

ESSAY # 175

BROKEN PROMISES

The Balfour Declaration is considered by many to be the seminal milestone in the creation of the modern nation of Israel. This assumption is widely accepted by Jews, Christians and even Arabs. Do the facts support the conclusion that Britain made a magnanimous, selfless show of support for the persecuted and oppressed Jewish masses, with every intention of assisting in the creation of a modern Jewish state?

On November 2, 1917, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Arthur Balfour, proclaimed on behalf of the British government the nation's commitment and intention to support and facilitate a homeland in Palestine for the 2,000-year, stateless Jewish people. At the time of Lord Balfour's public proclamation, Britain was involved in the very bloody Great War, World War I. The United States, still a fledgling nation in historic, European terms, avoided entry into this war for years, considering it a purely European matter. The predominant personal opinion of the majority of British officials, including the War Department, Colonial Office, and Foreign Office, was almost, if not completely, hostile to the Jewish people. They were intensely opposed to the creation of a modern Jewish state, especially in Palestine.

In light of such hostility in the key compartments of the British government, why did they ever permit the proclamation to be issued? In short, the negative voices were silenced. For one thing, the case was made among key British dignitaries that such a promise to world Jewry, as given in the Balfour Declaration, would create support in the American Jewish community. The "powerful American Jews," it was argued, would pressure their government to get involved in the European conflict. In fact, within six months of the public Balfour proclamation, the United States did enter World War I. Secondly, British officials obstinately opposed to assisting the Jewish people in any way, were also persuaded there would be many opportunities to obstruct, delay and even block the fulfillment of the stated intent of the proclamation. This would be accomplished through the time-honored tradition of "bureaucracy."

Upon the conclusion of the war, the victorious allies - primarily the British and the French - began to chop up the spoils of war. This included the vast land holdings of the Ottoman Turks, who had made the imprudent decision of siding with the losing Germans. The French coveted the land of Palestine, but the British cited the Balfour Declaration as the motivation and justification for Britain receiving this vast area. Besides, the French especially desired the area that was to become Syria. The parties agreed.

Thereupon, the British presented their case to the newly formed League of Nations, requesting the League to grant the Mandate (an International trusteeship), so Britain could implement the goals of the previously issued Balfour promise. Based upon this British commitment to the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, the League of Nations granted the "Mandate of Palestine," on July 24, 1922.

Meanwhile, back in Palestine, General Allenby and his British War Department staff had already begun to neutralize, dilute, and in every way possible, countermand the Balfour policy. Official communications sent from Palestine attempted to persuade the Home Office government to withdraw the Declaration. As the logic went, the war was over, the British were in control of Palestine, Egypt and Mesopotamia, and there was no longer a reason to follow through with the ill-advised Balfour promise.

Once the League of Nations granted the Mandate to Britain, all legal authority over Palestine passed to the anti-Jewish voices within the War Department, Colonial Office, and Foreign Office. This legal authority was used almost immediately to successfully obstruct and prevent any meaningful immigration of the millions of persecuted, and politically harassed, European Jews from entering Palestine. In 1939, on the very eve of WWII, and what was to become Hider's "final solution to the Jewish problem," the British government strictly exercised its Mandate authority. Britain set unbending limits upon Jewish immigration to Palestine of scarcely 10,000 persons per year for the upcoming, five-year period from 1940-45. This was the same period of time when over six-million European Jews would suffer slaughter at Hitler's hand. Even when confronted with proof of the mass exterminations, Britain adamantly refused to relax the barriers to entry for Jewish refugees.

Conclusion

- "British Balfour Declaration promises a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine.
- Britain requested, and was granted, a legal Mandate from the League of Nations in July 1922, over vast lands of the Middle East and Palestine. Its professed purpose was to fulfill the promise of the Balfour Declaration. For this reason, and this reason alone, the Mandate was granted by the League.
- The Mandate's authority was used instead as legal cover to obstruct, prevent and neutralize Jewish immigration to Palestine, and to delay indefinitely the implementation of the promised modern Jewish state. This ensured the designated Promised Land could not become a haven for refugees of Hitler's Holocaust.
- During the entire Mandate period, at no time did Great Britain ever set a date, time, or conditions for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.
- It took the British abandonment of the Mandate, and evacuation from Palestine, for the Jewish Nation to become a reality. Within hours of the final British evacuation, on May 14, 1948, the modern state of Israel was at last, realized.
- Britain's immigration policy prevented Jewish refugees from escaping Hitler to Palestine.
- At the time the League of Nations granted the Mandate, the sun never set upon the British Empire.
- Hitler relentlessly bombarded the British mainland, reducing London to rubble. Following the war, London had to be almost entirely rebuilt
- By the time of the British evacuation from Palestine, its worldwide Empire had been reduced to a mere shadow of its former colonial self.

Nations make promises and break promises as it suits them. This stands in |t to the Living and Eternal God, Who makes promises and keeps promises to the 10'000th generation.

Numbers 23:19-20 (NASB)

19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man that He should repent? Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

20 "Behold, I have received a command to bless; When He has blessed, then I cannot revoke it."

God made a promise to Abraham.

Genesis 12:2-3 (NASB)

2 "And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;

3 "And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

This promise is a two-edged sword: a blessing and a curse. Thank you for being on the right side of God's promises, and siding with the Jewish people. The Lord bless you from Zion.

[Jack Wasson is a 1979 summa cum laude graduate of the University of Texas at Arlington, with bachelors degrees in Modern European History, International Political Science and Psychology. He graduated in 1972 from Southwestern Assemblies of God Bible College, Waxahachie, Texas. He served as a military intelligence officer in the US Army. He is a member of the IMJA Administrative Committee.]

For further reading

Katz, Shmel. Lone Wolf: A Biography of Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky. New York, New York: Barricade Books, Inc. 1996. 2 volumes, 1,792 pages.

Collins, Larry and Dominique Lopicrre. O Jerusalem! New York, New York. Simon & Schuster. 1972. 566 pages.⁴