towards the Arab minorities in Israel, which has often been discriminatory because of our nation-state structure, will be ameliorated and levelled out the moment the Palestinians secure their homeland.

ELLIOT: What do you see as the basic foreign policy of a Middle East Confederation?

ABILEAH: The cornerstone of a confederative foreign policy should reflect the common welfare of the region. This is idealistically expressed. However, in practical terms, it should include trade agreements with Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. We might begin with an irrigation scheme in the Syrian desert. As I indicated earlier, this is a very fertile region. Adding to it the area between the Rivers Euphrates and Tigris, which might require agricultural development projects, Syria and Iraq will achieve a stable economic position. They will no longer take part in bitter political rivalries. This is what occurred in Jordan, in 1970, as well as in Lebanon for the last two years. Indeed, conflict has been an unhappy part of our region for the last 29 years.

ELLIOT: How will the confederation be governed?

ABILEAH: The responsibility for administration and decision-making in the various member-states must be left to the local governments. The confederative government should deal, at least in the beginning, with common regional concerns. These might include a coordinated foreign policy and the rehabilitation of refugees. Once we have made progress in these areas, we will find ourselves cooperating in such areas as health services, road building, meteorological services, port authorities, and many others. A president should be elected on a rotating basis, similar

to the system in Switzerland, when seven members of the cabinet hold office as chairman for a period of one-year in rotation. The concept of parity representation in the confederative government is essential, especially since every sector is afraid of being outnumbered.

ELLIOT: Do you envision the United Nations playing a role in maintaining peace in the area while the confederation is taking hold?

ABILEAH: The answer is no. When partition was decided by the United Nations General Assembly, it was implemented by Israelis fighting the Arab opposition without the participation of a single United Nations soldier. Later, when United Nations soldiers were posted at the Israeli-Egyptain frontier, they were unable to prevent infiltration and conflict during the entire period, 1957–1967, and left altogether when the war broke out. The weakness of the United Nations in such cases is well-documented by Michael Mekory in his book, *The Peace Scroll: The Way to Universal Peace.* What we need are peace-makers, not peace-keepers. I applaud the United Nations in those areas in which they are best suited: health, technical assistance, human rights, world traffic, environmental pollution, etc. However, in the areas of peace-making and peace-keeping, the United Nations will always fail because of structural shortcomings. We must discover better ways to involve our citizens in the solutions to their own problems.

ELLIOT: How would a confederation deal with the problem of social, political, and economic integration?

ABILEAH: The problems which exist today are the result of the fact that the new State of Israel consists of citizens who brought with them the cultures and habits of 80 different countries. The main differences appear in the clash between east and west. We have a majority of eastern Jews (whom the Palestinians call the Arab Jews) and a minority of immigrants from the west. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to impose western values on the whole society, with the result that we are becoming more and more "Levantinized." On the other hand, the Arabs are shaking off more and more of their traditions in favor of western ways of life (one of them being nationalism). It remains to be seen how the confederation will influence the integration of the two cultures, and how we will incorporate the

desirable parts of each to the needs of the area. Economic integration should include development projects for the rehabilitation of the returning refugees. There should be a common budget in which we pool our available resources. With the advancement of living standards in the member-states, the economic situation will level out in the future. With regard to political integration, we must allow each member-state to follow along its own lines. For example, Israel comprises all forms of political structure: extreme communism in the Kibbutz to trade union-owned agriculture and industry to capitalist private enterprise. It is inevitable that the Palestinian state will experience a class struggle until it finds a suitable structure. It is also clear that Jordan will gradually become a constitutional monarchy, with the pressure from below growing stronger.

ELLIOT: What role would the super-powers play in a Middle East Confederation?

ABILEAH: The super-powers are not interested at the present time in the outbreak of peace in the Middle East because they are afraid of losing their foothold in their respective spheres of influence in the region. Oil interests and weapons markets are also involved. As far back as 1969, I argued that we should ask for help from the nations of the world in irrigating the Syrian desert, but at the same time guarantee the oil interests for these nations. This induced Mr. Maynard Shelly, the former editor of *The Mennonite*, to write an article entitled, "Take Your Oil. Give Us Water." The super-powers are not interested in a big fire which would mean a direct confrontation, but they do not mind if a few thousand Arabs and Jews are killed from time to time. The situation demands that we no longer kill or be killed to protect foreign interests. Our conscientious objectors have made an important start in this direction. This is a first step, but a passive one. We must become more active in peace-making by awakening our citizens to the true facts of the situation. Even for the super-powers the present policies are short-sighted. The arms supplied to the Middle East are paid for in cash only by rich countries. Those supplied to Israel are mostly in the form of loans, few of which will ever be paid back. This fact does not worry the United States as long as we remain their serfs. Arms do not produce anything; they can only be used for destructive purposes. On the other hand, if credit was granted in the form

of tractors and other agricultural machinery, new skills could be developed, and in time, all loans repaid with interest. In a confederation comprising all countries of the Middle East or even a common market constellation, regular commercial relations on equal standing could be established with western as well as eastern nations, including the super-powers.

ELLIOT: How has the Israeli public reacted to your proposals?

ABILEAH: The reaction of the Israeli public can best be described as skeptical. This fact is changing, however, as the idea of confederation is being advanced by many political leaders, as well as discussed in the news media. We rarely encounter direct opposition, although doubters are still abundant.

ELLIOT: Does your plan have support in the Arab community?

ABILEAH: In the Arab community, we find a better reaction, although seldom in public statements. The further the individual who is approached lives from the scene of the conflict, the more nationalistic and uncompromising he seems to be. Peoples in the West-Bank realize that they must eventually unite with Jordan or Israel in order to survive. In a union with Israel, they fear being labeled as traitors to the Arab cause. When a tripartite confederation is proposed to them, they see a basis on which to agree; more than that, they welcome such a plan as a possible solution to the problem. The fact that Arabs were among the founders of our Society, and continue to demonstrate great cooperation, indicates that they are as eager as the Israelis to assure the future of their children. Indeed, the chairman of our Society, Mr. Ibrahim Sima'an, is himself an Arab.

ELLIOT: Have the Palestinian national movements evidenced a willingness to support your plan?

ABILEAH: Yes. I have talked with several members of the political committees of the Palestine Liberation Organization and also with members of the so-called "rejectionists." Without daring to commit themselves, they expressed the view that the confederation idea might constitute a positive first step towards the realization of a democratic state in Palestine. Moreover, they indicated that if the proposed confederation resembled the system in Switzerland, they could accept it without losing face. They realize that such a confederation would entail compromise, that they would have to abandon many of the declared aims of their movement. However, they also realize that Israel would have

to make similar concessions, which would satisfy their sense of justice.

ELLIOT: Are you optimistic over the prospects of Arab-Israeli co-existence?

ABILEAH: I am optimistic in terms of peaceful co-existence provided that we can work out a suitable political framework. This cannot be the same pattern which was invented in the nineteenth century and which precipitated two world wars. We cannot turn the wheels back. We must look ahead to a new world order. We must be prepared to adapt our policies to the realities of the twenty-first century. If, however, we continue to accept the idea of the nation-state, then I see a bleak future ahead.

Before discussing how the plans for this confederation have been publicized in Israel and abroad for the past seventeen years and what the reception has been, it is good to pause to consider the worldview that is implicitly present in the interview, because without knowing Joseph's religious and philosophical base, one cannot hope to get a full picture of him as a peacemaker. As in all things, there is a connection between the goal and the means of attaining that goal. As stated earlier, Joseph believes that a new structure can be based on nonviolence, peace, and social justice. After a long struggle, he has reconciled these principles with his religious beliefs.

One way of examining these difficulties is to see how the universal humanism characteristic of Joseph's Judaism came to be at odds with what happened to Judaism under the impact of the nation-state structure of Israel. His desperate struggle against the partition plan is part of a struggle to hold on to his own beliefs in Zionism and Judaism, even as it was a struggle against what he correctly saw as a guarantee of endless strife between Arab and Jew. Recent historians of Zionism like Bernard Avishai have observed that Zionism, as it moved towards the nation-state, became less universal. Avishai, in *The Tragedy of Zionism*, sees the loss of ideals of labor Zionism (a secular, classless, propertyless society informed by social justice for all its members) replaced by values of statism (xenophobic ex-

altation of the military achievement, pride in lack of cultural diversity, etc.). Joseph sensed this change in the late 1940s, and his abhorrence of a nationalistic socialism led him to such verbal excess that at times he sounded almost anti-Zionist.

But there are many Zionisms, and while he rejected the new definitions of Zionism, which sounded more and more like those espoused by Ze'ev Jabotinsky and his followers, he tried to remain true to the spiritual and cultural Zionism of the Second Aliyah. As he grew older and felt the need to define for his audiences the spiritual base from which he operated, he came to believe that his religion was a Judaism practiced by the early Christians. His long conversations with Nathan Chofshi, who was a true biblical scholar, helped Joseph realize that the sort of brotherhood he felt, experienced, and worked for had deep Jewish roots. Christianity had no exclusive right to speak of the radical path of love because, after all, Jesus was a Jew. His Sermon on the Mount is seen by Christians as a radical break with the past, but for Joseph, it was the logical extension of post-Babylonian Jewish thought. The messianism present in that line of thought has always inspired Joseph and has made him feel that he was and is a genuine Zionist, though one who has learned from the inspiration of the men and women of other religions.

In an effort to explain his kind of Judaism and Zionism and how his own pacifism could not only be reconciled with it but also be seen to grow out of it, Joseph wrote "Le Judaisme et la Non-violence" for a French Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) publication in 1981. This brief essay, in which he seeks Jewish roots for nonviolence, reminds one of Arie Eliav's *Shalom: Peace in the Jewish Tradition* and represents a good statement of Joseph's own credo.

He begins the essay by noting that, while the Jewish religion is not "a pacifist philosophy," nonetheless there is from the beginning a desire for peace and a desire to avoid violent conflict. Abraham, Genesis 13:8–9, tries to avoid a conflict with his nephew Lot, and Jacob tries to be reconciled with Esau. Yet most of the desire for peace was accompanied by fear. The fear

usually meant that one hand offered peace while the other rested on the sword, Nehemiah 4:17. Genuine peace can come only if it is offered with both hands, and the precondition for this step would be the loss of fear. Because even the word *peace* means many things to many persons, Joseph goes on to explain the many meanings of the word *shalom*—peace, as it is used in the early Hebrew scriptures. The word often referred to a completed state—being at peace—which also sometimes meant being secure. This kind of peace could be attained by violence, since what was important was the end, the state of security, and not the means. Because there was no necessary connection between means and ends, there was no necessary connection between peace and nonviolence. Modern slogans, such as "There is no way to Peace; Peace is the way," meant little to those in the Hebrew scriptures who, in their longing for security, did not renounce the sword.

According to Joseph's reading of the Hebrew scriptures, it was only in the period of the Babylonian exile that Jews, perhaps under the influence of Zoroastrianism (which in turn had been influenced by other eastern religions), came to the realization that an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, could be tempered by mercy. At the same time, Jewish thought embraced the notion of love and forgiveness that went beyond family, tribe, and nation. In this period, until the destruction of the Second Temple, "the great prophets preached forgiveness rather than reprisal, love for one's enemy and a God of all nations and not just the exclusive God of Israel." These five hundred years represent the period in which Joseph finds the roots of his universal, messianic Judaism.

He believes that Jesus had his roots there as well. The Talmud commentators on the Bible were also rooted here. Thus, in their commentary, Aaron becomes a model of a man of peace. He reconciles enemies by going to each separately to tell each what the other had said in praise of him. Yet the Talmudic writers were convinced that true peace would come only with the Messiah, and hence they could justify war in certain situations, even though they did not glorify it. For Joseph, such glorifica-

tion came about only with the birth of the nation-state. For Joseph, the beautiful prayer of Reform Judaism—"Give us peace, your most precious gift, O eternal source of peace. Let Israel be a messenger to all the people of the world. Bless our nation so that it may always be a fortress of peace and an intercessor in the council of nations"—has been undercut by the structure of the nation-state. Too much emphasis had been placed on the fortress, on the notion of peace as security, and not enough on peace as a transforming power that melts hostility. Only those who have faith in the human heart can realize that to make peace one needs to offer both hands, not keep one resting on the sword. In Joseph's lifetime, peace on the part of both Jews and Arabs had been at best a one-handed gesture.

The essay continues with a description of his own two-handed gestures in 1936 and 1947 (the well near Ben Shemen and the bath at Wadi Maleh). Only at such a time, when gestures like these spread, will we "be able to say that we were people chosen by God to set such an example, as one of our own (Jesus) did more than 1900 years ago." The true hero, according to Rabbi Nathan, is he who converts his enemy to a friend. As Jesus proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount, "If you love only those who love you, what reward do you deserve?" Joseph ends the essay and this belief description of his belief in love and nonviolence, a belief that has informed his whole life and work, by quoting a letter he received from Nathan Chofshi in 1969, soon after Joseph had dedicated whatever life was left to him to the search for a political structure for peace.

> You read me yesterday a letter from a stranger in which he said that the Bible tells us various things and according to the correspondent's interpretation, it leans towards violence. You replied that it contains everything. As you were in a hurry, I left my reply until today. Those who say the Bible establishes this or that don't know their scripture, or else they are demagogues. The Bible is neither a legislator nor a pedagogue. It is divided into two parts: the Laws, which the Talmud has fundamentally changed by adding humanitarian elements, and there is not a

> Rabbi in the world who is going to judge according to the Laws of the Bible, but only according to the Talmud, which interprets the Bible in its own fashion. Only the Samaritans and Karaites held exclusively to the Bible. The rest of the Bible in its first part is composed of the history of people and events, with high and low points, and the atmosphere is still primitive—idolatrous. Violence there is dominant. One finds sparks of goodness, but one could not judge according to this part and say "The Bible tells us thus and so." The one who has read deeply sees morality there, an allusion against violence, and he who understands it feels it.
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> But in the part of the Bible we call the late prophets, one finds a true world of purity, and it is there that there is an ethical Judaism at once Jewish and universal, not one or the other. I will never say "The Bible says that," but it is our prophets who have made prophecies for us and for all peoples. Among the prophets there is no deviation from the eternal truths from their time to ours, and there we hear time and again the vision of peace between individuals, between one nation and another, between men and woman and every thing that lives. This is my summary, albeit a brief one, on this delicate subject.

Joseph has always responded to the words of late prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah, who offer peace through love and reconciliation as the supreme good. He treasures the words of Hillel, who defined the essence of the Torah itself as "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Shalom for Joseph has never meant a state but a process, a power of transformation, whereby enemies become friends, swords are beaten into ploughshares, and men study war no more. Thus, it seems logical to him that the confederation he has proposed is built upon the friendship of one's neighbors, a structure that discourages xenophobic possessiveness and fear and encourages the cooperation that lies within the grasp of every person who would live according to his or her heart.

Having discussed the ideas and beliefs that inform the proposal for the Society for Middle East Confederation, it is now time

for us to turn to the activities through which the society hoped to spread its ideas. Between the years 1971 and 1987, Joseph made thirteen lecture tours abroad. He also worked among Arabs and Jews in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza, speaking wherever he was invited. There are certain characteristics that all the trips abroad seem to share, as do some of the activities at home. When on his trips to Europe and America, Joseph undertook a lecture schedule that would do in the ordinary traveler. Traveling with just a small suitcase, he rushed at an unbelievably hectic pace from city to city. Overbooked, he was extremely thankful for the few times when lectures were canceled, yet he was also pleased that most of the tours were extremely well planned in advance. Because he did not like the idea of spending money on travel and lodging, he took the cheapest transportation and stayed in hostels or with friends. The chronicle of each year, meticulously kept in extensive travel diaries, reveals his delight at meeting new people, seeing new places, and establishing his own personal peace network around the world. The experiences he had on his travels confirmed him in the road he had taken and deepened his commitment to nonviolence. Just as importantly, the persons he met convinced him that he was not alone.

The solidarity with peacemakers abroad was extremely important to Joseph because he had trouble receiving an enthusiastic reception for his ideas in Israel. Many friends criticize him for not working harder with Israeli groups, but he spoke wherever and whenever he was asked; and while he might have pushed harder to talk with hard-line groups in the Israeli right, he did his best. The reception that audiences gave him tended to vary according to the political climate within a given year. This variance had always been true of his reception in Israel. In 1955, for example, he was asked by the municipality of Haifa to give a series of lectures commemorating the eightieth birthday of Dr. Albert Schweitzer. Joseph seized the opportunity to talk about Schweitzer's ethics and how his universalism challenged both the notion of right by conquest and the structure of the nation-state. The lecture series was quickly canceled af-

ter Joseph had delivered just the first two. Israel, on the eve of the expansionist Suez War for the Sinai, was not ready to hear about Schweitzer's politics, though they were quite open to learning more about his music and humanitarian activities in Africa. Joseph could not separate Schweitzer's music from his pacifism any more than he could separate the two in his own life.

When, as we have seen, Israel acquired through war vast amounts of new territory in 1967, people seemed open to new ways of achieving peace. Similarly, for a brief period of time after the 1973 war, when Israel felt that it might be more vulnerable militarily than it had previously thought, there was some receptivity to the idea of confederation. In 1977, when Sadat made his dramatic visit to Jerusalem, things looked up for the society, and there was some interest after the Lebanese War of 1982. On the whole, however, the idea of a confederation has never been able to overcome the skeptical response of groups whose fears have led them to maintain known strategies for survival rather than embrace those that involve a great deal of risk.

These years convinced Joseph that at home he had to become part of a peace network to gain wider acceptance, and so he established links with many of the new peace groups springing up in Israel, especially those that stressed Arab and Jewish reconciliation at the grass-roots level. Among these groups he has had the satisfaction of seeing his ideas discussed, and several public figures have talked of confederation, from Shimon Peres to the editor of the Arabic newspaper *Al-Fajr*, Hanna Siniora. Still, no young person has come along to whom Joseph could leave the work of the society. Aaron Kamis, who for a while looked as if he would be Joseph's successor, has moved to Switzerland; and though he is secretary of the Friends of the Society for Middle East Confederation, he is removed from the part of the world where he would do the most good. Similarly Saba Shami, who was sent with Joseph's help to study in the United States, decided to stay and become a U.S. citizen. Arie Hess, a Jerusalemite very active in the Labour party, remains

the best hope for carrying on the fight within Israel itself, though his commitment to the political solution does not appear to have the same philosophical foundation as Joseph's own, despite the similarity in confederal plans.

After the August 1971 meeting, Joseph undertook a four-month tour abroad, propagating the new society and gathering support through membership and funding. It was at this time, for example, that Dr. Martin Niemöller agreed to become an international sponsor. Dinah was with Joseph as he began his trip in London with an address to the Commonwealth of World Citizens conference. After addresses arranged by various English peace groups, including the Fellowship of the Friends of Truth, headed by Ruth Richardson of Birmingham, who was to remain a friend and supporter in the following years, Joseph visited the Hesbjerg Peace Research College in Denmark and the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo. It was in Oslo that his old WRI friend, Johan Galtung, arranged a seminar on Middle East peace possibilities. Galtung, one of the famous international names in the field of peace research, was later to embrace a Middle East peace plan that was similar to Joseph's own.

One incident during the European trip is worth describing in detail to throw light on the kind of impact Joseph could make on an audience. He had gone to a Quaker quarterly meeting in Langenburg, Germany, and was asked if he would visit the youth prison at Schwäbisch Hall. He was asked to give a short talk on the subject of fear, and he cited his own experiences in the thirties and forties of how fear could be overcome with friendship and love. After he talked, he heard music whose power has remained a vivid memory with him ever since. Two of the prisoners played with such conviction and passion that Joseph was reminded, as he was when performing Beethoven, that true and great art always arises from suffering. What Joseph did not realize was that he was in part responsible for the power of that music. He denies that his talk had anything to do with the way the two musicians performed, but others in attendance have a different version of what happened. Rosalie

Regen, writing in the *Friends Journal* of April 1972, described Joseph's impact when he finished his speech by telling the prisoners how the power of nonviolence lay within anyone's grasp, as did the power to overcome fear,

> Suddenly great waves of sound washed over us. The prisoners responded to Joseph's message with a powerful pounding of feet and arms against floor and benches. It was an ecstatic roar of approval and affirmation. They had been moved deeply; I felt lifted up as if to heaven's gates in a great surge of joy.
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> In this highly charged atmosphere, two prisoners, Martin Hetz and Gerhard Wissman, played their guitars and sang, "I Like How You Look, I Don't Want to Leave You Now," and "Hush, Little Baby" from *Porgy and Bess*, with their own variations, which seemed to us more poignant than the original. They screwed up their faces in emotion. Blond Bob moaned; dark, intense Gerhard, his guitar held in front of him, played grace notes as a counterpoint to Bob's intent singing.
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> The response was deafening, until the pastor reminded us that we should not applaud—this was a church. One encore was allowed, and then a group of us Quakers sang "We Shall Overcome."

On his trip to the United States, Joseph was delighted to meet peace workers like Viktor Pashkis, of Fellowship Farm; Thalia Stern, AFSC Middle East peace worker in Miami; and Jeanne Gevaert, a talented sculptress and world citizen from Atlanta. But he spent a great deal of time trying to establish political contacts. In Washington, D.C., he spoke with members of the state department and to the aides and offices of Senators George McGovern and Mark Hatfield. Senator McGovern, in spite of his own busy schedule, had a private meeting with Joseph and expressed interest in his ideas. In Washington, D.C., he had a productive meeting with the famous journalist I. F. Stone and met with Dr. John Davis, who had been the head of United Nations Works and Relief Agency (UNWRA). Many of his lectures were arranged by the Hillel Foundation on university campuses.

Some of the Hillel groups had received pressure not to invite him as a speaker, but almost all the rabbis in charge of them felt that his message should be heard, if for no other reason than that Jewish students needed to hear minority as well as mainstream Israeli ideas. After speaking at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and at Brandeis University, the major Jewish university in the United States, Joseph was asked by the prestigious *Christian Science Monitor* to write an article explaining his plans for a confederation. The article appeared in March 1972.

In general, American and European audiences were receptive to his views, especially because they were delivered in a gentle manner and with great personal conviction. He never responded defensively or angrily to attacks, and by thus disarming his critics, he won respect for the integrity of his nonviolent life if not for the details of his peace plan. One Arab student did say to his companions, "We did not know of such moderate views in the Israeli sector. Should we not tell our countrymen about these minority groups and embark ourselves on a similar course?" Rarely did people leave the talks in protest, a notable exception being in Basel, Switzerland, where after Joseph had explained the four pillars of his faith, on which the bridge to peace are supported (brotherhood and sisterhood of all humanity; sanctity of human life; nonviolence and truth; good means required for good ends), he was asked by someone if that meant that Egyptians were his brothers. When Joseph replied without hesitation, "Of course, they are my brothers," his questioner left the gathering.

There were others who left the society. During the early stages of the society's meetings, more than twelve Arab members of the Israeli Communist party expressed interest in the plan of confederation. When Joseph and others made it clear that the society required a commitment to nonviolence in the implementation of its goals, all the communists, with the exception of Assam Abassi, a personal friend to Joseph, stopped coming to the meetings. Even Abassi, editor of *Ittihad*, the communist newspaper, left the group one year later. Although the

society was officially founded on January 9, 1972, Israeli public interest in Joseph's proposals was already on the wane. Over the years, the society lost about as many members as it gained and now numbers only about two hundred.

Joseph did his best to fight this general drift towards indifference. In 1972, the society presented a biweekly forum in Haifa's Baptist Center for discussion of various confederative solutions. The results of these discussions were published in a small pamphlet in 1973. Because the society was not committed to a single political plan, eight different approaches were put forth. One of these, which had earlier appeared in a truncated form in *The Jerusalem Post*, was by Naftali Bein.

Bein was a well-known political figure in the Independent Liberal party who had, in 1933, traveled with a delegation of Palestinian Jews to Transjordan in an effort to buy land for Jewish settlement. His travels took him the length and breadth of the country; and while they produced no tangible results, they left him with a conviction that, from a geopolitical perspective, Transjordan and Palestine should be united as one country. Like Joseph, Bein believed that the Jordan River was not a natural border but a vein running through the heart of the country. Also like Joseph, Bein advocated a Middle East federation as an example for other nations to follow. "The writer is convinced that the peace of the world can be ultimately secured only through a system of voluntary federations of free nations, culminating finally in a federal world government, which should hold, in its hands, by proxy, the ultimate military power of the world." Bein is unambiguous in this article in his belief that confederation is the only way to peace. "If we genuinely want peace, security and the integrity of the character of our own state within the wholeness of the Holy Land, within its historical borders on both sides of the Jordan—as we do—and if the Arabs demand a similar status for themselves—as they do—then both parties can have that only in the form of an economic and political federation of two independent states, Israel on the one hand, and an Arab-Palestinian-Jordan state on both sides of the Jordan, on the other."

Bein, who had political influence within his party, managed to convince the Liberal leadership, which in 1976 had four members in the Knesset, to include a federal solution in its party platform. At the last moment before the 1977 election, fearing a negative reaction from voters who were obviously swinging to the right, the Independent Liberal party withdrew the proposal from its platform. Ironically, their representation after the election was reduced from four to one. Joseph, who normally does not engage in wistful "what-might-have-beens," wonders what might have been the situation if the proposal had been left in and if the Liberal seats had been increased from four to five. At the very least, the issue would have had a serious airing and debate.

With the formal beginnings of the society in 1972, Joseph felt he needed more time for his political work than the extended holiday he took every year from the symphony and conservatory. In 1972, he made his final break from teaching and performing, yet it would be incorrect to say he ever broke with music. His evenings were filled with chamber music, and music continued to nourish other phases of his life. For example, he often began political lectures with a short musical piece. Once, when someone was trying to assess the language in which Joseph was most comfortable, Joseph replied that his mother tongue was German, his formal education was in French, and the languages of his daily life were Hebrew and, to a lesser degree, Arabic. The frustrated interviewer asked, "But what is the language of your prayers?" To this Joseph replied, "Music." Music remains the inspirational force behind his work as he attempts to translate harmony from the musical score to the living world.

In the first months of 1972, Joseph met with many young people in Israel, including students from universities in Jerusalem and Haifa. He took some of them into the West Bank to meet with Arab leaders and promoted Arab-Israeli dialogue whenever he could. It was in 1972 that he first visited Neve Shalom, the only intentional living community in Israel set up by Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Foreign groups of students,

especially from Germany, sought Joseph as a guide, a translator, and a contact with Arabs and with those in the Israeli peace movement. One group was the Aktion Sühnezeichen-Friedendienste, a group of young Germans who volunteered for two years' service in countries affected by the terrible years of Nazi power. He has maintained close ties with them and was a special guest at the 1986 reception that marked the completion of twenty-five years of service in Israel.

After completing a short trip to Germany in September 1972, where he had been invited back to the International Friendship House in Bückeburg to mediate an Israeli-Arab-German encounter, Joseph returned to plan for a more extensive tour abroad in 1973. Late in the year, Dinah suffered an accident that changed his plans. That year Effie had been an exchange student in the United States, but while she studied in America, she also had to keep up with her work in Israel. To help her do so, Dinah used to go over to her classmates' homes each day to take their lecture notes back to be copied. One day, her copying kept her so late that she had to rush to the railway station to catch a train to Tel Aviv, where she was to join Joseph at a family wedding. In the rush to make the train connection, she slipped from the pavement into the path of an automobile. She suffered a serious fracture of the leg, which took more than one and one-half years to heal. Joseph was her nurse during the whole period of her immobility.

Even though his movements were restricted, he still managed to participate in peace activities that were important to him. He went to Europe in 1973 for thirty-three lectures and again in 1974 for sixty-five. During these trips, he tried to deepen support for his ideas abroad, even though he was somewhat discouraged about his lack of progress at home. He counted on these tours not only to put the pressure of world opinion on the Israeli government but also to produce some revenue for his activities at home. While his lecture fees were always modest and his mode of travel just a cut above his travels in India, he had to count on gifts, membership fees, and honoraria to keep both the society and his own family going. Every trip more

than met his expenses and usually produced later funding. By 1976, he was receiving annual contributions from Swiss, Dutch, and German Quaker groups as well as from the American Friends Service Committee, the Mennonite Central Committee, and, since 1977, the Brethren Service Commission. By 1983, more than 90 percent of his budget came from abroad, which meant that staying in touch with these groups was essential, though keeping up with the correspondence was increasingly difficult. He did not get rich from these ventures. He charged the society only seventeen dollars a month for his office and not more than one hundred dollars a month for his services as secretary. While he could have used the additional income from music during this period, he also could not possibly have nursed Dinah and kept up with his work for the society had he also had to give lessons and perform with the Haifa Symphony Orchestra. Guests continued to stream through the front door, but they probably never suspected what a toll their presence was taking on their hosts' meager resources.

On the Israeli front, Joseph spent 1973 working for the rights of citizens of Ikrit and Bir'am and, in the summer, helped to organize a successful work camp at Jdeide, an Arab town in the western Galilee. The work camp constructed a playground for the town and was one of the first successful undertakings of Father Elias Chacour. The interfaith cooperation in planning and running the camp brought back memories of the successful work-camp activities of the fifties, and this camp, as well as the one the next summer for the Arab inhabitants of Lod, received support from the Israeli branch of the WRI and financial backing from private individuals and from groups like the German Quakers. When the Jdeide project was finished, the group realized that it needed a fence around the playground to keep it safe for the very young and to discourage using it as a place to dump rubbish. An appeal to Yehudi Menuhin for help brought the funds needed for the fencing material.

It is important to remember that these camps represented constructive reconciling activity that "sandwiched" the 1973 October War. In the years 1973 and 1974 there was more in-

terest within Israel for the society's proposals because of the sudden and almost catastrophic war with Egypt. The myth of Israeli military invincibility was severely shaken; and when Arie Eliav, former secretary of the Histadrut and an influential Knesset member, told Joseph that his name could be used as one who in the Knesset favored the proposal for confederation, it seemed that at last a public debate might take place. But although the society received a small increase in membership, the Israeli public as a whole swung in the direction of strengthening Israel's defenses so that they would never be surprised as they were on October 6, 1973. Few seemed interested in the long-term goal of creating conditions of a positive peace, and Joseph's plans were thwarted by a decided shift to support for right-wing opinions. Sometimes it was hard to think of going against the tide, but incidents occurred that gave him strength to continue.

One such incident was a meeting in 1974 in Switzerland with Lore Steinestel Abbady. Joseph had first met Lore Steinestel, a young German from Stuttgart, when he received her in his home in Haifa in 1971. She subsequently married an Egyptian, Sayed Abbady, and moved to Port Said. During the October War, she was evacuated from Port Said and sent to Switzerland. There she went to hear Joseph lecture. After the meeting, she went up to him and told him how desperate she was both for reunification with her husband, who had stayed behind in Port Said, and for reassurance that one day these wars would end. Still hanging on his words of hope, she accompanied Joseph to the train station. As he looked out from the window of the train, his last sight was of her beseeching eyes. Loyalty to those eyes—as to the eyes of Mrs. Jaber, who on her death bed asked Joseph to continue to work so that mothers would not be separated from their children as she had been from hers; and to the eyes of the young mother in Tel Aviv, who tearfully thanked Joseph for giving words to her deepest hopes for a peaceful country, where Israeli mothers would not have to wonder which of their sons would survive the war—all these eyes made Joseph feel he had the obligation to pursue his work. He realized as he lec-

tured at home and abroad that, while parties and governments and even organizations rejected his ideas, these same ideas were held by the ordinary people of the world. His dream was not a solitary one, and when dreams are not solitary, they have a chance of becoming real.

Joseph's second lecture tour to the United States in 1975 brought him audiences that, in many ways, were more receptive than they had been in 1971, even when Israeli audiences were becoming less so. He had received backing from the Mennonites for this trip, especially because his plans were to be on the same lecture platform with Ibrahim Sima'an, who had replaced Wajdi-Farid Tabari as chairman of the society. The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) had hoped to show the American public living proof that Arab-Jewish cooperation was possible, and when at the last minute Ibrahim had to cancel the trip because of his wife's illness, the MCC cut down on some of their responsibilities for organizing the tour as a whole. Other groups took up the slack, and Joseph gave seventy lectures in a thirty-nine-day period. Highlights were talks in California and Florida, where his constructive approach to the future seemed to instill a new spirit into Jewish and Arab groups that had been sharply at odds with one another. One California spectator wrote to a friend, "The power of nonviolent reason was proven. Joseph Abileah played God's servant as Martin Luther King, Albert Schweitzer and Gandhi had. I place Joseph in that group as I hope I can you and myself and many others when we allow the power of truth and love to express itself."

In Washington, D.C., Joseph made his second visit to Congress, this time in the company of George Assousa, a Palestinian, and Yossi Ben-Dak, an Israeli, who were coleaders of a new association, the Foundation for Arab-Israeli Reconciliation (FAIR), which promoted a tripartite confederation scheme. This initial contact with FAIR was encouraging to Joseph, but the organization lasted only a short while as its leaders adopted different stances. Unfortunately, such setbacks were not new to Joseph, but he carried on. When organizations let him down, there always seemed to be people who picked him up again.

One such person was Joe Maizlish, who lived in a small one- to two-room apartment and drove around in a car that seemed destined to fail any automobile inspection. Joe had a consuming passion for justice and was active in West Coast peace groups. One day in 1981, he discovered that he had inherited part interest in an orange grove in Israel. When he checked on this land, Joe Maizlish discovered that it had been confiscated from Arabs in 1948. Although he was a man of modest means, Maizlish decided he could not keep money earned on land he did not genuinely believe was his own. Consequently, he turned over his share of the profits every year to Joseph and the society to use as they saw fit for building bridges between Arabs and Jews. A notable use of one year's proceeds was to begin a school building for the Ein Hilweh camp in Lebanon, a refugee camp that had been almost destroyed during the 1982 war in Lebanon. Joseph and Ibrahim Sima'an took the money and purchased a module for one room. Then they used that one room to attract support for the construction of the whole school. Private individuals in Israel and the government itself, along with the UN, contributed enough to build a school. The most important of these individuals was Dov Yermiya, author of *My War Diary,* a moving account of an Israeli's moral struggle with the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. Yermiya, a lieutenant colonel in the Israeli Defense Forces, was assigned to civilian relief during the war. As part of his activities, he rasied funds for nine classrooms. The Israeli government eventually stepped in with funding for three more rooms and the UNO provided funds for furniture and salaries for the teaching staff.

Maizlish did not at the time want his name made public, but it is important to name him because he is one of many individuals who form a network with Joseph and who, like Joseph, are peace workers unknown to the public but honored by those who come within the orbit of their lives. In a part of the world where so much destruction occurs, it is important to memorialize those whose lives have been dedicated to creation, not only for what they themselves have done but because they suggest that perhaps there are many more who may be working in the same way.

Joseph believes that there are others and keenly feels his fellowship with workers for peace whom he has never met, as well as with countless numbers who are now his friends. The list of people he encountered in these years includes famous figures in the peace movement like Joan Baez, Scott Kennedy, Martin Niemöller, John Davis, Jim Forest, Allan Solomonow, I. F. Stone, Johan Galtung; but it includes others whose names are not as well known but whose lives have touched those who have felt the warm light of their spirit. People like Reverend Martin England, a Baptist minister from South Carolina; Willi and Margreth Halli and Liesel and Joseph Mertens from Germany; Ida and Abe Kaufman and Thalia Stern (Broudy) from Florida; Alan Carnoy of California; Rabbi Michael Robinson of Croton-on-Hudson, New York; and Ruth Richardson of Birmingham, England. To each of these names belongs a story, but we must be content to name them as one names the precious threads that weave the fabric of peace. And in doing so, we must not forget the threads contributed by people living in the Middle East: Sister Marie Goldstein, Elias Jabbour, Kamil Shehadeh, Aaron Kamis, Amos Gvirtz, Mubarak Awad, and others already mentioned. And to these persons should be added the names of organizations that form a part of Joseph's peace network: the Quakers, the Mennonites, the FOR and IFOR, and the WRI and ILHCR have been discussed; but there are many other groups like Viktor Pashkis's Fellowship Farm, Ned Hanauer's Search for Justice and Equality in the Middle East, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Committee to Bridge the Gap, Alan Carnoy's Association for Peace in the Middle East, the Communauté de l'Arche, the Peace Village of Ste. Dorothéa in Switzerland, the Meditran, the International Vegetarian Society; also Neve Shalom and Shutafut (Partnership) whose work has intersected with Joseph's own and who have given him important encouragement to carry on.

There are many times when he needed this strength. On April 26, 1978, he took a group of young Germans working in Israel to visit the West Bank. They hired a bus from an Arab company that had bought an old Israeli bus and had repainted

it. Some of the Hebrew letters showed through the paint, and when the bus got to Nablus, people became suspicious of it. Thinking that it was full of Israelis, someone threw a bomb through a window. Two young people, Suzanne Zahn and Christoph Gaede, were killed, and Christoph's brother, Dietrich, lost the sight of one eye and suffered damage to the other. Fortunately, Joseph had left the bus minutes before the blast to get transportation back to Haifa. He heard nothing of the attack until he got home, where a frantic Dinah, not knowing if he had still been on the bus, met him with the news of the tragedy. In a part of the world that never ceases to surprise one with its cruel ironies, the fact that this group of young Germans, who in their efforts to promote healing and to atone for the crimes of their own country through their work with Aktion Sühnezeichen-Friedendienste, had come to the West Bank to hear the Palestinian point of view and had been mistaken for Israelis seemed a cruel blow to those who believed in the possibility of peace. It appeared to confirm the worst fears of those who thought Arab-Jewish reconciliation was a dangerous and fruitless undertaking. Joseph was devastated by the event and vowed never to arrange a trip for any foreigners again to the West Bank. Dietrich Gaede, the remarkable young survivor, refused to blame Joseph or anyone else for the tragedy. Quick action by the Israeli army had saved the sight of one of his eyes, and the Israeli government has given him a pension to help compensate for the loss he suffered; but when he was asked to make a public statement about the incident, he asked for attention to be paid to the conditions that made such terrorism possible. Though almost blind, he courageously held to a vision that sought to "take away the occasion of all wars," and as Joseph played the viola at a memorial service for the victims, his own eyes could barely see the score, blinded as they were by tears caused by guilt, regret, and, curiously, hope. The example of Dietrich impressed upon him once again that, at the moment of darkest tragedy and cruelest irony, the light of hope, the "divine sparkle" in the human heart, manifested in Dietrich's ability to forgive, could continue to assert itself.

Later in 1979, Joseph made another trip to America and Europe, his second in two years. In fifty-one lectures and fourteen interviews he reached more than thirty-four hundred listeners. After the Nablus tragedy, it was good to find audiences receptive to his ideas who also encouraged him to continue his work. A significant event was his participation in a meeting held by the Committee for a Just Peace in the Middle East, where Allan Solomonow of the Middle East Peace Project was debating Mr. Zuhdi Terazi, the PLO ambassador to the United Nations. Joseph was asked from the floor to address the meeting, and many in the audience came away with the conviction that the federal solution was the only way out of the Middle East dilemma. He met a similar response at the Resource Center for Nonviolence in California, where he met with Scott Kennedy, from whom he received one thousand dollars to help with his work.

In the following year, Joseph was able to continue his dialogue with officials of the PLO when, on a trip limited to Europe, he spoke with Daoud Barakat, the PLO representative in Geneva. Before a large audience, they had a frank exchange of ideas. Barakat did not rule out the idea of a confederation, but he insisted that it could come about only after the creation of a Palestinian sovereign state. Barakat's point of view is the one shared by most Palestinians who listen to Joseph. His notion of a confederation is possibly reconcilable with the goal of a secular democratic state, but after forty years of stateless existence, few Palestinians are willing to give up the idea that establishing a sovereign state in the West Bank and Gaza is the first step toward an eventual peace.

Joseph spoke to large audiences, especially after he appeared at the German Book Trade Peace Prize ceremony, which that year was given to Yehudi Menuhin. When Joseph had told Menuhin that he would like to be present at the award, he was sent an invitation. When he arrived at the large hall, Joseph was surprised to find himself escorted to a seat near the platform. In the course of his acceptance of the award, Yehudi Menuhin, with characteristic modesty and humility, told of Joseph

and his work, and the television cameras zoomed in on the embarrassed Joseph, who suddenly realized why Menuhin had secured such a good seat for him. Menuhin arranged for Joseph to be seated with the Israeli ambassador later at the awards dinner, so that he could tell him more about his work and ideas.

It was greatly frustrating to be received so well abroad and yet have so much trouble getting a speaking engagement in Israel. In 1981, on the one trip he made to America with Ibrahim Sima'an, he was asked to have a radio discussion with Mohammed Milhem, the deposed mayor of the Palestinian town of Halhul. At the end of the discussion, Joseph was asked to sum up and to give his hopes for the future. When he finished, the interviewer turned to Milhem to ask him for his own concluding remarks. Milhem replied, "I have nothing to add. What this gentleman says comes straight from my heart." In 1982, he was similarly welcomed by Dr. Boutros Ghali, minister for foreign affairs of Egypt. Joseph had heard from his friends Ida and Abe Kaufman that Dr. Ghali appeared to be a believer in a federal solution to the conflict. After trying for several years to arrange a meeting, Joseph, accompanied by Dinah and Jehudith and Meir Sarid, friends from Haifa, met with Ghali on March 28, some two months before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Dr. Ghali told Joseph that he had dreamed of a federated Middle East for more than thirty years and that, after a period of normal relations between Egypt and Israel, who had just recently signed the Camp David Accord (1978), he hoped to work for a peace that meant more than just the absence of war between the two countries. More importantly, he confirmed Joseph's belief that it would be the grass-roots organizations like the Society for Middle East Confederation, working amongst the people and not cloistered in academic think tanks, who would be instrumental in creating this peace. Joseph gave Dr. Ghali a selection from the transcript of his dialogue with Daoud Barakat, and Ghali assured him that the Voice of Cairo would report on their meeting with him. The war in June 1982 erased any good that broadcast might have done.

Through the years, Joseph has become an effective public

speaker. The format of his lectures usually divides the time equally between lecture and discussion. His success has often been linked to the manner of his presentation. Though he speaks with conviction, he never gives way to emotions. More importantly, he never reacts to emotional comments and questions in a defensive manner. To veterans of debates on the Middle East, where each side is determined to blame the other as much as possible, it has been refreshing to hear someone who is not so much interested in finding fault as in planning ahead. It is not that he thinks the past is unimportant, for he acknowledges the claim of both Jews and Arabs to the same piece of land, but since each claim is based on historical conquest, he does not find it profitable to spend too much time deciding who has the most rights. Thus in 1971, he wrote to Thalia Stern, who had written him to say how disappointed she had been in a meeting with a Palestinian Quaker who did nothing but dispute the numbers killed in the Holocaust:

> And here we come to the conversation you had with Dr. Mansour at Ramallah. I myself never experienced such unpleasant talk with him. This owing to the fact that I never bring up the negative side and wrong-doings of other people, but always turn to positive, constructive matters. I thereby create a dialogue on what has to be done in the future in order to reach peace. To cut it short: it is not relevant to inquire who first started the dispute, but it is very important to know who will stop first. For me it is not important to fix exactly the correct number of Nazi victims or the number of synagogues destroyed, but to find a way that such things do not happen again.

During one of his lectures in California, he was challenged by a young Palestinian who, not untypically at these occasions, gave a speech under the guise of asking a question. In his diatribe, he mentioned that there were six million Palestinian refugees. It would have been easy for Joseph to correct his figure and perhaps to humiliate him for his lack of accurate historical knowledge. But Joseph has never called anyone a liar dur-

ing his lectures. Instead, he simply said that he would not get involved in a debate on blame because "there had not been one thing that the Jews experienced from Arabs that we did not do to them. . . . We want no balance sheet, but only to stop the chain reaction. It may be that many Jews abroad did not know about the massacre of 254 Palestinians in the village of Deir Yssin in 1948, but there are also many Palestinians who did not know about the massacre of 77 Jewish doctors and nurses a few days later on the road leading to the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem." It might be argued that this approach at times minimizes the impact of past sufferings, but few can argue that it clears the way for thinking of the future without being chained to the past.

Joseph begs his audiences not to revert to the use of loaded words that can mean many things to different people. He asks each member of his audience to refrain from using slogans and to be logical and clear as they listen to his own simple and pragmatic position. To those people who are able to respond to requests to avoid such words as *terrorism, racism, Zionism*—almost any "ism" as a matter of fact—the effect has been remarkable. Time and time again, people respond both to his simple logic and to the authenticity of its presentation. There is no gap between the moral base from which he speaks and its political projection. The world has grown a bit weary of public figures whose personal lives are often deeply at odds with their public rhetoric, and Joseph awakens the belief that this need not be the case. Though many peace leaders have had feet of clay, the following review of a speech he made on May 23, 1985, in Germany is typical of those listeners who are struck by his integrity. "He is not a bitter prophet of peace nor is he a lone dissenter in his homeland, but young and old who came, invited by Pax Christi, met a man with passion but also with gentleness, a witness of the happenings of the Middle East. And in a humane, convincing way, he strives for reconciliation between Jews and Arabs. He is far from an airy idealist, because he puts analytically the situation by knowing exactly all the historical facts and differences of the mentalities."

The continuing and expanding support from abroad has somewhat offset the frustration of not having his ideas take deeper root in Israel. Arab and Jewish friends who believed in the confederation urged Joseph to spend more time talking with Israelis and less time abroad. Among Israeli Arabs and, to a lesser degree, West Bank Palestinians, his ideas have received a positive hearing, partly because they have answered a deep Palestinian longing for self-determination, an end to discrimination, and the assertion of individual dignity. Anwar El-Khatib wrote to *Qadi* Wajdi-Farid Tabari after Joseph met him in 1967, "I enjoyed meeting Abileah. He is a great man and I would like to see him again."

Such positive words have not come from the mouths of many Israelis. While there are those like Arie Eliav, who shares his dream, or those like Professor Daniel Elazar, who believes in a federal solution to the problem, most Israelis are unwilling to give up the hard-won national sovereignty for something as risky as a confederation. With most Israelis, he has been more interested in his ideas getting a hearing than in having his name associated with them. He possesses the rare gift of absorbing the criticism of his fellow citizens without being too discouraged or personally crushed. He has been able to absorb abuse because he has questioned neither the truth of his own commitment to all his fellow creatures nor the belief that his own plan was one that would one day prevail.

One important convert to his ideas was his wife, Dinah. As we have seen, the early years of their marriage were difficult for her. Because she did not share his ideas, his frequent absences and his disregard for the financial security of his family weighed heavily on her. She never understood his frantic activity at the time of the partition, and she grieved when he refused to read Adi's letters after he had joined the army. There were times when she wondered how long they could live together, though she always loved him deeply. While she did not accept his ideas in the early days of their marriage, she did her best to give him the sort of stable home he needed for his ac-

Joseph and Dinah.

tivities. She even became used to cooking vegetarian meals for him and separate ones for the children and herself.

After 1967, especially after Effie was grown, Dinah became more and more involved with the society. Her participation in work camps had convinced her that one could work for and create peace; and on her trips abroad with Joseph, she became more and more willing to believe that his dreams might one day be realizable. While never totally or enthusiastically in agreement with the aims of the society, she served many hours as its corresponding secretary and helped Joseph keep up with the files of hundreds of correspondents that began to fill the office, which had been the bedroom of her sons. When she broke her leg in 1972 and Joseph attended to her, he realized how much he counted on her and needed her steadiness to keep him going. She had several other serious illnesses during this period, but in 1983, doctors discovered that she had bone cancer. She bore this extremely painful illness with great patience and watched with some amusement as Joseph learned to drive a car to help her get around. The veteran scooter driver required almost three hundred hours of instruction before passing his test. It seems he was too cautious and too willing to waive his rights when on the highway; in this, like everything else in his life, he is consistent. The same man who is willing to waive his national rights in exchange for peace is the one who would waive his driving rights at intersections. Israel has had as much trouble accommodating his driving style as it has his politics.

On May 9, 1986, Dinah died. Though her death was expected, Joseph was shattered by it. She seemed to take much of his strength with her, and friends have been alarmed that perhaps something had broken in Joseph with her death. His old friend *Qadi* Tabari visited him the day after the funeral. He found Joseph on the floor of his bedroom, polishing Dinah's shoes. He had spent all day at it—to give them away. Emptiness and despair came upon him whenever he was alone. Letters from friends all over the world remained unanswered on his desk. He began to wonder if he would ever get back to his work.

In the end, the dream reasserted itself. As he remembered

Joseph Abileah, musician of Haifa. Courtesy of Yossi Yarmus.

the pledge he had made at his brother's grave in 1967, he pledged himself again to the task of peace. In the spring of 1987, he rose above his despair and undertook a strenuous two-month lecture tour of Europe and the United States. While it was painful to visit old friends, he appreciated their efforts to comfort him and turn him to the future. It was also heartening to rediscover that there was an audience for his ideas and an urgency that

they be implemented before the state of affairs in the Middle East grew worse. He faces the future still holding fast to his vision and to his faith in the human heart, but he is apprehensive about who will accompany him on his journey or take over from him when he is gone. Dinah's death appears to have impressed him with how solitary he can be, even at a time when the greatest solidarity imaginable is needed. His work is not yet done.

# 8

# The True Victories

To believe in God is easy. But to believe that one day this world will be God's world; to believe this in a faith so firm and resolute as to mold one's life according to it—this requires faithfulness until death.

—Leonard Ragaz

If we keep our eyes fixed on the foreground, the true victories, won in secret, sometimes look like defeats. True victories happen slowly and imperceptibly, but they have far-reaching effects.

—Martin Buber

How do you measure the value of a life? Do you assess the efforts of a peacemaker only by whether peace is achieved in his or her lifetime? If so, Joseph Abileah's lack of success in winning peace in a land he loves so much would seem to cast a shadow over his life and permit the comparison of his activities to those of Don Quixote, tilting at windmills, hopelessly out of touch in a world that has moved beyond magic, knighthood, and ladies in distress. Indeed, the history of Israel might be written without Joseph Abileah appearing even in a footnote. So many things he has worked for have never been realized. Arabs have still not come back to Bir'am, despite a 1952 court ruling that favored their right to return, subject only to the permission of the minister of defense; houses continue to be expropriated and destroyed, even though in 1987 Joseph drove his car through fields of mud to try to stop the demolition of Bedouin homes on Mount Carmel; olive trees continue to be uprooted, despite Joseph's participation in marches designed

to insure the protection of the green line, and Jews are stabbed in Gaza markets and in the streets of Jerusalem, despite Joseph's pleading for the use of nonviolence. Each day seems to create more enmity between Arab and Jew. A 1987 poll found that 60 percent of the Israeli Jewish teenagers would refuse to live in the same apartment building as an Arab and that 40 percent would not want to work with an Arab. If the same poll had been taken among Israeli Arabs or Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza, the percentages would have been even higher. Real peace in the spring of 1987 seemed even farther away than it did in 1947, the year Joseph began in earnest his peacemaking efforts.

The face of the Middle East changed, perhaps forever, on December 9, 1987. The beginning of the Palestinian *intifada* (uprising) occurred when Joseph was in Germany, recovering from a slight stroke he suffered while on a speaking tour. The *intifada*, like many other crises in the state of Israel, appears to offer an opportunity to break out of stale ways of thinking. Somewhat surprisingly, an amazing number of voices have now been heard who advocate confederation between Israel, Jordan, and Palestine as the only viable long-range solution to the conflict. People as diverse as Samuel Lewis, a former United States ambassador to Israel; Hanna Siniora, the Palestinian editor of the Arabic newspaper, *Al-Fajr*; Shlomo El Baz, the head of the Sephardic peace group, East for Peace; and Abba Eban, former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations have all spoken in favor of confederation. The *intifada* has made abundantly clear three important situations: (1) the steadfastness of the Palestinian people's desire to achieve national self-determination; (2) the lack of support for the so-called Jordanian option—a plan to absorb Palestinians into the kingdom of Jordan; and (3) the impossibility of either expelling or absorbing the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza into Israel. With a December 1988 decision on the part of the United States to begin talks with the Palestine Liberation Organization, even United States newspapers are printing articles arguing for a confederation.

No one seems to have recognized that the father of the confederation of three states is neither Martin Buber nor Judah

Magnes; it is Joseph Abileah. Joseph continues his long convalescence in Germany while the ideas he fought to realize his whole adult life are no longer regarded as mere pipe dreams; they are being seriously debated as viable political solutions to a seemingly intractable problem. It may be that these ideas, which he despaired of seeing implemented in 1987, will yet bear fruit in his lifetime. If so, the results will be highly gratifying both to him and to others who have shared his dream.

But while results are important, especially because they are quantifiable, they are not the true measure of a human life. When one thinks of Joseph Abileah, one thinks not of shadows but of light. He has not wasted his life in pursuit of an unrealizable dream. His dream has given his life a meaning, and the consistency of his witness has made of his life a thing of beauty. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace," Isaiah 52:7. No one should dismiss Joseph's single-minded pursuit of his truth as grotesque and foolish without looking at that truth itself and how its power has transformed those who observe in Joseph its embodiment. In Joseph's life, the way of achieving the goal is as important as the goal itself. In some respects, the way *is* the goal—the means are the ends.

One can see this tenet by examining one last time the most important pillar of Joseph's faith—the brotherhood and sisterhood of all humankind. He is not unique in his belief nor is he alone in Israel in asserting the common humanity of Arab and Jew. But he has lived his ideal as few have done and has exhibited great staying power. Examine the following passages: "We are not transient wayfarers here. We have come to strike roots in this land, and as we meet its Arab cultivators, who are rooted in it, the roots we are sending down into the ground meet their roots in the depth of the soil, and they cling together and draw nourishment from one source. We, the Jewish and the Arab workers, are sons of one land, and our way of life is intertwined forever." And, "Every person has the right for a homeland and every person must have his roots somewhere. If I feel my roots at the same place as my Arab brother feels his roots,

we must find a common way in this common homeland." The metaphor used is the same in each passage, as is the underlying idea. The first passage is more poetic, and its rhetorical beauty makes it sound more persuasive. The first is from the mouth of David Ben-Gurion, speaking at a labor convention in 1924. The second is by Joseph Abileah, conversing with PLO member Daoud Barakat at a debate in Switzerland in 1979. By the time he became the first prime minister of Israel, Ben-Gurion had sunk his roots and had stood by and watched as the Arabs he once claimed as brothers were uprooted, including three hundred thousand in what was determined by the UN partition plan to be the Jewish state in Palestine. The 1979 statement made by Joseph represents a commitment he had held onto and lived by since arriving in Palestine in 1926, and his roots have been forever intertwined with those of his Arab brothers.

In the fall of 1986, Joseph and I were sitting in the restaurant of a petrol station outside the Israeli Arab town of Shefa Amr. We had arrived early for an appointment with Elias Jabbour, and to avoid disturbing him at lunchtime, we decided to eat at the station. As we took our salad plates to the table, I noticed two men eyeing us closely. We had been served with polite coldness by the Arab waiters, and I was beginning to feel uncomfortable and out of place. At last, one of the two men came over to our table and stopped in front of us. "Abileah?" he asked. Joseph replied affirmatively in Arabic, though it was clear from his face that he did not recognize the man. The man broke into a grin and hugged Joseph, who had tentatively risen from his seat. The man insisted that we join him for the rest of our lunch and explained that he had last seen Joseph in 1947, in Haifa. He, Josef Khoury, had been employed by the British, and one day while on his way to work in the midst of heavy fighting between Arabs and Jews, he had been stopped in the street by Joseph, who asked for directions to the Muslim head of the Arab Dèfense Force. Khoury, who had never met Joseph but had heard of him and had recognized this skinny and bespectacled Jew wearing a white *khaffieh*, had been afraid to ac-

company Joseph. He gave him directions and hurried away, but he had always remembered him and had followed accounts of his trial and of his peace work in the newspapers. Khoury himself is resigned to second-class citizenship and thinks that his situation will never change, but he expressed admiration and affection for the man who had clung to his own ideals. The other Arab at the table was from the village of Sahnin, where Joseph had gone to comfort victims after the violence of Land Day in 1976. He, too, had heard of Abileah, the "good Jew."

Joseph has earned his status as persona grata in the Palestinian community by his unwavering commitment to brotherhood. A Mennonite minister once met in Beirut a prominent member of the PLO who had come from Haifa. He asked him what life had been like before the partition. The PLO official, Nabil Shaath, said that he left when he was only ten and had few memories, but one memory he had was of a Jewish neighbor, Joseph Abileah, whose example of genuine and peaceful coexistence and manner of treating all Arabs with respect had stayed with him and had led him to believe that, in spite of all the hatred, it might be true that Jews and Arabs could one day live in peace.

What is important about these tributes is not that they speak of Joseph's plan for confederation, which may or may not be realized, but that they bear witness to his person. Many nationalistic Israelis who think his ideas are dangerous for the state still honor him as a person, as a man too good for a brutal world. Israelis on the left end of the political spectrum who have themselves left their country respect his tenacity in pursuing what, to them, is not so much a dangerous as an unfortunately unattainable ideal. His sister-in-law, Miriam, who lives in Canada, wrote, "Pack up dear fellow, your life's work wasn't worth a sou. This is the age of brutality triumphant." Yet Joseph alone, of all those she left behind, commands her affection. It is difficult to know if the seeds he plants will grow in the uncertain soil of Israel/Palestine. But people will remember the sower. *Vebaharta betov,* says the Hebrew—you are able to choose the good.

Joseph is the man of peace who has chosen goodness. He has chosen it from a purity of heart that sparkles in its clarity. John Woolman, an American Quaker, wrote, "There is a Principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names; it is, however, pure, and proceeds from God. It is deep, and inward, confined to no forms of religion, nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren." This extraordinary purity of heart and clarity of vision suggest affinity not only with Magnes and Buber but also with early Hebrew prophets. But while he shares this vision, which involves the defense of the weak against the mighty and the obligation to work for a society characterized by justice and mercy, he would not want to be remembered as a prophet but as a worker—as one who could not wait until the world was ready, as one who with every ounce of his strength and determination worked for the final triumph of the good. What he learned from Beethoven's symphonies and quartets was that the good will prevail but that one has to work for it. What he learned from his religion, which is at one with his music, is that "the final outcome of the messianic age is not in our hands, but if we work for it, it will come."

*Qadi* Tabari said of Joseph, "He is a rare Jew of our times. He is a real human being; a true citizen of the world with a heart for everyone. I would love to see one Arab like him who would speak as openly and bravely about relations with the Jews as he does about the Arabs."

In a land created from a dream, Joseph is one of the few remaining dreamers. His mentor, Albert Schweitzer, once said, "One belief of my childhood I have preserved with the certainty that I can never lose it: belief in truth. I am confident that the spirit generated by truth is stronger than the force of circumstances. In my view no other destiny awaits mankind than that which, through its mental and spiritual disposition, it prepares for itself. Therefore I do not believe that it will have to tread the road to ruin right to the end." Like Dr. Schweitzer, Joseph

remains an optimist. His life may be proof that humankind has a future. At times when we seem destined to "tread the road to ruin right to the end," it is important to recall that there are those whose lives reveal a different, better way. One can only wish him well as he continues on his journey, sharing his dream with others, moving his dream a few steps closer to reality. His example is enough to suggest that it may one day be possible for men and women to achieve the "true victory"—a life of peace, shalom. Abileah, shalom.

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