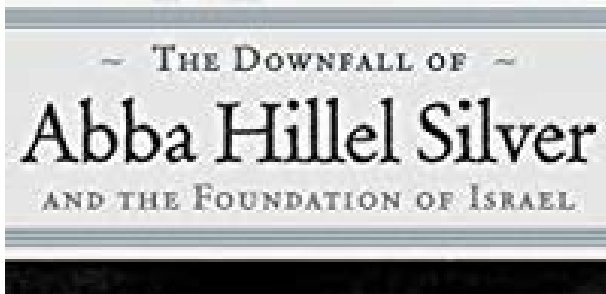
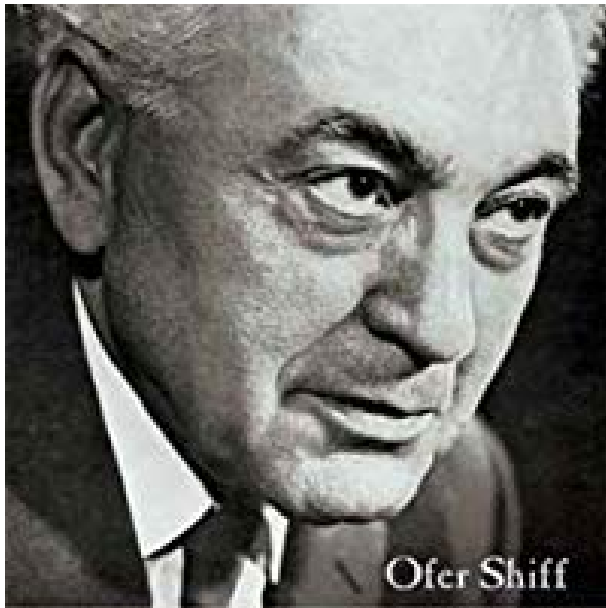


The Downfall of Abba Hillel Silver and the Foundation of Israel



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In early February 1949, American Jewry's most popular and powerful leader, Abba Hillel Silver (1893–1963), had summarily resigned from all his official positions within the Zionist movement and had left New York for Cleveland, returning to his post as a Reform rabbi. In the immediate years prior to his resignation, during the second half of the 1940s, Silver was the most outspoken proponent of the founding of a sovereign Jewish state. He was the most instrumental American Jewish leader in the political struggle that led to the foundation of the State of Israel. Paradoxically, this historic victory also heralded Silver's personal defeat.

Soon after Israel's declaration of independence, he and many of his American Zionist colleagues were relegated to the sidelines of the Zionist movement. Almost overnight the most influential leader—one who was admired and feared by both supporters and opponents—was stripped of his power within both the Zionist and the American Jewish arenas. Shiff's book discerns the various aspects of the striking turnabout in Silver's political fate, describing both the personal tragic story of a leader who was defeated by his own victory and the much broader intra-Zionist battle that erupted in full force immediately after the founding of Israel. Drawing extensively on Silver's personal archival material, Shiff presents an enlightening portrait of a critical episode in Jewish history. This book is highly relevant for anyone who attempts to understand the complex

homeland-diaspora relations between Israel and American Jewry.