

SW Regional ETS Meeting  
Houston, TX  
March 28, 2026

## **From Napoleon to Balfour: 120 Years that Culminated in a Jewish Homeland in Ottoman Palestine**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

May 14, 1948 stands as one of the most pivotal dates in twentieth-century world history. On that day, the modern State of Israel was established—nearly two millennia after Rome brought the ancient Jewish state to an end. This extraordinary development, however, was neither sudden nor effortless. While many readers are familiar with the post–World War I events that culminated in Israel’s statehood in 1948—most notably the establishment of the British Mandate for Palestine in 1922—far fewer are aware of the crucial developments between 1799 and 1922 that laid the groundwork for Israel’s modern rebirth. This paper traces the key developments of that 120-year period and identifies the twelve most significant factors that paved the way for the emergence of the modern State of Israel.

### **A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE HOLY LAND PRIOR TO 1800**

In ancient times, the land now known as Israel was commonly referred to as the land of Judah. Following Pompey’s seizure of Jerusalem in 63 BC, Judah came under Roman rule. During the Roman period, various parts of the Holy Land went by different designations. Following the death of Herod the Great, the southern part of the territory was called Judea and ruled by a Roman governor, whereas most of the northern region was referred to as Galilee and administered by a Herodian ruler (so Luke 3:1). As is well-known, Jesus of Nazareth ministered and presented Himself as the promised Messiah in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies while Israel was under Roman rule. His rejection by the religious leadership of the nation led to His crucifixion in the spring of AD 33.

In the latter AD 60s, the Jewish revolt against Roman rule culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple in AD 70. A second failed Jewish revolt during the years AD 132-136—the Bar Kokhba revolt—not only resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of Jews but effectively brought an end to Jewish settlement in Judea. Jews were barred from entering Jerusalem, few remained in the land (those who did typically resided in the Galilee area), and most survivors joined the Jewish diaspora. Another outcome of the failed Bar Kokhba revolt was that the Romans renamed the land “Syria Palaestina” and Jerusalem “Aelia

Capitolina.” Hence, the name *Palestine* (from Latin *Palæstina*) effectively stems from this Roman renaming of the land in the second-century AD following the Bar Kokhba revolt.<sup>1</sup>

By the fourth century—in line with Emperor Constantine embracing and promoting the Christian faith—Byzantine Christianity began to flourish in the land, so that by the fifth-century AD, the majority of the population were Christians. At this stage, the land was divided into two parts, *Palaestina I* and *Palaestina II*. A major offensive by the Sasanian Empire (centered in present-day Iran) against the Byzantine Empire resulted in the Sasanian conquest of Jerusalem in early AD 614. Prior to this date, there was only a small Jewish population in the land. The Sasanian conquest, however, ended the Byzantine ban on Jewish entry into Jerusalem, so that Jews were able to enter the city for the first time since the Bar Kokhba revolt.<sup>2</sup>

Sasanian rule proved to be short-lived, however, due to the rise of Islam. Within six years of Muhammad’s death in AD 632, the Muslim conquest of Byzantine Syria (AD 634-638) was followed by the capitulation of Jerusalem to Islamic forces in AD 638. During early Islamic rule, the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque were built. On the positive side, Jews were permitted to legally reside in Jerusalem, became a protected community under Islamic rule, were given religious freedom under “dhimmi status” (legally protected but socially subordinate), and enjoyed some access to the Temple Mount area.

Except for some brief periods during the Crusades, Palestine remained under Islamic rule until the early part of the twentieth century. The Crusades—of which there were at least eight major ones during the years AD 1096 to 1270—significantly impacted the Holy Land and the Jews as a people. The Crusader capture of Jerusalem in July 1099 resulted in a massacre of much of the city’s population, including the Jewish community. Most were wiped out or enslaved, and synagogues were burned with people inside. Jewish communities in other cities—such as Haifa and Caesarea—also suffered violence. For most of 1099-1187, Palestine remained under Crusader rule, and Jews were largely barred from living in Jerusalem. In other places—such as Ashkelon, Nablus, and Galilee—Jews lived as a tolerated but heavily limited minority, subject to heavy taxation and land confiscation. Following Saladin’s reconquest of Jerusalem in AD 1187, Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem under Muslim rule, although they remained a minority.<sup>3</sup>

The rise of the Ottoman Empire (and especially the conquest of the Byzantine capital of Constantinople in AD 1453) brought significant changes to the region. During the Ottoman-

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<sup>1</sup> In a technical sense, the designation “Palestine” does have earlier witness. The Greek historian Herodotus used the term in his fifth-century BC work *The Histories* to describe a “district of Syria, called Palaistine.”

<sup>2</sup> There were some exceptions to Jewish prohibition in Jerusalem. During the annual Jewish holiday of Tisha B’Av, Constantine allowed Jews to enter for this one day only. The ban was temporarily lifted in AD 438 by Empress Aelia Eudocia, but—following violent Christian opposition—quickly reinstated. The ban remained in effect except for a brief reprieve during the reign of the emperor Julian (r. 361-63) and again from 614-617 under the Persians.

<sup>3</sup> The Crusaders briefly regained Jerusalem by treaty during the years 1229-1244, again restricting Jewish residence. Yet the period was short-lived, and after AD 1244 Crusader control of Jerusalem ended permanently, as Jewish communities continued under Muslim rule. By 1291, Acre—the last Crusader stronghold in Palestine—fell to the Mamluks (non-Arab enslaved mercenaries who converted to Islam), thereby giving Muslims control of the entire region.

Mamluk War (AD 1516-1517), Sultan Selim I defeated the Mamluk Sultanate at the Battle of Marj Dabiq in AD 1516. This resulted in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt being absorbed into the Ottoman Empire. Syria and Palestine remained so until the conclusion of World War I.

Prior to AD 1800, Palestine—as part of the greater Ottoman Empire—was not a unified official province having a singular government administration. Rather, it was divided into several districts within larger provinces. Muslims remained by far the largest part of the population, though the Ottoman millet structure allowed Jews, Christians, and Muslims to manage their own religious and communal affairs.<sup>4</sup> The primary Jewish communities existed in Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias, and Safed (in Upper Galilee). The region as a whole was largely agricultural and experienced extended periods of relative stability.

## **THE MAJOR FACTORS THAT SET THE STAGE FOR THE STATE OF ISRAEL**

As the nineteenth century dawned on the land of Palestine, there were only about 7,000 Jews living in the land—a mere 2.5% of the total population. Their percentage of the total population would experience a five-fold increase by the time of the British Mandate in 1922. This rise in Jewish population, as significant as it was, was accompanied by a host of other factors that served to increase the impact of the Jewish presence in the land. I will first list the twelve foremost factors that contributed to the increase of Jewish influence, and in the remainder of the paper I will provide more detail of how these affected the creation of a Jewish homeland. The following list is in relative chronological order rather than the order of their significance:

### **1. The Jewish Enlightenment or Haskalah (1770's – 1881)**

The Haskalah was a Jewish intellectual movement (centered primarily in Central and Eastern Europe) that reshaped Jewish identity by promoting secular education, the study of Hebrew, and the idea of a more modern Jewish identity. Its core theme was the struggle for Jewish social emancipation. A clear example of this was the contribution of Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), a popular philosopher who argued for the integration and acceptance of Jews among non-Jews (especially in Germany). The Haskalah also resulted in the creation of a secular Jewish culture with less emphasis on religion. Significantly, the difficulty of Jewish assimilation into European society eventually gave rise to the Zionist movement in the 1890s.

### **2. Early Jewish Population Growth in Palestine (1800–1880)**

A slowly expanding Jewish presence in Jerusalem, Safed, Tiberias, and Hebron created continuity with the past and a demographic base for later waves of immigration.

### **3. Ottoman Reforms and Administrative Changes (Tanzimat, 1839–1876)**

These reforms reshaped life in Palestine long before Zionism became a mass movement. Key effects included:

- Greater openness to land purchases by foreigners

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<sup>4</sup> The *millet structure* was the Ottoman Empire's system for governing its diverse religious communities by granting each group a high degree of internal autonomy. This allowed Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims to run their own courts, schools, charities, and religious institutions while remaining subjects of the Sultan.

- Improved transportation and communication networks
- More predictable legal and property systems
- Increased European involvement in local affairs

All of this made it far more feasible for Jewish immigrants to buy land, settle, and build communities. Without these structural changes by the Ottoman government, early Zionist settlement would have faced far greater obstacles.

#### **4. Growth of Jewish Philanthropic Networks (e.g., Montefiore, Rothschild)**

Moses Montefiore was especially active in the years 1836-1860, and Baron Edmond de Rothschild in the 1880s-1910s. They provided crucial financial backing for early settlers.

#### **5. Rising Antisemitism and Pogroms in Eastern Europe**

Violence in the Russian Empire (especially after 1881) pushed tens of thousands of Jews to seek refuge elsewhere. This created the demographic momentum behind the First Aliyah—Jewish immigration to Palestine—and gave Zionism a sense of urgency.

#### **6. The First Aliyah and Agricultural Settlements (1882–1903)**

Early settlements like Rishon LeZion and Petah Tikva established a physical foothold in the land, introduced modern agriculture, and created the first Hebrew-speaking labor communities.

#### **7. The Revival of the Hebrew Language (ca. 1881-1910)**

The transformation of Hebrew into a spoken, modern language unified immigrants from dozens of cultures and created a shared national identity. This became the cultural backbone of the emerging nation.

#### **8. The First Zionist Congress & the Basel Program (1897)**

This development created a unified political movement, a global leadership structure, and a clear national goal. It turned Zionism into an organized force capable of diplomacy, fundraising, and institution-building.

#### **9. Creation of Zionist Institutions (1897–1920)**

Organizations such as the Jewish National Fund, the Anglo-Palestine Bank, and Hebrew school networks functioned as proto-state institutions long before 1948.

#### **10. The Second Aliyah (1904–1914)**

This immigration wave brought idealistic young pioneers who founded kibbutzim, promoted Hebrew labor, and built the foundations of the Haganah (a Zionist paramilitary organization). They supplied the social, cultural, and military leadership of the future state.

#### **11. WWI and The Balfour Declaration (1917)**

Britain's endorsement of a "national home for the Jewish people" provided the single most important diplomatic breakthrough of the era. It transformed Zionism from an aspiration into an internationally recognized political project.

#### **12. The British Mandate for Palestine (1920-22)**

The League of Nations Mandate incorporated the Balfour Declaration and gave Zionism a legal

framework for immigration, settlement, and national development under international supervision entrusted to Great Britain. As such, Palestine was no longer under Ottoman rule.

## OTTOMAN PALESTINE IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY (1799-1850)

The Jewish population of Palestine in 1800 was quite small, and the few Jews in the land were mostly a religious community. The land was predominantly Muslim, and even the Christian population exceeded the number of Jews. Although the Jews would remain a minority people in the land throughout the next 120 years, their increase in the land proved to be significant. They would grow from approximately 7,000-8,000 in 1800 to about 43,000 by 1890, a six-fold increase. By 1922, that number would then double to almost 84,000. Here are some approximate population figures, drawn from various sources, for the Jewish presence in Palestine:<sup>5</sup>

Year	Notable Event	Jews	Jewish % of Total	Christians	Muslims	Total
1800	Rough approximation	7,000	2.55%	22,000	246,000	275,000
1839	1 <sup>st</sup> Montefiore census <sup>6</sup>	6,408				
1852	PalQuest estimate	13,000	4.00%	27,000	300,000	325,000
1860		13,000	3.52%	31,000	325,000	369,000
1866	4 <sup>th</sup> Montefiore census <sup>6</sup>	14,500	3.41%			425,000 <sup>7</sup>
1871-72	Ottoman Census	15,280	4.00%			381,954 <sup>8</sup>
1878	Just prior to the 1 <sup>st</sup> Aliyah that began in 1881	25,011 <sup>9</sup>	5.29%	43,659	403,795	472,465
1882	Estimates – early in 1 <sup>st</sup> Aliyah	<30,000 (?)				< 500,000 (?)
1890	Significant Jewish increase due to the 1 <sup>st</sup> Aliyah	43,000	8.08%	57,000	432,000	532,000
1914	Approximation at the start of WWI	94,000	12.37%	70,000	525,000	760,000
1922	British Mandate Census	83,794	11.14%	73,024	590,890	757,182*
1947	Final pre-war British & UN Figures	630,000	31.98%	143,000	1,181,000	1,970,000*

\*Both the 1922 and 1947 totals include some minority groups (Druze, Sikhs, Baha'is, Metawalis, Samaritans).

<sup>5</sup> Many of these figures are rough approximations, as few official censuses were taken. Readers may wish to consult Bernard Lewis, "Studies in the Ottoman Archives—1," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 16:3 (University of London, 1954); Roberto Bachi, *The Population of Israel* (Hebrew Univ. of Jerusalem, 1974); Alexander Schölch, "The Demographic Development of Palestine, 1850–1882," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17:4 (Nov 1985): 485–505; Justin McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1990); Jacob Metzger, *The Divided Economy of Mandatory Palestine* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Sergio della Pergola, "Demography in Israel/Palestine: Trends, Prospects, Policy Implications," online at <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/37f9/76b1ef3efc9d44daa3f00846f6ec06905efe.pdf> (Aug 2001); David Grossman, *Rural Arab Demography and Early Jewish Settlement in Palestine: Distribution and Population Density During the Late Ottoman and Early Mandate Periods* (Transaction Publishers, 2011); and Daniel Kessler, "The Jewish Community in Nineteenth Century Palestine: Evidence from the Montefiore Censuses," *Middle Eastern Studies* 52:6 (2016): 996-1010.

<sup>6</sup> Moses Haim Montefiore commissioned several censuses of the Yishuv (Jewish community in Palestine) that were conducted in the years 1839, 1849, 1855, 1866, and 1875.

<sup>7</sup> The Montefiore census only counted Jews and did not give a total population. The figure of 425,000 is a modern-day extrapolation by some scholars (usually attributed to Justin McCarthy or Alexander Schölch).

<sup>8</sup> The 1871-72 Ottoman census was the earliest published Ottoman population tables covering all of Palestine. However, it tended to count only adult males, excluding women and children in many regions.

<sup>9</sup> This Jewish population figure included 15,011 Jewish citizens and up to 10,000 foreign-born Jews.

### ***The Impact of Napoleon's 1799 Invasion of Palestine***

Although Napoleon is more famous for his military conquests in Europe, he did make a brief incursion into the Middle East. In an effort to undermine Britain's access to its trade interests in India, he—along with his army and a group of 167 scientists, engineers, and scholars—landed in Alexandria Egypt in July of 1798. Napoleon easily conquered the Mamluk forces of Egypt who soon opposed him, though he suffered a loss of many of his ships to the British fleet under the command of Sir Horatio Nelson. One of his notable achievements was the discovery of the Rosetta Stone—an inscription in three ancient languages—that led to the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics. [This stirred greater interest in archaeological expeditions to the Middle East, especially when it was finally deciphered by Jean-François Champollion in 1822]. In early 1799 Napoleon advanced with his army of 13,000 French soldiers into the Ottoman province of Damascus (Syria and Galilee) and soon conquered the coastal towns of Gaza, Jaffa, and Haifa. In the course of doing so, about 1200 of his army died in combat and thousands perished from disease (mostly bubonic plague). Following his unsuccessful siege of Acre (now Akko in modern Israel), he retreated to Egypt and soon sailed back to France. As a result, his conquest of the Holy Land failed to materialize, and he stopped short of marching against Jerusalem. Afterwards, Ottoman authorities reasserted control over Palestine and strengthened their defenses.

Despite Napoleon's failure to conquer and rule the Holy Land, his mission marked the beginning of modern European colonial involvement in the Middle East, drawing attention to Palestine's strategic value.<sup>10</sup> Some of the consequences included:

- More explorers, surveyors, and missionaries were sent forth by European powers.
- Major powers such as France, Britain, and Russia increased their diplomatic attention to the Holy Land.
- European strategic thinking began to focus on Palestine as a strategic crossroads.

Another matter of interest is that in 1799, Napoleon issued a proclamation offering Palestine as a homeland to Jews under France's protection—a stimulating idea, though it had no immediate effect. Nevertheless, this idea of a Jewish homeland became a precursor to later proposals, long before the First Zionist Congress of 1897 and the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

### ***Early British Interest in Jewish Conversion and a Jewish Homeland***

As the 1800s dawned in Britain, most Protestants who held to a premillennial theology embraced the *historicist* version of prophecy along with a belief in the papacy as the Beast of Revelation.<sup>11</sup> For them, most of the details of Revelation had already been fulfilled in the course of church history. They also followed the *day-year theory*, understanding the 1260 days of Revelation to represent 1260 years. Their calculations, then, led them to see the fulfillment of the 1260 years

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<sup>10</sup> As an example, the scholarly contingent that accompanied Napoleon worked to produce the *Description de l'Égypte*, which helped spark Western academic interest in the Levant. Appearing as a series of publications during the years 1809 to 1829, its aim was to comprehensively catalog all known aspects of ancient and modern Egypt.

<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed treatment of this stage of premillennial thought, see chapter 5 ("The State of English Premillennialism in the Early 1800s," 55-61) in my book, *The Rapture Promise; Its History and Fulfillment at Christ's Return* (1924), available on Amazon.com.

during the time of the French Revolution (1793 in particular) and the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, expecting the return of Christ to shortly follow. One key figure of this interpretative view was George Stanley Faber, whose views not only influenced others but created an increased interest in Jewish evangelism, as I have explained elsewhere:

Along with this new outlook was an increased expectation that the second coming was near, which (for many) also meant a mass conversion of Jews to Christ before His personal return. Thus, in 1809, men such as William Wilberforce and Charles Simeon united to form the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, also known as the London Jews' Society or simply the London Society (and eventually renamed). The concern for the conversion of Jews would have a significant bearing on the theology of both Irving and Darby.<sup>12</sup>

Another key figure at this time was Lewis Way (1772-1840), a graduate of Oxford who was later ordained a priest of the Church of England (1817).

He was also one of the founding members of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, believing the restoration of the Jews to Israel would fulfill biblically-mandated prophecies. Following a visit to Russia in 1817, he became convinced of the imminent return of Christ. Beginning in 1816 and for several years thereafter, the London Society published the journal *The Jewish Expositor and Friend of Israel*, and Way wrote on the second coming in the 1820 and 1821 editions under the penname "Basilicus."<sup>13</sup>

Still another key figure was William Cunningham of Lainshaw (AD 1775-1849), whose writings were influential in shaping the "premillennial historicist views" of others. Like Lewis Way, he had a fervent passion to see the Jews converted and restored to Palestine as a prelude to the second coming and Christ's rule from Jerusalem. This early British interest in Jewish conversion and a Jewish homeland would serve to foster greater British interest in Palestine, resulting in not only archaeological expeditions to the Holy Land but the sending of missionaries as well.

### ***The Political, Social, and Economic Landscape of Palestine, 1800-1850***

At the outset of the first decade of the 1800s, the region that included Palestine was firmly part of the Ottoman Empire. Changes, however, were soon forthcoming. Palestine was governed as part of Ottoman Syria, a broad administrative region. The Empire was divided into larger provinces known as "eyalets" and second-level administrative districts known as "sanjaks." Rather than having a unified central government, Palestine consisted of several sanjaks such as Jerusalem, Nablus, Acre, and Gaza. Governmental control was uneven, being stronger in cities but weaker in rural areas. Especially in the hill regions, local Arab notables (a social class known as *a'yan*) exercised significant autonomy and authority.

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, the powerful governor of Acre—Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar ("the Butcher") dominated northern Palestine. Upon his death in 1804, Acre's political strength

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

weakened and resulted in more local autonomy and occasional instability. Religiously, Palestine was overwhelmingly Muslim, the majority of whom were Arabic-speaking Sunni Muslims, while some Bedouin tribes flourished in the south and east. Even the Christian communities far outnumbered the Jewish population. The Christian communities—primarily Greek Orthodox, Armenian, and Latin Catholics—were strongest in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The Jewish population was the smallest community, about 2.5% of the total population in 1800 that only grew slowly to 4% by 1850. They tended to be mostly clustered in Jerusalem, Tiberias, Hebron, and Safed (in the Upper Galilee area).

Palestine's economy was agrarian, major crops being wheat, barley, olives, citrus, and cotton. Acre served as a trade port, and Jerusalem (understandably) remained a destination for religious tourism. Christian and Jewish pilgrimage continued steadily, accelerating in the latter half of the century. Apart from a few local power struggles, there were no major wars in Palestine itself in the first decade following 1800. The land experienced relative stability, though this turned out to be *the calm before the storm*.

### ***Early European Travelers to Palestine***

During the years 1800-1830, the land of Palestine began to receive visits from several European travelers that created additional interest in the region by the West. One such explorer was Edward Daniel Clarke of England, a Cambridge scholar who visited Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and surrounding regions. He later wrote (in installments) *Travels*, which became one of the most widely read British accounts of the Holy Land (his work on Palestine appearing around 1814-1816). From France, François-René de Chateaubriand visited Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley, and Galilee in 1806. His 1811 work, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, shaped European romantic views of the Holy Land. An earlier work in 1787 by Constantin Volney of France is also worth mentioning. His *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte* influenced nearly every European traveler of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. All these literary works (as well as that of others) had an impact upon Western perceptions of the region before large-scale missionary, consular, and archaeological activity began in the 1830s–1850s.

### ***The Decade of Egyptian Rule of Palestine***

The year 1831 was a major turning point, as Egyptian forces under the command of General Ibrahim Pasha were sent to conquer Ottoman Syria, and consequently Palestine came under Egyptian rule. Pasha's introduction of conscription, taxation reforms, disarmament of local clans, and agricultural modernization triggered major revolts (especially in Nablus and Hebron). The resulting "Peasant's Revolt" of 1834 failed to overturn Egyptian rule, as rebel leaders were executed, and 10,000 peasants were deported to Egypt. During the hostilities, however, a major rebel assault on Jerusalem occurred in which virtually every Muslim, Jewish, and Christian-owned shop was raided and damaged. The immediate aftermath of the 1834 revolt is that the male population of Palestine was reduced by one-fifth (either due to death or deportation). By 1841, however, Egypt was forced to withdraw from Palestine, thanks to the United Kingdom and the Austrian Empire which intervened to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire.

### ***Restoration of Ottoman Rule and Tanzimat Reforms***

The restoration of Palestine under Ottoman rule brought about changes during the 1840s. Particularly significant were the implementation of the “Tanzimat reforms”—new administrative districts, new legal codes, and more direct taxation. These changes and the restoration of order following Egyptian rule led to European consulates being opened in Jerusalem (notably by the British, French, Prussians, and Russians). Christian pilgrimage also increased dramatically. In short, the 1840s marked the beginning of modern bureaucracy in Palestine.

## **CHANGES IN OTTOMAN POLICIES AND THE OLD YISHUV (1850-1880)**

### ***Increasing Western Interest in Missionary and Archaeological Endeavors***

The 1850s were characterized by further European interest in the Holy Land, with several Western countries establishing consulates in Jerusalem. Missionaries, scholars, and archaeologists began to flood the region. The London Jewish Society (LJS)—which began in London in 1809 as one of the first evangelistic ministries to Jews—saw their work expand in Palestine by the 1830s. In 1836, the society’s first two missionaries were sent to Jerusalem who established a clinic in Jerusalem, and by 1844 this had become a 24-bed hospital. In its heyday, the society had over 250 missionaries and was active in the establishment of Christ Church, Jerusalem, the oldest Protestant church in the Middle East (completed in 1849).<sup>14</sup> Over the years, the London Jewish Society built hospitals and schools in Safed, Jerusalem, and Jaffa.

Another example was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Its first missionaries arrived in 1819, but by the 1850s, ABCFM missionaries were active in education, printing, and medical work across the Levant. Other missionaries also entered the region, helping further expand Protestant humanitarianism in Palestine and elsewhere.

Building on the increasing western interest in the biblical lands, a number of archaeologists and archaeological societies were also highly active in the years 1840-1850.<sup>15</sup> Charles Warren of Britain, for example, served with the Palestine Exploration Fund, whose work is considered the beginning of scientific archaeology in Jerusalem. Warren conducted the first major underground excavations around the Temple Mount. Others contributed with survey work and mapping, producing the first modern maps and surveys of Palestine. Their reports back to their respective countries generated still greater interest in the Holy Land.

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<sup>14</sup> The name of the London Jewish Society has changed several times over the years. It currently operates under the name “The Church’s Ministry Among Jewish People” (CMJ). Although created as a missionary society, it has often adopted a Zionist position, advocating that the Jewish people deserve a state in the Holy Land—a position they maintained even decades before Zionism began as a movement.

<sup>15</sup> Some of the more notable archaeologists of this period were Edward Robinson and Eli Smith (American), Félicien de Saulcy (French), Charles William Wilson (British), Charles Warren (British), Claude Reignier Conder (British), Horatio Herbert Kitchener (British), Conrad Schick (German), Frederick Jones Bliss (American/British), and R.A.S. Macalister (British).

### ***Warfare and Debt Dependence Weakening the Ottoman Empire***

During this period, Ottoman involvement in wars brought about a gradual weakening of the Empire. The Crimean War—fought between the Russian Empire and an alliance of the Ottoman Empire alongside the European powers of Great Britain, France, and others during the years 1853 to 1856—resulted in an embarrassing defeat for Russia. Nevertheless, the Crimean War marked the beginning of a prolonged period of debt dependence for the Ottoman Empire, as it was forced to borrow heavily from European markets—a trend that limited its financial sovereignty until its own defeat in World War I. Another major setback for the Ottoman Empire was their defeat in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 that resulted in Bulgarian independence. This, in turn, created problems for Jews who wished to immigrate to Palestine. Turkey, worried that Russian Jews moving to Palestine would cooperate with Russia for independence, blocked Jews from immigrating there—this at a time when the number of Jews applying for visas to enter Palestine was increasing. The following notice was publicly posted in Odessa in April of 1882:

The Ottoman Government informs all Jews wishing to immigrate into Turkey that they are not permitted to settle in Palestine. They may immigrate into the other provinces of the Empire and settle as they wish, provided only that they become Ottoman subjects and accept the obligation to fulfil the laws of the Empire.<sup>16</sup>

### ***The Influence of Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai***

Judah ben Solomon Chai Alkalai (1798-1878) was a noteworthy Sephardic Jew and influential precursor of modern Zionism, as he advocated in favor of the restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land. Originally from Serbia, Alkalai established the Society of the Settlement of Eretz Yisrael in London in 1852 and eventually moved to Jerusalem in 1874 at the age of seventy-six. In 1857, he wrote *Goral al-Adonai* (“A Lot for the Lord”), prescribing the return of the Jews to the Holy Land and renewed glory of Jerusalem. He maintained that the coming of the Messiah and divine redemption of the Jews required their return to the Holy Land. Some of Alkalai’s suggestions included the purchase of land from Ottoman landholders, the pursuit of agricultural labor, and even the revival of Hebrew—all in an attempt to achieve national unity. Contemporary scholars have concluded that Alkalai’s Zionistic thinking had an influence on Theodor Herzl.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Ottoman “Tanzimat” and the 1858 Land Code***

Tanzimat—a term meaning “reorganization”—refers to a period of reforms throughout the Ottoman Empire stretching from 1839 until 1876. These reforms were intended to reverse the empire’s decline by modernizing legal, military, and administrative systems. At the same time, it sought to promote “Ottomanism” (equality for all subjects). This period introduced such reforms as secular courts, modern education, and infrastructure improvements like railways. Another

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<sup>16</sup> Neville J. Mandel, “Ottoman Policy and Restrictions on Jewish Settlement in Palestine: 1881-1908: Part 1,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 10:3 (Oct 1974): 312-332.

<sup>17</sup> Herzl’s paternal grandfather, Simon Loeb Herzl, is said to have attended Alkalai’s synagogue in Semlin (near present-day Belgrade, Serbia) and even had his hands on one of the first copies of Alkalai’s 1857 work. Another early rabbinic figure who advocated the Jewish resettlement of Palestine was Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, an orthodox German rabbi, whose book *Derishat Tzion* was published in 1862. He saw this as a way of providing a home for the homeless Eastern European Jews who could support themselves by practicing agriculture.

purpose was the modernization of the military, inspired by developments in European armies. In conjunction with these reforms, the Imperial Reform Edict of 1856 promised full legal equality for citizens of all religions (supposedly abolishing the *jizya* tax on non-Muslim subjects).

One of the more noteworthy reform programs—one particularly affecting the inhabitants of Palestine—was the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 which required landowners to register ownership. Prior to this date, land ownership in Ottoman Syria was regulated by people living on the land who operated according to local customs and traditions. Land was often collectively owned by village residents (though individual ownership did exist). This new law caused a shift, whereby merchants and local Ottoman administrators registered large stretches of land in their own name, resulting in land becoming the legal property of people who may have never lived there. Locals - on the other hand, many of whom had lived on the land for generations, became tenants of absentee owners. This new law was enacted to (1) increase tax revenue, and (2) exercise greater state control over the area. From the Turkish government's standpoint, this provided a more efficient way of levying taxes on property. This shift from communal land holdings to individual ownership allowed absentee landlords to register large tracts of land in their own names as well as making it possible for land to be bought and sold as a legal commodity. This was followed by the 1873 Land Emancipation Act which took the privatization of land ownership even further, moving land from state control to the private market and encouraging land sales. This reshaping of landownership patterns would come to be very consequential as time came to pass.

Another reform affecting those in Palestine was a new status granted to Jerusalem. A new district was formed in 1872 with Jerusalem as the key city—known as the “Mutasarrifate of Jerusalem.”<sup>18</sup> This district in Ottoman Syria was now to have special administrative status as an independent province (reporting directly to the Ottoman government in Istanbul rather than to Damascus) and would encompass not only Jerusalem but the cities of Hebron, Jaffa, Gaza, and Beersheba as well. Most of the district's villages were farming communities, while its towns were populated by merchants, artisans, landowners, and moneylenders. Of special note is that between 1856 and 1880, Jewish immigration to Palestine more than doubled, with the majority settling in Jerusalem. These immigrants were “pre-Zionist” (coming before the later Zionist movement) and were mostly religiously motivated. Most were Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe. For their subsistence, many depended on “*ḥalukkah*”—an organized collection of charity funds that were intended for distribution to Jewish residents of the Holy Land. In discussing immigration, it is good to keep in mind that during the years 1800-1920, most Jewish immigrants went to the United States, not to Palestine. Tens of thousands of German-speaking Jews migrated to the U.S. during the years 1820-1880.<sup>19</sup> After 1881, migration became overwhelmingly Eastern

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<sup>18</sup> The term “Mutasarrifate” means a special administrative district which is governed by an official called a *mutasarrif*. Prior to 1872, the Mutasarrifate of Jerusalem was officially a district (*sanjak*) within the Syrian Vilayet of Damascus.

<sup>19</sup> Between the years 1820 and 1880 alone, the Jewish population in the U.S. grew from 3,000 to 300,000, driven largely by German Jewish immigration. After 1880, emigration from Russia to the U.S. also significantly increased.

European due to pogroms and persecution. Western European migration to Palestine was minimal, although Western Jews tended to provide financial and ideological support.

Along with the increase in Jewish immigration, the first modern Jewish agricultural schools and proto-settlements began to appear. In 1870 Mikveh Israel was established as the first of these modern Jewish agricultural schools, located southeast of today's Tel Aviv. Its purpose was to train a new generation of Jews in practical, modern agriculture and create the skilled labor base needed for future agricultural settlement. This would prove very timely with the huge Jewish population increase that would come after 1880.

The term "Yishuv" (lit., 'settlement') is used as a way of referring to the community of Jews residing in Palestine prior to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The expression "Old Yishuv" was coined in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a way of designating those earlier Jewish communities of immigrants who came to Palestine prior to 1880. They were more economically dependent, as they tended not to embrace land ownership and agriculture to the extent that those of the "New Yishuv" would do. Those of the Old Yishuv resided mainly in the four holy cities, namely, Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias, and Safed (though smaller communities also existed in Jaffa, Haifa, Peki'in, Acre, Nablus and Shfaram). Some economic aid was provided, for instance, in 1854 by Judah Touro (an American businessman and philanthropist) who bequeathed money to fund Jewish residential settlements in Palestine. Moses Montefiore, the executor of his will, used the funds for various projects, including the building of the first Jewish residential settlement outside the walled city of Jerusalem in 1860.

## **RISING EUROPEAN ANTISEMITISM, THE FIRST ALIYAH, AND THE HEBREW LANGUAGE (1880-1908)**

In the early 1880s, there was a major wave of Jewish immigration to Ottoman Palestine known as the First Aliyah (1881-1903), also known as the agriculture Aliyah. This marked the beginning of the New Yishuv. The immigrants came mostly from Eastern Europe (including Russia) as a result of pogroms and violence against the Jewish communities there.<sup>20</sup> Others, such as those who came from Yemen, did so out of religious motivation.<sup>21</sup> At least 25,000-30,000 Jews immigrated to Palestine during this period (and some estimates go much higher), although many became discouraged and either returned to their originating country or went elsewhere.

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<sup>20</sup> During the years 1880 to 1920, some two million Jews fled Russia, especially due to a wave of pogroms during 1881-1884, as well as the antisemitic May Laws of 1882 introduced by Tsar Alexander III of Russia that restricted Jewish residence and economic activity. Many others emigrated from Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania. Although the vast majority of the fleeing Jews immigrated to the United States (with some to Western Europe), still roughly 2000-3000 came to Palestine in the early 1880s. Immigration to Palestine was complicated by Ottoman restrictions on immigration, there was a high malaria rate, and organizations like Hovevei Zion were just forming and could only support a limited number of Jews.

<sup>21</sup> Prior to 1940, there were Jewish communities in many Arab countries, including Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. These were relatively stable, as they generally had *dhimmi* status (meaning they enjoyed protection in life and property and were allowed to practice their religion). Immigration to Palestine/Israel from Arab lands primarily arose after 1940 (and especially after 1948). As an example, there were roughly 130,000 Jews in Iraq in 1950, but 125,000 of these left within 20 months.

### *Early Agricultural Settlements*

Many of those who came in the First Aliyah were helped by a variety of proto-Zionist organizations known as “Hovevei Zion” (meaning ‘Lovers of Zion’), officially constituted as a group in 1884 at a conference led by Leon Pinsker. What Hovevei Zion did for these immigrants was to purchase land from Arabs and other Ottoman subjects and to create various settlements for them (made possible on account of the recently enacted land laws of 1858 and 1873). The first modern Jewish agricultural settlement in Ottoman Palestine was Petah Tikva, founded in 1878 by Orthodox Jews of the Old Yishuv and located about 5.5 miles east of Tel Aviv. It became a permanent settlement in 1883 with financial help from Edmond Rothschild.<sup>22</sup>

Rishon LeZion, the first farm settlement in Israel as part of the New Yishuv, was founded in 1882 by Jewish immigrants from the Russian Empire. Other early settlements were Yesud HaMa'ala, Rosh Pinna, Gedera, Nes Tziona, Zikhron Ya'akov, and Rechovot. These agricultural settlements were supported by philanthropists from abroad, chiefly Edmond Rothschild and Alphonse James de Rothschild. These early settlements were significant in that they helped establish a physical foothold of the Jews in the land, introduced modern farming, and created the first Hebrew-speaking labor communities. As such, they are considered the forerunners and foundation-builders of modern Zionism. One thing that can be said is that by 1900, Palestine was no longer an isolated Ottoman province but rather a focal point of global interest.

### *The Revival of the Hebrew Language*

Prior to 1880, the Hebrew language was primarily reserved as a liturgical language. Rabbis could read ancient Hebrew, but the average Jewish person spoke the language of whatever country he happened to reside in.<sup>23</sup> For there to be a shared national identity, however, a common language was needed for the ever-increasing Jewish immigrants.<sup>24</sup> For there to be a modern nation, they needed common schools, common newspapers, common public institutions, and a shared cultural vocabulary. Hence, a common language was essential, and Hebrew proved to be the right choice.

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<sup>22</sup> Edmond James de Rothschild (1845-1934) was a French member of the Rothschild banking family. He was a staunch supporter of Zionism and made large donations in support of the first Jewish settlements in Palestine. Although his financial support of early Jewish settlements of the First Aliyah was of significant help, in 1924 he established the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association, which acquired more than 125,000 acres of land and set up business ventures.

<sup>23</sup> Jewish immigrants to Palestine spoke any one of a number of different languages, including Yiddish, Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, Arabic, Ladino, German, Amharic, Persian, Italian, Turkish, Farsi, and French.

<sup>24</sup> Immigrating Jews tended to fall into one of three major umbrella groups. By far the largest were the Ashkenazi Jews originating from Central and Eastern Europe who primarily spoke Yiddish, Russian or a German dialect. A second group were the Sephardic Jews. Originally from the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal), they spread to other countries after 1492, primarily to the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, Italy, and the Balkans. Many spoke Ladino (Judeo-Spanish). Many of these came early (1600-1800), although a few came in the Zionist era. The third major group were the Mizrahi Jews, whose origin was typically from the Middle East (Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Iran, Egypt, and Kurdistan). Depending on which country they originated from, their languages might be Judeo-Arabic, Aramaic, Farsi, or Kurdish. Most of these either came early (1700s and 1800s) or came after 1920. There were also secondary groups that came before 1920, such as the Yemenite Jews (the first of whom came in 1882), and in smaller numbers, the Italian Jews (Italkim) and the Romaniote Jews—Greek-speaking Jews of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Furthermore, this helped connect the people with their historic roots, namely, the Old Testament scriptures (which they refer to as Tanakh—an acronym for the three major divisions).

The key person to help make this a reality was Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922), a Russian-Jewish linguist, lexicographer, and journalist who immigrated to Jerusalem in 1881 at a time when Palestine was still under Ottoman rule. Although his native language was Yiddish, he attended a Jewish elementary school where he studied Hebrew and the Hebrew Bible. There was a Hebrew-language monthly periodical called *HaShahar* (published in Vienna from 1868-1884) and containing scientific articles and essays, as well as general Jewish news. Reading from this publication, Ben-Yehuda became acquainted with the early movement of Zionism.

In addition to his native Russian, Ben-Yehuda also learned French and German. In 1877, he went to Paris for further studies at the Sorbonne University. There, he met a Jew from Jerusalem who spoke Hebrew with him, and it was this conversation that convinced him that Hebrew could be revived as the language of a nation. So, in 1881, he joined the First Aliyah and immigrated to Jerusalem where he found a job as a teacher. He saw Zionism and the revival of the Hebrew language as going hand-in-hand. He became a major figure in the establishment of the Committee of the Hebrew Language (Va'ad HaLashon) and later in 1953 the Academy of the Hebrew Language. Both of these served to direct the development of modern Hebrew, standardizing the vocabulary and grammar. Ben-Yehuda initiated the first modern Hebrew dictionary (a multi-volume work) that became known as the Ben-Yehuda Dictionary, the first volume of which was published in 1908. Naturally, this required the coining of many new words, often relying on Aramaic and Egyptian, but especially on Arabic roots. He also became the editor of several Hebrew-language newspapers, though often opposed by Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox community who objected to the use of the holy tongue for everyday conversation. Despite such resistance by certain Jews to the use of Hebrew as a national language, Ben-Yehuda's efforts eventually proved successful. By the first decade of the 1900s, Hebrew had become the dominant language of the Yishuv. One historian summed up his contribution to the Hebrew language in this way: "Before Ben-Yehuda, Jews could speak Hebrew; after him, they did."<sup>25</sup> Young children who studied in the Jewish schools soon became native speakers of Hebrew.

## **THEODOR HERZL, ZIONISM, AND THE SECOND ALIYAH (1897-1914)**

### *Herzl and the Early Zionist Congresses*

Probably no other man did more to help shape the Zionist movement than Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), an Austro-Hungarian Jewish journalist and lawyer.<sup>26</sup> Rightfully, he is considered the father of modern political Zionism and is regarded as "the spiritual father of the Jewish State." Although he was born into a prosperous Jewish family, he was confronted with antisemitic

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<sup>25</sup> Jack Fellman, *The Revival of a Classical Tongue: Eliezer Ben Yehuda and the Modern Hebrew Language* (The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton, 1973).

<sup>26</sup> Working alongside Herzl at the First Zionist Congress was Max Nordau (1849-1923), co-founder of the World Zionist Organization and president of several Zionist congresses. His commitment to Zionism arose from witnessing the Dreyfus affair. He persuaded Herzl that the Zionist movement needed to be *democratic*, which led to Nordau organizing the first Zionist Congress in 1897.

events in Vienna where he had a brief legal career. Based on such experiences, he concluded that anti-Jewish sentiment in Europe made Jewish assimilation impossible and that the only solution for Jews was the establishment of a Jewish state.<sup>27</sup> In 1896, at age 36, he published a pamphlet called *Der Judenstaat* (“the Jewish State”), sub-titled “*Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage* (“Proposal of a modern solution for the Jewish question”). In this, Herzl expressed his vision for the founding of a future independent Jewish state and encouraged Jews to purchase land in Palestine, the historic homeland of the Jews. *Der Judenstaat* was intended as an address to the powerful Jewish banking dynasty of the Rothschild family, whose support he hoped to obtain. Nevertheless, Baron Edmond de Rothschild initially rejected Herzl’s plan, thinking it might threaten those Jews living in the Diaspora.

In pursuit of his passion for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, Herzl convened the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in August 1897 and was elected president of the Zionist organization. Some 204 delegates from across Europe, Russia, and the Middle East gathered as a Jewish national movement in a formal, parliamentary-style assembly. Afterward, Herzl famously wrote in his diary, “In Basel I founded the Jewish State.” Prior to the 1897 conference, Zionism primarily existed as an expression of independent ideas and local initiatives. But at Basel, the goal was declared of establishing a “publicly and legally assured home for the Jewish people in Palestine.” In order to accomplish this goal, they formed the World Zionist Organization (WZO) with Herzl as its head, which gave the Jewish national movement a central leadership for the first time in almost 2000 years. This First Zionist Congress also led to the establishment of the Jewish National Fund (1901) to help with the purchase of land in Palestine, as well as the Anglo-Palestine Bank (1903). Committees were also formed to address issues such as education, settlement, and immigration. Hebrew was promoted as the national language. In essence, all this served to further a cultural unity that was essential for absorbing diverse Jewish immigrants from Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. The Zionist Congress also gave credibility to the movement, enabling Herzl and later leaders to negotiate with the Ottoman Empire, Britain, and other European powers. Finally, this diplomatic infrastructure can be seen as paving the way for the Balfour Declaration (1917) and the League of Nations Mandate (1922) that would come later. The Congress of 1897 was followed by a sequence of several more over the next few years, although Herzl himself died rather prematurely in 1904 at the age of forty-four as a result of cardiac sclerosis. Before his death, Herzl did visit Jerusalem for the first time in the fall of 1898. Despite his early death, what Herzl did was to formalize Zionism in a way like no other, setting the course for Jews from around the world to eventually have a homeland of their own.

### ***The Second Aliyah (1904-1914)***

Ironically, Herzl’s death was quickly followed by the Second Aliyah (Jewish immigration to the land of Israel). During these years, some 35,000 Jews, mostly from Russia but with some from

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<sup>27</sup> In addition to Herzl’s own negative experiences in Vienna, he closely followed the political scandal of the Dreyfus affair (1894-1906). This revolved around the Jewish French army captain, Alfred Dreyfus, who was falsely accused of spying for Germany. Witnessing the antisemitic activities of the mass rallies in Paris and the shouts of “Death to the traitor!” served to further Herzl’s commitment to Zionism.

Yemen, immigrated into Ottoman Palestine. The motivation behind this, however, was not so much a zeal for Zionism as it was the sufferings of persecution and poverty in the countries from which they came. For some it was to escape conscription into the Tzarist Russian army. Certainly, rising antisemitism in Russia contributed the most.<sup>28</sup> There had been and continued to be numerous pogroms, such as those that broke out from 1902-1906, leaving an estimated 2,000 Jews dead and many more wounded (not to mention extensive property damage and confiscation of valuables). After Imperial Russia began to acquire new territories with Jewish populations (e.g., Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania), the government enforced “the Pale of Settlement,” an area in which Jews were reluctantly permitted to live, being forbidden from moving to other parts of European Russia, unless they converted from Judaism or obtained a university diploma or first guild merchant status. Outside of the main outbreaks of persecution, an anti-Jewish riot in Odessa in 1905 resulted in the death of thousands of Jews. During the war years and shortly afterwards (1914-1920), it is estimated that some 100,000 Jews were killed across Ukraine and surrounding regions, thereby increasing Jewish support for immigration to both Palestine and the United States.

Many of those coming to Palestine in this period sought to establish agricultural settlements, thirteen of which had been founded by 1906 with financial support coming from the Jewish Colonization Association, the JCA (a philanthropic organization founded by Baron Maurice de Hirsch in 1891).<sup>29</sup> Up until this point, newly established agricultural settlements were known as “moshavot.” These were private farms made up of individual family households and based on a philosophy of market economy. In 1910, however, the first “kibbutz” (pl. kibbutzim) was established and known as Degania Alef. The *kibbutzim* differed from earlier moshavot in that they were established by collective ownership, practiced communal living, and pursued a socialist economy. Despite their primary goal of pursuing an agricultural livelihood, these early kibbutzim were essentially utopian communities, combining socialism with Zionism. However, not all those who immigrated to Palestine in the Second Aliyah pursued agriculture. Others found jobs as silversmiths, construction workers, and other professions.

For those who came to Palestine in the Second Aliyah, many difficulties awaited them. Most Jews who immigrated had foreign citizenship, and as a result faced an unfriendly Ottoman government upon arrival. Many were met with expulsions, deportations, arrests, and denial of Ottoman nationality. In addition, they had to face the challenges of disease and limited economic opportunities. Among the new arrivals were David Ben-Gurion (destined to eventually become the primary national founder and first prime minister of the State of Israel) and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi

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<sup>28</sup> One of the most infamous pogroms prior to World War I was the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903, located in Kishinev of the Russian Empire (in what is now Moldova). This was triggered by an anti-Semitic newspaper falsely accusing Jews of ritual murder. Some 49 Jews were murdered, many injured, hundreds of women raped, and 1,500 homes destroyed. In other pogroms of this period, even more Jewish deaths were recorded.

<sup>29</sup> In 1899, so as to ensure long-term sustainability, Edmond Rothschild transferred his network of settlements to the Jewish Colonization Association. At that time, nine major colonies depended upon his support, representing over two-thirds of all Jewish-owned land in Palestine.

(noted Jewish historian and the second president of Israel from 1952 until 1963).<sup>30</sup> To put things in perspective, the majority of Jewish emigrants from Russia and Europe went to the United States where there was much more economic opportunity. During the years 1907-1914, some 1.5 million Jews entered the U.S., while only about 20,000 immigrated to Palestine.

During this period, the process of reviving the Hebrew language continued (many were still not fluent), and many people still relied on their languages of origin. During the years 1905-1909, the first Hebrew high school, Herzliya Gymnasium, was founded. By the start of World War I in 1914, there were some 94,000 Jews living in Ottoman Palestine, yet more than 40,000 of these held Russian citizenship. Another development arising from the Second Aliyah was the creation of the first security organization, *HaShomer*, founded in 1909 (which would eventually give way to the Haganah in 1920). Riding on horseback, HaShomer vigilantes were responsible for guarding Jewish settlements in the Yishuv, reducing dependence on foreign consulates and Arab watchmen for security. Despite its limited weaponry and capabilities, this served to pave the way for an eventual Jewish army. Yet another significant development in 1909 was the founding of Ahuzat Bayit north of Jaffa, soon renamed Tel Aviv. By 1914, Tel Aviv had 2,000 Jewish residents.

### ***The Impact of the Young Turk Revolution on Ottoman Palestine***

Abdul Hamid II (1842-1918) was the sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1876 to 1909. His rule was marked by a decline of the Empire accompanied by numerous rebellions. He presided over an unsuccessful war with the Russian Empire (1877-78) and the loss of Ottoman control over Egypt, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Tunisia, and Thessaly (1877-1882). [The British conquest of Egypt occurred in 1882 and resulted in firm British occupation of and influence over Egypt until 1922]. The Empire was also beset with indebtedness to European banking establishments resulting from Ottoman war efforts. Abdul Hamid suspended both the constitution and the parliament in 1878. Though he intended to consolidate his rule by doing so, this actually set the stage for the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. Revolutionaries belonging to the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) rose up against the Sultan and forced him to restore the constitution, recall the parliament, and schedule an election (thus initiating the Second Constitutional Era that lasted from 1908-1912). The main effect was that after 1908, the Ottoman sultanate ceased to be the base of power for the Empire.

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 did lead to repercussions for other parts of the Empire, including Ottoman Palestine. The Second Constitutional Era ushered in guarantees of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and legal political parties . . . all of which would benefit the growing Jewish presence in Palestine. Hence, Zionist groups could operate more openly, while newspapers and pamphlets multiplied. Also, public debates about identity, nationalism, and modernization intensified. There was also increased Jewish immigration (though still monitored), as well as more land purchases. A branch of the “Poale Zion”—a

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<sup>30</sup> David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973) arrived in Ottoman Palestine from Poland on September 7, 1906. He initially resided in the settlement of Petah Tikva but soon became highly active in political groups that sought to promote Jewish interests in the land (and in particular, the labor Zionist movement).

movement of Marxist-Zionist Jewish workers that originated in Poland, Europe, and the Russian Empire in the early 1900s—began to form in Palestine in 1906. At Jaffa in October of that year, the newly arrived David Ben Gurion was chosen to chair a conference that was named the *Jewish Social-Democratic Workers' Party in the Land of Israel*. By the following January, they produced *The Ramleh Program*, a manifesto of their aspirations with the added declaration, “the party aspires to political independence of the Jewish People in this country.” They also agreed that there should be segregation of Jewish and Arab economies. Thus, the movement served to expand labor Zionist activism on the eve of World War I, setting up employment offices, kitchens, and health services for members.

In the spring of 1909, there was a counterrevolution—an attempted monarchist and Islamist uprising that sought to reverse the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and restore Sultan Abdul Hamid II to full autocratic power. In essence, it was a reaction against secular reforms and an attempt to restore Sharia-based law. However, the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) successfully crushed the uprising, which brought about increased centralization and CUP control during the years 1909-1914. This had implications for those in Ottoman Palestine. There was now more direct oversight from Istanbul, stricter enforcement of immigration laws and land sales, and a growing suspicion toward both Zionist and Arab nationalist movements. These tensions would soon boil over during World War I.

## **WORLD WAR I AND THE BRITISH MANDATE FOR PALESTINE (1914-1922)**

Although World War I—the Great War—is often remembered for the trench warfare on the Western Front, the Middle East also played a key role in what proved to be one of the deadliest wars of history. [The war resulted in an estimated thirty million military casualties and eight million civilian deaths]. Historians point out numerous causes of the war, not the least of which was the rise of the German Empire and decline of the Ottoman Empire. This contributed to a disturbance of the long-standing balance of power in Europe, and especially the growing tensions in the Balkans. On 28 June 1914, a Bosnian Serb named Gavrilo Princip assassinated Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. That was enough to set the tinder aflame. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia the following month, only to see Russia mobilize in Serbia's defense. Due to alliances in place at the time, other nations soon joined the fight. On one side were the “allied powers,” namely, France, the United Kingdom, Russia (until 1917), Italy, and from April 1917 the United States. On the other side were the “central powers,” primarily Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire.

### ***The Arab Revolt Against the Ottoman Empire***

The British had already seized control of Egypt from the Ottoman Empire back in 1882, and thus Egypt quite naturally served as a strategic military center for the allied powers in the Middle East. The British helped instigate the “Arab Revolt” against the Ottoman Empire, the roots of which went back to the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 in which the hunger for Arab nationalism—an overthrowing of the Ottoman yoke—had spawned. In the Arab Revolt, the Hashemite-led Arabs of the Hejaz revolted against the Ottoman Empire. The basis for this was

the correspondence exchanged from July 1915 to March 1916 between Henry McMahon of Britain and Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Mecca of the Kingdom of Hejaz (the western portion of the Arabian Peninsula ruled by the Hashemite dynasty).<sup>31</sup> This alliance with the British Empire was formed with the intention of driving the Ottoman Army from the Arabian Peninsula. Supposedly (based on the correspondence between McMahon and Hussein bin Ali), the British government had promised Hussein in exchange for their help in overthrowing the Ottoman Empire, a single independent Arab state that would include in addition to the Hejaz region, modern-day Jordan, Iraq, and most of Syria. [The fate of the Palestine region was expressed in more ambiguous terms]. In June 1916, the Arab Revolt started with the Battle of Mecca led by Sharif Hussein. Although the Arabs with British assistance did indeed conquer much of Ottoman-held Arabia (resulting finally in the Ottoman surrender of Damascus in the fall of 1918), what only became known in the aftermath was that the Arabs had been betrayed by both the British and the French.<sup>32</sup>

### *Palestine in World War I*

At the outset of the war, Palestine was under Ottoman control. The British were heavily engaged on the Western Front, which delayed any British assault on Palestine. Instead, British forces in Egypt were focused on guarding the Suez Canal. On 9 January 1917, the Battle of Rafa was fought, the last battle to complete the recapture of the Sinai Peninsula by the British led Egyptian Expeditionary Force under the command of General Sir Archibald Murray.<sup>33</sup> This marked the beginning of fighting over the Ottoman territory of Palestine. The British victory at Rafa led to further victories in the Battle of Gaza in March and April of 1917. America's entry into World War I in April of 1917 certainly alleviated much of the pressure on Britain (which until this point was limited in sending more troops to the Middle East conflict). By June of that year, General Edmund Allenby (recently reassigned from the Western Front to Palestine) took command of the British forces. Numerous minor battles followed over the next several months, and by October 31 they managed to capture Beersheba from the Ottoman forces. This was soon followed by the Battle of Jaffa (16 Nov – 21 Dec 1917) and the Battle of Jerusalem (17 Nov – 9 Dec 1917). With these British victories, the final objective of the Southern Palestine Offensive was secured. Following the surrender of the city of Jerusalem on 9 December 1917, General Allenby entered Jerusalem two days later on foot, a show of respect for the holy city. This marked the first time for Jerusalem to be under non-Muslim rule since AD 1244 and put Britain in the key position for determining the future of Jerusalem and Palestine after the war.

In the early months of 1918, Ottoman forces still held positions in the north and to the east of Jerusalem. By February, Jericho in the Jordan Valley was captured, thereby extending the eastern

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<sup>31</sup> Sir Vincent Arthur Henry McMahon served as High Commissioner in Egypt for the British military from 1915 to 1917.

<sup>32</sup> T. E. Lawrence of the British Empire played a leading role in coordinating war efforts with the Arab forces. On 30 September of 1918, Arab forces led by Hussein's son, Faisal I bin Hussein, entered Damascus, and on the next day (1 October) T. E. Lawrence and other Arab troops also entered. Faisal would later serve as king of a new kingdom of Iraq under British administration beginning in August 1921.

<sup>33</sup> Rafa was a city in North Sinai that bordered the southern tip of the Gaza Strip in Palestine on the Mediterranean coast.

flank to the Dead Sea. However, German and Ottoman forces effectively stifled British advances northward during the spring of 1918 (including unsuccessful British assaults on Transjordan and Amman). Finally, after a lengthy period of reorganization and a stalemate in northern Palestine, Allenby launched a major attack on 19 September 1918, a campaign called the Battle of Megiddo. Ottoman troops were taken by surprise, and in their full-scale retreat, the Royal Air Force bombed them severely, such that within a week's time the Ottoman army in Palestine ceased to exist as a military fighting force. Though the war in Palestine was effectively over, the conflict in Syria lasted another month. By early October, however, Damascus was forced to surrender to the Allied forces, and by 25 October 1918 Aleppo did as well.

Final capitulation of the Ottoman government came on 30 October 1918. The British forces and their allies proved victorious in freeing Palestine from Ottoman hands, though at an exorbitant cost. Their total battle casualties were 51,451, consisting of 12,873 killed/missing, 37,193 wounded, and 1,385 captured. Over half a million more were hospitalized as non-battle casualties, mostly from disease. The fight for Palestine also significantly affected the inhabitants of the land. The many battles devastated both land and cities, while severe famine, disease, and epidemics also took a toll. Overall, there was extensive suffering and economic collapse.

### *The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916*

Unbeknownst to those who negotiated the alliance promising Arab independence, a secret treaty—known now as the Sykes-Picot Agreement—was being hashed out behind the scenes as the war on the ground was being played out. The name comes from the two major representatives who signed the agreement, Mark Sykes of Britain and François Georges-Picot of France. This was a secret treaty between the United Kingdom and France, with assent from Russia and Italy. The purpose was to define the spheres of influence each was to have upon the successful victory of the Allied powers, and the control they would be given once the Ottoman Empire was eventually partitioned. The primary negotiations of the agreement were conducted between late November of 1915 and early January of 1916. The agreement was subsequently ratified by the respective governments on 9 and 16 May 1916, thus predating the start of the Arab Revolt.

Primarily, the agreement detailed that the Ottoman provinces outside the Arabian Peninsula would be entrusted to British and French control. France was to have control over southeastern Turkey, the Kurdistan Region, Syria, and Lebanon. Britain, on the other hand, was to have control of Jordan, southern Iraq, and what is today southern Israel and Palestine (including the port cities of Haifa and Acre on the Mediterranean). Russia was to have Western Armenia, as well as Istanbul and the Turkish Straits, while Italy was to receive southern Anatolia. The heart region of Palestine (including the coastal area around Jaffa, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and the immediate Holy Places) was designated for “international administration.” For the most part, Britain and France would divide between themselves the Ottoman provinces outside the Arabian Peninsula.

The Bolsheviks of Russia made the Sykes-Picot Agreement public on 23 November 1917, much to the embarrassment of the British and to the dismay of the Arabs. The latter viewed it as a British failure to keep their promises as seen in the McMahon-Hussein correspondence.

### ***The Balfour Declaration of 1917***

One of the most significant developments that set the stage for the future State of Israel was the Balfour Declaration, a letter dated 2 November 1917 from Arthur Balfour (the British foreign secretary) to Lord Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community.<sup>34</sup> The main intention of the letter was to confirm Britain's support for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. Lord Rothschild was entrusted with transmitting the letter to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland—an umbrella organization for the Zionist movement in the United Kingdom. The original letter read as follows:

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. [signed Arthur Balfour].

In addition to noting carefully the comment about the non-Jewish communities in Palestine (primarily the Arab inhabitants), it is helpful to understand some of the developments that preceded the Balfour Declaration. Shortly after the onset of the war, there was already discussion taking place as to the future of Palestine. Sitting on the War Cabinet was one Herbert Samuel, a Zionist Jew. He circulated a memorandum suggesting that Britain would be helped in the war effort by enlisting the support of Jews who harbored Zionist ambitions. In December of 1916, David Lloyd George became prime minister, and he favored the idea of partitioning the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, he was well-acquainted with Zionist aspirations, having previously served as Theodor Herzl's legal adviser in the early 1900s. Not surprisingly, he had a sympathetic and cooperative relationship with Zionist leadership. On 7 February 1917, a conference took place between the British government and the Zionist leaders (Mark Sykes being one of those involved). As a result of subsequent discussions, Balfour requested on 19 June 1917 that Rothschild and Chaim Weizmann draft a public declaration.<sup>35</sup> Finally, by late October of 1917,

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<sup>34</sup> Lionel Walter Rothschild (1868–1937), was an influential member of the Rothschild family. He was both a prominent banker and politician. A Zionist leader, he went on to serve as the president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews from 1925 to 1926.

<sup>35</sup> Chaim Weizmann—originally from Russia but who migrated to Germany to study (and where he worked as a Hebrew teacher)—attended the Second Zionist Congress in Basel in 1898. Having been awarded a PhD in organic chemistry, he moved to the United Kingdom in 1904 to teach chemistry at the University of Manchester. Shortly afterwards, he was introduced to Arthur Balfour, who at that time was Prime Minister. Due to his developments in chemistry—some of which related to munitions for the war effort—he obtained favor in the eyes of the British Government which gave him access to senior Cabinet members (with whom he could share his Zionist aspirations). He went on later in life to become the first president of Israel (1949-1952).

the final declaration was authorized for release. Without formally calling for a Jewish “state,” the letter, nevertheless, set Britain on a course of furthering the cause of Zionism in which they would (at least) work for the establishment of a homeland in Palestine for Jews.

### *Post World War I Conferences and Agreements*

Armistice Day—a day commemorating the signing of the armistice between the Allied Powers and Germany that formally ended World War I—took place on 11 November 1918, roughly one year after the release of the Balfour Declaration.<sup>36</sup>

The Sykes-Picot Agreement, despite the unfortunate tensions it generated for British-Arab relations, set the direction for several post-war conferences and events. The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 was followed by the signing of the 1918 Anglo-French Modus Vivendi on 30 September 1918. This served to create the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration for the area of modern-day Syria, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, and Palestine. This “modus vivendi” was to clarify who would take responsibility for allotted areas.

After the end of the war, the Paris Peace Conference, a series of meetings (both formal and informal) transpired during the years 1919 and 1920. The main objective was to set the peace terms for the defeated Central Powers, including the financial penalties that would be imposed. Out of this, the decision was made to create the League of Nations. Also, five peace treaties with the defeated states were agreed upon. The treaty signed with Germany imposed several harsh conditions, not least of which was having to pay enormous reparations to the Allied Powers. Ironically, this would in one sense further the Zionist cause. After the war, financially crippled Germany became a breeding ground of revolutionary thought which in time gave rise to Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany. What they did to the Jews in the late 1930s and in World War II catapulted the growing Jewish community in British-mandated Palestine into finally becoming a Jewish state.

One other outcome of the Paris Peace Conference was the assignment of Ottoman territories as “mandates” to be put into the hands of certain Allied Powers, chiefly Britain and France. As early as February of 1919, the World Zionist Organization submitted its draft resolutions to be considered by the conference. They sought for recognition of Jewish “title” over the land, a declaration of the borders (significantly larger than had previously been suggested under the Sykes-Picot agreement), and that the League of Nations would have sovereignty via a British mandate. As part of the Treaty of Versailles, the Covenant of the League of Nations was subsequently signed on 28 June 1919 and became effective on 10 January 1920.

Following the official creation of the League of Nations, the San Remo conference was held in Sanremo, Italy in April of 1920.<sup>37</sup> From this, the San Remo Resolution was passed on 25 April 1920, determining the allocation of the League of Nations mandates for three key former

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<sup>36</sup> The cessation of hostilities had to be reaffirmed several times following 11 November 1918. It would not be until the following year that a formal peace agreement would be reached when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919 (at the Palace of Versailles in France).

<sup>37</sup> The San Remo conference was preceded by the Conference of London in February of 1920, in which the leaders of Britain, France, and Italy met to discuss the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire.

Ottoman territories, namely, Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia. The exact boundaries were left to be defined later.<sup>38</sup> Despite these developments during 1920 and 1921, the transition to a new society in Palestine did not proceed smoothly. Numerous riots and fighting between Arabs and Jews occurred.<sup>39</sup> These led to the drafting of the Churchill White Paper of 3 June 1922.<sup>40</sup> The paper maintained Britain's commitment to the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and its promise of a Jewish national home in Mandatory Palestine, but it promised that Palestine would not become a Jewish State nor would Arabs be subordinated to Jews. Despite this attempt, much disagreement, debate, and ambiguity still remained . . . both in London and in Palestine. There could be no doubt that the British Mandate of Palestine would be a rocky road for travelling (and which ultimately proved to be a disastrous failure).

### *The British Mandate of Palestine*

On 22 July 1922—in keeping with the Sykes-Picot Agreement and more than two years after the San Remo conference—the relatively young League of Nations granted a governing “mandate” for the British administration of the territories of Palestine and Transjordan. Civil administration of Palestine began in July 1920, though the British Mandate did not officially begin until 29 September 1923 (following the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in July of 1923). The border between Palestine and Transjordan was defined, as well as the northern border with the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon.

Although the British Mandate did not establish a Jewish state as such, it did put into effect what had been declared in the Balfour Declaration of creating in Palestine a “national home for the Jewish people” alongside the Palestinian Arabs (the latter still being the vast majority of the local population). Shortly after the mandate for governing Palestine was entrusted to Britain, the first census was carried out by the British authorities on 23 October 1922.<sup>41</sup> At that time, the total population stood at approximately 757,182. Of this total, Arabs numbered roughly 590,890 (~78%), Jews 83,794 (~11.1%), Christians (mostly Arab) 73,024 (~9.6%), and a few minor groups the remainder (e.g., the Druze). The creation of separate Arab and Jewish states was not determined at this stage of development. The British government later confirmed that the words “in Palestine” found in the Balfour Declaration did not mean that the Jewish national home was intended to cover all of Palestine. Furthermore, the British administration of Transjordan was an entirely separate matter, and at the Cairo Conference of March 1921, it was agreed that Abdullah

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<sup>38</sup> A further attempt at defining the outcome for the Ottoman Empire was laid down with the Treaty of Sèvres, signed on 10 August 1920 in Sèvres, France. However, it was not ratified. Nevertheless, it marked the beginning of the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire, a humiliating experience for Turkey. The terms were finally concluded on 24 July 1923 with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne which officially resolved the conflict that had initially arisen between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied Powers.

<sup>39</sup> Particularly hostile conflicts included the 1920 Jerusalem riots from 4 to 7 April 1920 around the Old City of Jerusalem (also known as the 1920 Nebi Musa riots), and the Jaffa riots on May 1-7, 1921. These served as a foretaste of even greater hostilities that would take place during the British Mandate period from 1922 to 1948.

<sup>40</sup> The official title was “Palestine: Correspondence with the Palestine Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organisation.”

<sup>41</sup> A second census was carried out by the authorities of Mandatory Palestine on 18 November 1931. Aside from the 2,500 British forces stationed in the land, the total population stood at approximately 1,033,314 (an increase of about 36.5% since 1922). Of this total, Arabs numbered roughly 759,717 (~73.5%), Jews 174,610 (~16.9%), Christians (mostly Arab) 91,398 (~8.9%), and a few minor groups the remainder (e.g., the Druze).

bin Hussein would administer that territory under the auspices of the British Mandate.<sup>42</sup> The state of Jordan eventually became fully independent with the Treaty of London of 22 March 1946.

## CONCLUSION

The land once known as Ottoman Palestine is today comprised of Israel proper, the West Bank, and Gaza with a total population in 2026 of roughly 15.5 million people.<sup>43</sup> Of these, the Jewish population today numbers about 7.43 million—almost half the total population. It is rather remarkable to think that in 1800 (just after Napoleon’s invasion of Palestine) the Jewish population of the land stood at only 2.5%. Yet over the next 120 years, numerous events and developments combined that brought about the dismantling of Ottoman control of Palestine, finally culminating in the emergence of a Jewish homeland in that sacred territory.

Certainly, this cannot be attributed to a single cause. This paper has identified twelve significant events, developments, and movements over roughly 120 years that contributed to the Jewish people gaining a homeland of their own. Among these, the course of World War I and its immediate aftermath proved especially decisive. In particular, the Sykes–Picot Agreement of 1916 and the drafting of the Balfour Declaration in November 1917 stand out as crucial turning points. These, together with British military victories in Palestine, placed Britain in the leading position to shape what followed. After the League of Nations was established on 10 January 1920, Britain was authorized to administer the mandate over what had been Ottoman Palestine. In keeping with its commitment to the Balfour Declaration, a Jewish homeland in Palestine became an official reality when the British Mandate was approved on 22 July 1922. This did not mean that Palestine had become a Jewish state, for it was assumed that the details of Jewish–Arab coexistence in the land would be worked out in the years ahead. In the meantime, formal administration of the territory rested with the British.

As the next three decades unfolded, it became increasingly clear how difficult it would be to reach an acceptable solution. In November 1947, the United Nations proposed a partition plan—Resolution 181—to divide the land. Although the plan passed in the UN, it was never implemented because most neighboring Arab states refused to accept it. The British Mandate remained in effect until 14 May 1948, when British forces withdrew and the Jewish leadership—under David Ben-Gurion—proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel.

As one reflects on the events and developments from Napoleon to the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate, one would be remiss not to see the hand of God in the recovery of a homeland for the Jewish people. Some might call it remarkable, but it is nothing less than

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<sup>42</sup> Abdullah I bin Hussein (1882-1951) became the Emir of Transjordan and ruled from 11 April 1921 until his assassination in 1951. He was one of the sons of Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Mecca, who led the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire. On 24 April 1950, Jordan annexed the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), and the territory remained under Jordanian control until the 1967 Six-Day War when it was occupied by Israel. Finally, on 31 July 1988 Jordan severed its ties with the West Bank territory.

<sup>43</sup> Population statistics listed here are drawn from the World Population Review dataset and the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics.

miraculous—a testimony to God’s eternal purposes. The reassuring words of the ancient prophet Jeremiah blaze forth from the pages of Scripture:

<sup>35</sup> Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the Lord of hosts is His name: <sup>36</sup> “If this fixed order departs from before Me,” declares the Lord, “Then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever.”  
(Jeremiah 31:35-36)

To this, the New Testament echoes, “I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! . . . God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew” (Rom 11:1-2). They remain a vital part of God’s eternal plan, as the Apostle Paul further affirms: “Now if their transgression means riches for the world and their defeat means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full restoration bring?” (Rom 11:12; NET<sup>2</sup> Bible). We must understand that what has happened to Israel is only “a partial hardening” (not a permanent casting off) “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (Rom 11:25). As one studies the Scriptures, it becomes clear that the Jewish people must be present once again in their ancestral homeland for the final events leading to the second coming of Messiah Jesus to unfold. For this reason, the events from Napoleon to Balfour were no accident. God’s hand was orchestrating the details, creating first a homeland for the Jews in what had once been Ottoman Palestine, thereby setting the stage for the modern State of Israel and ultimately the second coming of the Lord Jesus.