

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bq\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php)

## The Arab and the Jew in Palestine.

I RETURNED to England last July from Palestine, where I had been living for a year, but my first introduction to the racial problem there was in the spring of 1933, when I visited it for a fortnight from Egypt. Then I was amazed at the prosperity of the Jewish colonies we passed along the Maritime Plain; wherever there were well-cultivated citrus groves or farms with a modern house and farm buildings, there were prosperous Jewish communities with unlimited energy and considerable wealth. We stayed one night at Haifa and thence were driven to Nazareth by an Arab taxi-driver, who was only too willing to talk about the condition of his country. He told us how boat after boat was coming, crowded with fresh Jewish immigrants, legal and illegal, at the rate of 5,000 a month; how successive commissions had found that either there was no more room or that the maximum number the country could absorb was 10,000 a year and that 20,000 a year would give a Jewish majority in the country in twenty years. As we climbed the hills north of Esdraelon he pointed out the wire fences of the Jewish colonies, which were crowding the black Bedouin tents into an ever decreasing space at the foot of the Carmel Range, and told me how, with their boundless wealth, the Jews were buying all the best land from the absentee farmer and turning out the Arab peasant tenant who had lived there for generations. He finished with a venomous snarl: "They are buying it with their money, but they will sell it with their blood." In the autumn of that year riots broke out in Palestine.

We came away after that visit with two equally strong impressions; first, of the obvious and growing prosperity of the Jew, and secondly, the equally patent fear of the Arab lest he should be dispossessed from the land his fathers had held for 1,300 years.

### THE HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM.

There is no need to remind you of the history of the race problem in Palestine in Biblical times; nor in the succeeding centuries dealt with by Professor Margoliouth in his Schweich lectures. The Arab conquest took place in 636 A.D. Since the Mongol invasion in 1518 under Sultan Selim, no Arab prince has borne rule in the Holy Land, nor have the Arabs had political freedom, but it must be remembered that during those 400 years *their* religion was also the religion of the overlord,

and Arabic was the official language and remained supreme. Apart from the short Crusader Period it has been their land for 1,300 years. The Dome of the Rock, built in the old Temple area in 691 by the Ommayad Caliph Abdul Malek, was adorned by the conquering Mongols under Suliman the Magnificent; Jerusalem had become the Holy Spot—*El Kuds*—for them, and second only to Mecca, and some of the most fanatical Moslems in the world are those who guard the Cave of Machpelah at Hebron.

Though the modern invasion of the Hebrews by force of wealth and at the instigation of the Government is a new thing in the history of aggressive warfare, yet I need hardly remind you that they also are not newcomers to the land. From the first tribal invasions of the Habiru in the fifteenth century and Joshua's invasion in about 1200 B.C.—if we may trust the Bethel evidence—Hebrews have remained. Driven out of Jerusalem by Hadrian in the second century A.D., they moved to Tiberias; they returned again with the Arab in the seventh century, and were allowed to resettle and found schools, and also again after the defeat of the Crusaders, although Benjamin of Tudela (1160-1173) tells us that there were "only few men left." In 1492 Jews expelled from Spain returned to Galilee and obtained from Sultan Selim II. permission to rebuild Tiberias and repopulate it with Jews. They were joined in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by refugees from Central Europe, and, by the middle of the eighteenth century, with the help of the Haluka fund, Jewish schools had been founded in the four Holy Cities of Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias and Safed. In 1770 there were about 5,000 Jews in Palestine, but by 1840 the number had grown to 12,000. It is of interest that when Britain stopped the advance of Ibrahim Pasha at Acre in 1832, Lord Shaftesbury proposed that the land be used for Jewish settlement. It was, however, handed back to the Turks, but the first British Consul, appointed in 1838, had as part of his work the protection of the Jews who began to flow back. Officially they were not allowed to purchase land nor to remain more than three months. In 1855 Sir Moses Montefiore obtained from the Sultan permission for Jewish purchase of land, and from then the Jewish colonisation increased and the Jewish population doubled itself in the forty years to 1880. The Russian persecution of 1881 brought more recruits—among them Ben Yehuda in 1882, who was mainly responsible for the revival of Hebrew as the spoken language of Palestine—and stimulated the Nationalism which had begun to spread to the Jews. This Nationalism took the form of a "Back to the Land" movement, with the desire that the rejuvenated Judaism should be firmly planted on the soil,

and that Jews should be no longer traders in "new money and old clothes," but creative and productive. More land was purchased in Sharon and Galilee, worked by 3,000 young pioneers from Russia and Roumania. The Zionist movement proper began a few years later when Theodor Herzl, roused by an anti-Jewish outburst in Paris, started a fund for the purchase of land for Jews, and in 1897 convened the First Zionist Congress at Basle, which had as its aim the establishment of a Palestine home for the Jewish People. By 1914, mainly through the inspiration of Sir Laurence Oliphant and the wealth of Baron Edmund Rothschild, forty-three Jewish colonies had been established, each with an average population of 3,000 and an average area of 100,000 acres.

As far as I can find out, while the increase was a natural growth not officially supported by a Government declaration, there was no Arab opposition or discontent. In 1918, before the Balfour Declaration had been published in Palestine, the Moslem Mufti of Jerusalem was present at the laying of the foundation of the new Hebrew University on Mount Scopus. The difficulties experienced by the Jews were those common to any non-Moslem in a Turkish land—the inability to acquire political rights—but backsheesh would then, as now, purchase anything in the near East!

The war changed everything. Britain had long realised the importance of Palestine as an additional defence for Suez and as a bridgehead for the land route to the Persian Gulf, and had carefully cultivated the friendship of Sheriff Hussein of Mecca. In 1915-16 the negotiations between Great Britain and Hussein offered him, in exchange for Arab support against the Turk, a great Arab Empire to include all Arabia, except Aden, Transjordan and Palestine, except a coastal strip west of Damascus and Aleppo. Later, Britain claimed that the agreement excluded all Palestine, but her persistent refusal to publish the documents tends to suggest that the claim cannot be substantiated. In 1916 the Sykes-Picot agreement reserved for France and Britain spheres of influence within this Arab Federation. France wanted Syria, and Britain wanted Haifa and Acre and the right to build a railway—a corridor—through to Mesopotamia. The "Holy" part of the land, between a line from Acre to Tiberias on the north and Gaza, Hebron and Jericho in the south, was to be in International hands. On November 2nd, 1917, after the British capture of Gaza, Britain published a letter from Lord Balfour to Lord Rothschild containing the now famous "Balfour Declaration," which, with characteristic British diplomacy, said nothing but was sufficient to bring into the Allied cause Jewish and American support and

finance. This letter was not published in Palestine, so far as I can ascertain, until 1920. The Declaration said: "H.M. Government views 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 understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine."

In 1918 an order issued by the British Headquarters in Palestine said that the Allied aim was "Complete and definite emancipation of the Peoples so long oppressed by the Turks, and the establishment of National Governments and Administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations."

In 1919 a commission was sent by the Council of Ten to ascertain the wishes of the peoples of Palestine and Syria, and the plebiscite was overwhelmingly against the idea of a Jewish National Home and in favour of a United Arab State under the protection of America or Great Britain. Feisal—the son of Hussein—was allowed to found an Arab State with Damascus as its capital, and it is to this period that Feisal's agreement, quoted so often by Jewish writers, to the project of Jewish immigration belongs; the agreement was made on the definite and written understanding that the British pledges to the Arabs were fulfilled.

But in 1920 the Conference of San Remo gave to France the mandate of Syria, and in three months Feisal's Arab troops had been defeated, and Damascus captured. Britain obtained the mandate of Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine. This arrangement was confirmed by the League of Nations in 1922 and all powers of legislation and administration were vested in the mandatory power. From the British share Iraq has become independent and a member of the League of Nations, Transjordan has obtained a relative independence ruled by the Emir Abdullah under British protection, and the British Government has made various attempts to make Palestine more self-governing. In 1920 Sir Herbert Samuel nominated an Advisory Council of ten British Officials, seven Arabs and three Jews, but the Arabs refused to serve. In 1923 another Council was suggested of ten Officials, eight Moslems, two Christians and two Jews. An attempt in 1930 was defeated by the Jews, who now saw the possibility of a Jewish majority in Palestine and wanted to postpone any scheme of self-government until this majority had been achieved. A final attempt was made by Sir Arthur Wauchope—the High Commissioner—in 1935; this provided for a council of twenty-eight members, of which fourteen

would be Arab—nine elected and five nominated—eight Jews—3 elected and five nominated—five British Officials, an independent commercial representative and a specially appointed British chairman. Reserved subjects with which the Council would not deal would include all international affairs and obligations, the terms of the Mandate, the Budget and the immigration quota, though the last two subjects would be open to discussion by the Council. Extensive powers were reserved for the High Commissioner, including a veto on any measure that might be passed. The Arab leaders gave their consent, but the Jews have rejected it, carried on an extensive campaign against it and their more militant section, the Revisionists, have organised demonstrations in Palestine against it. To the Arab it is significant that the Jewish opposition has prevented the project from being proceeded with; he regards it as proving the enormous Jewish influence on British politics.

#### THE JEWISH ACHIEVEMENT IN PALESTINE.

No one who knows Palestine can doubt the amazing achievement of the Jewish people in Palestine during the last fifteen years. There are now about 450,000 Jews in the land, and the number is increasing at the enormous rate of 70,000 a year—the official report to the League stated that in 1935 a total of 64,147 legal immigrants entered Palestine as compared with 44,143 in 1934, and it should be noted that this figure does not include the thousands of illegal immigrants who have entered during this period. Jewish wealth appears to be flowing in at the same rate. From 1923-33 £10,000,000 of Jewish public money was spent in setting up 2,700 farmers and as much private capital on the cultivation of orange groves. It is estimated that £1,000,000 sterling is coming into the country every month, and of this about £6,000,000 was spent on building in 1934.

It is almost impossible to give any one acquainted with Palestine an adequate impression of the economic prosperity which has been brought to the country by this Jewish invasion. The report issued by the Jewish National Fund in 1935 shows that the primary effort has been put into citrus groves—oranges, grapefruit and lemons—and about 140,000 dunams (a dunam is about a quarter of an acre) have been planted by Jews, and of the 5½ million cases of fruit exported in 1934, sixty per cent. were from the Jewish groves. The difficulty of finding markets for a further increase in this trade is causing the new stream of settlers to turn to more general farming and the raising of dairy, poultry and vegetable products, which up till now have been largely supplied by the Arabs. Whether this agricultural prosperity is still a subsidised one is a question on

which Jewish opinions differ; one suspects that the majority of these colonies are not self-supporting, but their growth can be judged from an example like Rishon-le-Zion, which was founded in 1882 on land bought for £9,000 and paying taxes of £25 a year, and now supports 2,000 Jewish families, is worth £2,000,000 and pays £25,000 annually in taxes. There are three types of these agricultural settlements:

(1) That of the individual farmer who owns his land and employs Jewish and Arab labour, and because Arab labour is cheaper these settlements are responsible for the large seasonal inflow of the Haurani Arabs from Transjordan;

(2) Colonies of smallholders (Moshav Ovdim) who employ no outside labour, but work on a kind of guild system and form a unity for marketing purposes;

(3) Those run by workers' co-operative groups (Kvuzoth). These groups consist of about 200 people, who work the farm as a unit, have everything in common, receive no wages, have creches for the young children and all the adults have meals together.

Industrial undertakings are also increasing, as can be seen from the increase in the consumption of electricity from the Jordan plant from eight million kilowatts in 1931 to thirty-four million in 1934. The exports of potash and bromide from the Dead Sea works are growing; the Iraq pipe line from Mosul to Haifa—1,150 miles long—has been completed, and, though only forty miles of the line is in Palestine, the oil will be shipped from Haifa, and the tonnage of boats entering there, which trebled itself in the past five years, will be rapidly increased.

Among the Jewish achievements in Palestine, mention must be made of the rapid growth of Jewish culture there. Large sums of money are being spent on education; elementary schools, secondary schools and technical institutes form, with the Hebrew University, a complete and satisfactory system of education. The literary output in good modern Hebrew is enormous, not only of original work, but of translations. Most works of real interest in other languages—whether it be Shakespeare or Kipling—can be obtained in Hebrew.

There has been one slump period. In 1925 the opening of the Hebrew University caused a great enthusiasm in world Jewry and many immigrants of the £500 class came to swell the ranks of small shopkeepers. The amount of immigration far exceeded the amount of land purchase; at the end of 1925 immigration began to decrease and in 1927 more Jews left the country than entered; but by 1929 the slump was over, and bankers tell us that the same is not likely to occur again.

There are certain disquieting features in the situation. The

first is caused by the Aim of Zionism, which, from the beginning, has been two-headed. On the one side are the followers of the Jew who called himself Ahad Ha'am, who asked for a legally assured home where the Jew was of right and not on sufferance and where, in freedom, he could build up a cultural and spiritual centre for all world Jewry and develop the genius of the Jewish peoples. Dr. Weizmann—the great Zionist leader—has spoken sometimes in a way that supports this aim: "Jewish people desire to live with the Arab people on terms of amity and mutual respect and together with them to make a common home into a flourishing community, the upholding of which may assure to each of its peoples undisturbed national development." Professor Bentwich has written: "A National Home, as distinguished from a State, is a country where a people are acknowledged as having a recognised legal position and the opportunity of developing their cultural, social and intellectual ideals without receiving sovereignty." Dr. Magnus, President of the Hebrew University, in a booklet, *Wie alle Völker*, emphasises the fact that a Jewish State cannot offer the solution to the problems of the whole diaspora, and has repeatedly recognised that a National Home cannot be permanently built if founded on British bayonets, but only on understanding, co-operation and the recognition of others' rights. But on the other side are the great mass of political Zionists, whose spearhead is the Revisionist section, who last year broke away from the general Zionists, whose aim is definitely a Jewish State with a Jewish majority. In 1919 at Versailles Dr. Weizmann said that a Jewish National Home meant settling from 50 to 60,000 annually on the land, developing Jewish institutions and language so that Palestine would become as Jewish as America is American. The refusal of the whole Zionist Congress at Lucerne last August to accept the proposed Legislative Council points in the same direction. Official Zionism has become cautious and no longer speaks openly about majorities or Jewish States; its slogan is now, "The largest possible number settled on the smallest possible space in the least possible time at the lowest possible cost." But it is essential for the permanency of the only Home that can offer a haven to Jewish victims of persecution, that the Jew should deal as firmly as possible with those aggressive Nationalists from central Europe who are insisting on political domination and raising Arab fears, and that he should take every opportunity of co-operating with the mandatory power and with the Arab population.

Another disquieting feature is that this growth of population has been far too rapid owing to the persecution in Germany;

at least 30,000 German Jews entered Palestine last year, and some of them are not the most desirable citizens; Europeans at Tel Aviv are indulging in crimes almost unknown in Palestine a few years ago—counterfeiting, scientific safe-breaking, passport and visa forgeries and bank frauds. There are also some of the other bad features of Western civilisation present—slums and homeless children, and the pathway to the Wailing Wall is lined on both sides with Jewish beggars.

#### THE ARABS' POSITION.

I have written at length of the Jewish side of the question, now may I turn to the Arab. The War and the Allied promises gave to the Arab a new feeling of nationalism and kindled a vision of a revival of that independant Arab State which they had lost 400 years before, and that vision fades but slowly. Until 1925 their policy was one of non-co-operation with the British, their leader was Emin el Husseini, now the Mufti and President of the Supreme Moslem Council, but his leadership lacked drive because his aim was not simply an Arab Palestine but a great pan-Islamic movement which would force the hands of the British Government.

Then the Arab National Party was formed under Nashashibi, who until last year was Mayor of Jerusalem. It was ready to co-operate with the Government but demanded: (a) Full recognition of Palestine as an Arab land; (b) revocation of the Balfour Declaration; (c) formation of a democratic National Government; (d) recognition of Arabic as the sole official language; (e) improvement of the conditions of the fellahin and of Arab industry.

It lost its power because as soon as it was formed in 1925 the great slump came, and with characteristic Eastern optimism—born of indolence—the Arabs believed Zionism would never recover and that they need do nothing. The hope was not realised and in 1929 riots broke out. The agitation spread to the masses, and the outcome was the formation of a vigorous Arab Nationalist Movement under Husseini. Even religious differences were sunk in the common Nationalist sentiment, and a quarter of the 600 delegates to the following Arab Congress were Christian. Gradually the cohesion weakened, trouble arose between the Nashashibi and the Husseini parties, and the Arab Youth party gradually drifted away from the main body. Last year a determined effort was made to form a united Arab front and the Arab Reform Party came into being, leaning for advice, not as was expected on Ibn Saud, but on the Emir Abdullah of Trans-jordan. This party has been strengthened by the events in Egypt, and particularly in Abyssinia.

The Arab lacks cohesion, organising power and energy. The Effendi is growing rich by his contact with the Jew; he sells part of his land and retains some, watches the Jewish methods, and copies them, and, since 1919, nearly as many orange groves have been planted by Arabs as by Jews. But this Effendi has little in common with the peasantry, whom no invasion really moves and whose blood, probably predominantly Canaanite, has mingled with that of every people—including the Israelite—which has entered the land. These peasants also are far removed from the poverty-stricken Bedouin, whom the Government are attempting gradually to settle on the land. The peasant is friendly, humorous and very childlike; there is far more rapprochement between him and the Jewish colonists than anywhere else between the two peoples; he borrows their implements, watches their methods and does likewise. The Effendi are the leaders, but they have not yet bridged the feuds between the leading families. Until his death there was a great hope among many of the Arabs that Lawrence of Arabia would one day return to lead them. But though they have no real leadership and their political aspirations can be drugged by prosperity, the inflammable material is always there and needs but a spark to fire it. At the end of last year there was some trouble when they discovered a large consignment of arms and ammunition being smuggled into the country by Jews, but it did not spread because the hope was strong in them that the Abyssinian affair would create a European conflict which would remove the British control. That hope has been disappointed and as in 1929 they were more ready for trouble when Jews fired the powder train last May. The immediate occasion of the present trouble was a hold-up on the Haifa Road; two Jews, among those held up, were foolish enough to show fight with the revolvers they were carrying, and they were immediately shot, as they would have been whether they were British, Arab or Jew. That night two lonely Arab shepherds were shot by Jews as a reprisal, and the Jews in Tel Aviv began to attack the Arabs in Jaffa. At once the wildest rumours spread that the Arabs were being murdered by the Jews and the peasantry rose. It is not surprising that Britain's magnanimous offer of another royal commission does nothing to appease them—they have convinced every commission that has been appointed but it has not affected British policy—nor that the threat of capital punishment and the presence of six more battalions of British infantry has done little to allay their fears.

The large increases in numbers are making the Jews aggressive, many of them are armed and they believe that the time is within sight when they will be the most powerful section

in the country. But 2,000 years of persecution seem to have taught them nothing. Bentwich wrote: "The establishment of the Jewish National Home in Palestine lays a special obligation and a special task on the Jewish people with relation to its international and pacific ideals. They may order their conduct in relation to the other nationality in Palestine in such a way that the cause of peace may be served by their example"; and Herzl wrote: "Build your home in such a manner that the stranger may feel happy in your midst." Under the Moorish Caliphs of the middle ages the Arab and the Jew together built up one of the highest civilisations of the time. The same might have been possible in a happy, prosperous Palestine to-day if the Jews had been willing to handle aright their relationships with the Arab; they have everything to gain if their national home is founded on sure foundations, everything to lose if it is not. Palestine is not "An unpeopled land ready for a landless people"; 1,300 years of occupation have given the Arabs at least some rights there, and they form a single unity with the surrounding peoples. These peoples are rapidly growing in strength and in national feeling, and Moslem India is already showing in unmistakable ways its sympathy with its fellow Moslems in Palestine.

The present trouble in the country has subsided, as everyone knew it would, now that the slack season in agriculture is over. But the ending of the strike and the presence of a whole division of British troops has not solved the problem of the relationship between these two peoples. A home must be found for thousands more Jews in a world in which anti-Semitic feeling is growing rapidly, but that home can be built in Palestine only if the rights of the Arabs are fully recognised. Perhaps there is yet hope that wiser counsels may prevail in Zionism, for the key to the situation still lies in Jewish hands.

J. N. SCHOFIELD.