RARELY SINCE THE CONQUEST of Jerusalem by Titus has the Jewish community experienced a period of greater oppression than prevails at the present time. In some respects, indeed, our own time is even more troubled, for man’s possibilities of emigration are more limited today than they were then.

Yet we shall survive this period too, no matter how much sorrow, no matter how heavy a loss in life it may bring. A community like ours, which is a community purely by reason of tradition, can only be strengthened by pressure from without. For today every Jew feels that to be a Jew means to bear a serious responsibility not only to his own community, but also toward humanity. To be a Jew, after all, means first of all, to acknowledge and follow in practice those fundamentals in humaneness laid down in the Bible—fundamentals without which no sound and happy community of men can exist.

We meet today because of our concern for the development of Palestine. In this hour one thing, above all, must be emphasized: Judaism owes a great debt of gratitude to Zionism. The Zionist movement has revived among Jews the sense of community. It has performed productive work surpassing all the expectations any one could entertain. This productive work in Palestine, to which self-sacrificing Jews throughout the world have contributed, has saved a large number of our brethren from direst need. In particular, it has been possible to lead a not inconsiderable part of our youth toward a life of joyous and creative work.

OUT OF MY LATER YEARS

Now the fateful disease of our time—exaggerated nationalism, borne up by blind hatred—has brought our work in Palestine to a most difficult stage. Fields cultivated by day must have armed protection at night against fanatical Arab outlaws. All economic life suffers from insecurity. The spirit of enterprise languishes and a certain measure of unemployment (modest when measured by American standards) has made its appearance.

The solidarity and confidence with which our brethren in Palestine face these difficulties deserve our admiration. Voluntary contributions by those still employed keep the unemployed above water. Spirits remain high, in the conviction that reason and calm will ultimately reassert themselves. Everyone knows that the riots are artificially fomented by those directly interested in embarrassing not only ourselves but especially England. Everyone knows that banditry would cease if foreign subsidies were withdrawn.

Our brethren in other countries, however, are in no way behind those in Palestine. They, too, will not lose heart but will resolutely and firmly stand behind the common work. This goes without saying.

Just one more personal word on the question of partition. I should much rather see reasonable agreement with the Arabs on the basis of living together in peace than the creation of a Jewish state. Apart from practical consideration, my awareness of the essential nature of Judaism resists the idea of a Jewish state with borders, an army, and a measure of temporal power no matter how modest. I am afraid of the inner damage Judaism will sustain—especially from the development of a narrow nationalism within our own ranks, against which we have already had to fight strongly, even without a Jewish state. We are no longer the Jews of the Maccabean period. A return to a nation in the political sense of the word would be equivalent to turning away from the spiritualization of our community which we owe to the genius
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of our prophets. If external necessity should after all compel us to assume this burden, let us bear it with tact and patience.

One more word on the present psychological attitude of the world at large, upon which our Jewish destiny also depends. Anti-Semitism has always been the cheapest means employed by selfish minorities for deceiving the people. A tyranny based on such deception and maintained by terror must inevitably perish from the poison it generates within itself. For the pressure of accumulated injustice strengthens those moral forces in man which lead to a liberation and purification of public life. May our community through its suffering and its work contribute toward the release of those liberating forces.

53

TO THE HEROES OF THE BATTLE OF THE WARSAW GHETTO

They fought and died as members of the Jewish nation, in the struggle against organized bands of German murderers. To us these sacrifices are a strengthening of the bond between us, the Jews of all the countries. We strive to be one in suffering and in the effort to achieve a better human society, that society which our prophets have so clearly and forcibly set before us as a goal.

The Germans as an entire people are responsible for these mass murders and must be punished as a people if there is justice in the world and if the consciousness of collective responsibility in the nations is not to perish from the earth entirely. Behind the Nazi party stands the German people, who elected Hitler after he had in his book and in his speeches made his shameful intentions clear beyond the possibility of misunderstanding. The Germans are the only people who have not made any serious attempt of counter-action leading to the protection of the innocently persecuted. When they are entirely defeated and begin to lament over their fate, we must not let ourselves be deceived again, but keep in mind that they deliberately used the humanity of others to make preparation for their last and most grievous crime against humanity.
OUT OF MY LATER YEARS

ALBERT EINSTEIN

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# CONTENTS

1. Publisher's Preface  

*Convictions and Beliefs*

2. Self-Portrait (1936)  
3. Ten Fateful Years (1939)  
4. Moral Decay (1937)  
5. Message for Posterity (1938)  
6. On Freedom (1940)  
7. Morals and Emotions (1938)  
8. Science and Religion (I—1939; II—1941)  
9. On Education (1936)  

*Science*

10. The Theory of Relativity (1949)  
11. \( E = MC^2 \) (1946)  
12. Time, Space, and Gravitation (1948)  
13. Physics and Reality (1936)  
   General Consideration Concerning the Method of Science  
   Mechanics and the Attempts to Base all Physics Upon It  
   The Field Concept  
   The Theory of Relativity  
   Quantum Theory and the Fundamentals of Physics  
   Relativity Theory and Corpuscles  
   Summary  
14. The Fundamentals of Theoretical Physics (1940)  
15. The Common Language of Science (1941)