

# Howard Jacobson's *The Finkler Question*: Yiddish Humor and Jewish Anti-Zionism

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ハワード・ジェイコブソン作 『フィンクラー氏の悩み』：  
ユダヤのユーモアとユダヤ人反シオニズム主義

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イギリスにおけるユダヤ系文学の研究は極めて少なく、ほとんど例がない。アメリカ文学と比較して、ユダヤ系のイギリス作家の数が極端に少ないことが、その主な理由であろう。また、イギリスのユダヤ系作家は、イギリス社会への同化が進んでいるため、自分自身の出自をあまり前面に出さないという傾向にある。これも、イギリスにおける研究が進まない理由のひとつかもしれない。

このような状況にあって、ハワード・ジェイコブソンは稀有なイギリス・ユダヤ系作家である。本論では、彼の代表作『フィンクラー氏の悩み』を通じて、ユダヤ系イギリス人のアイデンティティをめぐる悩みの深さを考察したい。特に、イギリスのユダヤ人が主張する反シオニズムにはイギリス社会に同化しようとする複雑なユダヤ人心理がみられる。こうした点も考慮に入れて、ユダヤ系作家ジェイコブソンが織りなす、微妙なユーモアが作品構成をいかに支えているのかも吟味したい。また、その過程でジェイコブソンの文学をアメリカのフィリップ・ロスの作品とも比較研究したい。

ジェイコブソンは、ユダヤ的なユーモアのセンスをイディッシュ語表現の使用によって高めている。イディッシュ語話者が非常に少ないイギリスにあってこれは稀な例であろう。その点に着目してイディッシュ語の象徴的な意味も吟味したい。

キーワード：ハワード・ジェイコブソン、イギリスの反シオニズム、イディッシュ語

## I Non-Jewish Perspectives

As critics maintain, *The Finkler Question* is a hilarious novel filled as much with humor as with seriousness. Modern Jewish American writers deal with the grave and controversial themes of the Holocaust and political Zionism in Israel in both direct and figurative ways. In general, these themes are not suitable for humorous treatment. Rabbi Joseph Telushkin sharply points out the essence of Jewish humor in Israel:

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Key Words: Howard Jacobson, British Anti-Zionism, Yiddish

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There is not a great deal of humor being created in Israel, and most of what exists is not very funny, at least not to non-Israelis. Because people in power are able to deal with their problems directly, they have no need to settle for the personal gratification of a sharp put-down or witticism. Israelis, for example, don't joke much about their Arab opponents; they fight them. (Telushkin 173)

As Rabbi Telushkin suggests here, Israelis have the means to actually deal with their problems as opposed to Jews in Eastern Europe whose humor reflected a kind of resignation to their own helplessness in a hopeless situation. Therefore, it is curious to examine how Howard Jacobson delineates Zionism through humor.

One of the most famous novels on the topic of Zionism is Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock* (1993), which delves into the controversial issues arising from the conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians. However, the tone of the story greatly differs from Jacobson's humorous treatment in *The Finkler Question*. Jacobson's interjection of humorous Yiddish expressions greatly contributes to the comicality of the novel. Quite a few reviews were written on this work, but none from Yiddish or Yiddish literature perspective, so far.

For readers familiar with Yiddish literature, it is easy to identify the protagonist Julian Treslove as a *shlimazel-type*<sup>1</sup> figure.

He should have seen it coming.

His life had been one mishap after another. So he should have been prepared for this one.

He was a man who saw things coming. Not shadowy premonitions before and after sleep, but real and present dangers in the daylight world. Lamp posts and trees reared up at him, splintering his shins. Speeding cars lost control and rode on to the footpath leaving him lying in a pile of torn tissues and mangled bones. Sharp objects dropped from scaffolding and pierced his skull. (3)

The story revolves around Julian Treslove, a melancholy, lackluster former BBC radio producer. After being mugged one night, he believes, with increasing certainty, that his attacker called him a Jew. Though his old friends, Sam Finkler and Libor Sevcik are Jewish, Treslove is not. However, as a result of this incident, he becomes increasingly obsessed with the question of Jewishness. Treslove doesn't approach his journey into Judaism from a religious standpoint. He takes no steps to learn Hebrew or to convert to Judaism; instead, his obsession is cultural. He wishes to understand the mannerisms and customs of Jewish life as well as the hidden code of Jewish sarcasm through the Yiddish language.

While Treslove yearns to pass as a Jew, many of his Jewish contemporaries in

the book do their best to pass as gentiles, including one pitiful character who spends his waking hours trying to reverse his circumcision, chronicling his efforts on a blog, photos and all. This plot reminds us of Sholom Aleichem's story *The Bloody Hoax*, in which the author tries to show how difficult it is for a young Russian male aristocrat to be a Jew in Tzarist Russia. In Sholem Aleichem's novel, the protagonist exchanges his identity with his Jewish friend without imagining the unexpected harsh fate that awaits him as a Jew. Thus, unimaginably brutal anti-Semitism is realistically and vividly revealed through the fresh eyes of a young Christian man. In a similar way, we learn about the Jewish customs and Yiddish expressions from Treslove's perspective, an outsider's viewpoint on the Jewish world.

## II Jewish question

Old Libor Sevick is the former teacher of Treslove and Finkler, and he has lost his beloved wife and misses her. Sam Finkler has also lost his wife Tyler, and he has become a widower like Libor. Libor and Finkler are Jewish but they relate to Israel differently.

Before Libor married Malkie Hofmannsthal, her parents had strongly opposed the marriage due to his "lack of intellectuality and breeding" (12). Despite her parents' objection, Malkie falls in love with him and Libor also deeply loves her "whose neck was more graceful than svontz" (13). "Svontz" is a key word which impressed Malkie more than Libor expected:

A neck more graceful, he had told her the day they had met, than a swan's. Because of his accent, Malkie had thought he had said her neck was more graceful than a svontz, which had reminded her of a Yiddish word her father often used, meaning penis. (12)

It is clear that Yiddish is effectively interjected into the text and heightens the humorous atmosphere of the story, and mitigates the serious topic of anti-Semitism in Britain. At first glance, "swan" and "svontz" seem to be mutually exclusive, but they are closely entangled with each other. The clashing images of swan and penis are merged through the Yiddish sound, which evokes comicality. Even in the British Jewish community, Yiddish retains a certain sense of familiarity. In fact, Jacobson is well aware that Yiddish is one of the richest languages in the world filled with expressions, idioms and proverbs. Sam Finkler is an old friend of Julian Treslove, a gentile, from their school days, although Sam is Jewish and Julian a gentile. In those days, Sam maintained that he was Samuel. Though his father was a fake pharmacist, Sam Finkler's father was "a religious man who wore a black fedora" like other Orthodox Jews. Sam, however, for some reason turned his back on Judaism, and eventually came to hate his father. Sam's complicated psychology is illustrated through his relationship with his father:

Finkler, who did not dream, had a dream.

He dreamed that he was punching his father in the stomach.

His mother screamed for him to stop. But his father only laughed and shouted, 'Harder!'

'Los the boy allein,' he told his wife. Which was cod Yiddish for 'Leave the boy alone'.

In life, when his father spoke to him in cod Yiddish, Finkler turned his back on him. Why his father, English university-educated and normally softly spoken—a man of learning and unshakable religious conviction—had to make this spectacle of himself in his shop, throwing his hands around and yelling in a peasant tongue, Finkler couldn't understand. Other people loved his father for these shows of Jewish excitability, but Finkler didn't. He had to walk away.

But in the dream he didn't walk away. In the dream he summoned all his strength and threw punch after punch into his father's stomach.

What woke him was his father's stomach opening. When Finkler saw the cancer swimming towards him in a sea of blood he could not go on dreaming.

(40-41)

This dreadful and aggressive dream foreshadows Sam's future thought formation on the subject of Israel and Jews. It is clear that his life started quite differently from his father's life, which was deeply colored by the poverty of Jewish immigrants. Sam has grown up as an Englishman of Jewish heritage. On the other hand, his father's mother-tongue is Yiddish, the colorful language of poor Jewish immigrants. For business purposes, his father makes use of the Yiddish expressions in order to make his fellow Jews feel comfortable.

As an English boy, Sam cannot accept the Jewish jargon, Yiddish, and he despises it. Sam's reaction to his father demonstrates his self-hatred to a great extent. His dream of punching his father's stomach reveals Sam's strong self-hatred in a figurative or distorted way. Thus these boyhood feelings gradually develop into his anti-Zionism in later years.

"The Finkler Question" can be interpreted as "the Jewish question." In the United Nations General Assembly's 1975 resolution condemned "Zionism as racism" , though the "Zionism is racism" resolution was repealed in late 1991. The dual identity of British Jews is so complicated that there is no right answer to the question. The six million American Jews have a similar identity problem, but America is a multi cultural society and therefore is able to absorb a variety of races, religions, and ethnicities. However, in Britain, the Jewish population is a minority group of less than 300,000, that does not like to draw special attention from the main stream of society.

Now, Sam Finkler, a famous philosopher, is a well-known anti-Zionist, who is the central figure in the ASHamed Jews (fictional group name) in London. His philosophy

regarding Israel or Jews in Palestine is too opaque and arcane for the non-Jew Treslove to understand.

Though he detested his fellow Jews for their clannishness about Israel, Finkler couldn't hide his disdain for Treslove for so much as daring, as an outsider, to have a view. 'Because of the blood that will be spilled while we sit and do nothing,'he said, spraying Treslove with his contempt. And then, to Libor, 'And because as a Jew I am ashamed.' (26)

Sam criticizes his fellow Jews for their "clannishness about Israel," but he does not wish outsiders to judge Israelis and blames them for the Palestine situation, without the knowledge of life always harassed in Israel. Like Treslove, other non-Jewish British people, for Sam, are not entitled to express their judgments on Palestinian problems, because they do not like to be involved with the controversial issue. In fact, Britain is responsible for causing the initial Palestinian refugees by the fact that she recognized both sides, namely Jews and Palestinians, to establish their own nations in the same area by the Balfour declaration<sup>2</sup> in 1917. As a result of the declaration, the future confusion in Palestine could have been assumed.

In the beginning, Sam was very critical about Israel as a central member of the ASHamed Jew, but he eventually changes his position into a more conservative Jewish attitude facing the never-ending anti-Semitism in Britain. His ambivalence is projected into the book title "the Finkler question," in other words, "the Jewish question," which cannot be answered without contradictions.

### III Jewish anti-Semitism

Finkler's wife Tyler was born a Catholic, but she converted to Judaism after she married him. The irony, however, is that Finkler is neither interested in Judaism nor in being a Jew in Britain, where there still strongly remains an anti-Semitic tendency. According to Tyler, "He's ashamed because he's a Jew, I am ashamed because he's not" (121). Finkler's dilemma is illuminated in his love affairs with Jews other than his converted wife. Tyler confesses to Treslove, "I'm still the shiksa (non-Jewish woman) to him. If he wants the forbidden he can get it at home. The irony is that he's out fucking Jews" (78).

In regard to Finkler's distortion, his wife explicates precisely the Jewish mentality in Britain:

'All Jews. Endlessly falling out in public about how Jewish to be, whether they are or they aren't, whether they're practicing or they're not, whether to wear fringes or eat bacon, whether they feel safe here or precarious, whether the world hates them or it doesn't, the fucking Holocaust, fucking Palestine . . .' (121-21)

As a result of her husband's affairs, Tyler also starts having a relationship with her husband's friend Treslove, who is mistaken for a Jew and mugged by a woman on the street.

Jacobson intentionally uses non-Jewish main characters, Tyler and Treslove, to provide inside information about the Jewish world. This is a well-wrought literary strategy: Tyler is a bridge between Christians and Jews as a converted Jewess showing much sympathy to Jews, and Treslove becomes more conscious of the Jewish question after being mugged on the street. Therefore, the reader is allowed to switch his/her perspective of Jewish society in Britain from outside to inside. In particular, Treslove is a *schlimazel-type* figure character in order to demonstrate the complex issue of Jewish anti-Zionism in Britain.

The United Nations resolution of 1975 equated Zionism with racism. Knowing from hard experience what real racism was, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. insists:

“When people criticize Zionists, they mean Jews; you are talking anti-Semitism.”<sup>3</sup>

This remark from King provides a clue to understanding why Finkler accuses his own son Immanuel of being a “racist” (190). Outside the Oxford Union, Immanuel starts arguing about Israel with an Orthodox Jew. And he “accuses them of stealing someone else’s country” (189). Immanuel levels his own accusation: “They were Zionists. The real meshuggeners (crazy people) with black hats and fringes” (189). Learning of his son’s assault on an Orthodox Jew, Finkler is deeply shocked at this son’s anti-Semitic behavior, though Immanuel does not understand how outrageous an act it is to knock a Jew’s hat off.

‘I just told them all what I thought of them and their shitty little country and called one of them, who came up to me, a racist.’

‘A racist? What had he said to you?’

‘Nothing. It wasn’t about him. I was talking about his country.’

‘Was he an Israeli?’

‘How do I know? He wore a black hat. He was there to oppose the motion.’

‘Did that make him a racist?’

‘Well, what would you call it?’

‘I can think of other words.’

‘I can think of other words, too. But we weren’t playing Scrabble.’

‘And then what happened?’

‘And then I knocked his hat off.’

‘You knocked a Jew’s hat off.’

‘Is that so terrible?’

'Jesus Christ, of course it's so terrible. You don't do that to anyone, least of all a Jew.'

'Least of all a Jew! What? Are we a protected species now or something? These are people who bulldoze Palestinian villages. What's a hat?'

'Did you hurt him?'

'Not enough.'

'This is a racist assault, Immanuel.'

'Dad, how can it be a racist assault when they're the racists?' (189-90)

This dialogue between father and son is an accurate reflection of Jewish anti-Zionism and British anti-Semitism. As Immanuel demonstrates, the target of anti-Jewish hostility today is less the individual Jew than the Jewish state. Israel has been accused of everything from reenacting the crimes of Auschwitz to a "genocidal" war against the Palestinians.

Despite the fact that Immanuel is Jewish, his behavior toward the Orthodox Jew is nothing but a "racist assault." Immanuel, however, does not understand how he can be racist toward Jews, because he is well aware that he is one of them. But perhaps he is not aware that covering one's head is commanded by God in the Bible.

And Moses said to Aaron, and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons, "Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon all the people." (Leviticus 10 : 6)

To a non-religious Jew, like Immanuel, it is impossible to read the cultural and religious code behind wearing a hat. Finkler sees himself, as a member of the ASHamed-Jews, as responsible for his son's assault by rejecting Jewish religious traditions and culture. To a great extent, it is true that Immanuel's hatred of Israel comes from self-hatred.

#### **IV The Shande Jews**

Tyler, Finkler's wife, writes a Will in the form of memorandum.

'The shande Jews my husband spends his evenings with, (when he isn't spending them with his mistress), accuse Israelis and those they call 'Zionist fellow-travellers' of thinking they enjoy a special moral status which entitles them to treat everyone else like shit; but this accusation is itself founded on the assumption that Jews enjoy a special moral status and should know better.' (273)

The Yiddish word, "shande" means ashamed, therefore she refers to the ASHamed Jews in Britain as "shande Jews." Tyler criticizes them for their baseless assumptions

about Israelis. In other words, she suggests that their feelings about the Jewish state are anti-Semitic. She categorically rejects the idea that Jews believe they enjoy a special moral status and that Israelis disrespect non-Jews. On the contrary, Jews are fated to be harassed for no good reason. "It was a password to madness. Jew. One little word with no hiding place for reason in it. Say 'Jew' and it was like throwing a bomb" (186).

This message is aimed at her husband, Finkler himself. In other words, Finkler unconsciously holds Israelis to a higher moral standard than other nations. This is simply a reaction against his own emotional attachment toward Israel or Jews as one of them, even though he deliberately tries to deny it, as seen in his dream of punching his father in his stomach. This is reflected in his abhorrence of his father, who tries to hide his higher educational background, and reverts to Yiddish expressions among Jews. As a boy, Finkler believed that his father did it to make money, but his father's deep psychology can be analyzed as his own expression of Jewish identity. It is most probable that Finkler realizes this when he encounters harsh criticism of Israelis by a non-Jewish woman at an ASHamed Jews meeting. Tamara Krausz, a famous academic member of ASHamed Jews, "a woman whose quiet authority commanded respect not only in England but in America and the Middle East, wherever anti-Zionists . . . were gathered" (169). She analyzes the history of modern Israel:

Sent mad in the Holocaust, not least by their own impotence and passivity, Jews were spilling what was left of their brains over the Palestinians and calling it self-defense. (169)

Thus Krausz argues that Jewish madness begets madness if Jews do not reflect on what kind of life they are leading. Finkler does not share the theory of madness begetting madness.

Immanuel's violent attack on a Hasidic student is considered to reflect on his father Finkler. These minor incidents gradually lead Finkler to his ambivalent attitude toward Judaism and Zionism. In fact, it is a difficult decision for Sam to shift from his harsh criticism of Israel to a rather mild attitude toward Zionist philosophy.

### **V A Shlimazel's Pathos**

After having met Jewish Hephzibah, Libor's relative, Treslove seriously starts thinking about Jewish "circumcision." In the Old Testament, the meaning of circumcision is clearly stated:

And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. "This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; "and you shall be



circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you . . .” (Genesis 17: 9-11)

Thus, “circumcision” is considered a symbol of the covenant between God and Jews. Therefore, Treslove wishes to be circumcised to gain a Jewish identity, but he is comically afraid of losing his sex drive. The two contrasting desires, the covenant with God and keeping his sex drive are humorously portrayed through Treslove.

On the other hand, circumcision is regarded as a “barbarous ritual” even among some Jews who were circumcised as infants. Treslove comes to know such a Jew, Alvin Poliakov, epispasmist, who desperately tries to restore his foreskin. Poliakov argues that circumcision can be compared to Zionist violence toward Palestinians:

This barbarous ritual, Alvin Poliakov maintains, is analogous to cutting off young men’s hair before enrolling them in the army, and serves an identical function. It is to destroy individuality and subjugate every man to the tyranny of the group, whether religious or military. There is irrefutably, therefore, in Alvin Poliakov’s view, a direct link between the Jewish ritual of circumcision and Zionist slaughter. The helpless baby and the unarmed Palestinian become one in the innocent blood that Jews do not scruple to take from both. (222-23)

Such a distorted analogy is meaningless, but we cannot ignore the important role of such a crazy theory in the history of anti-Semitism. Hephzibah calls Poliakov a “meshuggener” (224), a crazy person. However, Treslove sharply admonishes her,

‘How can you take no notice? The work of a meshuggeners or not, this stuff circulates. It comes from somewhere. It goes somewhere. Opinion doesn’t evaporate. It stays in the universe.’ (224)

This remark suggests Howard Jacobson’s warning against Jewish passivity in the face of anti-Semitism in Britain, which Jews had already experienced in the Holocaust. In fact, Hephzibah likes Treslove because “he seemed without ambition, a lack she had not encountered in her husbands” (224). In other words, he is “a change” for her. Therefore, this is not what she expected him to say, and she recognizes some change in him after he shows a strong interest in Yiddish and Jewish identity. Nevertheless, Hephzibah is attracted to his compassionate personality rather than his intelligence, a trait of her former husbands.

She liked him. . . . He listened to her when she talked, which the others hadn’t. And he appeared to want to be with her, keeping her in bed in the morning, not for sex—not only for sex—and following her around the apartment when she

was in, which could have been irritating yet wasn't.

But there was a tendency to sudden gloom in him which worried her. And more than that a hunger for gloom, as though there wasn't enough to satisfy him in his own person and he had come to suck out hers. Was that, at bottom, all that his Jewish thing was really about, she wondered, a search for some identity that came with more inwrought despondency than he could manufacture out of his own gene pool? Did he want the whole fucking Jewish catastrophe? (224)

Like the Yiddish "shlemiel"<sup>4</sup> or "shlimazel," Treslove voluntarily seeks the disadvantageous Jewish life, as Hephzibah puts it, "a hunger for gloom." He is neither a "lack" nor a "change." Moved by Treslove's earnest desire to be Jewish, she takes him to her family party.

And though he raved like a madman about Jewish family and Jewish warmth, the moment she introduced him to her family, he fell in their company—Libor excepted—and behaved as though he hated them, which he assured her he didn't, and generally embarrassed her by his lack of—well, warmth.

'I'm shy,' he said. 'I am abashed by the vitality.'

'I thought you liked the vitality.'

'I love the vitality. I just can't do it. I'm too *nebbish*.'

She kissed him. She was always kissing him. 'A *nebbish* doesn't know he's a *nebbish*,' she said. 'You aren't a *nebbish*.'

He kissed her back. 'See how subtle that is,' he said. "'A *nebbish* doesn't know he's a *nebbish*.'" It's too sophisticated for me. You're all too quick on your feet.

'Have to be,' she said. 'You never know when you might be packing your bags.'

'I'll carry them. That's my role. I'm the *schlepper*. Or doesn't a *schlepper* know he's *schlepper*?'

'Oh, a *schlepper* knows he's a *schlepper* all right. Unlike a *nebbish*, a *schlepper* is defined by his knowledge of himself. (225-26) (My underline)

Jacobson uses some popular Yiddish expressions to portray Treslove's comicality; *nebbishy* (shy), *nebbish* (a pitifully ineffectual, luckless, and timid person), and *schlepper* (an awkward, clumsy, or dull person). As I pointed out at the outset, Treslove is certainly a Yiddish shlemiel or shlimazel.

In response to his remarks, Hephzibah says jokingly: 'You never know when you might be packing your bags.' It is not clear if she intends it or not, but it hints at the Jewish fear of anti-Semitism which would break out at any moment. In fact, she faces serious anti-Semitic movements in London after the Meyer Abramsky incident in which

Abramsky shot Palestinians, and she is anxious about the opening of her museum in London, on which she has been working for a long time. Though she says so in a joking tone, it hints at the difficult situation in which she finds herself.

Understanding her anxiety, Treslove warmly encourages her by using a Yiddish expression: "I'll carry them. That's my role. I'm the schlepper." The verb form of *schlepper* in Yiddish is schleppn which means "to drag." In this context, it means "carry." Whether Treslove is aware of it or not, his usage of *schlepper* has a double meaning here: he is willing to take Hephzibah's burden on his shoulders like a hero, but, at the same time he is a luckless or timid person, a comical figure.

With regard to the Meyer Abramsky episode, Jacobson is referring to the Jewish "siege mentality," which is quite unique to Jews because of their long history of having to endure anti-Semitic violence. And "it wasn't only Meyer Abramsky who was under siege; it was the entire Jewish people" (276). This particular Jewish "siege mentality" is considered the source of their self-hatred. To defend themselves, some British Jews try to distance themselves from religious Jews or Zionists by expressing their hatred toward Israel. Finkler is one of these Jewish anti-Zionists. In other words, it is a reflection of the British Jews' siege mentality. This siege mentality is also obvious in Hephzibah's anxiety about opening her Jewish museum in London. The comical hero, Treslove, tries to protect her by becoming a real Jew through the Jewish ritual of circumcision. The serious theme of anti-Semitism is softened by Treslove's comicality or "meshugas" (madness), which is well illustrated in his belief that he is Jewish as a result of an attack by a woman on the street. Due to his negligence, Hephzibah leaves him behind and he is not even invited to the opening ceremony of her museum. Therefore, he admits, "his life had been a farce" (301). Despite his goodness, he behaves clumsily and loses an important opportunity. This is a perfect example of the Yiddish "shlemiel" or "shlimazel" who appears in Yiddish folklore and evokes as much the sense of pathos as comicality.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In Yiddish, a *shlimazel* is an unlucky person.

<sup>2</sup> Foreign Office, November 2nd, 1917.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:

"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”.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely

Arthur James Balfour

<sup>3</sup> John Lewis. “I Have a Dream’ for Peace in the Middle East: Martin Luther King Jr.’s Special Bond with Israel,” San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 21. 2002.

<sup>4</sup> According to Leo Rosten, it means “a foolish person” (*The New Joys of Yiddish*: Random House, New York, 2001), 343.

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