

# The Judge and the President

*- How the American Zionist movement began*

Julie Selstø Roppestad



Masteroppgave i historie,  
Institutt for arkeologi, konservering og historie

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

Våren 2015



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2015

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# Summary

With the release of Theodor Herzl's "The Jewish State" in 1896, Zionism became a political movement with a clear goal; a Jewish homeland. The desire first arose in Europe, but soon American Jews followed suit. The American Zionist movement was riddled with internal strife from the get-go, and it took the involvement of "the People's Attorney", Louis D. Brandeis, and his friendship with the American President, Woodrow Wilson, to unite the American Zionists, at least for a little while. President Wilson quickly endorsed the Balfour Declaration, largely because of his friendship with Brandeis. This thesis is about the period between 1897 and 1930, and the main focus is on Louis D. Brandeis and the impact his leadership and his friendship with President Wilson had on the American Zionist movement.









# Table of contents

Summary.....	VIII
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 The Origins of Zionism.....	2
1.2 Political Zionism.....	4
1.3 A Short History of the Jews of America.....	6
1.4 Scope & Limitations.....	8
1.5 Sources and literature.....	9
<b>2. Zionism in Europe.....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Jewish life in Europe.....	12
2.2 Assimilation.....	13
2.3 Nationalism brings trouble for the Jewish population.....	13
2.4 Theodore Herzl.....	14
2.5 The Jewish State.....	17
2.6 Uganda or Palestine?.....	18
<b>3. The Early Years.....</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1 Lovers of Zion.....	21
3.2 The American Jewish scene: a place of contrast.....	22
3.3 American disinterest.....	23
3.4 The movement begins.....	25
3.5 The difference between the American and the European Zionists.....	27
3.6 A uniting effort.....	29
3.7 The troubles with the WZO begin.....	31
3.8 The non-Zionist diplomat who kept the American Zionist movement going.....	33
<b>4. Brandeis &amp; Wilson.....</b>	<b>37</b>
4.1 Louis D. Brandeis.....	37
4.2 Brandeis becomes a Zionist.....	38
4.3 Why Zionism?.....	40
4.4 The outspoken leader 1914-1916.....	43
4.5 The opposition to Zionism from the Jewish community.....	45

4.6 Woodrow Wilson.....	46
4.7 The relationship.....	47
4.8 The nomination and subsequent appointment 1916.....	50
4.9 The silent leader 1916-1921.....	52
4.10 Brandeis, Wilson & The Balfour Declaration.....	55
4. 11 Brandeis in Palestine 1919.....	59
<b>5. The Roaring Twenties with Louis Lipsky.....</b>	<b>62</b>
5.1 The situation in the ZOA by 1921.....	62
5.2 Lipsky the idealist vs Brandeis the pragmatist.....	63
5.3 Brandeis & Weizmann.....	65
5.4 A British Protectorate.....	68
5.5 Lipsky and Weizmann fight the Brandeis group.....	69
5.6 The <i>Keren Hayesod</i> .....	72
5.7 The Cleveland Convention .....	72
5.8 Aftermath. ....	73
5.9 The Lipsky regime.....	74
5.10 The Return of the Brandeis group.....	78
<b>6. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>82</b>
6.1 Zionism in America before Brandeis.....	82
6.2 The Brandeis effect.....	83
6.3 Lipsky without Brandeis .....	86
<b>7. Literature &amp; Sources.....</b>	<b>89</b>

## 1 - Chapter One

# Introduction

The Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) was instrumental in securing US support for the establishment of Israel in 1948.<sup>1</sup> This must have seemed like a hopeless dream to most American Zionists in 1930. The American Zionist movement was close to collapsing in on itself after years of internal struggle. Despite a slow start in 1897, American Zionism had grown strong with Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis as President, culminating in a successful effort to get President Woodrow Wilson to endorse the Balfour Declaration from 1917. Membership numbers were increasing, and there was a sense of hope among American Zionists.<sup>2</sup> The first President of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, called this “the providential and almost miraculous rise of American Zionism”. An internal and personal fight between Brandeis and another member of the leadership, Louis Lipsky, ended with Brandeis resigning as President of the ZOA in 1921 and Lipsky taking over the presidency. This strife left a divided organization that was slowly losing members and influence. Why did Brandeis’s leadership from 1912 to 1921 prove to be so important for the American Zionist movement, and how was it affected by his departure? In what way did World War One and Brandeis’ friendship with the President of the United States affect the work of the ZOA? Why did the relationship between the ZOA and the World Zionist Organization (WZO) become troublesome during this time?

This thesis will look at the period from the organization’s humble beginnings in Chicago in 1897, through the successes mainly achieved by the first Jewish Supreme Court Justice, Louis D. Brandeis, and the difficult period after his retirement. His leadership lasted from 1912 to 1921, and this thesis aims to show that it was during this time that the foundation for the future successes of the American Zionist movement was laid.

While there certainly was anti-Semitic opposition from the American public to the movement throughout this period of time, this thesis will mainly deal with the opposition from the Jewish community, where lecturers were banned from teaching on the sole basis of them

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<sup>1</sup> It was originally called The Federation of American Zionists (FAZ), but changed name and became the ZOA in 1917. I have found different dates for the founding of the organization, from 1896 to 1898, but I elected to use 1897 as it is the most frequently used, as well as the date that the ZOA itself operates with.

<sup>2</sup> Halperin, Samuel. *The Political World of American Zionism*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1961, 327

being Zionists, and within the movement itself.<sup>3</sup> The sheer magnitude of internal strife makes it impossible to mention everything, hence only the conflicts pertaining to Brandeis, Lipsky and Weizmann will be covered.

## 1.1 The origins of Zionism

*Zionism* originates from the word *Zion*, which in the Bible referred to Mount Zion, Jerusalem, Solomon's temple and even the afterlife. It was a word Jews of both Europe and America were familiar with and it was found in frequently spoken prayers such as "Next year in Jerusalem [Zion]" which was, and still is, often used to end the Seder, the Jewish feast that signifies the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover.<sup>4</sup>

The first documented appearance of the word *Zionism* in a public setting was in 1892. Nathan Birnbaum used this term during a public discussion in Vienna.<sup>5</sup> He was the co-founder of the first Zionist student organization in Vienna, *Kadimah*. Although Birnbaum used the word with political connotations, it is Theodor Herzl who is widely recognized as the founder of *political Zionism*.<sup>6</sup>

Finding a definition of Zionism, as well as what being a Zionist actually means, that everyone agrees on, is a difficult task. Evyatar Friesel, professor emeritus of modern Jewish history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem writes: "It is almost as difficult to determine who is a Zionist as it is to define who is a Jew."<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, he tries with a definition that states that "a Zionist is a Jew who believes that Jewish statehood in the Land of Israel is a necessary condition for the life of the Jewish people in the social and political circumstances of the modern world."<sup>8</sup> It is not a definition that everyone will agree with, but it is close to how most American Zionists may have interpreted the term at the end of the nineteenth- and the

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<sup>3</sup> Rabinowitz, Ezekiel. *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*. Philosophical Library, New York, 1968, 8

<sup>4</sup> Cohen, Naomi W. *The Americanization of Zionism, 1897-1948*. Brandeis University Press, New England, 2003, 2; Laqueur, Walter. *A History of Zionism*. Schocken Books, New York, 1972, 40; Raider, Mark A. *The Emergence of American Zionism*. New York University Press, New York, 1998, 6-7; During the Passover Seder, the story of the Jewish people's Exodus from Egypt is told, while traditional Jewish cuisine is served.

<sup>5</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, xiii; Birnbaum, although credited with being the first person to utter the word Zionism in a political context, ended his life as an orthodox Jew and a firm anti-Zionist.

<sup>6</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, xiii; Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 5-6

<sup>7</sup> Friesel, Evyatar. "American Zionism and American Jewry: An Ideological and Communal Encounter". *The American Jewish Archives Journal* Vol. 40, No. 1 (1988): 1.

[http://americanjewisharchives.org/journal/PDF/1988\\_40\\_01\\_00\\_friesel.pdf](http://americanjewisharchives.org/journal/PDF/1988_40_01_00_friesel.pdf) (opened Aug. 25<sup>th</sup> 2014)

<sup>8</sup> Friesel, *American Zionism and American Jewry: An Ideological and Communal Encounter*, 1

first quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> The WZO released a pamphlet in 1912 where they explained that for them Zionism “is the name of the movement which aims at the restoration of Jewish national life in Palestine. It is based upon the conviction that the Jews are a nation, and that they can best fulfil their destiny by reviving their corporate life upon a national basis in their ancestral country.”<sup>10</sup>

Europe had gone through enormous changes in the past centuries. Gone was the old feudal society, where power and allegiances were based on promises of loyalty between lords and vassals. Instead the new national state was revered as the ideal. The national states were to be based on the idea that each people should have their own state where they enjoyed autonomy and a secure environment among equals. Cultural and religious heritage as well as general history was the basis for who belonged where.<sup>11</sup>

This nationalism became problematic for the Jewish people. They were essentially seen as a wandering people without a permanent place to live, an unwanted minority.<sup>12</sup> Of course, this was not necessarily the way the Jews themselves saw it. Most had lived in the same place their whole life, and so had their parents and their parents again, but European nationalism brought with it an expectation of common traditions and heritage, which the Jewish population was not a part of. What were the Jews of Europe supposed to do? They found themselves in an impossible situation. Yet again, their home was not their home anymore.<sup>13</sup>

This development in Europe led to millions of Jews across Europe becoming unemancipated. The nationalistic ideas were followed by a rising tide of anti-Semitism. The anti-Semitism of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century manifested itself in gruesome *pogroms*, which were hateful attacks on Jews brought on by masses who blamed their Jewish neighbors for all bad things. In these attacks, hundreds of Jews were killed and houses and properties owned by Jews were destroyed and burned.<sup>14</sup> Herzl, hearing about the *pogroms* and living in Vienna, which was one of the most anti-Semitic places a Jew could find at the time, decided that the Jewish

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<sup>9</sup> Cohen, Israel. *The Zionist Movement – Its aims and aspirations*. W. Speaight & Sons, London, 1912, 5

<sup>10</sup> Cohen, *The Zionist Movement – Its aims and aspirations*, 5

<sup>11</sup> Palmer, R.R., Colton, Joel & Kramer, Lloyd, *A History of the Modern World – tenth edition*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 2007, 518

<sup>12</sup> Waage, Hilde H. *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. Cappelen Damm Akademisk, Kristiansand, 2013, 29

<sup>13</sup> Palmer, Colton & Kramer, *A History of the Modern World*, 518; Waage, *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 18

<sup>14</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 27



people needed their own nationalistic movement.<sup>15</sup> Herzl believed that the survival of the Jews was in peril as long as anti-Semitism was able to roam free among the new national states that wanted nothing to do with their Jewish populations. This led him to put all his efforts into Zionism. Herzl's Zionism was nationalistic, secular and more than anything, it was political.<sup>16</sup>

## 1.2 Political Zionism

Zionism was at first a vague ideology, but it became a firm political movement in 1897, when Theodor Herzl, a Western European Jew, organized the First Zionist Congress in Basel. His publication of *The Jewish State* from the year before included his thoughts on how to resolve "the Jewish problem" and his goal with the Congress was to unite Jewish political activity in an effort to promote the creation of an independent, democratic Jewish nation-state.<sup>17</sup> To Herzl the priority was not on where this nation would be located. Whether it would be in Palestine, Argentina or Uganda, was not as important as the plan being viable.<sup>18</sup> His Zionism was built on political pillars, not historical- or cultural ones. His focus was political because he saw it as the only way for a Jewish organization to be able to affect change. To base the organization on Jewish historical plights or cultural heritage would be less effective in the midst of an anti-Semitic surge.<sup>19</sup>

With this universal Jewish Congress, Zionism changed its form from a passive to an active ideology, and political Zionism became the umbrella under which all the other forms of Zionism gathered.<sup>20</sup> According to Menachem Ussischkin, a contemporary Eastern European Zionist leader, the success of Zionism depended on certain conditions being met by the Jewish people:

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<sup>15</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 27, 30

<sup>16</sup> Herzl, Theodor. *A Jewish State*. Federation of American Zionists, New York, 1917, 11-12; Elon, Amos. *Herzl*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1975, 131

<sup>17</sup> The use of "the Jewish problem" or "the Jewish question" is problematic because of the Nazi's later use of this term. Nevertheless, it is impossible to avoid it in a thesis like this. Herzl and Brandeis, as well as a magnitude of others, spoke and wrote about "the Jewish problem" and how to "solve" it. By this they meant the problems the Jewish people were facing in Europe and what to do to help them. Throughout this thesis I will only use it when referring to the use of it by a Zionist. I will use quotation marks to mark that these are the words they used at the time.

<sup>18</sup> Bein, Alex. *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, Atheneum, New York, 1970, 131

<sup>19</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 127-128, 131; Elon, *Herzl*, 147-148

<sup>20</sup> Cultural-, religious-, diplomatic Zionism to name a few. M. Ussischkin, C. E., *Our program*. Federation of American Zionists, New York, 1905, 1

It must possess a highly developed national consciousness, it must be united in a strong, disciplined organization, it must possess immense national funds, it must be armed with endurance and patience, and, above all, it must be ready to sacrifice the interests of the present for the sake of the future. If the people does not possess all of these essentials, it will not succeed in forming a political center.<sup>21</sup>

Herzl viewed “the Jewish problem” as “a remnant of the Middle Ages, which civilized nations do not . . . seem able to shake off, try as they will.”<sup>22</sup> He also claimed that the very same Jews who were trying to escape it, spread “the Jewish problem” throughout the world. Because Jews were moving to places where they believed they would find safety, the sheer amount of Jewish immigrants created the animosity and anti-Semitism they were trying to escape.<sup>23</sup> For Herzl, this was the reason why the situation had become untenable by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Something had to be done, for the good of all mankind, he argued.<sup>24</sup>

For Louis D. Brandeis, by many seen as America’s Herzl, “the Jewish problem” contained two questions: 1. “How can we secure for the Jews, wherever they may live, the same rights and opportunities enjoyed by non-Jews?”; 2. “How can we secure for the world the full contribution which Jews can make, if unhampered by artificial limitations?”<sup>25</sup> This concerned both the individual Jew and the collective Jewish people. “The suffering of the Jews due to injustices continuing throughout nearly twenty centuries” was, according to him, unfair and had to come to an end.<sup>26</sup>

For Herzl and his followers “[t]he aim of Zionism [was] to create for the Jewish people a publicly legally assured home in Palestine.”<sup>27</sup> This would give the Jewish people a national state of their own, which would solve “the Jewish problem” once and for all.

Herzl’s idea was to create a Jewish interest group that could participate in public affairs and influence governments. Interest groups are independent and created on the principle of volunteer work. They are autonomous but constricted by laws and regulations. They can serve on councils or on an advisory level to government officials. They often rely on mass media and the use of propaganda. The use of interest groups brings the public closer to the

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<sup>21</sup> Ussischkin, *Our program*, 1

<sup>22</sup> Herzl, *A Jewish State*, 2

<sup>23</sup> Herzl, *A Jewish State*, 2

<sup>24</sup> Elon, *Herzl*, 131, 141

<sup>25</sup> Brandeis, Louis D. *The Jewish Problem: How to Solve It*, The Zionist Essays Publication Committee, New York, 1915, 1

<sup>26</sup> Brandeis, *The Jewish Problem: How to Solve It*, 1

<sup>27</sup> Herzl, *A Jewish State*, vi

decision makers, making it easier for a group of people with similar interests to be heard.<sup>28</sup> The first American Zionists hoped that by uniting and creating a political interest group, they would be able to promote Jewish interests in the US as well as help the Jewish population in Europe. To gather support from the Jewish community in the US, they relied on the use of propaganda in already existing Jewish media. They also arranged for public meetings where Zionism was explained and discussed. Once the movement had substantial support they hoped to influence the US government to look favorable on issues that concerned the Jewish community, in particular the formation of a Jewish nation state in Palestine.<sup>29</sup>

### 1.3 A Short History of the Jews of America

1654 is recognized as the year the first 23 Jews settled in America.<sup>30</sup> Some were said to have come with Columbus in 1492, but this year marks the first official count. It started with 23 and the numbers rose slowly but steadily. By 1776 there were between 1000 and 2500 registered. However, it was not until the 1840s that the growth became exponential. From around 15 000 in 1840, the number rose to 50 000 in just eight years. By 1870 the number had risen to about 200 000, and by the time the American Zionist Organization was established in 1897, there were around one million Jews living in the United States.<sup>31</sup> This massive increase mostly arose from immigration, and between 1881 and 1924 the United States received about 2 million Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe alone.<sup>32</sup> Another 600 000 arrived from Western Europe, bringing the total number of immigrants to the US in this period to 2.6 million.<sup>33</sup>

In 1892, the large increase in Jewish immigrants led the American government to send two immigration officers to Europe to find the reason why. They reported back incredible scenes of poverty and general misery, particularly from Russia.<sup>34</sup> The immigration continued and reached a high between 1903 and 1906, when about 400 000 Russian Jews left Russia and settled in the US.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Østerud, Øyvind, *Statsvitenskap: innføring i politisk analyse*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, 1996, 84-85

<sup>29</sup> Ussischkin, *Our program*, 9-10, 36

<sup>30</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 46

<sup>31</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 46-47; Jewish Virtual Library, "Vital Statistics: Jewish Population in the United States, Nationally." <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/usjewpop1.html> (opened Aug. 25<sup>th</sup> 2014)

<sup>32</sup> Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism*, 69

<sup>33</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 27

<sup>34</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 57

<sup>35</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 60

In Europe the majority of the Jewish population had been excluded from agricultural work. Because they were not allowed to own land, most opted for other occupations found in small towns and urban areas, where they settled down. When they immigrated to the US, this became the case there as well. A census from 1936 shows that of about 4,770,000 Jews living in the US, 4,640,000 stayed in “principal communities”, leaving only a small percentage in smaller communities.<sup>36</sup> 78 percent of the Jewish population could be found in the 15 biggest cities at the time. In New York City alone, there resided over 2 million Jews, making up almost 17 percent of the total settlement. Although the Jewish immigrants settled in cities from coast to coast, the majority could be found in the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Ohio.<sup>37</sup> This density of the Jewish population benefitted the Zionist movement greatly. It was able to use existing Jewish establishments in the big cities, such as the synagogues and the Jewish media to spread its message.<sup>38</sup>

When Zionism first appeared in 1882, with the establishment of *Hibbat Zion* (Lovers of Zion), the opposition was substantial among American Jewry.<sup>39</sup> Both Orthodox and Reform Jews had their objections. The Orthodox Jews feared Zionism for theological reasons, as they viewed Zionism as too secular and a threat to the religious aspects of American Jewry. The Reform Jews objected because they feared that Zionism would interfere with Jewish integration into American society.<sup>40</sup> Brandeis tried to fight these perceptions by making the basis for his entire presidency that “[l]oyalty to America demands that each Jew become a Zionist.”<sup>41</sup> The supporters of Zionism in the US faced difficulties along the way but the movement was able to “[grope] its way to the forefront, learning while it acted, changing its character from that of a weak, uncertain amateur organization, into a great, self-conscious and powerful movement.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 48

<sup>37</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 48-49

<sup>38</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 49

<sup>39</sup> Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism*, 8

<sup>40</sup> Urofsky, Melvin. *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1975, 89, 92-105; For more about the Orthodox Jews and the Reform Jews see Chapter 3, 3

<sup>41</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 6

<sup>42</sup> Lipsky, Louis. *Selected Works of Louis Lipsky, VI – Thirty Years of American Zionism*, The Neshar Publishing Co., New York, 1927, VII

## 1.4 Scope & Limitations

Like any movement, the ZOA, throughout the roughly thirty years I have researched, consisted of a flux of people, some more relevant to the subject than others. Louis D. Brandeis, President Woodrow Wilson and Louis Lipsky are the main protagonists in this research. In the battle over the ZOA between Brandeis and Lipsky, they both had many supporters who are big names in the history of American Zionism. Jacob de Haas and Julian Mack and a multitude of others, were unquestionably important actors in this movement. De Haas, originally born in England, immigrated to the US in 1902. He was sent by Theodore Herzl to help the American Zionist movement.<sup>43</sup> Julian Mack was, in addition to an American Zionist, a social reformer, and he became a Judge on the United States Court of Appeals in 1911.<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, this thesis simply operates with terms such as *the Brandeis group* and *Lipsky and his friends*. These terms are frequently used in both Brandeis and Lipsky's correspondence, as well as by other researchers, and are used about Brandeis' and Lipsky's supporters within the organization.<sup>45</sup> In addition to this trio, Simon Wolf, a Jewish diplomat who was active in the political circle in Washington D.C., and Chaim Weizmann, the English Zionist who is credited with achieving the Balfour Declaration in 1917 as well as becoming the first president of Israel in 1949, will be discussed.<sup>46</sup> This will highlight the difference between the ZOA with Brandeis, and the ZOA without him.

A problem one encounters when writing about a group of people, such as the American Zionist movement, is that a movement consists of many people of differing opinions on a range of issues. Whenever I use *American Zionists*, *American Zionism* or *the American Zionist movement*, it definitely does not mean that every member agreed. As this thesis will show, there was substantial in-house fighting, which makes this a simplified generalization. Unless specifically stated, the terms are used to show the official party line supported by the majority or the leadership. It is also important to note that the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) was not one homogenous organization. It consisted of many local branches and interest groups, with their own leadership. Nevertheless, the ZOA would be rendered

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<sup>43</sup> Lipsky, Louis. *Memoirs in Profile*, Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1975, 216-217

<sup>44</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 134

<sup>45</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 299; Urofsky, Melvin. *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, Pantheon Books, New York, 2009, 538; Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism, 1897-1948*, 77

<sup>46</sup> Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile*, 103-104, 113

useless without the support of these branches, validating the use of the ZOA as the representatives of American Zionism.

## 1.5 Sources and literature

There are several issues to take into consideration when working with both primary and secondary literature. Letters and notes do not tell the whole story, only what the person writing them wants the person receiving them to know. While private and not meant for public use, these correspondences have been purposely archived. In President Wilson's case, it was evident that his correspondence would become public knowledge, like the presidents before him. Also Brandeis, upon becoming a Supreme Court Judge must have realized that his archive would become research material. With this in mind, certain parts may have been intentionally destroyed or edited by its author. It is therefore plausible that what is found in these collections, are only part of the story.

Memoirs and autobiographies create another set of problems. While they provide the private thoughts and insights not found anywhere else, these thoughts and insights have been through a censor by its author. They may have been, intentionally or unintentionally, altered to fit a preferred image or even made up entirely.

In this thesis I have relied equally on primary and secondary sources. The secondary literature had mostly been used to bring context and clarity to the primary sources. Of the primary sources, predominantly the Papers of Louis D. Brandeis, Woodrow Wilson and Louis Lipsky, which include their personal correspondence as well as news clippings and self-authored articles. Particularly Brandeis' own collection of every mentioning of Zionism in newspaper articles has provided valuable insights on the subject matter. Brandeis' letters have been published, in several books issued in the 1970's, but his collection consists of so much more than the letters found in these publications. The author and journalist Ray Stannard Baker wrote a series of Pulitzer Prize winning books about President Woodrow Wilson. *Woodrow Wilson Life & Letters* were published between 1927 and 1940 and consists of excerpts of letters infused with biographical commentaries by the author. The letters are often lacking parts deemed not relevant by the author. Therefore it was necessary to research the original primary sources. The Papers of Louis D. Brandeis and The Papers of President Woodrow Wilson are located at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The Papers of

Louis Lipsky and Simon Wolf have not been published at all. They are available to researchers at the Center for Jewish History in New York City

In addition to the primary sources, I have used secondary literature on both universal Zionism and American Zionism, as well as biographies. Among them are Alex Bein's *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism* and John Milton Cooper Jr's *Woodrow Wilson – A Biography*. For a general history of Zionism, Walter Laqueur's *A History of Zionism* stands out. It thoroughly covers the prehistory of Zionism, and the general Zionist movement up until the establishment of Israel in 1948. He sporadically mentions America and the ZOA, but rarely anything about the situation before the 1930s.

There has been written extensively on American Zionism, from its beginnings and up until today. Most of what has been written has been written by American Jews who have been involved in the events they are describing. The ZOA also has quite a few pamphlets and books on its own publishing house. Most of the research has been centered on the phenomenon of American Zionism and its appearance in American society. Melvin I. Urofsky's *American Zionism From Herzl to the Holocaust* from 1975 provides a detailed account of American Zionism. Ezekiel Rabinowitz's *Justice Louis D. Brandeis* is a collection of quotes from and about Brandeis. Although not always providing enough information, it served as a guide through the not always equally organized collection of the papers of Brandeis. Another book by Melvin I. Urofsky is his biography on Brandeis, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, which looks at the legacy Brandeis left as an attorney and a Supreme Court Judge, as well as a Zionist. Jonathan Schneer's *The Balfour Declaration – The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* has provided insights in the Balfour Declaration, as well as the complicated relationship between Brandeis and Weizmann.





## 2 - Chapter Two

# Zionism in Europe

Political Zionism, the Zionism fronted by Theodore Herzl, came into being at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Jews of Europe faced relentless persecutions and day-to-day discrimination and were desperate for a solution. All they wanted was to be able to be free and feel secure in their home. How did Herzl revamp the old term Zionism, and why did it become so relevant for the Jews living in Europe?

The history of the Jewish people in Europe before the 20<sup>th</sup> century is one of both hope and disappointment. After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, in which the Romans destroyed the Second Temple and killed, sold or exiled most of the inhabitants, the Jewish people ceased to exist as a unity, and instead, they went searching for a new place to call their home as individuals.<sup>47</sup> Some settled in the nearby Middle Eastern countries, but a large number ended up in Europe, particularly in the eastern countries, and also in Asia, for the most part in Russia. By the 1800s, 90 percent of the two and a half million Jews living around the world, were situated in Europe.<sup>48</sup> The number of Jews living in western European countries was substantially lower than those living in eastern European countries, and historically, the number of Jews living in an area has been connected with how they have been treated.<sup>49</sup> As Theodore Herzl put it: “The Jewish question exists wherever Jews live in perceptible numbers.”<sup>50</sup> Jews living in areas with a low number of Jews were treated better than Jews living in areas with a larger Jewish population. The former achieved a much quicker assimilation than the latter, which created problems between the Jews in Western Europe and the Jews in Eastern Europe. This would also become an issue at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for the new Zionist movement, both in Europe and in the US.

## 2.1 Jewish life in Europe

Before the First World War, Jews experienced sporadic persecution and discrimination and were always left on the outside of society. This led to an unstable population that tended to grow rapidly, before suddenly declining again. For centuries this had been the reality for the

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<sup>47</sup> LDB, *Zionism And Patriotism in the Jewish Advocate*, Oct. 2, 1914. LBD Papers, Reel 135, LC.

<sup>48</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 4

<sup>49</sup> Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism*, 5

<sup>50</sup> Herzl, *A Jewish State*, 2; For definition of “the Jewish problem”, see introduction.

Jewish population. Seen by the Christian population as “the race that killed Jesus”, Jews were generally blamed for everything from natural disasters to corruption. However, the 18<sup>th</sup> century marked a change in this attitude. The Enlightenment, with its reverence for reason and tolerance, brought with it a more humane treatment of the Jewish population. After the French Revolution of 1789, emancipation spread quickly in the surrounding countries, and in Prussia, the most influential German state, full legal emancipation was obtained, and the Jewish population was called upon to fight Napoleon wearing the same colors as their countrymen.<sup>51</sup>

This inclusion into the French society did not last for long. First, Napoleon revoked some of the previously earned rights for the French Jews. Then the Prussian Jews yet again had to live with the many restrictions put on them, for instance that not all professions were open for Jews. This rescindment of Jewish rights led to some bitterness among the Jewish population, particularly among the men who had fought in the war alongside their countrymen and felt like equals. Despite these setbacks, a strong sense of hope for the future was prevailing among the Jewish community, and many felt that inclusion in the European society was not far away.<sup>52</sup> The strong belief in assimilation remained.

## **2.2 Assimilation**

As a way of surviving this discrimination, some Jews became even more Jewish, and put their faith in their religion and old traditions. However, many Jews went in a different direction and put their faith in the social and cultural assimilation that was increasingly becoming a part of the Jewish society in the eighteenth century. That meant to soften their Jewishness, or Jewish heritage, at least in public, and making themselves more similar to their surrounding countrymen, adopting their culture and way of living. Some even shaved their traditional beards off to appear non-Jewish. This worked to some extent, until the anti-Jewish sentiments became about race, and not culture. Race was not something the Jewish population could alter, no matter how hard they tried.<sup>53</sup>

## **2.3 Nationalism brings trouble for the Jewish population**

Before the invention of nations, and before sentiments such as nationalism appeared, the

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<sup>51</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 3

<sup>52</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 4, 32

<sup>53</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 6, 29-30

people of Europe were loyal to their local region or community. This loyalty was associated with a certain religion or a particular leader more than a geographical area. With the French revolution, and later on, the unification of the German states in the late 1800s, a new sense of commitment to ones place of origin and cultural history blossomed. The new *nationalism* meant a shift from geographical loyalty to loyalty towards ones own people.<sup>54</sup> A people constituted a nation, and a nation belonged to its people. For the Jewish population, who felt like they did not belong to any particular nation, aside from the almost mythical Israel, nationalism proved difficult, and particularly the Eastern European Jews, who were substantially larger in numbers than the Western European Jews, longed for Zion, the Promised Land.<sup>55</sup>

When the racial anti-Semitism entered society, it meant that assimilation had failed.<sup>56</sup> Many Eastern European Jews had become disillusioned with the idea of assimilation. They felt that their Jewish roots deserved better than only to be remembered within the confinements of their own homes. This double life, with assimilation in public and performing Jewish rituals in private, did not give them the relief they had hoped for.<sup>57</sup> Many Jews started to search for something else to save them from the oppression they were facing on a day-to-day basis. The idea of the return to Zion had always been with them through traditional prayers and stories, but to most people, after centuries of oppression, this seemed like a distant dream.<sup>58</sup> A writer from Hungary would do his best to turn that dream into reality.

## 2.4 Theodore Herzl

Theodore Herzl, originally from Budapest, moved to Vienna to become a student when his family decided to relocate after the death of his only sister in 1878. As an eighteen-year-old student in a new place, he went searching for some kind of belonging. He enrolled in school to study law, to please his parents, although he already knew that he wanted to be a writer. As an adult and as a Zionist he was to be remembered as a serious and rigid man, but he admitted that he “had a part in all the ridiculous pranks of the student body” during his

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<sup>54</sup> Palmer, Colton & Kramer, *A History of the Modern World*, 518; Elon, *Herzl*, 6, 11, 35-36

<sup>55</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl to the Holocaust*, 23-24

<sup>56</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 30

<sup>57</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 32

<sup>58</sup> Through the Bible, Zion was known to the Jews and referred to Mount Zion, Jerusalem, Solomon’s Temple or the hereafter. Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism, 1897-1948*, 2

student days.<sup>59</sup> He joined a student association, the *Akademische Lesehalle*, where he met people who would help him grow, as a writer and as a leader. The *Lesehalle*, although not a political organization, experienced internal difficulties because of the political environment in Austria-Hungary in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its members were from all parts of society, with no obvious distinctions between class and religion, but political issues were of course discussed among its approximately one thousand members. Among the most thoroughly discussed topics were the newfound fondness for the *German Reich* and the affection for expansion combined with a new internal nationalism that had led to the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>60</sup>

During the first half of the reign of Emperor Franz Joseph, Herzl and the other Jews living in Vienna had felt secure and protected.<sup>61</sup> But by 1885, Viennese society, heavily influenced by the nationalist sentiments of the time, was not the same tolerant place Herzl had enjoyed living in.<sup>62</sup> He began to see signs around him, signs of a rising wave of anti-Semitism. The Dreyfus affair in France, in which a Jewish officer in the French army, Alfred Dreyfus, in 1894 was accused of selling confidential papers to Germany, was for a long time seen as what made Herzl realize that he had to do something to save the Jewish population in Europe.<sup>63</sup> However, new research has found that it was actually the election of Karl Lueger as mayor in Vienna that convinced Herzl.<sup>64</sup> Lueger's time as mayor saw a resurgence of cruel treatment of the Jewish population, which made Herzl lose faith in assimilation.<sup>65</sup> He realized that the only way to escape anti-Semitism was the creation of a Jewish nation state.

Herzl was not the first person to actively seek a solution to “the Jewish problem” by wishing to create a new state. Several men, one of them being Baron Moritz de Hirsch, one of the wealthiest men at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, rummaged the earth looking for a fitting place. The Baron even bought land in Argentina for the purpose of Jewish colonization.<sup>66</sup> What lacked from Hirsch's plan, as well as for the others preceding Herzl, was the support of large

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<sup>59</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 25

<sup>60</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 26

<sup>61</sup> Franz Joseph was Emperor of Austria and later the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1848 to 1916

<sup>62</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 18

<sup>63</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 401; Alfred Dreyfus was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison twice, before he was cleared of all charges in 1906. The whole case was politically motivated, and Dreyfus' Jewish background was on trial, with particularly anti-Semitic Catholics and nationalists pushing hard for a conviction.

<sup>64</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 30

<sup>65</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 30

<sup>66</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 124

numbers of Jews. For the plan to be viable, enough Jews would have to be interested. Even though the Jews in Russia were becoming increasingly desperate for a solution, the Baron underestimated the allure of Palestine. He acknowledged the importance of traditions, but failed to see how traditions could triumph security, which he thought was much easier to find in Argentina. Still, Hirsch went ahead with his plan, and by 1894 four colonies, numbering approximately 3000 Jews, had been established in Argentina. However, compared to the costs of making this happen, it failed. Herzl wrote to Hirsch telling him that “what [he] had undertaken till now was as magnificent in conception as it has proved futile in actuality; it is as costly as it is hopeless.”<sup>67</sup> He proposed collaboration for the project to become “something more”.<sup>68</sup>

The two met in 1895 and Herzl outlined two possibilities for solving “the Jewish problem:” without migration or with migration. This was the first time Herzl had written down his attempt at solving this issue. With either solution, education of the Jewish people was paramount. Herzl wanted Hirsch’s support in teaching the Jewish community about “self-sacrifice, moral bearing and capacity for great enterprises”.<sup>69</sup> For Herzl it was a question of time. He felt that the problem could eventually be solved without migration, but it would take time. Time, he did not believe the Jews of Europe had. The quickest fix would have to entail migration of Jews to a secure place.<sup>70</sup> This, of course, was not his decision to make. He was just one Jew, among the rest of the Jews.

Herzl believed that one of the reasons for the Jewish people’s dispersion and separation was that they did not have, and had not, for a long time, had a political leader who could bring the diaspora together. The first step towards a resolution would have to be the creation of a political center.<sup>71</sup> Hirsch still believed in his Argentinian project. His goal was to show that Jews could be successful farmers, which he hoped would convince the Russian government to allow Jews to own land.<sup>72</sup> Herzl viewed this hope as fantastical, and after their meeting, it was evident that their ideas on how to best help the Jews of Europe were widely different. Herzl, realizing that he could be more persuasive through his skills as a writer, began to write down his plans.

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<sup>67</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 125

<sup>68</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 125

<sup>69</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 125

<sup>70</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 126

<sup>71</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 127

<sup>72</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 129

## 2.5 The Jewish State

In 1896 Herzl published *The Jewish State*, which was his attempt at solving “the Jewish problem”. The book made several assumptions. For one Herzl claimed that “the Jewish problem” was unavoidable because the Jewish people were a people without a land. They were connected only in a cultural sense. This made the Jews abnormal and an easy target for anti-Semites. He also claimed that unless the Jewish community became united, Jewish culture and traditions would eventually become extinct. His solution to both anti-Semitism and the threat of cultural extinction was the establishment of an independent Jewish national state. Only with such a place would the Jewish people feel secure enough to continue living as Jews, thereby salvaging the Jewish cultural ancestry.<sup>73</sup> This book became the start of the Zionist movement, but for Herzl it was not enough. For his dream to become possible, he needed supporters in the Jewish community.

Herzl organized the first Zionist Congress in 1897.<sup>74</sup> It was held in Basel, and Jews from all over the world participated. The Congress agreed on a platform for the new Zionist movement. It was called the Basle Declaration and it stated that:

The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law. The Congress contemplates the following means to the attainment of this end:

1. The promotion, on suitable lines, of the colonization of Palestine by Jewish agricultural and industrial workers.
2. The organization and binding together of the whole of Jewry by means of appropriate institutions, local and international, in accordance with the laws of each country.
3. The strengthening and fostering of Jewish national sentiment and consciousness.
4. Preparatory steps toward obtaining government consent, where necessary, to the attainment of the aim of Zionism.<sup>75</sup>

The World Zionist Organization (WZO) was established, and the new movement would work for the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine.<sup>76</sup> Herzl originally wanted the platform to mention the word *state* instead of *home*, but the wealthier Jews, from Western Europe, preferred *home*. They did not suffer the same degree of anti-Semitism as their Eastern European counterparts and did not intend to move to Palestine. Zionism therefore generated

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<sup>73</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 6

<sup>74</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 224

<sup>75</sup> Laqueur, Walter & Rubin, Barry. *The Israel-Arab Reader – A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, Penguin Books, New York, 2008, 9-10

<sup>76</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 31

more support among the Eastern European Jews than the Jews of Western Europe.<sup>77</sup> Despite this little setback, Herzl was pleased with the progress, and in his diary he expressed satisfaction with what he thought of as the creation of the Jewish state.<sup>78</sup>

## 2.6 Uganda or Palestine?

During the time between the First Congress in 1897 and the Sixth Congress in 1903, Herzl worked relentlessly to promote his new organization. He had endless meetings with government officials from different countries, in particular the British government, and the Ottoman Sultan who controlled Palestine.<sup>79</sup> A series of meetings with representatives from the British government, led to what was to be known as the Uganda Plan. This plan, and the struggle that followed, would shock the WZO to the core.

The location of the Jewish state was not the most important aspect of Herzl's plan. If Palestine was too difficult to obtain, he was open to other suggestions. In 1903 Herzl had a meeting with Joseph Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary. Chamberlain, after returning from a trip to some of the British colonies in Africa offered part of British East Africa to be used as a Jewish colony: "On my travels ... I saw a country for you: Uganda. [T]he climate is excellent for Europeans. You can plant cotton and sugar."<sup>80</sup> The background for this offer was the terrible pogroms in Russia, in particular the massacre in Kishinev in 1903.<sup>81</sup> Herzl was initially skeptical to the offer, knowing full well the Jewish people's sentiments toward Palestine. However, as his efforts to secure Palestine seemed to wither away, he revisited the Uganda Plan.

He presented the proposition at the Sixth Congress in 1903. A debacle ensued. There were strong feelings both for and against the plan. On the one side the Zionist representatives were afraid that accepting this offer would mean giving up on Palestine. On the other side, people were arguing the urgency of the situation. A representative from Kishinev remarked that "in their present circumstances the Jews of Russia would even go to hell."<sup>82</sup> The discussion

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<sup>77</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 31

<sup>78</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 31; Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 108

<sup>79</sup> *The Uganda affair in the Jerusalem Post Magazine*, Dec. 17, 1971, LL Papers, Box 15, Folder 1

<sup>80</sup> *The Uganda affair in the Jerusalem Post Magazine*, Dec. 17, 1971, LL Papers, Box 15, Folder 1; Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 435; Today, the area in question actually belongs to Kenya.

<sup>81</sup> For more on the Kishinev pogrom, see Chapter 3, 30

<sup>82</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 453

lasted for several days and became a question about principle: Palestine or Uganda. A vote on whether or not to investigate the plan further led to 295 votes in favor of such an investigation and 178 votes against.<sup>83</sup> The representatives that had voted against stormed out, feeling that the Congress had betrayed the Basle Program, by choosing Uganda over Palestine. Herzl, forever the diplomat, talked them down, explaining that Uganda was simply more realistic at the time. He also assured them that he did not intend to abandon the dream of Palestine: “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand wither.”<sup>84</sup>

In public Herzl tried to keep the Zionists minds open to Uganda, but in private conversations to his friends he showed his ambivalence: “Palestine is the one land where our people can come to rest. But hundreds of thousands are waiting for immediate help.”<sup>85</sup> He proved willing to sacrifice Zionism for the safety of world Jewry. On July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1904, only 44 years old, Herzl died. This came as a shock to the members of his movement. They all knew that he had been sick, but the seriousness of his heart condition had been kept between his family and close friends. The Uganda Plan died with him. Although the plan failed, it can be seen as “the first time that a great Power recognized the Jewish people’s right to a land of their own.”<sup>86</sup> Without Herzl, the WZO permanently set their sights on Palestine as the only possible place for their Jewish home.<sup>87</sup>

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Herzl died before he could realize his dream, but political Zionism lived on and grew stronger in Europe. It also spread across the Atlantic. Slowly at first, but as the situation for Eastern European Jews became more known, it blossomed in America as well.

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<sup>83</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 459-460

<sup>84</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 464

<sup>85</sup> Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 465

<sup>86</sup> *The Uganda affair in the Jerusalem Post Magazine*, Dec. 17, 1971, LL Papers, Box 15, Folder 1

<sup>87</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 136-138





## The Early Years

### 1897-1912

America and Europe at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were very different places, particularly for their Jewish population. Whereas the European Jews had to fight for their survival and experienced violent attacks on a regular basis, the majority of American Jews were well integrated in US society. They had reliable jobs and felt safe and a sense of belonging in their hometowns. It was not predestined that the new Zionist movement that was gaining support in Europe with Theodore Herzl at the wheel would resonate with the American Jews. Yet, it did, but its way forward in the US was very different than what it was in Europe for the European branch. How did the American Zionist movement differ from the European Zionist movement? Why was it difficult for the movement to gain support among the Jewish community in the US?

### **3.1 Lovers of Zion**

The first introduction of Zionism into the American Jewish community came with the establishment of a Lovers of Zion society in 1884.<sup>88</sup> In Europe, Lovers of Zion had already existed for a couple of years. The organization worked to promote Jewish immigration to Palestine as well as offering support to the Jews already living there. It was the first seed of modern Zionism, and the precursor to the political Zionism of Theodore Herzl.<sup>89</sup>

The Lovers of Zion society gathered some support in the US, but their numbers grew very slowly, and never became the equivalent to its Eastern European role model.<sup>90</sup> The goal of the movement, as stated by Dr. Aaron Friedenwald, a prominent Jewish leader in Baltimore in 1894, was that the Jews needed to stop suffering while waiting for the Messiah. They needed to live now, and not just wait for the future that would bring with it a better life. To the Lovers of Zion, assimilation was unrealistic and not something to thrive for. Instead the Jewish culture and traditions needed to be sustained. This would lead to the survival of the

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<sup>88</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 82; Lipsky, *Selected Works of Louis Lipsky, VI – Thirty Years of American Zionism*, 3; Also referred to as Hibbat Zion, Chovevei Zion or Hoveve Zion.

<sup>89</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 74

<sup>90</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 83

Jewish community.<sup>91</sup> The Lovers of Zion failed to make much headway in Palestine, mainly because of its non-political course of action. When Theodore Herzl and his Zionist movement, guided by the publication of *Der Judenstaat* in 1896, emerged in Basle, most Lovers of Zion groups in Europe joined the new movement.

### **3.2 The American Jewish scene: a place of contrast**

At the same time, small Zionist organizations started popping up across America, the first in Chicago in 1897. With both the Reform Jews and the Orthodox Jews actively against Zionism, the movement struggled to find its footing in the beginning. The organization also had to try to merge the schism that existed between the old settlers or assimilationists, and the new settlers.<sup>92</sup> The earliest Jewish settlers, had assimilated into the American society, and were as much, if not more, American as they were Jewish. Most had come to the US during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to escape persecution and humiliating circumstances in their land of origin.<sup>93</sup> In the US, they kept their Jewish heritage intact, with their temples and social clubs, but it was all done in an American context. They led comfortable lives, and because of their small numbers they were not yet burdened with the anti-Semitic sentiments afforded their co-religionists in countries with larger Jewish communities. The first Jews in America had become more secular, and more interested in making it in the new world than preserving the religious aspects and traditions of the old.<sup>94</sup>

The new settlers, on the other hand, were forced to come to America by the hostile mood in Eastern Europe. They started coming to the US during the 1880, but felt like strangers in their new home. They had escaped persecution and starvation in Europe and wanted to keep their Judaism alive. For them assimilation was not a desirable solution.<sup>95</sup> They were mostly orthodox, and the Yiddish and Hebrew press became their source of information on both the old world they had left behind, and also on conditions in America. The differences between these two communities were so substantial that interaction between them was difficult. The earlier settlers looked upon the new settlers with pity and saw them as a charity project. This

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<sup>91</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 83-84

<sup>92</sup> Halpern, Ben. *A Clash of Heroes – Brandeis, Weizmann, and American Zionism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1987, 83

<sup>93</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 53

<sup>94</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 82

<sup>95</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 56

was, naturally, not popular with the new settlers.<sup>96</sup> All of this was bound to cause problems within the Jewish community in America. How was the new Zionist movement supposed to get these two inherently different groups to join the same movement?

The religious groups also created problems for the new movement. The Orthodox Jews were traditionalists and believed that God himself had written the Torah. To the Orthodox, it was then handed to Moses for the people to follow, without questions and uninterrupted by a forever changing world society.<sup>97</sup> They were deeply concerned with the secularism that Zionism brought into the Jewish society and the consequences this would have for Judaism in the US.<sup>98</sup>

Reform Judaism had originated in Germany in the 1700s as a consequence of the intellectual ideas of the Enlightenment. The Reform Jews believed that the Torah was inspired by the words of God, but had in fact been written by people.<sup>99</sup> The Reform branch of Judaism in America feared Zionism as well. They saw it as a threat to their attempts at further assimilation and Americanization.<sup>100</sup> The third Branch of Judaism, which at the time was the numerically smallest in the US, was the Conservative Jews. They also believed that God wrote the Torah, but they tried to interpret it in light of the modern world.<sup>101</sup> It was among this group that the new Zionist movement would eventually gain the most followers.

### 3.3 American disinterest

Theodor Herzl disregarded the Jews in the US, and only included them in his vision as a possible source for support, should it be necessary. For Herzl, the most important thing was the fate of the Jews in Europe, and America did not interest him. Most American Jews were equally disinterested, and the majority ignored the First Zionist Congress in Basel called for by Herzl in 1897. Only five American delegates attended the Congress, although a number of the European delegates who attended later relocated to the US.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Lipsky, *Selected Works of Louis Lipsky, VI – Thirty Years of American Zionism*, 5-6

<sup>97</sup> Oxford Reference, s.v. "Orthodox Judaism." April 15th, 2015.

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095633201>

<sup>98</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 102

<sup>99</sup> *The Oxford Reference Dictionary*, s.v. "Reform Judaism".

<sup>100</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 83

<sup>101</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 102

<sup>102</sup> Lipsky, *Selected Works of Louis Lipsky, VI – Thirty Years of American Zionism*, 20

Louis Lipsky, an active member since the beginning and important figure in American Zionism, wrote that this disinterest could partly be attributed to the Monroe Doctrine.<sup>103</sup> The Doctrine originated in 1823, and it expressed the United States' policy of noninterference towards Europe. It was an effort for the US to disentangle itself from European affairs to concentrate on the expanding American continent. The Doctrine encompassed three basic principles: non-colonization, non-intervention and non-interference. Essentially, this meant that if European powers did not interfere in America, the US would stay out of European affairs. Zionism and the Jews in Europe were of many viewed as a European affair, to be dealt with by the European powers, and not by America.<sup>104</sup> "It is the true interest of America to steer clear of European contentions... whenever a war breaks out... the trade of America goes to ruin".<sup>105</sup>

Another reason for the low number of American delegates can also be because the clubs failed to raise enough money to send more people to the first Zionist Congress in Basel. The interest for the Congress may have been greater than the number of delegates would suggest. It is important to remember the opposition the first Zionist clubs were up against in America. The Orthodox and Reform movements were much larger and more influential and did what they could to advise people not to give their hard earned money to a bunch of secular Jews who supported a fanatic writer in Vienna.<sup>106</sup> Reform rabbi Dr. David Philipson explained that their "opposition to Zionism is due to our conviction that this movement in its political aspects is a distinct menace to the best interests of the Jews in this and other lands."<sup>107</sup> He was skeptical to Zionism setting "the Jews apart as a national group".<sup>108</sup> The Reform Jews who were against Zionism saw themselves as "Americans in nationality and Jews in religion".<sup>109</sup> Because of this they could not support Zionism and its quest for a Jewish national state. "The United States is our land, not Palestine." This did not mean that they were uninterested in helping the Jews already living in Palestine, or those that would move there in the future. They just did not think that supporting Zionism was the best way to do this.<sup>110</sup> For

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<sup>103</sup> Lipsky, *Selected Works of Louis Lipsky, VI – Thirty Years of American Zionism*, 21

<sup>104</sup> Mauk, David & Oakland, John. *American Civilization – An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2009, 176-177

<sup>105</sup> Paine, Thomas. *Common Sense 1776 in The Norton Anthology – American Literature*, New York: Norton, 2008, 329

<sup>106</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 86

<sup>107</sup> *The New York Times*, Sept. 14, 1918.

<sup>108</sup> *The New York Times*, Sept. 14, 1918.

<sup>109</sup> *The New York Times*, Sept. 14, 1918.

<sup>110</sup> *The New York Times*, Sept. 14, 1918.

the Orthodox Jews who opposed the movement, it was mostly based on religious reasons. They feared that the religious traditions and rituals would be replaced by a political nationalism.<sup>111</sup> Despite this opposition, a few people were curious anyway, and traveled to Basel to see what it was all about.<sup>112</sup>

The First Congress turned out to be a success for the Zionists in that it decided on a common platform for all Zionists, also known as the Basel Program. The Program stated that the new Zionist movement would work for the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine.<sup>113</sup> The American delegates brought this back to their local organizations with the hope of fighting the disinterest.

### **3.4 The movement begins**

A few failed attempts at promoting the Zionist idea in the US were sabotaged by Orthodox and Reform representatives. However, the idea finally gathered some support in Chicago and in Philadelphia. The first supporters were mostly found among the new immigrants from Eastern Europe. Many were Orthodox and opposed Zionism, but those that found themselves in the middle, between the beliefs of Orthodox and Reform, were open to the ideas of Zionism. They were new to the US and did not identify with the reasons of the opposition. Most had been forced to leave their home and rejoiced at a movement that would work for a legally secured home for the Jews of the world.<sup>114</sup>

In the months leading up to the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897 the American Jewish press started writing more about this new movement that was making noise in Europe. They were skeptical of Herzl and speculated in what his true intentions really were. Most of the Jewish publications written in English at the time were Reform, and the earliest supporters of Zionism, mainly found among the newly arrived Russian immigrants, organized debates and mass meetings to get their thoughts out to the people.<sup>115</sup> Although he faced fierce skepticism in America, Herzl received optimistic reports from friends in America, which led him to write in his diary on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1897 that “[t]he movement is beginning in America.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 86

<sup>112</sup> Lipsky, *Selected Works of Louis Lipsky, VI – Thirty Years of American Zionism*, 21

<sup>113</sup> See Chapter Two for more on the Basel Congress and Program.

<sup>114</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 65, 104

<sup>115</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 2, 85-86

<sup>116</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of his Life*, 2

After the Congress more clubs and societies started appearing across the country. More and more people seemed to approve of Herzl and his ideas. To keep this new enthusiasm going, thirteen clubs in the New York area gathered and spoke of unity and common goals. They called themselves the Federation of New York Zionists and elected as chairman the respected Professor Richard Gottheil, who became the first face of American Zionism.<sup>117</sup> Gottheil contacted groups in other cities and called for a national meeting to take place in May 1898. This meeting was meant to unite all of Jewish America, but had to be cancelled because of the three month long Spanish-American War of 1898.<sup>118</sup> The war occupied the press and the minds of the public, including the Jewish community, making interest in the new Zionist idea difficult to promote.

This postponement of the national meeting was unfortunate because internal strife erupted before a national unity had been achieved. The religious aspect, or rather the lack of a religious aspect in Zionism, led to a fight over leadership which again led to the establishment of the Federation of Zionist Organizations in the United States. This group was mostly comprised of Zionist groups with Orthodox leanings.<sup>119</sup> Both groups, the Federation of New York Zionists and the Federation of Zionist Organizations in the United States, quickly realized that they needed to find some common ground if they were to save the fragile American Zionist movement. After a discussion and promise that the religious aspect would be considered, the two groups united and formed the Federation of Zionist Societies of Greater New York and Vicinity with Gottheil as president.<sup>120</sup> The organization ratified the Basle program and made it their goal to work for colonization in Palestine and the promotion of the Hebrew language. It all started in the New York area, but the organization soon spread out, and by March 1898 it had reached Indiana.<sup>121</sup> Although they promised to also work for “the Jewish spirit”, not everyone was satisfied. Those that wanted the focus to be on the cultural Zionism fronted by Ahad Ha’am broke out and established their own groups instead. Ahad Ha’am opposed Theodore Herzl’s Zionism and fought for a spiritual center in

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<sup>117</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 86

<sup>118</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 87; The conflict began when the US interfered in the Cuban War of Independence. Cuban forces rebelled against the Spanish colonial forces. The US declared war on Spain for humanitarian reasons. The war ended with Cuban/American victory and the US acquired economic control of Cuba. Mauk, David & Oakland, John. *American Civilization – An Introduction*, Routledge, New York, 2009, 179

<sup>119</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 87

<sup>120</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 87

<sup>121</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 87-88

Palestine. He wanted Palestine to be a Jewish state, driven by Jewish tradition and heritage, and not a just a state consisting of Jews.<sup>122</sup>

On July 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 1889, one hundred delegates from different groups met in New York and established the Federation of American Zionists (FAZ).<sup>123</sup> FAZ became the official American Zionist organization, where most of the Zionist groups became members. They also affiliated themselves with the newly established World Zionist Organization in Vienna. Professor Gottheil was again elected president, and for the Second Zionist Congress American Zionists were officially represented by their elected president and several other officials.<sup>124</sup>

### **3.5 The difference between the American and the European Zionists**

Although the unification of American Zionists might at first have seemed harmonious to the Zionists in Europe, this was not the case at all. Internal struggle for both power and on specific issues kept happening in intervals from the beginning in 1897 and all through the 1920s. A big reason for this development was that the American Zionist, while having the same apparent goal as its European brethren, was fundamentally different. The desire for the restoration of the holy land came more from a sense of duty to his or her heritage, than any real need for a physical sanctuary.<sup>125</sup> According to rabbi and scholar Arthur Hertzberg, American Zionism was “an emotion and not an ideology” that “existed to help the pioneers and to take pride in them.”<sup>126</sup> This may be an oversimplified statement, as there existed different views on American Zionism among the American Zionists, but there is no doubt that there was a difference between the Jews in America and the Jews in Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe.<sup>127</sup>

Jews in America and in Europe shared an important emotion that connected them spiritually; they all felt a strong belonging to a community not found in the country they were living in. For many of the Jews in Eastern Europe the feeling was mutual, and they were not welcome

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<sup>122</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 96, 133, 163

<sup>123</sup> FAZ was renamed the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) in 1918 and remains an active organization to this day.

<sup>124</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 88

<sup>125</sup> Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism*, 2

<sup>126</sup> Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism*, 3

<sup>127</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 35



in most of the countries they were residing in. For the Jewish population in Western Europe the situation was better than for the Jews residing in Eastern Europe. They were fewer and consequently not so visible. They were gaining legal rights faster, and they also had a capacity for social and economic modernization.<sup>128</sup> The Jewish population in Western Europe was a part of the society it was living in and did not have to fear the horrible *pogroms* that was plaguing the Jews of Eastern Europe. Despite their apparent comfort many of the Jews of Western Europe longed for passage to America, which they saw as their “Promised Land”. In Eastern Europe the situation was much graver. In Vienna, where Herzl lived, the Jewish population lived in great uncertainty. Vienna was part of the decaying Austro-Hungarian Empire, and cruel anti-Semitic sentiments were brewing.<sup>129</sup> In Russia it was even worse, and the constant threat of *pogroms* was tormenting the Jewish communities.

In the case of the American Jews, however, this dual citizenship did not make them outsiders. In America everyone had a connection to some other place of origin, whether it was Ireland, China, Italy or somewhere else. The fluidity in American society made it possible for the Jewish population to live in peace among other nationalities.<sup>130</sup> Although there were anti-Semitic sentiments in the American society, the situation cannot be compared to what the Eastern European Jews had to endure, with anti-Jewish riots and violent attacks at irregular intervals. The Russian pogroms of 1881-1882, and the Pale of Settlement both illustrate the severity of the situation for the Jewish population living in Eastern Europe.<sup>131</sup> The Pale of Settlement was an attempt by the Russian government to keep Judaism from spreading throughout the Empire. Jews were permitted to settle down within the limits of the Pale, and settlement outside was prohibited. The majority of American Jews, who had resided in the US for a generation or more, had very little understanding of this, having never experienced anything like it.

Many American Zionists at times were very vocal and active in their campaigning for American support of their cause, but most of them never intended to actually live in the Holy Land themselves, much like the Western European Jews. Their lives in the United States were mostly respectable, and they enjoyed a much larger degree of freedom and autonomy,

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<sup>128</sup> Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism*: 5

<sup>129</sup> Elon, *Herzl*, 7-8; Bein, *Theodore Herzl – A Biography of the Founder of Modern Zionism*, 101-102

<sup>130</sup> Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism*, 5

<sup>131</sup> The Russian Pogroms of 1881-1882 was a period of many vicious attacks on the Jewish population in Russia (now Ukraine and Polen). The Russian Tsar Alexander II was assassinated and the Jews were blamed for this. Riots were the Jewish community was the target, ensued, and Jews were killed, injured, raped and burgled.

as well as a general feeling of security in their lives, than what the Jews living in Europe and Russia were experiencing. For the Eastern European Jews this was viewed with a high degree of bitterness, and seen as treachery to their shared religion and heritage.<sup>132</sup> They felt that the Jew should come before the American, but the American Jews were proud of their homeland as well as their religious and cultural belonging. The American part of the American Zionist was dominant in these years. They shaped their organization after the American society, and because they did not have the urgent need for a new home, it might have been easier for them to get lost in endless discussions of trivial matters.<sup>133</sup> The World Zionist Organization did not have time for that, and although there were internal struggles there as well, as the Uganda Plan clearly demonstrates, they were always able to put their desire for a new home first.<sup>134</sup>

Another fundamental difference between America and Europe at the time was the low frequency of anti-Semitism in American society. “[A] Zionism directed at anti-Semitism seemed pointless, and both Jews and non-Jews refused to take it seriously... American Jews were too busy being successful to worry much about a pie-in-the-sky plan for restoration.”<sup>135</sup> This is probably also part of the reason why so few Jews became Zionists in this period. They had good, dependable lives, and although they wanted to help the European Jews, Zionism appeared too radical for them. Yet another factor was that the Jews in America were in different stages of their Jewish life. The first to arrive in America had come a long way in assimilating into the American society, while the more recently arrived were torn between a desire to belong and a wish to maintain their old way of life. The newly arrived knew what the European Jews were facing. Until recently, they had also faced the same situation. They were more personally involved. This led to a lot of frustration when many American Jews had other things on their minds than the return to Zion.<sup>136</sup>

### **3.6 A uniting effort**

Nevertheless, the FAZ tried their best to unite the American Jews. They followed Herzl’s idea of “winning the communities”, and they started collecting money from their increasing

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<sup>132</sup> de Haas, Jacob. *Louis D. Brandeis – A Biographical Sketch with Special Reference to his Contributions to Jewish and Zionist History*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1929, 16-17

<sup>133</sup> Among other things, it was decided that religious views would not be considered when choosing leaders. The organizational structure also made sure that there could not be a strong leadership in control. Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 88

<sup>134</sup> See Chapter Two for more about the Uganda Plan.

<sup>135</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 81

<sup>136</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 81-82

pool of members. Herzl himself sent a letter specifically to the American Zionist urging them to contribute to the resolution of the Jewish question.<sup>137</sup> At the Third Congress, the eleven American delegates reported that Zionism was on its way up in America. It was mostly at a local level that support increased, but it was the leadership in the Federation who wrote and published pamphlet after pamphlet of Zionist propaganda in addition to traveling across the nation and speaking at local gatherings.<sup>138</sup> Among them were the president of the FAZ, Professor Gottheil, and also rabbi Stephen Wise. Stephen Wise, born in Budapest, came to New York as an infant with his family. He studied under Gottheil, and despite of his Reform background, he was among the first Americans to join the Zionist movement. His influence was far-reaching and included friendships with two American presidents, Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In the beginning there was some confusion among those American Jews that still had not become Zionists. The Zionists said that their status as Americans would not be altered, but at the same time they were supposed to show allegiance to a foreign country, a place they had never been and never intended to go to, because they were a part of something different and unique. This led many to feel that it would be unpatriotic to support Zionism, as it would be the same as supporting an alien nation.<sup>139</sup> When asked why there were so few New York Zionists, Louis Lipsky, one of the active members of the FAZ, optimistic about the future, answered that although lacking capital fund and a large corps of energetic workers “[w]hat we possess is a small band of enthusiastic men and women who believe ... Zionism is as yet no mass movement.”<sup>140</sup>

The Kishineff Massacre, also known as the Kishinev pogrom, in 1903 woke many American Jews. This anti-Jewish riot in Russia lasted for three days and during that time 47 Jews were killed and many more injured. The Jewish population in America reacted angrily when Russia refused to receive a petition for a relief fund for the victims signed by 12 544 American citizens, and backed by President Theodor Roosevelt and Secretary of State John Hay.<sup>141</sup> This immense gathering of resources by a previously divided community led to the

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<sup>137</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 89

<sup>138</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 90

<sup>139</sup> Conversation with Rabbi Harold White, March 31st (Easter Sunday) 2013

<sup>140</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of his Life*, 4-5

<sup>141</sup> Hay to Wolf, June 24, 1903; SW Papers, Box 1, Folder 10

American Zionists for the first time taking charge at the forefront of Zionist affairs, a role previously associated with the European Zionists.<sup>142</sup>

While much progress had been made in America, the Zionists were still a minority when Herzl died on July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1904. Many mourned his passing, but instead of succumbing to a sense of hopelessness now that their great leader was gone, they used this occasion to urge the Zionists to keep going. One of them was Lewis N. Dembitz, the uncle of Louis D. Brandeis. He wrote in the *Maccabean*, the FAZ's official publication:

Let us form new societies; let us bring new members into the old ones; let us buy shares in the Colonial Trust, and make our neighbors buy shares; let us remove all causes of quarrel and dissension, not only among the Zionists, but among Jews in general; let us be worthy of restoration – and we will be restored to our ancient greatness.<sup>143</sup>

There were also many who did not see Herzl's death as a loss. An ultra-Orthodox rabbi in New York made his view known with a little prayer; "Blessed is the Lord who struck him down."<sup>144</sup>

It is a small miracle that the FAZ survived this period. Although they had more members than when they first started, they had a hard time getting anything done. Structurally, it was a federation of member groups that could only act if the groups agreed. All of these groups had different ideas on what was important, what was not, and who should be their leaders. This resulted in never-ending quarreling between the Federation and the smaller groups. Because money was collected locally, this feuding also meant that the Federation suffered from a constant lack of money to fund any projects, even the ones previously agreed upon.<sup>145</sup> The leaders lacked experience with running an organization, which became evident every time they encountered a problem.

### **3.7 The troubles with the WZO begin**

In 1904 Gottheil had had enough and declined another term as president. By 1907 it had become apparent that if the Federation were to survive, something had to change. Judah

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<sup>142</sup> de Haas, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Biographical Sketch with Special Reference to his Contributions to Jewish and Zionist History*, 9-12

<sup>143</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 92; The Colonial Trust was an English-chartered bank that would help finance colonization and developmental work in Palestine.

<sup>144</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 91

<sup>145</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 100

Magnes, a Reform rabbi from California, reported to the world organization that the Federation had to make serious changes in the administration, but nothing worth noting happened until 1910 when Henrietta Szold, appeared on the scene. She would go on to form the Hadassah Women's Organization in 1912. As honorary secretary of the FAZ, she was in charge of the business side of the organization, including the economic management. She did her best to clear up the mess left by years of incompetent leadership. In the end it all came back to a lack of money. The local societies refused to let go of control and let the FAZ do the collecting. The World Zionist Organization had always seen America as a land of wealth and assumed that the Jews living there had enough money to contribute, so when very little money arrived, they were not pleased. They blamed the Federation and excluded them from important committees and councils.<sup>146</sup>

The relationship between American Zionists and European Zionists had always been a tricky one. From the very beginning Herzl was skeptical to Gottheil's leadership, and sent his own people to spread propaganda in the US. They used the same rhetoric and issues as they used in Europe, which was not effective in America, where the situation for the Jewish population was completely different. The American Zionists knew this, and were furious when they discovered what was happening. Instead of recruiting more Zionists, the Europeans had strengthened the skepticism that American Zionists had tried to break through. Herzl did not give up after this, and sent his English secretary, Jacob de Haas, to assist the Federation. This enraged Gottheil, and the relationship between the two remained cold throughout his term as president.<sup>147</sup> Although de Haas' first years in the Federation were not easy, he proved to be an important person later on for the organization.

After a long period of tension between the Federation and the WZO, the FAZ came dangerously close to severing all ties when the Actions Comité, the executive organ of the WZO, recognized Knights of Zion, who had previously extracted itself from the FAZ, as an independent body. The Knights of Zion was a fraternal lodge particularly popular in Chicago. It was the largest Zionist group outside of New York, and it consistently refused to cooperate with the FAZ. Instead it wanted to deal directly with the WZO.

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<sup>146</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 108-109

<sup>147</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 109

The threat of defection made by the FAZ scared the WZO, but not enough to stop the relationship from remaining unfriendly over the next few years. Before he died, Herzl had refused to make the FAZ the only representative for the American Zionists. He believed that with several organizations, more money could be collected and sent to Europe and Palestine.<sup>148</sup> Instead of an increase in funds, this undermined the FAZ in their efforts, which led to fewer donations. This again, led the WZO to exclude the American branch from important committees and meetings. It felt that the Americans should be able to collect more money than they did. Naturally, the Americans did not like this, and relations between the FAZ and the WZO were lacking the respect needed for productive cooperation.<sup>149</sup>

With all the internal and external quarreling, it is a wonder that any progress was made at all. Far from all American Jews became Zionists, in fact only a small part joined the official Zionist groups. However, very often the Zionists and the non-Zionists vocally and actively supported the same causes and argued for the same things. Although their end destination was different, they were travelling the same road. It was the non-Zionist Jews who had the greatest impact on American society in this period, and it is doubtful whether the Zionist movement would have survived in America without them. One of these men was Simon Wolf.<sup>150</sup>

### **3.8 The non-Zionist diplomat who kept the American Zionist movement going**

Simon Wolf was born in 1836 in the Kingdom of Bavaria, a German state that ceased to exist in 1918.<sup>151</sup> After immigrating to the United States in 1848, and settling down in Ohio, he became an attorney. He relocated to Washington, D.C. in 1862 and because he proved to be good at creating and maintaining personal relationships with politicians in different camps, he was an important part of the early communications between Jews and various people in the Government, all the way up to the President.<sup>152</sup> He held the position of Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia from 1869 to 1878. As Recorder of Deeds, it was his responsibility to maintain public records and documents, such as real estate records in case of disputes of

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<sup>148</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 110

<sup>149</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 109

<sup>150</sup> Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile*, 340

<sup>151</sup> Wolf, Simon. *Selected Addresses and Papers of Simon Wolf*. Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1926, 13

<sup>152</sup> Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile*, 34

ownership. He was appointed by President Grant and became one of the first Jews in the city to hold public office. He also had short-term employments as judge and consul-general of the United States to Egypt, before President James Garfield appointed him a member of the Board of Charities for the District of Columbia. This was a supervisory committee in charge of the care of the “wards of the state”, those that could not look after themselves.

He was also chairman of the Board of Delegates of Civil and Religious Rights for several years. It was created in 1859, before the Civil War, to gather information and provide relief work for the Jewish population. Its main accomplishment was to prove the need for a national Jewish organization.<sup>153</sup> All of these positions gave him many occasions to submit topics of Jewish interest to the federal government.<sup>154</sup>

Wolf, although a self-proclaimed non-Zionist, became an important ally for Louis Lipsky and the rest of the Zionist movement right up to his death in 1923.<sup>155</sup> He did not see Zionism as a solution to the *Jewish problem*, but he was concerned with a lot of the same issues. As one of the leaders of the Independent Order of B’nai B’rith, he utilized his relationships with government officials to promote issues important to all American Jews. The Independent Order of B’nai B’rith was established in 1843 by mainly German-Jewish Americans to help secure the continuation of the Jewish people. In addition to fighting anti-Semitism they also provided insurance for widows and children of deceased Jews.<sup>156</sup> Simon Wolf knew every US president from Lincoln to Wilson, which gave him opportunity to bring up a range of issues important to American Jewry.

One of the issues he concerned himself with was Russia’s refusal to admit to the country American Jews originally from Russia travelling back to visit family members. Wolf corresponded with Secretary of State John Hay in 1901 on “a subject that appeals, not only to the Jew, but to the man, to the American”.<sup>157</sup> This “cruel injustice” upset the whole Jewish

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<sup>153</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 72-73

<sup>154</sup> Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile*, 340; Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 74

<sup>155</sup> “*Jewish Nationalism at Versailles*”, Dec. 1, 1918; SW Papers, Box 2, Folder 8

<sup>156</sup> Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes – Brandeis, Weizmann, and American Zionism*, 84; Medoff, Rafael & Waxman, Chaim I. *The A to Z of Zionism*, Scarecrow Press, Inc., Maryland, 2008, 48

<sup>157</sup> Wolf to Hay, Nov. 23, 1901; SW Papers, Box 1, Folder 10

community in America.<sup>158</sup> Both the Zionists and Wolf tried, with little success, to appeal to the Russian government to change this policy.<sup>159</sup>

Another issue, also this involving Russia, was the Russian government's non-reaction to the many pogroms, and their consequent refusal to accept and distribute supplies to the Jewish population.<sup>160</sup> Wolf wrote the State Department, urging it to take action. On his suggestion, the ambassador in St. Petersburg, was contacted and directed "to make an investigation to ascertain whether supplies would be received".<sup>161</sup> He was also the man credited with convincing President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Hay to transmit to Russia the petition regarding the Kishineff Massacre.<sup>162</sup> Although this petition was refused by the Russian government, "its words ... attained world wide publicity".<sup>163</sup>

Because of his involvement in cases like these, Wolf was often referred to as "Ambassador of the Jews of the United States to Washington".<sup>164</sup> Wolf's diplomatic style kept the American Zionist movement alive. His unwavering effort to help the Jews of Europe, although not as a Zionist, kept the idea of Zionism going and got the movement ready for their next leader, the prominent Boston attorney known as the People's Attorney. Louis D. Brandeis shared Wolf's style of diplomacy and his involvement saved a movement in danger of collapse.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Wolf to Hay, Nov. 23, 1901; SW Papers, Box 1, Folder 10

<sup>159</sup> Wolf to Hay, Nov. 23, 1901; SW Papers, Box 1, Folder 10

<sup>160</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 75

<sup>161</sup> Francis B. Loomis, Assistant Secretary of State to Wolf, May 5, 1903, SW Papers, Box 1, Folder 10; Wolf to Hay, Nov. 23, 1901, SW Papers, Box 1, Folder 10. I have been unable to positively identify the US ambassador in St. Petersburg. In my sources he appears only as *the ambassador*.

<sup>162</sup> See page 9-10; Hay to Wolf, June 24, 1903, SW Papers, Box 1, Folder 10

<sup>163</sup> Hay to the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith, Oct. 31, 1903, SW Papers, Box 1, Folder 10. Of course, this did not change Russian policy, and the Czar even pardoned all participants in another pogrom, the Kiev program in 1905. Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of his Life*, 3

<sup>164</sup> Wolf, *Selected Papers of Simon Wolf*, 12

<sup>165</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of his Life*, 5





## Brandeis & Wilson

### 1912 – 1921

By 1912, the American Zionist movement was not much to speak of. The number of memberships, which had never been plentiful to begin with, was rapidly declining, and economically the movement was struggling to stay afloat. The movement could easily have disappeared there and then, without many people giving it much thought, or even noticing. It desperately needed a miracle, and a miracle it received in the form of a Boston attorney. Louis D. Brandeis was known across the country for his work for liberal causes and his public service, and, coincidentally, he had recently rediscovered his Jewish roots. Why did Brandeis become involved with Zionism and how did his relationship with President Woodrow Wilson affect the American Zionist movement?

#### **4.1 Louis D. Brandeis**

Louis Dembitz Brandeis became involved in the Zionist movement late in life. He was already in his fifties when his interest in the future of Judaism became so strong that he decided he had to contribute to the movement. His life before his involvement in 1912, was dedicated to the law, and he was publicly known as the People's Attorney because of his fights for social justice and against big corporations and their monopolies.<sup>166</sup> He also fought hard to end corruption among government officials and other influential people.<sup>167</sup> He was born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1856, but his practice was in Boston, where he settled down after law school. Although he relocated for work, he was proud of where he was from and "he spoke with a southern accent all his life".<sup>168</sup> Brandeis became very successful, but despite his increased wealth, he lived his whole life much like a Spartan. He disapproved of luxurious living and too many comforts, and of people flaunting their wealth.<sup>169</sup> In terms of his religious affiliation, "[h]e was a Jew, but did not regard it as his duty to assert the fact

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<sup>166</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 86, 92, 275, 325, 431

<sup>167</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 6; Cooper Jr., John Milton. *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, Vintage Books, New York, 2011, 90

<sup>168</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 162

<sup>169</sup> Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile*, 202

unless a situation called for it.”<sup>170</sup> His mother and father were both Jewish but like their son they did not see their Jewishness as the most important aspect of their lives.

## 4.2 Brandeis becomes a Zionist

Brandeis was raised without any religious preference. Frederika, Brandeis’ mother, had from her parents inherited what she called a strong belief in “goodness for its own sake”, not as a consequence of one’s religious beliefs.<sup>171</sup> She wanted to “give them something that neither could be argued away nor would have to be given up as untenable, namely, a pure spirit and the highest ideals as to morals and love.”<sup>172</sup> Brandeis was raised as an American who just happened to be a Jew as well. Although his uncle, Louis Dembitz, had been involved in early Zionist affairs previously, it was not until an interview in 1910 with Jacob de Haas, the editor of the Boston *Jewish Advocate* and himself an active Zionist, that Brandeis seems to have become interested in Zionism. He did receive an invitation to attend an informal meeting about the Zionist situation in Boston in 1905, which he politely declined.<sup>173</sup>

The interview with de Haas was about Brandeis’ involvement with the Massachusetts Savings Bank Insurance Law, which would give paid workers cheap insurance. But at the close of the interview de Haas mentioned Brandeis’ uncle, the Zionist. He explained that he had met him on several occasions, all related to Zionism. This peaked Brandeis’ interest and de Haas spent some time telling Brandeis about the goals and history of Zionism and the movement itself.<sup>174</sup> According to de Haas, it was the mentioning of Brandeis’ uncle that led to an hour of unfolding “the epic story of Theodor Herzl ... That story, told chapter by chapter in a series of interviews during the following winter, coupled with the capacity for the ideal which he had found in the needle workers of New York, opened to Brandeis new vistas.”<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile*, 202

<sup>171</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 121-122

<sup>172</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 122

<sup>173</sup> Edward J. Bromberg to LDB, Feb. 10, 1905, LDB Papers, Reel 68, LC; LDB to Edward J. Blomberg, Feb. 14, 1905, LDB Papers, Reel 68, LC.

<sup>174</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 125; Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 14-15. Needle workers: workers in the garment industry.

<sup>175</sup> de Haas, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Biographical Sketch*, 52

Brandeis was a part of the Progressive movement that was in sweeping through American politics at this time.<sup>176</sup> Among the many issues the Progressives took an interest in was the end corruption and bringing the political power back to the public. Natural resources should belong to the public, not private corporations, the movement argued. There was also a belief in new technology and new thoughts as a way to improve the human condition, as well as in the idea of the government existing to aid the weak and oppressed.<sup>177</sup> For Brandeis, the connection between these ideals and the Jewish community came when he, in 1911, arbitrated the garment industry strike in New York City. Both sides consisted mainly of Eastern European Jewish immigrants. Brandeis noted that he “was profoundly impressed by the ethical standards and idealism of strikers and bosses alike.”<sup>178</sup>

When Brandeis got involved with something, he seldom did it halfway. Extensive research on a subject was needed before he made any kind of statement or comment.<sup>179</sup> He read everything he could get his hands on and questioned anyone who possessed any kind of information on the subject. Louis Lipsky, who would succeed Brandeis as President of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), described this process as “a terrific raking of memory and a testing of its accuracy”.<sup>180</sup> This description demonstrates how Brandeis used his lawyering skills and performed a very intense cross-examination to soak in absolutely every aspect of an issue.

From his first meeting with de Haas in 1910, it took two years of reading up on Zionism and several more meetings with de Haas before Brandeis decided to join the Federation of American Zionists (FAZ) in 1912. His first public involvement was in 1913 when he chaired a meeting in honor of Nahum Sokolow, a Polish author and Zionist leader. Initially, Brandeis was skeptical to any personal involvement in the meeting, apart from a brief introduction of the guest of honor.<sup>181</sup> However, by the end of Sokolow’s speech, Brandeis is said to have jumped to his feet exclaiming “[t]hank you, Mr. Sokolow, you have brought me back to my people.”<sup>182</sup> After a few more words of encouragement for the audience, Brandeis paraphrased

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<sup>176</sup> The Progressive Era lasted from the 1890s to the 1920s as a reaction to industrialism and the changes to society it brought.

<sup>177</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 330-331

<sup>178</sup> Medoff, *The A to Z of Zionism*, 52

<sup>179</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 15

<sup>180</sup> Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile*, 204; The FAZ became the ZOA in 1918, see page 54 .By the time Lipsky became president it was called the ZOA.

<sup>181</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 125

<sup>182</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 126

a famous Herzlian quote, saying: “If you wish it, you can by service bring it about.”<sup>183</sup> These exclamations must have been received as an expression of devotion to Herzl and his work, and probably helped heighten the hype surrounding Brandeis among the American Zionists. Never a man to rush into anything, even after this awakening, Brandeis still moved very slowly in his approach to Zionism. He declined all active leadership positions offered to him, and would only hold honorary positions.<sup>184</sup> In August 1914 this changed when he accepted the position as president of the FAZ, which made him the official leader of the American Zionist movement.

### 4.3 Why Zionism?

Some people have claimed that Brandeis’ decision to actively involve himself in Zionist affairs was to further his own political aspirations, while others have said that it was a growing sense of belonging to the Jewish community that did it.<sup>185</sup> Yonathan Shapiro, an Israeli political scientist, made the argument that Brandeis’ failure to be a part of Wilson’s cabinet, drove Brandeis to put all his money and resources into the Zionist movement, so that they in turn, when the time came, would support his appointment to the Supreme Court.<sup>186</sup> This argument paints Brandeis as a narcissistic and power-hungry opportunist, which is not really consistent with his contemporary image as a simple-living lawyer who chose to fight for the common man. This explanation also credits the Jewish community with too much power and influence compared to what it actually had at the time. If Brandeis had his sights set on the Supreme Court, it would have made more sense to put all his resources into the political sphere in Washington. It was, after all, lawyers, politicians and businessmen who were on both sides during his appointment and the debacle that ensued.

Ben Halpern, who has written extensively on American Zionism and Brandeis, offers another explanation. He looked upon Brandeis’ involvement with Zionist affairs not as a conversion, but as a man who finally felt that he could pursue his Jewish roots to the fullest. According to Halpern, Brandeis had curbed his interest in all things Jewish because of his parents’ aversion

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<sup>183</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 126; “If you will it, it is no dream.” Taken from Herzl’s work of fiction, *Altneuland* (Old New Land).

<sup>184</sup> Zion Association of Greater Boston to LDB, April 24, 1913, LDB Papers, Reel 68, LC.; LDB to Zion Association of Greater Boston, April 26, 1913, LDB Papers, Reel 68, LC.; Zion Association of Greater Boston to LDB, April 29, 1913, LDB Papers, Reel 68, LC.; LDB to Zion Association of Greater Boston, April 30, 1913, LDB Papers, Reel 68, LC.; Zion Association of Greater Boston to LDB, May 2, 1913, LDB Papers, Reel 68, LC.

<sup>185</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 126

<sup>186</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 406

to religion. When they passed away, he was free to engulf himself fully in Jewish life. Zionism thus became his portal into the life he had sought his whole life.<sup>187</sup> This is an interesting theory, and it has some merit in that Brandeis was very close to his mother. But the idea that he would stay completely away from something he felt a connection to because it might upset his mother is unrealistic. He was used to being fair, but uncompromising, in his work as attorney, and able to keep his own feelings at bay when working on a case.<sup>188</sup> So to suggest that he denied himself an interest in Jewish life for most of his life to spare his mother's feelings seems unlikely.

Yet another theory is that Brandeis, while trying to ignore his Jewish roots, was experiencing the pain of anti-Semitism regularly while working in Boston. This theory posits that Brandeis grew tired of this and instead of trying to fit in, he dove headfirst into the most Jewish organization he could find, where he hoped he would find the solution to "the Jewish problem".<sup>189</sup> If he felt unfairly treated because of his background, then Zionism and its goal of a Jewish homeland would be appealing to Brandeis.<sup>190</sup> The problem with this theory is that there is no evidence of Brandeis ever having any anti-Semitic experiences in Boston.<sup>191</sup> It is true that the Boston Brahmin, Boston's traditional upper class, who was notoriously known for ostracizing out-of-towners, was very influential while Brandeis lived there. However, evidence of explicit use of anti-Semitism is not found in any of Brandeis' own recollections of his time in Boston. Brandeis was often left uninvited to parties and social events, even when his practice was one of the most respected and successful in the whole of Boston. It could be the fact that he was a Jew that left him without an invitation, but it could just as easily be because he was not a Boston native.

According to the man himself, he became involved in Zionism through his Americanism. The two isms shared common principles and values, and this struck a chord with him. To him, Zionism was "a movement to enable the Jews to exercise the same right now exercised by practically every other people in the world".<sup>192</sup> It was also "essentially practical" and did not

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<sup>187</sup> Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes – Brandeis, Weizmann and American Zionism*, 94; Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 406-407,

<sup>188</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 47-48

<sup>189</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 407

<sup>190</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 407

<sup>191</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 407

<sup>192</sup> LDB, *Zionism And Patriotism in the Jewish Advocate*, Oct. 2, 1914, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC.

wish to forcibly relocate anyone, only provide a home for those who needed it.<sup>193</sup> It would also be impossible as “there are 14,000,000 Jews [in the world], and Palestine would not accommodate more than one-fifth of that number.”<sup>194</sup>

He felt that the more superficial aspects of Americanism included “adoption of ... language, manners and customs”.<sup>195</sup> But to Brandeis, the more important features of Americanism were the ideals of liberty, self-realization, democracy and social justice.<sup>196</sup> It also included a notion of Americans acting as “our brothers’ keepers”.<sup>197</sup> “The right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” enjoyed by Americans, should therefore be extended to the Jewish population through Zionism.<sup>198</sup>

He is not the only one who saw this connection. Nahum Sokolow emphasized that “America is a world in itself, and this can equally be said of American Zionism.”<sup>199</sup> Brandeis was open about his lack of a Jewish upbringing, but the more he discovered of his Jewish heritage, the more he saw how it fit with his beloved American ideals. In an article he stated that “to be good Americans, we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews, we must become Zionists.”<sup>200</sup>

As a lawyer, Brandeis was involved in a lot of big cases and reforms, but it was his skills as a lawyer that won the cases, not his commitment to the particular case. Apart from the savings bank life insurance reform, where Brandeis made it possible for savings banks to sell life insurances that common people could afford, he does not seem to have stayed interested in an issue after the case was won. With Zionism he was different. People who knew him, even those that eventually opposed him, saw that his commitment and care was genuine.<sup>201</sup>

One of Brandeis’ principle characteristics, and the reason why his involvement in Zionist affairs made such an impact, was that he was first and foremost American. His Jewishness always came in second to his American identity. His belief in democracy, freedom and equal

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<sup>193</sup> LDB, *Zionism And Patriotism in the Jewish Advocate*, Oct. 2, 1914, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC.

<sup>194</sup> LDB, *The Boston Globe*, Sep. 28, 1914, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC.

<sup>195</sup> LDB, *True Americanism*, July 5, 1915, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC.

<sup>196</sup> LDB, *True Americanism*, July 5, 1915, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC.

<sup>197</sup> LDB, *True Americanism*, July 5, 1915, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC.

<sup>198</sup> LDB, *True Americanism*, July 5, 1915, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC.

<sup>199</sup> Sokolow, Nahum. *History of Zionism 1600-1918, Vol. 2*, Longmans, Green and Co, London, 1919, 355

<sup>200</sup> LDB, *Zionism And Patriotism in the Jewish Advocate*, Oct. 2, 1914, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC.

<sup>201</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 409

opportunities influenced his vision for the Zionist movement. In a speech he gave at a Zionist convention in Boston, he said: “It is Democracy that Zionism represents. It is Social Justice which Zionism represents.”<sup>202</sup> He envisioned a Jewish home in Palestine based on American principles.<sup>203</sup> This attitude fundamentally changed the American movement, and while it proved successful in America, it created difficulties in the relationship with the World Zionist Organization (WZO).

#### 4.4 The outspoken leader 1914-1916

The Zionist organization was in a bad shape at the time of Brandeis’ enrollment. Financially, it was struggling. Too few members and scant donations made life difficult for the leaders of the FAZ. Of about three million Jews in the United States, only about twelve thousand were official members of the movement.<sup>204</sup> The FAZ had never been an organization with huge influence in any areas, but in the beginning it at least had a steady foundation of members. By 1910, the organization was in danger of collapsing. This was mainly because many Jews were afraid of being accused of not being loyal to the US. The American Jewish Committee, who was established in 1906 to secure rights for Jews worldwide, was the main opponent. They were afraid of Zionism standing in the way of assimilation, much like the Reform Jews. Although many personally supported the Zionist cause, they kept their opinions and support away from the public scene to avoid accusations of dual loyalty. Henrietta Szold, who would go on to found *Hadassah*, the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, was brought in as secretary and sorted through some of the financial mess. However, it was not until Brandeis became an active leader that membership went up again.<sup>205</sup> With the rising number of members, a renewal of aspirations for the movement followed. Louis Lipsky, longtime American Zionist, stated that Brandeis

[t]hrough his position in American life ... was able to develop a Zionist Movement colored by American standards and ideals. He had made a place for himself in American life without emphasizing his Jewish identity. His return to Jewish ideals therefore had an enormous influence upon all Jews – orthodox and reform, labor and liberal.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 411

<sup>203</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 408

<sup>204</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 6

<sup>205</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of his Life*, 6; Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 327

<sup>206</sup> Lipsky, *Memoirs In Profile*, 203



The members Brandeis attracted were predominantly like him. They were Americans with a strong belief in American ideals and democratic principles.<sup>207</sup> They were second-generation immigrants or more. They had not experienced much anti-Semitism in their own life, but were offended by the notion. It was an important issue for them to secure equal rights for Jews regardless of where in the world they lived. Like female suffrage, Zionism, to these people, became a reform movement, a reform to solve the Jewish problem.<sup>208</sup>

In August, a few weeks after the outbreak of war in 1914, a telegram from the World Zionist Organization (WZO) made its way to Brandeis, the newly elected President of the FAZ. Those weeks had been filled with rumors and wonderings in the FAZ. The telegram confirmed what they feared the most: the WZO was deteriorating, with its leaders scattered across the continent. Communication was practically nonexistent. The FAZ called for an emergency meeting to discuss what the American branch should do in this uncertain and complex situation. Brandeis established the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs (PEC). It was to handle Zionist affairs for the duration of the war, including the management of an emergency fund. Brandeis also surprised the attending representatives with an inquiry into each and every Zionist group or organization. Those members who had expected Brandeis to be a figurehead leader for the organization, like most of his predecessors had been, were in for a big surprise. Brandeis wanted to know anything and everything about American Zionist life because he intended to be an active leader for them all.<sup>209</sup> PEC, with Brandeis at the helm, ran Zionist affairs for the duration of the war.

Brandeis had three main challenges to work on when he became leader. First he had to unify the movement to make it effective. Then he had to choose the “right” projects for the movement to get involved in, in order to get the less involved members more involved. He felt that “[t]he road [to Palestine was] economic and the opportunity [was] open”.<sup>210</sup> To achieve this, expenditures had to be kept low and as much money as possible had to be used *in* Palestine. For decades, economic policies were referred to as “Brandesian” in American Zionism.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 126; Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 408

<sup>208</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 126-127

<sup>209</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 405

<sup>210</sup> *The New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1929, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC

<sup>211</sup> de Haas, *Brandeis in Zionism* in [-] *Journal* [----], 1928, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC; The Document was damaged, so I was unable to see the full name of the publication, as well as the date.

Finally he had to converge Zionism and Americanism, to make the Zionist society and the American society fit together more neatly.<sup>212</sup> Brandeis felt that “[t]here [was] no inconsistency between loyalty to America and loyalty to the Jewish spirit”.<sup>213</sup> That meant a process of Americanization for the members as well as the organization. It was important to him that the Zionists’ “[l]et no American imagine that Zionism is inconsistent with patriotism”.<sup>214</sup> With statements like these from a recognized man such as Brandeis, the fear of not being patriotic enough dissipated, and the number of new members grew steadily. Groups like the Independent Order Brith Shalom and the Independent Order Brith Abraham, with more than 100 000 members, openly gave their support, moral and financial, to the Zionist cause.<sup>215</sup> However, not all Jews became Zionists.<sup>216</sup>

#### **4.5 The opposition to Zionism from the Jewish community**

Reform Judaism and its apparent leader Isaac Mayer Wise were adamant. According to them, Judaism and nationalism were two separate issues not to be intertwined.<sup>217</sup> “This country is our Palestine, this city is our Jerusalem, this house of God, our Temple.”<sup>218</sup> This uttering at the founding of America’s first Reform Temple from 1841, stood as their pillar in the opposition to Zionism. In addition to Reform Jews, opposition to Zionism was mostly found among the old settlers, the Orthodox community and the Jewish labor movement. The old settlers viewed it as a threat to their Americanism and the life they had fought so hard to achieve. They had finally become almost full members of American society, and Zionism in their mind undermined this effort. The Orthodox Jews at the time were against any new ideas that did not come from God himself. They prayed for a return to Zion, but the endeavor would have to come directly from God. The Jewish labor movement, strong adherents of the teachings of Karl Marx, viewed the loss of the Jewish nationality as a necessary sacrifice on the road to a worldwide revolution. On their own these four groupings did not yield much power, but combined they proved a challenging obstacle.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 409; Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 127

<sup>213</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 6

<sup>214</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 6

<sup>215</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 6-7

<sup>216</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 85-86, 92, 101; Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 63; Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism, 1897-1848*, 5, 26

<sup>217</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 7

<sup>218</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 7

<sup>219</sup> Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile*, 203

Brandeis used the terms "Jewish" and "Zionist" interchangeably.<sup>220</sup> Whether this was conscious or not is hard to say, but regardless it was an effective tool for promoting Zionism. In American society the two became unchangeably connected. The non-Zionist Jews had to try to explain how a Jewish movement was not really Jewish. This detail may have given the movement more credibility, as it was often believed that all Jews were behind it. The government officials may have felt that they were helping the Jewish population by supporting Zionism. One of these government officials was Brandeis' close friend, Woodrow Wilson, who also happened to be the President of the United States.

## 4.6 Woodrow Wilson

Thomas Woodrow Wilson was born in Staunton, Virginia on December 28, 1856. His father was the minister of the town's largest church, the First Presbyterian Church.<sup>221</sup> Like his father, Woodrow Wilson stayed a Presbyterian throughout his life, but he made a clear distinction between church and state, as well as between religion and society. "War isn't declared in the name of God; it is a human affair entirely."<sup>222</sup>

Wilson appears to have been a religious man without prejudices toward other religions. His second wife, Edith, was Episcopalian and went to her own church. He visited the pope in the Vatican as the first US President to do so. Many of his closest and most trusted political associates were Catholics and Jews, and he certainly went out of his way to appoint, and later fight to confirm, Louis D. Brandeis as the first Jew to serve on the Supreme Court.<sup>223</sup>

In March 1913 he was inaugurated as President of the United States of America. President Wilson was bold, extremely sure of himself and his abilities, and often stubborn. He saw himself as an instrument of God, but in his eyes so were everyone else. His presidential term coincided with World War I, and he was responsible for the US joining the Allies in 1917, bringing the war even closer to the Jewish population in America. Like Brandeis, he also

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<sup>220</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 411

<sup>221</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 13-14

<sup>222</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 4

<sup>223</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 4-5; However, he has been accused of being a racist and carrying out racist policies, like segregation in the Navy. The question of Wilson being a racist or not is widely discussed and has many aspects. However, the implementation of some of his policies suggests that he believed in the superiority of the white population.

identified as a Progressive and it was while discussing issues important to the Progressive movement that their friendship began.<sup>224</sup>

## 4.7 The relationship

Brandeis and Wilson first met in August 1912, a few months before Wilson would be elected president. In a letter dated August 1, 1912, Brandeis applauded Wilson's pledge to reduce the tariff duties gradually, as the Progressives of the time wanted.<sup>225</sup> This would "secure relief from tariff burdens" for small businesses, which would hinder monopoly, which again would benefit the people.<sup>226</sup> He wrote that this "is further evidence that the country may expect from you a wisely progressive administration ... The simple plan which you suggest is true statesmanship: and the real tariff reformers should rally to your support."<sup>227</sup> Brandeis and Wilson's common political ground would prove important for later political decisions.

The two men were the same age and both originally hailed from the South, Brandeis from Kentucky and Wilson from Virginia. The reason for their meeting was political. The issue at hand was the problem with the trusts. Brandeis was against Wilson's opponent Theodore Roosevelt's treatment of the issue, and made his case to Wilson. While the Republican Roosevelt wanted to regulate the trusts, Brandeis and Wilson proposed to regulate competition instead. The creation of monopolies came from unregulated competition, they felt, and by regulating competition, monopolies could be avoided.<sup>228</sup>

Brandeis' thoughts on the issue were not new to Wilson, who had concerns of his own, and they both characterized their meeting as a meeting of the minds. Brandeis described Wilson as "strong, simple, serious, openminded, eager to learn and deliberate."<sup>229</sup> In a telegram from September the same year Wilson asked Brandeis to "[p]lease set forth as explicitly as possible the actual measures by which competition can be effectively regulated. The more explicit we are on this point, the more completely will the enemies [sic] guns be spiked."<sup>230</sup> His use of the word *we*, shows that he already viewed Brandeis as an important ally, a mere

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<sup>224</sup> See page 39 for the Progressive movement.

<sup>225</sup> LDB to WW, Aug. 1, 1912, WW Papers, Reel 29, LC.

<sup>226</sup> LDB to WW, Aug. 1, 1912, WW Papers, Reel 29, LC; The Revenue Act of 1913 decided that taxes should be based in proportion to value and it also reduced tariff rates from 40% to 25%.

<sup>227</sup> LDB to WW, Aug. 1, 1912, WW Papers, Reel 29, LC.

<sup>228</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 163; Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis - A Life*, 344

<sup>229</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis - A Life*, 343

<sup>230</sup> WW to LDB, Sept. 27, 1912, LDB Papers, Reel 117, LC.

month upon meeting him. This instant respect and admiration from President Wilson would prove to be instrumental, in Brandeis' political life as well as in his fight for Zionism.

Brandeis' tactics on how to attack the issue with Roosevelt helped Wilson secure the win. He told Brandeis after the election that "[y]ou were yourself a great part of the victory."<sup>231</sup> In addition to supplying strategic policy advice at critical junctures, he also actively helped Wilson get elected.<sup>232</sup> He released statements to the press, wrote supporting articles, as well as joining the campaign trail.

Brandeis had made an impact on Wilson, who wanted him in his cabinet so he could take full advantage of the great abilities the man possessed. Unfortunately for Wilson, Brandeis was met with too much opposition among his advisors to be able to appoint him. Nevertheless, this did not keep him from seeking Brandeis' advice privately on the big issues he faced as President. For instance, he asked Brandeis for his opinion on proposed currency legislation. Brandeis responded saying that "[t]he power to issue currency should be vested exclusively in Government officials ... The American people will not be content to have the discretion necessarily involved vested in a Board composed wholly or in part of bankers: for their judgment may be biased by private interest or affiliation."<sup>233</sup> The amount of trust that President Wilson put in Brandeis' thoughts and opinions explains how Brandeis was able to secure support for Zionism from the President of the United States. President Wilson's continued effort to put Brandeis in positions where he could bring forth change, showed the faith he had in him, and his relentlessness led to Brandeis' appointment to the Supreme Court in 1916. This faith is also made clear in his bid to make Brandeis chairman of the Commission on Industrial Relations.<sup>234</sup> "There is no one in the United States who could preside over and direct such an inquiry so well as you could, and I wonder if it is possible for you to strengthen the whole thing by assuming direction of it. It would gratify me very deeply if you could."<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> WW to LDB, Nov. 12, 1912, LDB Papers, Reel 117, LC.

<sup>232</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 213

<sup>233</sup> LDB to WW, June 14, 1913, LDB Papers, Reel 117, LC.

<sup>234</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis - The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 48

<sup>235</sup> Baker, Ray Stannard. *Woodrow Wilson Life & Letters*, vol. 4, Doubleday, Page & Company, London, 1931, 36

Even after his two terms in office ended, Wilson would continue to take an interest in a magnitude of issues, often relying on Brandeis for input, and often offering his own in return. “Here is another suggestion. I hope that it will not seem to you that I am firing these things at you with inconsiderate frequency and rapidity; they form themselves somewhere in the hidden recesses of my system and I am uneasy until I get them out.”<sup>236</sup>

The relationship appears to have been very symbiotic. Both men sent rough drafts and final cuts to each other, for advice but also because they enjoyed reading each other’s writings.<sup>237</sup> The correspondence, while dealing with serious matters, also shows the easy banter that existed between the two men. The tone between them in their correspondence was friendly and showed that their relationship consisted of more than just politics and exploitation of each other’s positions.<sup>238</sup> The close relationship extended to their families as well. Every holiday season greetings were sent to both families.<sup>239</sup>

When his health was failing the former President relied on Brandeis’ talents to help him in the political aspect of his life: “Thank you for the statement which you were kind enough to write and send me. It seems to me admirably lucid and just sufficiently elaborate to make the argument clear. It will admirably suit the purpose which I has in mind, and I am deeply obliged to you.”<sup>240</sup>

Wilson’s view on Zionism before and after he openly endorsed the Balfour Declaration is difficult to say anything about. Brandeis and the President undoubtedly discussed Zionism on more than one occasion, but this was kept private and out of their correspondence. In their letters, there are a lot of references to conversations they have had, or are going to have at a later date, without any clues as to what the subject matter was. “Things are ready now for a brief conference on the matters you, Chadbourne, Colby and I have been discussing, and I will greatly appreciate it if you could make it convenient to be at my house here on Monday afternoon next, the twenty-fourth, at three o’clock to help round the matter out.”<sup>241</sup> The

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<sup>236</sup> WW to LDB, Dec. 6, 1921, LDB Papers, Reel 117, LC.; WW to LDB, Dec. 6, 1921, WW Papers, Reel 116, LC.

<sup>237</sup> JRB (Secretary to WW) to LDB, March 4, 1922, LDB Papers, Reel 117, LC.

<sup>238</sup> WW to LDB, Nov. 6, 1921, LDB Papers, Reel 117, LC.

<sup>239</sup> WW to LDB, Dec. 23, 1923, WW Papers, Reel 131, LC.

<sup>240</sup> WW to LDB, April 18, 1923, LDB Papers, Reel 117, LC; While still President, Wilson suffered several strokes, and the last couple of years of his presidency, his wife ran things from the White House.

<sup>241</sup> WW to LDB, April 17, 1922, LDB Papers, Reel 117, LC

correspondence between the two alludes to the fact that Brandeis was “pushing Wilson down a path he already wanted to take.”<sup>242</sup> The President asked for Brandeis’ views on topics, likely because he knew that, as adherents of the same Progressive movement, they very often agreed on political issues. More often than not, his requests were for rhetorical guidance, so as to make his opinions clearer to the public.

## 4.8 The nomination and subsequent appointment 1916

President Wilson’s nomination of Brandeis to a seat on the Supreme Court in January 1916 came as a big surprise. An eyewitness reported that “[w]hen Brandeis’s nomination came in yesterday, the Senate simply gasped.... There wasn’t any more excitement at the Capitol when Congress passed the Spanish War resolution.”<sup>243</sup> This was the latest action taken by the President in a series of progressive policies and decisions. The nomination was made possible by both luck and cunning thought. With the death of Justice Joseph Lamar a position opened up, and Wilson quickly made the decision to nominate Brandeis while his strongest adversaries in the government were away in Europe. In particular, that meant Colonel House, the President’s closest advisor. He was “always at the President’s side, coordinating, evaluating, and recommending.”<sup>244</sup> Colonel House was not a member of the Cabinet, but in the press he was known as *Assistant President House*, or *The President’s Silent Partner*.<sup>245</sup>

Colonel House had blocked Brandeis’ possible appointment to Wilson’s cabinet a few years earlier. Although the President had wanted Brandeis for the position of Attorney General, Colonel House had opposed. During a meeting at his house he noted that they “practically eliminated Brandeis for this position because he was not thought to be entirely above suspicion and it would not do to put him in such a place.”<sup>246</sup> In his diary, House wrote that he “liked him personally but he was not fit for that place.”<sup>247</sup> The position was instead given to the conservative and experienced James C. McReynolds.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson – A Biography*, 221

<sup>243</sup> Urofsky, Melvin I. & Levy, David W. *Letters of Brandeis – IV 1916-1921*, State University of New York, Albany, 1975, 25; Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 329

<sup>244</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 50

<sup>245</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 50

<sup>246</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 183; Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 51

<sup>247</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 51

<sup>248</sup> McReynolds went on to become a member of the Supreme Court in 1914, a position he held for over 26 years.

Although House claimed to like Brandeis personally, and to respect him as a lawyer, he also wrote that “[t]here comes to the surface, now and then, one of those curious Hebrew traits of mind that makes one hold something in reserve.”<sup>249</sup> House clearly displays anti-Semitic thoughts, but it was probably just as much out of jealousy as anti-Semitism that House did not want an appointment for Brandeis. Brandeis with his strong intellect and a connection with Wilson must have seemed like a threat to the President’s closest advisor, which led him to believe that it would be best for him if Brandeis was left outside of the government.<sup>250</sup>

Not everyone was against appointing Brandeis. Another advisor of the President was Secretary of State-to-be William Jennings Bryan. In a letter to President Wilson from December 1912, he stated that “I share your high opinion of Brandeis & I do not know that a better man can be found. He has a standing among reformers & I am sure all progressives would be pleased.”<sup>251</sup> He also wrote that “[i]t is more important that he be *at heart* with the people *against the special interests* than that he be a brilliant lawyer—brilliant lawyers can be hired but the right kind of man for Atty Gen [Attorney General] is not so easy to find.”<sup>252</sup>

Although he did find some support for Brandeis, many lawyers, financiers and quite a few Democrats were against his appointment. Their reasons were diverse. Brandeis, with his successes in court, had made quite a few adversaries. His uncompromising lawyering did not go down well with a lot of powerful lawyers and businessmen. Some of them were also anti-Semites, and this made them fundamentally skeptical to any elevation of someone of Jewish descent. These people had influence in the Capitol and in the end it became impossible for Wilson to assign him.<sup>253</sup> Wilson, who did not discriminate because of religion, must have been deeply angered by this development. The treatment of Brandeis in this case probably made Wilson more open to lending his support to Zionism. He genuinely trusted and cared for Brandeis, so to see him marginalized and discriminated against in this way must have been painful for the newly elected head of state.

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<sup>249</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 183

<sup>250</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 194

<sup>251</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 185

<sup>252</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 185; Italics found in the source material.

<sup>253</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 48-51; Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 183, 185, 190; Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 372-375



The President expressed great enjoyment when the opportunity to appoint Brandeis to the Supreme Court arose: “I never signed any commission with such satisfaction.”<sup>254</sup> Finally he was able to give Brandeis the official position he felt he had deserved for a long time. “I am going to see the new Justice today and tell him how happy it makes me to see him on the Great Court.”<sup>255</sup> For Brandeis this was a great opportunity to affect change on issues he really cared about. But it also meant that his role in the Zionist movement had to change.

## 4.9 The silent leader 1916-1921

In 1916, with the appointment to the Supreme Court, Brandeis did not wish to resign from the Zionist movement, but his new job meant that he would have to change his role. He gave up a few leading positions in different committees and organizations, but he kept his place at the helm of the FAZ. He changed his title from Chairman to Honorary Chairman, but kept working as assiduously as before as the movement’s silent leader. While letting others handle the domestic side of the movement, at least partially, Brandeis shifted some of his focus to Zionist affairs in an international setting, with renewed energy for the art of diplomacy. Brandeis had always relied on diplomacy and personal relationships in America, now he looked further ahead, towards international acclamation of the Jewish state.<sup>256</sup> “I feel more than ever that the opportunities are very great, greater than any time in eighteen centuries. The world is with us, that is the non-Jewish world. Whether the Jewish world will be with us, will depend very largely upon the Zionists themselves.”<sup>257</sup>

World War I was catastrophic for the World Zionist Organization (WZO). Its leaders were scattered across the continent, in their respective countries, making communication hard. Many federations were partially or wholly disabled. Palestine had to fend for itself, as most of the financial support had come from countries like Russia, which was now at war.<sup>258</sup> Although a unified effort was made difficult, the separate national movements kept up the pressure in their own countries. They continued with the national propaganda campaigns with brochures and flyers while collecting funds. While *Die Welt*, the central publication of the movement, was dissolved, many other publications were founded during the war.

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<sup>254</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 53

<sup>255</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 53

<sup>256</sup> de Haas, *How Brandeis Again Heads Zionism in the Chicago Jewish Chronicle*, Sept. 19, 1930, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC.; Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 296

<sup>257</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 40

<sup>258</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 5

Management of international affairs was largely up to the American branch. Because the war was not fought on American soil, it naturally became the central body of the organization. The international leadership was stranded in London, Copenhagen and Berlin, with just one member, Shmarya Levin, in the United States. While Dr. Chaim Weizmann was the one who lobbied and negotiated with the British government, he was not a member of the leadership at that time. The Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs (PEC) was established in the US in 1914, with Brandeis as chairman, to act as the executive for the WZO during the war.<sup>259</sup> This meant that Brandeis had become the *de facto* leader of the World Zionist Organization.

Although the war brought uncertain times, Brandeis was hopeful for the future of the movement:

When peace follows the present war, the small nation will be protected against the large, and the right of nations to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness must likewise be established; because no nation will be permitted to develop in such a way as to abridge the equal rights of other nations to development. When that principle shall have been established, the way will be cleared for the publicly recognized, legally secured home for the Jews in Palestine.<sup>260</sup>

The situation created by World War I can be seen as a big opportunity for Brandeis. Before the war his influence was limited. He was a well-known lawyer, but had little standing in political matters. When the war ended he was in charge of the Zionists of the world. In 1915 he had, with the assistance of President Wilson, procured the use of the Navy carrier, “Vulcan”, to ship supplies and medicines to the suffering in Palestine.<sup>261</sup> He could have become the official leader for the WZO if he had wanted to, but he chose to honor his responsibilities to the Supreme Court and stayed in America. For Brandeis and the FAZ, wartime had been prosperous with regards to membership and influence. By the end of the war, membership had risen to approximately 150 000, and Brandeis’ impact was undeniable.<sup>262</sup> Not only did this mean a larger budget for the organization, it also gave credence to the Zionists when they were discussing Palestine with world leaders.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> See page 44. Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism, 1897-1948*, 34

<sup>260</sup> Brandeis, *The Jewish Voice*, Nov. 13, 1914, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC.

<sup>261</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 22-23

<sup>262</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 327; Some researchers operate with as many as 200 000, but in statistics given by the ZOA themselves, states 149,235 as the official number.

<sup>263</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism*, 246

His charisma, combined with the continued outrage among American Jews for the treatment of Jews in Europe during the war, brought in new members and funds, which made the FAZ's standing in the WZO remarkably improved. The increase in paying members led to the American Zionist movement to collect \$1,634,188 between August 1914 and July 1918.<sup>264</sup>

Brandeis himself was a big reason for why support for the Zionist cause grew among American Jews during his time as leader of the American Zionists. Because of his position in society and his insistence that being a Zionist was completely consistent with being an American, it became easier for other Jews to show their support openly. There was less fear of being accused of dual allegiance involved, which the leap in membership from about 12 000 in 1914 to 176,658 members in 1919 clearly shows.<sup>265</sup>

There was also a deep respect for Brandeis, both as a man and as the leader of the American Zionists. In 1918, at the Zionist Convention in Pittsburgh, Brandeis was sitting alone in the gallery. A participant spotted him and subsequently leapt abruptly to his feet and started to clap. Others joined in and in just a few seconds the whole place was clapping and cheering. "It was as though a hurricane, elemental in its might, had swept through them."<sup>266</sup> At the same convention, Brandeis changed the name of the organization from the Federation of American Zionists (FAZ) to the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA). He did this to mark the progressive change in the organization from a federation of many local chapters to a single national organization. It would be based on direct membership, as opposed to the old system where the members were members of different local chapters. The existing chapters would still be independent, but the ZOA would be responsible for the official Zionist policy in the US.<sup>267</sup> This policy included raising money, fighting for political and civil equality, that natural resources should belong to everyone, that all land should be used for the good of all, cooperation in Palestine, free education and the use of Hebrew in all official instances in Palestine.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 325

<sup>265</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 6, 31

<sup>266</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 40

<sup>267</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 525-526

<sup>268</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 527

A ferocious effort by Brandeis and other prominent Zionists, in which the goals of Zionism was uttered at every opportunity, also played part in the growth of the movement.<sup>269</sup> The American Jews were encouraged to “[o]rganize, organize, organize, until every Jewish American must stand up and be counted, counted with us, or prove himself wittingly or unwittingly one of the few who are against their own people.”<sup>270</sup>

But Brandeis cannot get all the credit. People were also affected by the war and the dawning realization that Jews were not really welcome anywhere in the world. While most of the Jews living in America had experienced some form of anti-Semitism, they rarely felt that they were not a part of society. The First World War, and the aftermath, shook this feeling of security for many. The United States was not admitting as many Jews into the country anymore, and the situation was getting worse in Europe. Zionism became the only viable option for many, and that is probably a big reason for why support grew in this period.<sup>271</sup>

#### **4.10 Brandeis, Wilson & The Balfour Declaration**

During World War I, before the United States actively involved itself, Brandeis and his fellow Zionists had to take the American policy of neutrality into consideration in everything they did abroad. Chaim Weizmann, one of the most influential European Zionists, was living in the UK and did not have this impediment. He was working tirelessly to secure the support of the British government for giving Palestine to the Jewish people and he went about with his plans without consulting his American allies. Only after the US entered the war did he ask Brandeis and the others to use their influence with the American government to help bring to fruition what was to become the Balfour Declaration.<sup>272</sup>

The War Cabinet in Britain was skeptical about making a promise of such a magnitude, without knowing if America would support this endeavor. It decided to ask its ally what to expect from America.<sup>273</sup> The War Cabinet was familiar with President Wilson’s sympathies for his Zionist friends, predominantly Louis D. Brandeis.<sup>274</sup> But would he publicly commit to the Declaration? President Wilson, through Colonel House, first sent a noncommittal letter to

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<sup>269</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 145-146

<sup>270</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 21

<sup>271</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 148, 149

<sup>272</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 516; For a comprehensive account of Weizmann’s efforts, see Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration – The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*

<sup>273</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 66

<sup>274</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 217

the cabinet that left them feeling unsure of his position.<sup>275</sup> Then Brandeis, with the President's permission, sent a more positive letter, which in the end, was one of the reasons why the War Cabinet finally decided to instruct the Foreign Secretary to express the British government's decision in a letter to Baron Rothschild.<sup>276</sup>

Having received a cable from Chaim Weizmann, asking him to secure the support of the President, Brandeis had met with President Wilson in May, almost six months before the Declaration was officially issued.<sup>277</sup> He had explained the general Zionist policy, the changes in American Jewish affairs and the situation facing them in Palestine. President Wilson assured him that he was sympathetic to the movement's aims and that he, when the time came, would support their quest for a national state. Nevertheless, he also made clear that he would not make any public statement on the matter before government officials from France or Great Britain had done so.<sup>278</sup> During a trip to the US, Mr. Balfour met with Brandeis who told him of the views that the President had expressed. He also assured the Foreign Secretary that the President would support his policy of support for Zionism.<sup>279</sup> The Balfour Declaration was issued on November 2, 1917, with the unofficial support of President Wilson.

His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.<sup>280</sup>

Without an official endorsement of the Declaration by the US government, the ZOA, in June 1918, sent a letter to every congressman asking their opinion in order to determine what position the War Congress in the US would take on the question. The congressmen were asked if they approved of the Balfour Declaration and what their position in general regarding the effort by the Jewish people to establish a national home in Palestine was.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Weizmann to LDB, Oct. 7, 1917, LDB Papers, Reel 82, LC

<sup>276</sup> LDB to Weizmann, Sept. 26, 1917, LDB Papers, Reel 82, LC; Schneer, Jonathan. *The Balfour Declaration – The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Random House, New York, 2012, 338-340; Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson – A Biography*, 418

<sup>277</sup> Weizmann to LDB, Sept. 19, 1917, LDB Papers, Reel 82, LC

<sup>278</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 63

<sup>279</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 64

<sup>280</sup> Laqueur & Rubin, *The Israel-Arab Reader*, 16

<sup>281</sup> ZOA, *The American War Congress and Zionism – Statements by Members of the American War Congress on the Jewish National Movement*, Zionist Organization of America, New York, 1919, 6

61 Senators from 43 states and 239 Representatives from 44 states answered, and while most were positive, they also showed some reluctance to get involved.<sup>282</sup> One representative answered that: “I have not replied to your important letters, because I have nothing to say on the subject... This does not mean at all that I am unfriendly to the return of your people to their Homeland.”<sup>283</sup> One of the more actively positive was the Senator from California, James D. Phelan who praised the character of men “like Justice Brandeis” for their “vision and imagination.”<sup>284</sup> He goes on to express the attitude most American Zionists shared: that America’s role was to support all the Jews that did not enjoy the same safety and opportunities that American Jews did.<sup>285</sup>

The views expressed showed vastly different views on certain issues, like the population already living in Palestine. A representative from Wisconsin had this to say on the matter: “It [the return of the Jews to Palestine] will mean the rehabilitation of the Holy Land and relief for all time to come against Moslem tyranny and oppression. It will constitute a fitting example of what America means by self-definition of peoples based on racial lines.”<sup>286</sup>

On the other side of the spectrum another representative from the same state stated that:

I shall be glad to have the Government of the United States do all that it properly can do in furtherance of this essentially noble cause. This, of course, I say with the understanding that non-Jewish residents of Palestine shall forever enjoy such civil and religious liberty as is now guaranteed by our Constitution to the Jewish population in this Republic.<sup>287</sup>

President Wilson, answering the same questions, echoed this sentiment:

I welcome an opportunity to express the satisfaction I have felt in the progress of the Zionist movement in the United States and in the Allied countries since the declaration by Mr. Balfour on behalf of the British Government, of Great Britain’s approval of the establishment

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<sup>282</sup> ZOA, *The American War Congress and Zionism – Statements by Members of the American War Congress on the Jewish National Movement*, 20

<sup>283</sup> ZOA, *The American War Congress and Zionism – Statements by Members of the American War Congress on the Jewish National Movement*, 227

<sup>284</sup> ZOA, *The American War Congress and Zionism – Statements by Members of the American War Congress on the Jewish National Movement*, 25

<sup>285</sup> ZOA, *The American War Congress and Zionism – Statements by Members of the American War Congress on the Jewish National Movement*, 25

<sup>286</sup> ZOA, *The American War Congress and Zionism – Statements by Members of the American War Congress on the Jewish National Movement*, 226

<sup>287</sup> ZOA, *The American War Congress and Zionism – Statements by Members of the American War Congress on the Jewish National Movement*, 226

in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and his promise that the British Government would use its best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of that object, with the understanding that nothing would be done to prejudice the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish people in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in other countries.<sup>288</sup>

With this letter President Wilson openly endorsed the Balfour Declaration. Six months previously, he had made a statement in Congress where he, without mentioning the Declaration or Jews in specific, spoke of the importance of autonomy and security for all nationalities.<sup>289</sup> This endorsement was repeated in March 1919 when the President told a representative of the American Jewish Congress that he was “persuaded that the Allied nations, with the fullest concurrence of our Government and people, are agreed that in Palestine shall be laid the foundations of a Jewish Commonwealth.”<sup>290</sup>

Although Brandeis was not directly involved in the creation of the Balfour Declaration, he and his coworkers were closely involved with the American strategy toward it. Without Brandeis’ and Wilson’s close relationship, America might not have given its support to the resolution, and undoubtedly not so fast. Opposition to Zionism surrounded the President, from Jews and non-Jews, but his fondness and respect for his friend affected his decisions more than anyone else’s opinion could.<sup>291</sup> Brandeis later stated in an interview that:

I was strongly in favor, and still am, of the Balfour declaration, because I realized that it was as much for British interest as for our interest that Palestine should be developed by Jews. I reached that conclusion after very close relations with Britishers who were here during the war. But even before that I believed that such a thing ... was possible because I believed it not only to be in accord with British interests, but consistent with the interests of all the European powers and consistent also with the interests of the Allies.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> ZOA, *The American War Congress and Zionism – Statements by Members of the American War Congress on the Jewish National Movement*, 9

<sup>289</sup> ZOA, *The American War Congress and Zionism – Statements by Members of the American War Congress on the Jewish National Movement*, 6; Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 217

<sup>290</sup> *Resolutions on Balfour Declaration, 1917-1918*; LL Papers, Box 1, Folder 5; Opponents to the Balfour Declaration would later claim that President Wilson acted without the State Departments approval, and therefore his endorsements would have to be interpreted as his personal views, and not those of the United States government. However, it seems evident that the President meant it as official endorsements. Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 220

<sup>291</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism From Herzl To The Holocaust*, 215-220

<sup>292</sup> *The New York Times* Nov. 24, 1929 LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC; *The Jewish Tribune* Nov. 29, 1929, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC

## 4.11 Brandeis in Palestine 1919

Brandeis, although opinionated on Palestine, did not visit the Holy Land until 1919. He traveled with his loyal friend and fellow Zionist leader, Jacob de Haas. They decided to forego the planned itinerary and instead travelled with a guide to see the real Palestine. They drove all day and arrived in Poreah, an American colony in the eastern part of Palestine, late at night. There they met an American family that had settled down in Palestine.

We wanted to see and know how Americans from the Middle West thrive in the wilds of Palestine. They told their story of checkered experience simply. Poreah had been started with great enthusiasm, but the St. Louis support had failed at the critical juncture, the founder had died, the war had impoverished them, and the market for the crop was doubtful.<sup>293</sup>

Later, Brandeis and de Haas were offered escort further east by the Americans. The plan had been to go back, but when Brandeis asked why they wanted him to go east they said:

We know and understand that you are perhaps the only men who know the future eastern boundary of Palestine. You are going to ride out to it. The escort will not only protect you ... Wherever you stop eastward we will regard as the furthest east of Palestine. Some of the guard will return with you, the others will remain to found the outpost colony on the new Jewish frontier.<sup>294</sup>

Brandeis, who was usually careful with expressing his opinions to the press without knowing every detail of a case, made a rather ignorant statement to the *New York Times*. He exclaimed that “I found in Palestine, and I believe it is still true, that the danger of the Arabs is grossly exaggerated.”<sup>295</sup> He continued, saying “I think there were few things in Palestine that gave me more of a sense that our people could look out for themselves than the Arab legend which has grown up in regard to the ability of one of the *shomer* as a sharpshooter”<sup>296</sup> This idea of Palestine and the Jews’ place there, was typical of the American Zionists. They only saw opportunities, and discarded the people already living in Palestine. It is difficult to say if American Zionists underestimated the sheer number and the lengths the Palestinians would go to keep the Jews out, or if they just simply forgot to take them into consideration.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> *The Jewish Tribune* Feb. 17, 1928, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC

<sup>294</sup> *The Jewish Tribune* Feb. 17, 1928, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC

<sup>295</sup> *The New York Times* Nov. 24, 1929, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC

<sup>296</sup> *The New York Times* Nov. 24, 1929, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC; The *shomer* is the mounted Jewish police that guarded the colonies.

<sup>297</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 82-85; Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 521-522; Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 241-242, 266, 379



Brandeis is not the only one who was naïve in this regard. It seems to have been the attitude of most American Zionists. The natural explanation for this is that most American Jews were not personally involved with the relocation to Palestine. They collected money and fought for political support, but most never laid eyes on the land in question. It became a fight for an idea, a mental struggle. But for the Jews of Europe it was a struggle based in reality.<sup>298</sup>

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While Brandeis held a somewhat unrealistic perspective on the situation in Palestine, the same cannot be said about his abilities as a leader in America. He knew exactly how to handle the bureaucracy, and he quickly became a strong leader in the ZOA. He became involved in the movement because of his beliefs in American values and he worked hard to implement them in the running of the organization. His friendship with the President gave legitimacy to American Zionism, and particularly during the war years this led to a steady flow of members and charitable donations. His style of leadership worked throughout this period because people tend to gather around strong leaders in times of crisis. But as the war ended and feelings settled down, more and more people objected to his uncompromising style. The 1920's would prove difficult for the organization, as well as for Brandeis' position in it.

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<sup>298</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 90; Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 311; Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 543



## The Roaring Twenties with Louis Lipsky

During World War One, with Louis D. Brandeis at the helm of the organization, the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) had blossomed. Brandeis' style of leadership had spurred an enormous rise in memberships, which had increased the organization's budget substantially. His friendship with President Wilson had secured the sympathy and support for the Zionist cause by the most influential man in Washington, D.C. Despite this progress, the internal peace within the organization did not last for long. By 1921, Brandeis was replaced by Louis Lipsky as President, after a fierce battle for the leadership. This divided the movement considerably and created cracks to the foundation of the organization that were not easily fixed.<sup>299</sup> Why was Brandeis unable to keep his position after the war ended, and what consequences did the change in leadership have for American Zionism?

### **5.1 The situation in the ZOA by 1921**

Brandeis' leadership of the ZOA ended in 1921. The annual ZOA convention was this year held in Cleveland. In the months leading up to the convention, it was clear that the ZOA was divided in two. The Brandeis group, which consisted of Brandeis and most of the leadership, was challenged by a faction headed by Louis Lipsky. Lipsky had been involved in American Zionist matters in one way or another since the beginning of the movement. He was the editor of several magazines, among them the influential *The American Hebrew*, before becoming more and more involved in the administrative running of the ZOA.<sup>300</sup> The Lipsky faction was strongly supported by Chaim Weizmann and the World Zionist Organization (WZO). Chaim Weizmann was elected President of the WZO in 1920, and wanted more control over the American Zionists, who under Brandeis' leadership had become just as influential as the WZO.

The conflict between the two factions had grown slowly for the last couple of years of Brandeis' leadership. During the First World War, Brandeis unwavering belief in a better future had provided safety and stability in uncertain times. This, in combination with the high number of new members, led Brandeis to, unchallenged, remain President of the ZOA for the

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<sup>299</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 298

<sup>300</sup> *Undated articles*, LL Papers, Box 13, Folder 1; Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 115, 117

duration of the war. When the war ended, and life for the American Jewish population went back to normal, Brandeis' personality and style of leadership started to alienate more and more members of the organization.<sup>301</sup>

## 5.2 Lipsky the idealist vs Brandeis the pragmatist

Lipsky and his followers attacked Brandeis' style of leadership. What had before the war been seen as decisiveness and an ability to give the members a clear vision of where the movement should go, was now criticized as autocratic.<sup>302</sup> They said that Brandeis did not lead a democratic organization, but rather that he expected all the members to follow his lead without asking questions.<sup>303</sup> In fact, Brandeis conceded to this, stating that his leadership was "inconsistent with doctrinaire democracy."<sup>304</sup> He was a strong leader and his focus was on saving the organization and the work they were doing rather than making sure that it stayed a hundred percent democratic on every issue.<sup>305</sup> It is unlikely that he did this because he wanted all the power and control for himself. He came to the organization as an outsider. As such, he must have noticed all the internal strife in the leadership when he first got involved. It is therefore likely that he felt that he had to act as a strong and uncompromising leader, at least in the first couple of years, to be able to accomplish anything at all. It is true that the ZOA expanded quickly and grew more effective with him as leader but, like any strong leader will experience, not everybody was happy with his style of leadership.

The main difference between Lipsky and Brandeis in their approach to Zionism was, according to Lipsky, that "[f]rom the earliest days I felt the humiliation of the *Galuth* [the exile from Palestine], not through personal experience, but through sympathy for the race into which I was born...every allusion to Jewish hope, made an indelible impression on me."<sup>306</sup> Brandeis, on the other hand, became a Zionist too late in life, according to Lipsky. He appeared too American for the Lipsky faction, and to them, he seemed unable to incorporate into his own life all the aspects of Jewry that had been lacking from his life for too long. Lipsky and his friends felt that Brandeis first had to *return* to his people before he could help

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<sup>301</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 250

<sup>302</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 539

<sup>303</sup> Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile*, 203; Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 524

<sup>304</sup> LDB to De Haas, Sept. 16, 1920, LDB Papers, Reel 85, LC

<sup>305</sup> Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile*, 203

<sup>306</sup> Lipsky, *Thirty Years of American Zionism*, 4

them, and this distance to his Jewish heritage was something he was criticized for throughout his leadership.<sup>307</sup>

Another grievance Lipsky had with Brandeis was that he felt that in Brandeis' return to his Jewish roots, he had relied on other people's interpretations, mainly Jacob de Haas. According to Lipsky, this made him full of preconceptions and habits that had been shaped by others, and not by Brandeis' own personal experiences. This, in addition to Brandeis' aggressive style and search for clear answers, created issues with others and led to several clashes between the different factions of the movement over the years. Many disagreed with his policies, while Brandeis in turn disagreed with many proposed policies and refused to support them. Lipsky described Brandeis as a man who relied more on papers than on people, and that while he was brilliant in the use of logic, his understanding of personal relationships was lacking. Another, related, recurring criticism was that his style of writing and speaking was intended for the courts, and not for the masses.<sup>308</sup> Nevertheless, Brandeis had several close friends, within the organization and outside of it, whom he sought advice from and trusted wholeheartedly.

What Brandeis and Lipsky seem to have had in common, in addition to sharing a first name, was a huge admiration for Theodor Herzl. Not a lot of American Jews "appreciated the genius of Theodor Herzl", but these two did.<sup>309</sup> While Brandeis admired the man with the ideas, and also his preference for diplomacy, he also saw his shortcomings. He tried to make the movement a more realistic one than Herzl had imagined. For Lipsky, it was important not to move in a direction too far away from what Herzl had intended.<sup>310</sup>

During Brandeis' leadership the divide between the assimilated American Jews and the more recently immigrated European Jews, widened.<sup>311</sup> They were all American citizens, but the European Jews looked to Europe and the WZO for leadership, while the American Jews felt that the answers could be found in America. This became even more obvious after WWI,

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<sup>307</sup> Lipsky and his supporters were continuously referred to by the Brandeis group as *Lipsky and his friends*.

<sup>308</sup> Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile*, 201

<sup>309</sup> Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile*, 202

<sup>310</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 542; Lipsky, *Herzl, Weizmann and the Jewish State*, LL Papers, Box 14, Folder 2; Grossman, Meir. *Louis Lipsky: A Personal Tribute*, LL Papers, Box 16, Folder 7; These documents both lacked a date of publication.

<sup>311</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 523

when the ZOA emerged as the authority in Zionist matters. Brandeis said this of the role of the movement:

Zionism is not a movement for the compulsory removal of all the Jews of the world to Palestine. In the first place, there are 14,000,000 Jews, and Palestine would not accommodate more than one-fifth of that number. In the second place, it is not a movement to compel anyone to go to Palestine. It is essentially a movement to give to the Jews more freedom—a movement to enable the Jew to exercise the same rights now exercised by practically every other people in the world, to live at their option either in the land of their fathers or in some other country; the right which small Nations as well as large—which Irish, Greek, Bulgarian, Servian [Serbian] or Belgian may now exercise as well as Germans or English.<sup>312</sup>

Although the European Jews agreed with this sentiment, they also felt that the WZO should dictate the course of action, not the assimilated American Jews who had not physically felt the urgency of the situation as they had. The American Jews were happy with the responsibility being in American hands, as they felt that their ideas were the right ones, and that they did not need anyone to tell them what to do.<sup>313</sup> Yet another dividing issue was that the assimilated American Jews wanted Palestine to be a cultural center, while the European faction wanted an autonomous Jewish state.<sup>314</sup>

### 5.3 Brandeis & Weizmann

The relationship between Brandeis and Weizmann was a complicated one. Chaim Weizmann was British, and the man credited with bringing the Balfour Declaration into being. Like Brandeis, he had connections to government officials in his country, which made him powerful.<sup>315</sup> He was elected President of the WZO in 1920. Most Zionists predicted a symbiotic cooperation between the WZO and the ZOA, as the cooperation between Weizmann and Brandeis had proved successful in the past.

During the war, back in 1917, Brandeis had warned Weizmann of an operation taking place without his knowledge. The operation's aim was to try for a separate peace between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies. This was meant to end the war quickly by removing one of Germany's potential supporting states.<sup>316</sup> The operation was secret, headed by the former American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, at President Wilson's

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<sup>312</sup> *The Boston Globe*, Sep. 28, 1914, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC.

<sup>313</sup> Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes*, 204; Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 523

<sup>314</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 286

<sup>315</sup> Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 188-189, 193

<sup>316</sup> Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration – The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 263; Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 194

request. He was an American Jew and sympathetic to what Zionism was trying to achieve, but he did not see himself as a Zionist, claiming that it would be “utterly impossible to place several millions of people in Palestine. There would be grave danger from the Arabs.”<sup>317</sup>

Morgenthau’s plan was to claim go to Palestine to check on the conditions for the Jewish population in Palestine. He was well known in Zionist circles for his attempt at protecting Jews living in the Ottoman Empire, so this would not come as a surprise to anyone. In actuality he would go there to meet the Ottoman Prime Minister Mehmed Talaat Pasha and Minister of War Ismail Enver Pasha, who he knew personally from his time as Ambassador to Egypt. Once there, he was going to persuade them to let Allied submarines pass through the Dardanelles Strait and sink a German battleship that had Constantinople within range.<sup>318</sup> Weizmann and the other Zionists were not informed of this plan, had they been they would have protested. Morgenthau, knowing this, even brought along three American Zionists on the trip to make it legitimate, whilst keeping them in the dark regarding the true objective of the trip.<sup>319</sup>

One of the members of the expedition was Felix Frankfurter, a Zionist who would later follow in Brandeis’ footsteps and become a Supreme Court Judge. He told Brandeis that he was going on a journey to Palestine with Morgenthau to check on the conditions of the Jewish communities.<sup>320</sup> When Brandeis, in conversation with President Wilson, learned the true objective of the trip, he immediately contacted Weizmann. He sent an urgent telegram, saying that an American delegation was headed to the east. Brandeis had most likely promised President Wilson to keep this information a secret, because he did not tell Weizmann what this delegation hoped to achieve. Instead, he strongly urged Weizmann to intercept it. After receiving this telegram, Weizmann had his suspicions confirmed by another source and traveled to Gibraltar where he, and delegations from the French and the British governments, met up with Morgenthau.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration – The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 263-264

<sup>318</sup> Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration – The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 264; The Dardanelles Strait is located in the Northwest of Turkey. It separates Europe from Asia and, with the Strait of Bosphorus, connects the Mediterranean with the Black Sea.. The strait has historically been used as a strategic point in wars going back to the Trojan War. While Germany and the Ottoman Empire were officially allies, Germany kept an armed battleship, which was supposed to be a gift to the Turks but stayed under German command, within shooting distance of Constantinople.

<sup>319</sup> Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration – The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 265

<sup>320</sup> Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration – The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 265-266

<sup>321</sup> Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration – The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 266-268

While the true objective was a secret, the trip to Palestine was not. The American Zionist society raised over \$400 000 for Morgenthau to take with him to the Jews in Palestine.<sup>322</sup> Fund-raising had always been what American Zionists did best, and this time was no exception. What Brandeis and Weizmann both feared with this mission was that the Zionist movement would be seen as being involved with clandestine operations, which they feared would give rise to anti-Semitic sentiments. They were also afraid that a separate peace with the Ottoman Empire would make securing Palestine for the Jews even harder. The Ottoman Empire had not been entirely happy with the Jewish interest in Palestine, and the Zionists feared that anything other than an Empire on the losing side of the war would be disastrous. In the end, Weizmann managed to meet up with and stop Morgenthau's mission. He returned to London feeling even more powerful.<sup>323</sup>

Their effort to stop Morgenthau shows that Brandeis and Weizmann were able to cooperate. They both cared deeply for the future of Zionism and did what was necessary to secure it. They both expressed the necessity of not allowing private persons to buy up property and natural resources in Palestine. It was important to them both that this remained communal.<sup>324</sup> Another common ground was the belief that the Jewish community in Palestine should be an agricultural one, to ensure independence and development.<sup>325</sup>

Unfortunately, after this their ideas for what Zionism should focus on changed. For Brandeis, it was time to become more practical and spend every dollar raised *in* Palestine. The building up of institutions and infrastructure should be the first priority.<sup>326</sup> His visit to Palestine in 1919 had made this very clear to him.<sup>327</sup> For Weizmann, however, it was still about the use of diplomacy and propaganda to secure support for Zionism.<sup>328</sup> He also felt that the American Zionists had contributed to little during the war. He either did not understand, or he did not care about the restraints that the American neutrality had imposed on the ZOA.<sup>329</sup> One of the issues Weizmann and Brandeis disagreed on was how to deal with the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>322</sup> Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration – The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 263-269

<sup>323</sup> Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration – The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 269-271

<sup>324</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 521; Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes*, 204

<sup>325</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 521

<sup>326</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 524, 533

<sup>327</sup> See chapter 4 for Brandeis' trip to Palestine

<sup>328</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 258-259, 286

<sup>329</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 522



## 5.4 A British Protectorate

While the American branch supported the policy of a British Protectorate in Palestine, Brandeis, through Judge Julian Mack, the President of the ZOA, said no to the use of any sort of active propaganda to support this.<sup>330</sup> The United States was not involved in an active war against the Ottoman Empire, which is probably why Brandeis felt it best not to provoke them by publicly speaking of plans for Palestine. With regard to relations with the Ottoman Empire, the American Zionists were under great pressure from the American government not to get involved in any direct negotiations over Palestine. Brandeis knew that whatever he publicly said on the matter would be interpreted as President Wilson's views, because of their known friendship. He therefore had to refrain from making public statements, and instead put his energy into the practical preparations that could be done in anticipation of Weizmann's efforts.<sup>331</sup>

Weizmann and other European Zionist leaders and confidantes were running around the world, having meetings with government officials, doing everything in their power to promote the idea of a Jewish Palestine. The Brandeis group, although unable to do this because of political pressure, were heavily criticized by Louis Lipsky and others for not doing enough for Palestine. "Propaganda has come to an end", uttered a frustrated Lipsky.<sup>332</sup> The use of propaganda, which had been heavily relied on before, stopped under Brandeis as he felt that the time had come to focus on the practical aspects of Palestine.<sup>333</sup> Weizmann swore to politically destroy any and all who did not follow the WZO, and left for the US.<sup>334</sup> Letters between Lipsky/Weizmann and the Brandeis group went back and forth with accusations of non-cooperation and of undermining important work.<sup>335</sup> Weizmann favored a unified Zionist movement, and did not want the ZOA to act independently. Brandeis felt that the ZOA could accomplish much more if it was not bound to the WZO. For Weizmann it was a question of loyalty.

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<sup>330</sup> Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes*, 172

<sup>331</sup> Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes*, 176; Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 519

<sup>332</sup> Lipsky to Julian Mack, Apr. 19, 1921, LL Papers, Box 1, Folder 7

<sup>333</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 538

<sup>334</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 285

<sup>335</sup> Lipsky to Julian Mack, Apr. 19, 1921, LL Papers, Box 1, Folder 7; Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 289-290

A cold war between Brandeis and Weizmann began, brought on by differences in personality, as well as differing opinions on the optimal direction for Zionism.<sup>336</sup> It came to a head with the debacle surrounding the *Keren Hayesod*, which led to the retirement of the Brandeis group in the ZOA leadership.

## 5.5 Lipsky and Weizmann fight the Brandeis group

During a World Zionist conference in London in the summer of 1920, an annual budget of approximately two million pounds was proposed. The largest portion of this would have to come from America, it was argued. As the only big nation without any domestic damages after the war, the Europeans felt confident that the American Zionists would provide the money that was needed.<sup>337</sup> The American delegates protested. This was an enormous sum, they said, that they would never be able to raise. The most they could possibly hope to raise was one hundred thousand pounds.<sup>338</sup> Weizmann disagreed and told the Americans that if they could not, he would have to make the journey to the US, and raise the money himself. The representatives from America did not receive this insult kindly, but it did not discourage Weizmann from making his travel plans.

At the same conference, Brandeis refused to let any Americans join the Executive of the WZO. The Executive of the WZO was the committee in charge of the administrative running of the organization, and to Brandeis it appeared ineffective and in need of restructuring.<sup>339</sup> His views on this were not appreciated by the European delegates, which led him to not want any sort of cooperation between the American delegates and the Executive to take place. This stubbornness was not welcomed by many of the American delegates, who favored a close connection to the WZO.<sup>340</sup>

Weizmann also attacked Brandeis directly. He felt that Brandeis' position as the silent leader of the ZOA, with members of the Brandeis group wielding all the power, had reached an impasse. If Brandeis was not willing to step out from the cover of his Washington life and start actively and officially leading the ZOA again, he should be removed as Honorary

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<sup>336</sup> Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes*, 4

<sup>337</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 283; Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 123-124

<sup>338</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 283

<sup>339</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 537

<sup>340</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 278; Lipsky to Julian Mack, April 19, 1921, LL Papers, Box 1, Folder 7

President, and the Brandeis group should be replaced in the leadership.<sup>341</sup> Weizmann, of course, would not have felt this way if the Brandeis group had not openly opposed him and his vision for the future of Zionism. To Weizmann, Brandeis' Zionism lacked the concept of a true Jewish consciousness. Without this it was just a political endeavor without profound meaning.<sup>342</sup> Brandeis, however, felt that at the time, the focus had to be on the practical and political work of building a Jewish community in Palestine. Lipsky, on the other hand, agreed with Weizmann's ideas and became an excellent ally for Weizmann in bringing the ZOA back under the control of the WZO. The main issue between the Brandeis group on one side and Lipsky and Weizmann on the other side, however, proved to be the implementation of the *Keren Hayesod*.

## 5.6 The *Keren Hayesod*

Lipsky and his friends grew weary of Brandeis' leadership. They had seen their suggestions shot down time and time again, without a good enough reason, at least not one they could agree with. However, it was the conflict surrounding the *Keren Hayesod*, the Palestine Foundation Fund that functioned as the decisive blow to Brandeis' presidency. The *Keren Hayesod* was founded in 1920.<sup>343</sup> Its objective was fund-raising for the World Zionist Organization (WZO).<sup>344</sup> Brandeis and his supporters, often referred to as the Brandeis group, disagreed with how the WZO was managing the money raised, and fought hard against the founding of the *Keren Hayesod* and its establishment in the US. However, they failed to give a thorough explanation for their opposition. Lipsky and his supporters opposed Brandeis' position and sought assistance from Chaim Weizmann, now President of the WZO and responsible for the *Keren Hayesod's* existence.

Weizmann wanted the *Keren Hayesod* to be one centralized office with power, while the Brandeis group saw this as ineffective and wanted several national offices. These would be able to accomplish more and work faster. Weizmann interpreted this as another effort by Brandeis to make sure that the ZOA could operate independently from the WZO. Brandeis, on the other hand, saw Weizmann's rejection of his suggestion as proof that the WZO wanted

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<sup>341</sup> Sachs to de Haas, Mar. 9, 1921, LDB Papers, Reel 85, LC; de Haas to LDB, May 9, 1921, LDB Papers; Reel 85, LC; Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 267, 278

<sup>342</sup> Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes*, 200

<sup>343</sup> Some sources say 1921; Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 325

<sup>344</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 285

control over everything the ZOA did.<sup>345</sup> The Brandeis group also disagreed with the WZO's decision have donations and investments in the same fund. According to them, this would not give the American Jews who donated their money to Palestine much confidence in the *Keren Hayesod*. To Brandeis, it was unheard of to have gifts from hard working Jews and investments by private people in the same fund without proper auditing.<sup>346</sup> They suggested the establishment of a separate fund to deal with the investments, so that the donations would go directly to Palestine. To the WZO this was unacceptable, and Weizmann, who saw this as obstinacy from Brandeis, threatened to colonize the ZOA with Zionists partial to his own views. Brandeis refused to budge. This conflict turned many of Brandeis' earlier supporters against him. The Eastern European immigrants, in particular, who already felt left out, saw this stubbornness as the last straw.<sup>347</sup>

Brandeis' friendship with the President of the United States could not save him either. President Wilson had suffered a massive stroke on October 2, 1919, which had left his left side partially paralyzed. His wife, Edith, ran the White House for the duration of his presidency.<sup>348</sup> Although Brandeis and Wilson remained friends and allies for the remainder of the former Presidents life, the political influences that came with this friendship seriously decreased with the President's stroke. While he remained politically active, President Wilson did not have the same energy as before the stroke.<sup>349</sup> His involvement in the Paris Peace Conference after WWI, and the ensuing failure to achieve ratification for the Treaty of Versailles in the Senate, also took a toll on his political spirit. Although President Wilson was unable to affect changes after the end of his presidency, the two friends nevertheless, sought each other's advice when dealing with a range of issues. To Wilson it was invaluable that "[a] talk with Brandeis always sweeps the cobwebs out of your mind".<sup>350</sup> Brandeis' problems within the Zionist organization, however, were outside of President Wilson's range of influence.

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<sup>345</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 286

<sup>346</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 538

<sup>347</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 285-286

<sup>348</sup> Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson - A Biography*, 536-537

<sup>349</sup> WW to LDB, Nov. 6, 1921, LDB Papers, Reel 117, LC; WW to LDB, Feb. 27, 1922, LDB Papers, Reel 117, LC; WW to LDB, Mar. 4, 1922, LDB Papers, Reel 117, LC; WW to LDB, Apr. 18, 1923, LDB Papers, Reel 117, LC

<sup>350</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 48

The internal fighting became so severe that Judge Mack, President of the ZOA in 1921, even tried to get Lipsky to retire from the organization in April. Lipsky was Secretary for Organization, which meant that he was responsible for the administration of the organization. Judge Mack ordered all mail, official and personal, addressed to Lipsky to be intercepted and turned over to him. Lipsky refused, claiming that Judge Mack had betrayed the members of the ZOA by threatening to “break off relations with the World’s Zionist Organization”.<sup>351</sup> “The social idealism ... has been transformed into an ideal of private corporations ... The “word” has lost its significance. A united people is not essential or wanted.”<sup>352</sup> This, according to Lipsky was “the exact opposite of everything we Zionists here believed in during the period of struggle and sacrifice [the First World War]”.<sup>353</sup> “You and your group have committed the Zionist Organization of America, without its knowledge or consent, to a policy which you know means the establishment in the United States of an independent Zionist Organization carrying on separate private undertakings in Palestine.”<sup>354</sup>

## 5.7 The Cleveland Convention

On June 5, 1921 it all came to a head. The Lipsky/Weizmann party challenged the Brandeis group for control over the ZOA and won.<sup>355</sup> Judge Julian Mack, Brandeis’ second in command, who was now President of the ZOA, spoke of the importance of “[m]ethod, procedure, order, propriety, right, correctness, following all agreements and orders and mandates.”<sup>356</sup> It was important for the Brandeis group that things were done correctly and that meant that agreements should be honored. They felt that the WZO had reneged on an agreement of reform for the organization.<sup>357</sup> Mack also reaffirmed the Brandeis group’s view “that there is no political tie binding together the Jews of the world, but that politically the Jewish citizens of the United States are exclusively American citizens”.<sup>358</sup> This was one of the main issues Weizmann had with the leaders of the ZOA. Their inability and unwillingness to put their Americanism aside in Zionist matters annoyed him to no end.<sup>359</sup> Mack continued,

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<sup>351</sup> Lipsky to Julian Mack, April 19, 1921, LL Papers, Box 1, Folder 7

<sup>352</sup> Lipsky to Julian Mack, April 19, 1921, LL Papers, Box 1, Folder 7

<sup>353</sup> Lipsky to Julian Mack, April 19, 1921, LL Papers, Box 1, Folder 7

<sup>354</sup> Lipsky to Julian Mack, April 19, 1921, LL Papers, Box 1, Folder 7

<sup>355</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 541; Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 294

<sup>356</sup> Samuel, Maurice, *Report of the Proceedings of the 24th Annual Convention of the Zionist Organization of America*, ZOA: New York, 1921, 8

<sup>357</sup> Samuel, *Report of the Proceedings of the 24th Annual Convention of the Zionist Organization of America*, 8-9; Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 285, 291

<sup>358</sup> Samuel, *Report of the Proceedings of the 24th Annual Convention of the Zionist Organization of America*, 10

<sup>359</sup> Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes*, 203-204

saying “we want no legalized, political Ghetto here or in Palestine ... We want a living, breathing Jewish Nation in Palestine and of Palestine.”<sup>360</sup> The convention was roaring, and utterances were shouted out from the audience when they heartily agreed or disagreed with whoever was speaking.

There was a clear divide between the European-oriented Jews and the American-minded Jews. The Brandeis group lost several votes, but when they lost the fight over the *Keren Heyesod*, the fight was over. Judge Mack resigned as president on the spot and read out loud a letter from Brandeis. In it Brandeis, predicting the outcome, also resigned as Honorary President.<sup>361</sup> However, he did not amend his opinions on the matters at hand stating that “[o]ur place will then be as humble soldiers in the ranks to hasten by our struggle the coming of the day when the policies in which we believe will be recognized as the only ones through which our great ends may be achieved.”<sup>362</sup> After reading a long list of people in the leadership and the administration who would resign, 37 in all, Mack closed with a statement that received sounds of weeping from the benches.<sup>363</sup>

[N]o action which you have taken, no action which you will take, no action that you can take will ever drive me or any of the other gentlemen whose names I have mentioned from the ranks of membership in the Zionist Organization of America, and will never lessen by the slightest degree the intensity of their Zionism, their devotion to Palestine and their continuous zealous work for the one single complete platform of the World Zionist Organization.<sup>364</sup>

With that, the Brandeis group was out, and Lipsky, heavily influenced by Weizmann, resumed control over the ZOA.<sup>365</sup>

## 5.8 Aftermath

In a sense Brandeis’ defeat came because he wanted to be involved in every aspect of the organization, perhaps in an effort to avoid discrepancies. His efforts at holding a wiggly

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<sup>360</sup> Samuel, *Report of the Proceedings of the 24th Annual Convention of the Zionist Organization of America*, 11

<sup>361</sup> Samuel, *Report of the Proceedings of the 24th Annual Convention of the Zionist Organization of America*, 119-120; Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 293; Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 541; Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 128

<sup>362</sup> Samuel, *Report of the Proceedings of the 24th Annual Convention of the Zionist Organization of America*, 120

<sup>363</sup> Samuel, *Report of the Proceedings of the 24th Annual Convention of the Zionist Organization of America*, 120-121; de Haas to LDB, June 7, 1921, LDB Papers, Reel 85, LC; Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 293-294; de Haas, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Biographical Sketch* 144-145

<sup>364</sup> Samuel, *Report of the Proceedings of the 24th Annual Convention of the Zionist Organization of America*, 121; de Haas, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Biographical Sketch* 144-145

<sup>365</sup> He was not elected President of the ZOA, but after the Cleveland convention, he held the position of Chairman, basically the same power under a different name.

organization together actually led to its disintegration. This approach resonated with many American Jews, but also explains why it became impossible for a ZOA led by Brandeis to exist alongside Weizmann's WZO. They simply had different ideas of the goals for Zionism. Brandeis wished to replace political Zionism with real economic work in Palestine.<sup>366</sup> For him the time had come to move on from the theoretical to the reality.<sup>367</sup>

It was also his misjudgment of his own role in the movement that led to his demise. He believed that he could combine his work at the Supreme Court with his work in the ZOA as their *silent leader*. He delegated his responsibilities in the ZOA, making it difficult for the American Zionists to know if he still was their leader.<sup>368</sup> His title as Honorary President did little to dissuade the skeptics, as he more often than not was unable to attend meetings and conferences. He was unable to see that most of the members of the ZOA had followed *him*, not his ideas.<sup>369</sup> His absence confused the members and deterred their Zionist work. Brandeis, once referred to as "the greatest Jew since Jesus", had become more interested in Man than in men.<sup>370</sup>

One of Brandeis' personal characteristics also played a part. He absolutely hated publicity and he tried to avoid it if possible. That did not mean that he avoided the press. He was not afraid of stating the goals of Zionism and the work they were doing. He just did not see the need to express his role in everything. This meant that many members of the ZOA did not know that Brandeis was the decisive force that made things happen for the organization.<sup>371</sup>

## 5.9 The Lipsky regime

Lipsky felt that Brandeis had taken the movement too far away from the Zionism envisioned by Herzl, and wanted to steer the movement in a more Herzlian direction. This meant that he had to bring the ZOA closer to the WZO, by encouraging cooperation and implementing the *Keren Haysod* in the US. In actuality, the change in management meant little for how the movement was run at first. The ZOA got in line with Weizmann's WZO, but within a few years many of the policies introduced by the Brandeis group which Lipsky and his supporters

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<sup>366</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 279

<sup>367</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 533

<sup>368</sup> Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes*, 198

<sup>369</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 539

<sup>370</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 524, 539

<sup>371</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 38

opposed at the time, such as a focus on the work in Palestine, were implemented with the full support of both Lipsky and Weizmann.<sup>372</sup> Even the *Keren Hayesod* was changed, creating a special fund for the investments, leaving the gifts and the investments in two different funds.<sup>373</sup>

Lipsky's regime was not fruitful for the American Zionists. Soon after the Brandeis group's resignation, it became clear that the Lipsky regime was unable to inspire the same enthusiasm as Brandeis had done in the beginning of his presidency. Members had been fleeing the ZOA since the power struggle between Brandeis and Lipsky began. In 1918 there was 149,235 registered members.<sup>374</sup> In only a year it had plummeted to 56,838. In 1920, the ZOA only had 21,000 members. For the remainder of the 1920s it remained low, and in 1930 the official count was about 15,000.<sup>375</sup> A large portion of these left because the war was over, and the need for Brandeis to be their savior subsided. There was also a commencing economic recession, which could have contributed to fewer paying members.<sup>376</sup> The lack of members meant less influence in the WZO, which led to disgruntlement among the American Zionists, leading to even fewer members. This made for difficult working conditions for Louis Lipsky, and it was not made better by his mistakes.

One of the biggest mistakes Louis Lipsky made while he was president of the ZOA, was his treatment of *Hadassah*, the women's Zionist group. He saw the women as adversaries because of their connection to Brandeis, who had recognized the brilliance of *Hadassah's* leader Henrietta Szold and welcomed them into the ZOA. The group had been under great strain during the schism between Lipsky and Brandeis, because many of the members' husbands had belonged to different factions. In an effort to get rid of them while they were weak, Lipsky demanded that the leaders resign. They refused, stating that he was not in a position to demand anything from the leaders of an organization he was not a part of.<sup>377</sup> Another reason why Lipsky felt threatened by *Hadassah* was that they, like the Brandeis group, opposed the *Keren Hayesod*. *Hadassah's* main objective was to provide medical aid

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<sup>372</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 299, 334; Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 543; Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes*, 4

<sup>373</sup> Urofsky, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Life*, 543

<sup>374</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 327

<sup>375</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 320, 327

<sup>376</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 373-375

<sup>377</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 342-343



and assistance to Palestine.<sup>378</sup> The *Keren Hayesod* model that Lipsky favored meant that all the money *Hadassah* collected, which was not insignificant, would go to the *Keren Hayesod* first, and then be distributed to whoever in Palestine the WZO deemed more deserving. The women of *Hadassah* could not be sure that all of the money would go to medical aid or that they would have a say in how it was spent. That meant that *Hadassah* would just be another charity that collected money for the WZO, and that was unacceptable for an organization that had proved to be a success.<sup>379</sup>

Membership to *Hadassah* had expanded quickly since the beginning in 1912, as did its fundraising capabilities. By 1921 every third member of the ZOA was a member of *Hadassah*.<sup>380</sup> When Lipsky took on the organization and managed to antagonize even the Lipsky-friendly factions of the organization, the result would have to be catastrophic for the ZOA. Lipsky and *Hadassah* reached a short-lived compromise where *Hadassah* enjoyed a semi-autonomous status that ensured control over their own collections. By 1930, *Hadassah* had 34,483 registered members and it had collected a total of \$4,445,000, practically everything being used for medical aid in Palestine.<sup>381</sup> This enabled the organization to support many hospitals, health centers, and places where kids could be during the day so that their parents could work to make life in Palestine possible. Throughout the 1920's *Hadassah*'s membership had continued to grow, while the ZOA's membership had continued to shrink.

A sense of loss of purpose spread throughout the members of the ZOA, and the leadership was accused of incompetence on many occasions. In 1927 the ZOA had a debt of over \$140,000 and Brandeis accused them of prostituting a great cause.<sup>382</sup> While the administration lived on good salaries, hardworking Jews in Palestine were starving. In 1927 many former supporters of Lipsky had had enough and planned to get rid of their President, who admitted that they did have financial trouble.<sup>383</sup> Because the Brandeis group refused any cooperation with Lipsky, and because Weizmann continued to openly support the current administration, Lipsky was able to win the election that year, and subsequently got rid of his opponents in the administration. That did not mean that his position was secure, many members started to long

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<sup>378</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 342

<sup>379</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 343, 346

<sup>380</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 344

<sup>381</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 319

<sup>382</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 347

<sup>383</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 347-348

for the return of Brandeis and made no effort to hide it.<sup>384</sup>

Toward the end of the 1920s, Chaim Weizmann was still a powerful and influential Zionist. But a great number of the emigrated Jews in America who had identified with him previously did not feel the same sympathy anymore. After residing in the US for several years, they had achieved a higher standard of living. They lived in their own apartments and had jobs that supported their families. Weizmann and his American double, Lipsky, had lost some of their appeal.<sup>385</sup> The Roaring Twenties had been good to them and they did not identify with the people they had been when they first came to America, a decade or two ago. Brandeis' old program, where the effort was on the construction of Palestine, resonated with the majority. In many Jewish newspapers people were reminded that Weizmann was just a guest in the US, and Lipsky was just a journalist. According to them, it was no wonder why things had gone downhill for the movement.<sup>386</sup>

The return to focusing on rebuilding Palestine brought in some new donations by rich Jews who wanted to help their coreligionists, but had no interest in giving their money to support "the idea of Jewish nationalism in the Diaspora."<sup>387</sup> But this was short-lived, and the ZOA continued to struggle. As the ZOA's policies gradually became more Brandeisian again, it became clear that for the organization to survive, the Brandeis group had to be a part of the leadership. Lipsky and his supporters opposed this and once again the ZOA was split in two.<sup>388</sup>

Lipsky had to deal with harsh and public attacks from members of his own administration as well as from important groups such as *Hadassah*. Mrs. Irma Lindheim had become president of *Hadassah* in 1926 and said: "there are those who probably believe that Mr. Lipsky is not just a propaganda leader. I don't believe that he is any more than that."<sup>389</sup> Lipsky retaliated by accusing Mrs. Lindheim of not knowing "the proper role of women within the ranks of the ZOA."<sup>390</sup> Despite these verbal attacks, as well as official reports on his mismanagement of funds, Lipsky was reelected again at the 1928 convention. There were many reasons why he

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<sup>384</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 348

<sup>385</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 349

<sup>386</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 348-349

<sup>387</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 349

<sup>388</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 350-352

<sup>389</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 352

<sup>390</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 355

managed this. One of them was that there were those that felt that between Lipsky and Brandeis, Lipsky was the true Zionist. Another was that he also secured the support of the rich, who felt that their donations were in safer hands than with Brandeis in charge. This is rather odd, as Lipsky had brought the organization into debt. Nevertheless, they felt that their interests were more in tune with Lipsky than with the Brandeis group.<sup>391</sup>

There were also accusations of Lipsky taking steps to make sure that his supporters were front and center at the convention. Those in charge of admittance sent home a number of delegates that were openly opposed to Lipsky and his administration. A technicality made it possible to exclude about a hundred *Hadassah* members, who undoubtedly would have voted against him.<sup>392</sup> With the result of the vote being 398 to 159, it is clear that it would have been a lot closer without Lipsky's unethical involvement in admissions. The Brandeis group has to take some of the blame for their defeat as well. None of the big names, such as Brandeis, Stephen Wise, a prominent rabbi who often appeared in the press promoting Zionism, or Judge Mack, wanted to head the bill, which meant that the people who were dissatisfied with Lipsky had no one else to rally around.<sup>393</sup>

Despite continuous internal quarrels, the American Zionist movement kept gathering donations. By 1930, the American contribution to the *Keren Hayesod*, had reached \$10,945,000.<sup>394</sup> The unrest in the movement led the ZOA to lose influence with the WZO. Yet again, the American Zionists were viewed by the European Zionists as good for only one thing: money.<sup>395</sup>

## 5.10 The Return of the Brandeis group

By 1930, the few remaining members of the ZOA decided that the organization needed a new start in order to survive. They wanted Brandeis back as leader.<sup>396</sup> *Hadassah* had finally had enough of the incompetence of the ZOA and left to work independently.<sup>397</sup> Brandeis and the rest of his group, including Judge Mack and Jacob de Haas, entered into negotiations for an

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<sup>391</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 354

<sup>392</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 355-356

<sup>393</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 356

<sup>394</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 325; In comparison, the Joint Distribution Committee, which was not Zionist but also collected money allotted to Palestine, had collected a total of \$9,203,498.

<sup>395</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 370

<sup>396</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 364-265

<sup>397</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 375; Medoff, *The A to Z of Zionism*, 86

active return to the movement. One of their conditions was that Louis Lipsky would not continue as leader.<sup>398</sup> In 1930 Lipsky resigned as president, and it was agreed that the leadership would be equally divided between the Brandeis group and Lipsky's old supporters. An agreement was made on the potential for the *Keren Hayesod* as well as the need for publicity and propaganda. For the members, however, the most important aspect to this agreement was still in question. Would their former savior, Louis D. Brandeis, return to them as their leader?

Justice Brandeis was a household name, and he was mentioned in the big newspapers regularly. His interest in Zionism had not dissipated since his departure from the ZOA in 1921, and despite his aversion to publicity he began to use his position to promote what was, in his mind, the goals of Zionism again in 1929. In what was his first public address on a Zionist issue since becoming a Supreme Court Justice thirteen years earlier, he stated that he had "complete faith in the plan for a Jewish Palestine" and that "the success made by Jews in every part of the world" meant that conditions in Palestine were "really very favorable".<sup>399</sup> He also felt that the "[g]reatest assurance for the accomplishment of the aims of the Zionist movement lay in the strength of character of the Jewish race".<sup>400</sup> According to Brandeis, "Jews in America ... contributed alike intelligent and moral support, and through the projected corporation, he called on them to contribute money."<sup>401</sup> "I am convinced that a group of American business men of proved ability and loyalty to the Jewish cause can ... assure a Jewish Palestine."<sup>402</sup> Even though Brandeis chose to break his silence on this occasion, he kept in mind his role as a representative of America: "I found among those who had gone to the colonies far more of joy than of sorrow. They reminded me of that self-reliant attitude of our own pioneers of the West and of those who had made the East a few centuries ago."<sup>403</sup>

Despite of his reappearance as an advocate for the Zionist movement, Brandeis, in May 1930, decided not to return to an active role in the movement.<sup>404</sup> He was simply too busy with the

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<sup>398</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 364

<sup>399</sup> *The New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1929, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC

<sup>400</sup> *The New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1929, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC

<sup>401</sup> *The New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1929, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC

<sup>402</sup> *The New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1929, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC

<sup>403</sup> *The Jewish Tribune*, Nov. 29, 1929, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC

<sup>404</sup> *The Boston Herald*, May 23, 1930, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC; *The Jewish Standard*, July 4, 1930, LDB Papers, Reel 135

Supreme Court, and felt that he could do more good for the Jewish people as a Justice than as the president of the ZOA. Despite of his decision not to return he assured everyone that he was still deeply invested in the Zionist cause and would support it for the remainder of his life.<sup>405</sup>

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The 1920s had been rough for the ZOA. The struggle between the Brandeis group and the Lipsky/Weizmann faction had divided the organization and brought a sense of hopelessness and indifference to its members. This was clearly seen by the loss of over a hundred thousand members from 1918 to 1920. When Brandeis left the ZOA in 1921, Lipsky tried his best to unite the American Zionists, but he lacked the charisma that Brandeis possessed. His close cooperation with the WZO and Weizmann did not help either. And as more and more of Brandeis' earlier suggestions became policy for the Lipsky regime, a desire for the return of "the People's Attorney" appeared. Although Brandeis chose the Supreme Court over the return to the presidency of the ZOA, he remained a supporter of the movement. He was always available for advice and discussions about Zionism. 1930 saw a compromise between the remnants of the two warring factions, as well as an end of hostilities between most of the people involved.<sup>406</sup> The two old factions shared leadership of the ZOA and looked to future endeavors as a united front.

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<sup>405</sup> *The Boston Herald*, May 23, 1930, LDB Papers, Reel 135, LC

<sup>406</sup> Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, 369



## Conclusion

The object for this thesis was to understand the impact Louis D. Brandeis had on the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA). Why did Brandeis's leadership from 1912 to 1921 prove to be so important for the American Zionist movement, and how was it affected by his departure? In what way did World War One and Brandeis' friendship with the President of the United States affect the work of the ZOA? Why did the relationship between the ZOA and the World Zionist Organization (WZO) become troublesome during this time?

### **6.1 Zionism in America before Brandeis**

The story of Zionism in America is a story of a group of people chasing after what they believed to be the right solution to a problem that did not concern them. The belief in the notion that their ideas were the right ones made cooperation difficult, with each other as well as with the World Zionist Organization (WZO). Ever since the first Jews came to America, they had had a habit of establishing groups, both cultural and religious. With the introduction of Zionism, came the specifically political groups that dealt with Jewish questions in a political sense. These groups quickly became numerous and their thoughts and views were often too different for any useful cooperation.

The Zionist movement created even more groups that disagreed with each other on many issues, but the one thing every Zionist agreed on was the need for a sovereign Jewish state. Not all American Jews became Zionists, in fact only a minority joined the official Zionist groups. However, very often the Zionists and the non-Zionists vocally and actively supported the same causes and argued for the same things. Although their end destination was different, they were travelling the same road. A concrete example of this is the role of Simon Wolf. He was not a Zionist; in fact he vocally opposed the movement. However, he used his influence with several government officials to help Jews, not only those living in the US, but also those living in Europe. Among other issues, he pressed the American government for action against Russia's apathetic attitude towards the *pogroms*, and also worked to re-open the American borders to Jewish refugees. This was exactly what the American Zionist movement was trying to do as well.

In the years leading up to the First World War, the ZOA was struggling to stay afloat. American Jews, although sympathetic to their European brethren, used other forums than Zionism to offer monetary help. Support in the Jewish community for Zionism was scarce.<sup>407</sup> However, as the situation got worse for the Jewish population, specifically in Eastern Europe, the goal of the movement resonated with larger portions of the American Jewish society. The support for American Zionism grew exponentially, as seen by the increasing membership. In 1918 the ZOA had acquired 149,235 members.<sup>408</sup> This was mostly attributed to Louis D. Brandeis.

## 6.2 The Brandeis effect

With Brandeis at the helm of the organization, it became more acceptable among the Jewish community to join the ZOA. Because Brandeis was a household name with the American general public, and because he was by most people viewed as a respectable man, Jews wanting to join the Zionist movement did not fear alienation from American society or being pegged as unpatriotic. This had previously been a worry as many had worked hard for assimilation into the American society. Brandeis fronted a belief that to be a Zionist was not inconsistent with being an American. Instead, being a Zionist only made you a better American. American society, made up of immigrants from all over the world, was based on the idea that people could be proud of their heritage and culture and still live together in an American community. By being Zionists, the American Jewish community would support the continuation of the Jewish heritage, which was in accord with all the other national groups in the US. The American Zionist thereby became a hybrid, fusing Americanism with the influences brought to the US by Eastern European immigrants.<sup>409</sup> Brandeis' relentless assurance of this quenched the fear of being accused of dual allegiance.

The effect Brandeis' presidency had on the American Zionist movement cannot be described as anything other than extraordinary. He took his Progressive ideals and merged them with Herzl's political Zionism. This "Brandeisian synthesis" developed into American Zionism, which differed from the Zionism found in Europe.<sup>410</sup> For Brandeis and the American Zionists it was important to be American first and a Jew second. He said that "[l]oyalty to America

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<sup>407</sup> de Haas, *Louis D. Brandeis – A Biographical Sketch with Special Reference to his Contributions to Jewish and Zionist History*, 15

<sup>408</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 327

<sup>409</sup> Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism*, 2

<sup>410</sup> Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism, 1897-1948*, 61



demands that each American Jew become a Zionist”.<sup>411</sup> Because all Americans had some sort of connection to another country, honoring your heritage was a part of being an American. The Jewish home in Palestine, which they were working to achieve, was not to be their home. They would support the Jewish population there, but they were, and would always be, Americans living in the US. The Jews in Europe, in particular in Eastern Europe were working to secure their future home.

Brandeis became leader just as the world was thrown into the uncertainty of war. During a crisis, people look to a strong leader. For the American Jewish community, Brandeis was the strong father figure they needed during the tentative times that World War I brought. His unwavering certainty in what he was doing brought many new members to the ZOA, which meant a bigger budget and more cogency in negotiations, mostly with the WZO. He also “increased its [American Zionism] prestige and dignity abroad.”<sup>412</sup> Theodor Herzl had disregarded American Jews as nothing more than potential bank accounts, but with Brandeis as leader, American Zionists achieved a much higher status in the world organization, as expressed by one of its leaders, Dr. Max Nordau: “I wish that good and noble Jew, Mr. Brandeis and his followers, God Speed.”<sup>413</sup>

During the *pogroms* in Russia and World War I, the Zionists tried to get the US government to make the situation better for the Jewish societies in the world. However, there was little the US government could do, their appeals to Russia were met with little cooperation. Instead the American Zionists fixed their attention on the Jewish nation.

Up until his appointment to the Supreme Court in 1916, Brandeis was the outspoken leader of the ZOA. He reached out to government officials for help, and more often than not, he received it. The use of the Navy ship “Vulcan” for carrying supplies to Palestine is only one example. He was generally well liked and respected, and although he had his critics, his close connection to the President of the United States opened many doors. After he became a Supreme Court Justice, his role in the ZOA changed. He became a silent leader, and from his position as Honorary President, he maintained control while delegating the day-to-day

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<sup>411</sup> Brandeis, Louis D. *Brandeis on Zionism – A Collection of Addresses and Statements by Louis D. Brandeis*, Zionist Organization of America, Washington, D.C., 1942, 3

<sup>412</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 16; Sokolow, *History of Zionism 1600-1918, Vol. 2*, 80

<sup>413</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 36

operations to his trusted friends in the organization. He was no longer able to oversee every detail, but his trusted associates Judge Julian Mack and Jacob de Haas kept him apprised of everything that was going on.

It was during his time as the silent leader of the organization that he was able to win President Wilson's sympathy for Jewish aspirations in Palestine. The President time and time again asked Brandeis for advice on political issues. He fought hard to make sure that Brandeis was appointed to the Supreme Court, as the first ever Jew to hold the position. It was this trust in Brandeis' judgment that led him to give his support. Brandeis' role in securing the Balfour Declaration tends to be inflated by the American Zionists. But non-American or non-Zionist researchers equally understate it. The truth is somewhere in the middle. It is true that Chaim Weizmann, among the Zionists, deserves most of the credit for making it happen. His efforts, which included an immense amount of meetings, official and unofficial, brought it into being. But it is also important to acknowledge Brandeis' efforts in securing US support of it. The British War Cabinet was hesitant to issue the Declaration without the support of President Wilson, and it is evident that Brandeis and President Wilson's close and personal friendship did in fact fast-track the President's decision to endorse the declaration. The President fairly quickly gave his endorsement, despite his many advisors, such as Secretary of State Robert Lansing, advising him to "go very slowly".<sup>414</sup>

Throughout his time at the helm of the ZOA, Brandeis' main focus, in addition to building up a viable organization, was to increase membership. He knew that not only would this bring in more donations, it would also greatly escalate the organization's influence. When he took over the presidency in 1914, there were about 12,000 members.<sup>415</sup> By 1919 it had risen to 176,658.<sup>416</sup> This was an incredible development in only 5 years, and arguably one of the greatest achievements of his presidency. However, with the number of Jews living in the US at the time at around 3 million, it is evident that the American Zionists were a minority, albeit one with connections to the right people.

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<sup>414</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 12

<sup>415</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 6

<sup>416</sup> Rabinowitz, *Justice Louis D. Brandeis – The Zionist Chapter of His Life*, 31

### 6.3 Lipsky without Brandeis

When the war ended, the situation for the Jews in Europe seemed less precarious to the American Zionists. To them, the urgency of the situation had stalled and their main focus returned to their own post-war lives. For the ZOA, this meant that the good and stable times that Brandeis had provided ended. The people who had disagreed with Brandeis' style of leadership, with Louis Lipsky in front, rallied, and after a couple of years of bitter fighting, the Brandeis group was forced to resign. There were many issues they disagreed on but the main issue was that Lipsky wanted a closer relationship with the WZO, while Brandeis believed in his own plans for Palestine. Lipsky cooperated closely with Chaim Weizmann and the WZO. He managed to alienate many of the interest groups that the ZOA consisted of, the most influential being *Hadassah*, the Women Zionist Organization of America. He wanted the donations *Hadassah* was receiving to go to the WZO first, instead of directly to medical work in Palestine, as it previously had done. This was unacceptable to *Haddassah* and in the end Lipsky had to back down. Although Lipsky had occupied positions in the leadership of the ZOA since the beginning, he lacked the leader skills that were needed in the difficult conditions the 1920s provided. The ZOA was torn apart by conflict, and during the 1920s, members could not escape fast enough. By 1930, it was down to 15,000 and people were crying out for the return of Brandeis. Brandeis, who had passed 70 by then, stayed an active Zionist for the remainder of his life, but he did not return as leader

Looking back, it is easy to blame Lipsky for the chaos that ensued after he ousted Brandeis, but history is never black and white. Brandeis' style was uncompromising and firm, and the Brandeis group continued in this fashion when he was in Washington, D.C. working as a Supreme Court Justice. Many felt unheard during his presidency, but they accepted it during the uncertain war years. Without the threat of war and immediate Jewish annihilation, people started to feel like they needed a change in management. Many did not realize the impact Brandeis had had on their victories over the years. He was not one for publicity, so a lot of credit owed to him went to other people instead. Lipsky did his best to bring together the organization again, but his insistence on a close relationship to Weizmann, who was becoming increasingly unpopular among American Zionists, in addition to his treatment of *Hadassah*, only widened the divide.

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As this story of the first thirty years of American Zionism shows, Brandeis and the ZOA did not manage to influence the policymakers in Washington, D.C. at the time. With President Wilson's endorsement of the Balfour Declaration as the exception, US policies towards Palestine and Jews in general did not change. The organization as an interest group was unable to influence the American government on more than a few occasions, and on those occasions it was certain people in the organization that was able to use their private relationships, not the organization itself. Simon Wolf, Louis Brandeis and Louis Lipsky all had ties to US government officials. What separated them, and a big reason for why Brandeis was such an important figure in the American Zionist movement, was that his relationship with the President of the United States was a real friendship. A friendship not just created to achieve something, but a friendship that consisted of real trust and admiration from them both. This friendship laid the foundation for American public opinion to support the establishment of a Jewish state in the years to come.



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