

An Interlude: Zionism

by Arno Clemens Gaebelein

The sermon discusses the history and development of Zionism, a Jewish national movement that aims to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and critiques its fulfillment of the 'Hope of Israel'.

Scripture: Genesis 12:3, Deuteronomy 30:1, Psalm 147:2, Isaiah 2:3, Isaiah 51:11, Jeremiah 16:5, Jeremiah 23:5, Micah 4:7, Zechariah 8:3

Topics: "Jewish Nationalism", "Israel's Hope"

Description

Arno Clemens Gaebelein discusses the significant Jewish national revival towards the end of the Nineteenth Century, focusing on the revival of Jewish Nationalism and the movement towards establishing a homeland in Palestine. He highlights the historical events, key figures like Dr. Theodor Herzl, and the challenges faced in the journey towards a Jewish state. Gaebelein emphasizes the importance of understanding the conditions outlined in the Old Testament Scriptures for the true fulfillment of Israel's Hope, stressing the need for a whole-hearted return to the Lord and the role of the Messiah in bringing about Israel's blessing and glory.

Transcript

Towards the close of the Nineteenth Century appeared a most significant Jewish national revival. It had faint beginnings, but has now assumed most surprising proportions. As never before the eyes of millions of Jews look now towards Palestine as their homeland. It is a striking fact as the sands of the "Times of the Gentiles" run out, as the different forms of government of Gentile rule, or misrule, near collapse, as hopelessness, as we have seen, looms up everywhere, and the predicted end of our age and Western civilization becomes imminent, that there should come at the same time, keeping step with these Gentile conditions, such a remarkable revival of Jewish Nationalism. The sun of the "Times of the Gentiles" sets in a sky, red and lowering, while the star of Hope of Israel rises.

Suggestions of making the return of Jews to their own land possible were sporadically made at different times during the previous century. A prominent Hebrew in the United States, Mordecai Manuel Noah, made in 1818 such a suggestion as the only solution of the Jewish question. In Germany, France, England and Russia colonization schemes were advocated. George Eliot advanced it in her famous novel Daniel Deronda.

The writer had a special deep and sympathetic interest in the Jewish people during the years 1889 to 1899, giving them a Gospel testimony, and also in welfare work. He met from time to time orthodox

Hebrews, Bible-believing and Messiah-expecting, who were members of the "Choveve Zion" (lovers of Zion) organization. This society had come into existence in 1884 in Kattowitz, we believe, and was composed mostly of orthodox Jews. Branches sprang up everywhere. When traveling in Russia in 1895 we conversed with some of them and they were delighted to find a Gentile who believed in the Jewish Hope. Editing a Yiddish Monthly at that time called *Tiqwath Isroel--the Hope of Israel--* we often wrote articles on the never-dying Hope, which were eagerly read by hundreds of Jews. The Choveve Zion Societies were the harbingers of the greater, now world-wide organization known as "Zionism." Colonization on a limited scale had progressed. In 1896 there appeared on the scene an Austrian Hebrew of note, Dr. Theodor Herzl, who suggested something more than mere colonization of persecuted Jews in the land of their fathers. He suggested a national-political movement, a renaissance expressed in the restoration of Jewish National life in Palestine. He issued an epoch-making booklet, *The Jewish State*, in which he strongly urged the creation of a Jewish settlement in Palestine with a self-government. On August 27, 1897, a great congress was convened in Basle, Switzerland, attended by over 200 delegates from all over the world. After much discussion and opposition the congress adopted as its program Zionism and gave the following definition-- "The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law." The following means were to be used to gain this end--promotion of immigration of agricultural and industrial workers, a world-wide propaganda for Zionism, a strengthening of Jewish National sentiment and consciousness and preparatory steps towards obtaining the sympathy of Gentile governments to make political Zionism possible.

Palestine was then in the hands of Turkey, the lawful owner for many centuries. Sultan Abdul Hamid, whom history names "the damned" for he was a demon personified, was then the ruler. Dr. Herzl tried to obtain from him a charter for a large Jewish settlement. As a financial instrument to attain this Dr. Herzl organized the "Jewish Colonial Trust," in which large sums were invested by Jews from everywhere. Dr. Herzl had several audiences with Abdul Hamid. The Sultan was financially bankrupt and it is reported that Herzl suggested a purchase price and went so far as to say "Your Majesty, if you make the Jewish State possible our people will see in you their long promised Messiah." Nothing came of these negotiations and Dr. Herzl died suddenly with his task unaccomplished. Confusion and various struggles followed his death. It seemed as if Zionism would go down. Then came the Turkish revolution, which ended the reign of the monster and brought a constitutional government for Turkey. Dr. Max Nordau became president of the movement. The idea of a charter was given up. The aim now was to show to the new government of Turkey that the Jews were loyal subjects ready to fall in line with the new government and to labor for the economic and intellectual development of Palestine.

They looked to the Young Turk Movement to save their national Zionistic schemes and were permitted to go ahead with their agricultural plans and educational activities. Then came the world war, and, as stated in the first part of this volume, Zionism sided for a time with Turkey, hoping to gain its political goal.

The sufferings of the Jews in the world war were great and for a time it looked as if the entire plan of Herzl for a "Jewish State" would miscarry. But prominent leaders, among them Dr. Chaim Weizmann, Nahum Sokolow and Dr. E. W. Tschlenow, turned to Great Britain as the possible saviour of the Zionistic program. They found a great sympathizer in Lord Balfour. They realized that Germany, Turkey and their allies would suffer defeat and the victors would have the decisive voice in connection with Palestine, which would, in case of victory, no longer be under Turkish control. Great preparations were made and the Zionist organization in the summer of 1917, the memorable year when the capture of Jerusalem was brought about, submitted to the British government a document in which the principle of Palestine's recognition as

the national home of the Jewish people was set forth and the economic development through mass immigration was strongly advocated. Much opposition was made by prominent English Jews.

A great day it was when on November the second, 1917, some seven weeks before General Allenby's conquest of Palestine, Lord Balfour, Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, addressed a letter to Lord Rothschild with a declaration which had been fully approved by the government:

"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."

This is the celebrated "Balfour Declaration." It would take a separate volume to record all which followed. A monster demonstration was held on December the second, 1917, in the London Opera House. A prominent member of the Cabinet, Viscount Cecil, said--"Our wish is that Arabian countries shall be for Arabs, Armenia for the Armenians, and Judea for the Jews." Sir Herbert Samuel, who became the first High Commissioner, said, "There must be no attempt now or in the future to establish anything in the nature of political authority from Palestine over the Jews scattered in other countries of the world, who must probably always remain the great majority of the Jewish race." We have spoken in the first part of this volume of the remarkable capture of Jerusalem as the great goal of the world war. And so, even before the war ended, on July the 24th, 1918, the twelve foundation stones, symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel, were laid for the Hebrew University. The inauguration of the completed University was effected by Lord Balfour on the first day of April, 1925.

Next the Zionist demands were submitted to the Peace Conference in Paris. The demand was that "the historic title of the Jewish people to Palestine and the right of the Jews to reconstitute in Palestine their National Home be recognized, that the sovereignty of the country be vested in the League of Nations and the Government entrusted to Great Britain as Mandatory of the League. Palestine to be placed under such political, administrative, and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home, and ultimately render possible the creation of a self-governing commonwealth."

On July 24, 1922, the Mandate was confirmed by the League of Nations. It consisted of twenty-eight articles. The Mandate was more closely defined by the British Government in the following words:

"When it is asked what is meant by the development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, it may be answered that it is not the imposition of a Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole, but the further development of the existing Jewish community with the assistance of Jews in other parts of the world, in order that it may become a centre in which the Jewish people as a whole may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and pride. But in order that this community should have the best prospect of free development and provide a full opportunity for the Jewish people to display its capacities, it is essential that it should know that it is in Palestine as of right and not on sufferance. That is the reason why it is necessary that the existence of a Jewish National Home in Palestine should be internationally guaranteed, and that it should be formally recognized to rest upon ancient historic connection."

As a result great and universal rejoicing among all classes of Jews followed.

On the cover of the leading Zionist Monthly published in the United States, the following was printed:

"Our Redemption has come! On the seventh Day of the Month Iyar 5680 (Jewish Calendar year), 1850 years after the Dispersion, Eretz Isroel (the Land of Israel) became once more our land and the land of our children. Arise! Our Redemption has come."

The Executive Committee of the World Zionist Organization issued the following proclamation:

"By the decision of the Great Powers the Jewish National Home in Palestine is henceforth a part of the New World order. The Mandate for Palestine and the charge of ensuring the Jewish restoration to Palestine are entrusted to Great Britain, the power which first publicly proclaimed the indissoluble bond between the Jewish people and the Jewish homeland. The burden of the tremendous task now happily achieved was assumed primarily by the Zionist Organization as the representative and the champion of the Jewish people.

"Al I Jews are as one at this hour in their joy, their pride and their gratitude. To the great statesmen of the world and to the peoples on whose behalf they have acted in undoing the oldest of national wrongs, the Jewish people render heartfelt thanks. Their thanks will be not of words merely. The Jewish nation is resolute to make in Palestine a contribution worthy of its past to the lofty labor of humanity. It will be our striving to build up in the Jewish Palestine a society of individual and social justice, and a center of reconciliation and of fellowship among the nations. The Jewish genius restored to Jewish soil will there renew the great traditions of the Hebrew Prophets.

"In every corner of the world the joy of the Jewish people in its emancipation has found swift and spontaneous expression. In due course the Zionist Organization will suggest such further celebrations as this, one of the greatest days in our national history, demands. But forjall Jews the time of rejoicing is also the time of dedication. Every one of us is dedicated to the glorious work of rebuilding the Jewish Palestine. No effort will be too arduous and no sacrifice too great. In that spirit we celebrate this day of happy deliverance. In that spirit we turn to the noble and exacting labors before us."

Then followed, what may be termed "a home-gathering." Immigration was limited for fear that many undesirables would go to Palestine and become a public burden. The great majority came from Central and Eastern Europe, from Poland, Russia, the Ukraine, Austria and Galicia. These are called Ashkenazim. But the Sephardim, the Spanish speaking Jews, also appeared in goodly numbers. Afghanistan, Mesopotamia, Bagdad, India, the North of Africa, Egypt and Central Asia and other countries have their Jewish representatives in Palestine. Yemen Jews from Arabia have come, as well as small remnants claiming a relationship to nearly all the different tribes of Israel.

The Hebrew University has since its inauguration by Lord Balfour ten years ago developed rapidly. The privileges of the University are open to the members of any creed or race. It has three departments: The Department of Judaism, Jewish literature and life; the Department of Oriental Studies, covering Oriental literature and comparative religion. The library contains 12,000 volumes on Islam. And the third Department is called "The Institute of Humanity." Ten volumes, written by the author, were donated by him several years ago to the library and gratefully acknowledged by the Chancellor, Rabbi Judah Leon Magnes.

The Jewish population of Palestine neared in 1935 the 350,000 mark. It is predicted that ere long it will reach 500,000. The most astonishing growth is that of the city of Tel-Aviv, an entirely Jewish community. It had at the beginning of the world war 2,000 inhabitants; during the war they were scattered and many died. In 1929 the population rose to 40,000. In 1935 Tel-Aviv is the most Jewish city in the world, with over

110,000. And what more can we say of the industries, commerce, importations and exportations, the educational systems, the cultural developments in arts and literature, the vast sums expended on irrigation and water works, the expansion of colonies and the prosperity seen on all sides, with a non-existent employment question. Zionism, the rehabilitation of parts of Israel to their God-given land, is one of the historical miracles, a most significant and striking sign of the times.

The supreme question concerning this most interesting Jewish national revival is the question: Is Zionism the realization of Israel's Hope and will it ultimately lead to universal world blessing, world peace and the solution of world problems as they are today? Some Zionists have suggested that there should be established in Jerusalem a "World-Court." They base this suggestion on a prophecy of Isaiah: "For out of Zion shall go forth the law" (Isa. ii:3). Thousands, if not millions of Jews, believe that they have come into their own, that Zionism solves successfully the Jewish question. There are also many Gentile Christians who look upon the restoration movement as fulfilling Bible prophecy, and that the Lord is now regathering His chosen people and is making good His covenant promises.

We state at once without any further arguments that Zionism is not the realization of the great "Hope of Israel," nor will it result in bringing the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Inasmuch as the "Hope of Israel" is God-given and Godrevealed, made known in the law and in the prophets, it behooves Jews and Gentiles to turn to the oracles of God to find out when and how that great hope will be realized, when and how God is going to fulfill the national promises of Israel which will result in blessing for the whole world.

According to the Old Testament Scriptures, called by Hebrews "Thora, Neviim, Kethubim"--the Law, the Prophets and the Writings--two conditions are given before "that Hope" can be realized.

The first condition is the whole-hearted return of Israel to the Lord, expressing faith in and obedience to Him. Moses was a great prophet. He predicted the world-wide dispersion of the twelve tribes of Israel. He predicted their misery among all these nations. "And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest, but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind; and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life" (Deut. xxviii:65-66).

Who would question the literalness, the genuineness and the age-long literal fulfillment of this prediction! A short time after Moses had spoken these words he uttered words of hope for the scattered nation. He promised in the name of the Lord, that God would bring them back and gather them from all the nations among which they had been the homeless wanderers. He promised to bring them again to the land which their fathers possessed. He promised to multiply them above their fathers and all the curses which were upon them would be removed. There would be a great increase in material blessing. And more than that. Another circumcision would be theirs, not of an outward nature, but the circumcision of the heart, and the heart of their seed, so that they all would love Jehovah with all the heart and soul. Then the Lord Himself would rejoice over them. But the condition of it all is stated by Moses: "If thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God--if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God . . . then the Lord will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee" (Deut. xxx:i-10).

The same conditions of true repentance, obedience and a whole-hearted return to the Lord are re-stated by the prophets. Many of the rabbis of the orthodox synagogue, especially the great scholars of the middle ages, acknowledged this condition and exhorted the nation to meet it.

Do we then find this condition present in Zionism? Do the leaders stay their national Hope on the promises of the God of Abraham? Do they aim at humiliation, confession of sins and a whole-hearted return to the Lord? We speak as to the movement itself. No doubt among the Zionists are many who believe in the promises of the Lord and who are sincere, orthodox Hebrews. The movement itself knows nothing of a heart return to the Lord. It is a political scheme. Their strength is not in Jehovah but their own arm. It is still true "Thus saith Jehovah; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from Jehovah" (Jer. xvi:5). There may be statements which were made by Zionists, expressing true repentance, faith in Jehovah and His mercy. We have never seen one. We quoted the sentence of a Zionistic organ: "Our redemption has come," but it is not the true redemption. God does not seem to be acknowledged in Zionism.

The second condition of the fulfillment of the "Hope of Israel" is the Messiah. This is acknowledged by the orthodox Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament Scriptures. Messiah must come and through Him and His power, through His enthronement and reign as King, Israel's blessing and glory will be accomplished. All is dependent on the Messiah. Often in the orthodox prayers of the Jews, God is implored to send the Messiah. We quote but one fundamental passage from the Bible.

"Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth, and this is the name whereby He shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness (Jehovah Tzidkenu). Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that they shall no more say, Jehovah liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but, Jehovah liveth, which brought up and led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them, and they shall dwell in their own land" (Jer. xxiii:5-8).

How clear this is! Before Judah and Israel can be really saved, before their great re-gathering can come, King-Messiah must come and reign. But Zionism has no true Messianic Hope. It looks to political schemes for salvation. What the fate of political Zionism will be is also revealed in the Bible. We have explained this in our "World Prospects."

CHRONOLOGY OF ZIONISM

1896-- Publication of "The Jewish State," by Dr. Theodor Herzl.

1897-- First Zionist Congress at Basle (August 27-31).

1898-- Second Zionist Congress at Basle (August 15-18). Establishment of Jewish Colonial Trust.

1900-- Fourth Zionist Congress in London (August 13-16).

1901-- Fifth Zionist Congress at Basle (December 26-30). Commencement of operations by Jewish Colonial Trust. Establishment of the Jewish National Fund.

1903-- Sixth Zionist Congress at Basle (August 23-28). Establishment of the Anglo-Palestine Company.

1904-- Death of Dr. Theodor Herzl (July 4).

1905-- Seventh Zionist Congress at Basle (July 27-August 2). Transference of Central Office from Vienna to Cologne.

1907-- Eighth Zionist Congress at The Hague (August 14-21).

1908-- Palestine Office at Jaffa opened. Palestine Land Development Company established.

1909-- Ninth Zionist Congress at Hamburg (December 26-31).

1911--Tenth Zionist Congress at Basle (August 9-15).

1913-- Eleventh Zionist Congress at Vienna (September 2-9).

1914-- Transference of Head Office of Jewish National Fund from Cologne to The Hague.

1917-- Promulgation of Balfour Declaration (November 2). London Bureau of Zionist Organization established.

1918-- Zionist Commission, under Dr. Weizmann, proceeds to Palestine. Death of Dr. Tschlenow (January 31).

1919-- First International Zionist Congress after the War held in London (February 23). Zionist Central Office established in London. Dr. Weizmann, Mr. Sokolow and Mr. Ussischkin appear as representatives of the Zionist Organization before the Peace Conference in Paris (February 27).

1920-- Peace Conference at San Remo confers Palestine Mandate upon Great Britain (April 24). Zionist Conference in London elects Dr. Weizmann as President of the Zionist Organization, and Mr. Sokolow as Chairman of the Executive Establishment of the Keren Hayesod. Sir Herbert Samuel assumes office as High Commissioner for Palestine (July 1).

1921-- Twelfth Zionist Congress at Carlsbad (September 1-14).

1922-- Palestine Mandate ratified by the League of Nations in London (July 24).

1923-- Thirteenth Zionist Congress at Carlsbad (August 6-19).

1924-- Opening of Institute of Jewish Studies of the Hebrew University (December 22).

1925-- Inauguration of Hebrew University by Lord Balfour (April 1). Lord Plumer succeeds Sir Herbert Samuel as High Commissioner for Palestine. Fourteenth Zionist Congress at Vienna (August 18-31).

1927-- Fifteenth Zionist Congress at Basle (August 30-September 9).

1928-- Sir John Chancellor succeeds Lord Plumer as High Commissioner for Palestine.

1929-- Sixteenth Zionist Congress at Zurich (July 28-August 11). Anti-Jewish outrages in Palestine (August 23-29).

1930-- Report of Shaw Commission of Inquiry published (March). Report of Sir John Hope Simpson on Immigration, Land Settlement, and Development published, Together with the Passfield White Paper

(October 21).

1931-- Letter from Prime Minister (Mr. Ramsay MacDonald) to Dr. Weizmann published (February 18). Seventeenth Zionist Congress at Basle (June 30-July 16). Mr. Nahum Sokolow elected President. Sir Arthur Wauchope succeeds Sir John Chancellor as High Commissioner for Palestine.

1933-- Eighteenth Zionist Congress at Prague (August 21-Sept. 3).

1934-- Keren Hayesod secures loan of £500,000 from Lloyds Bank, Ltd.

1935-- Nineteenth Zionist Congress.

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