



# THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series E: General Alphabetical Files. 1960-1992

Box 87, Folder 3, Parkes, James, 1970-1972.

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY  
BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA 18015

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

October 12, 1972

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum  
The American Jewish Committee  
165 East 56th Street  
New York, New York 10022

Dear Marc,

A few days after I talked to you about the volume honoring James Parkes, I received a rather startling letter from Charlotte Klein indicating that David Kessler of Vallentine, Mitchell has moved in the direction of talking to Dr. Geza Vermes about perhaps publishing a special issue of The Journal of Jewish Studies in place of a book.

I enclose a photocopy of her letter, and of my reply, giving all the reasons why Roy and I find such a suggestion wholly untenable.

I don't know what implications this has for your suggestion that Zech Shuster talk to Mr. Kessler, as it sounds as if we may have to forget about Vallentine, Mitchell and seek an American publisher. Of course it would still be best if we can arrange for a British edition in addition to an American one.

Enclosed is the proposal, with the main points for consideration. The list of contributors is still essentially a working list, as I have assumed a publisher might wish to have some say about the final selection. The topics suggested are of a similar nature, since the authors must be consulted and a final balancing of various factors made. The subjects are not necessarily intended as titles, which should be as "punchy" as possible, of course.

If a further meeting about this seems necessary, please let me know and I will try to arrange a trip to New York.

With many thanks for your interest and help,

As always,

*Alice*

Alice L. Eckardt

ALE:tb

Proposal for a Festschrift for Dr. James Parkes

Dr. James Parkes has dedicated almost all of his adult life to learning about and helping others to understand the relations between <sup>the</sup> Jewish people and the non-Jewish societies in which they lived, and especially the relationships of Christians and Jews. He has been the pioneer in this endeavor, his own "voyage of discovery" blazing a trail that many Christians and scholars have since followed. He has inspired others to carry on the work not only of understanding the bases of the past unhappy relationships, but also of attempting to build a new and better one in the future. His own work remains unsurpassed in its originality and completeness.

For the foregoing reasons I propose that a volume honoring Dr. Parkes and his work be published as soon as possible. (He is now approaching his seventy-sixth birthday.)

Such a volume should honor Dr. Parkes by contributing to the present scholarship in the history and theology of Christian-Jewish relations, by attending to subjects of his concern as well as by a direct appreciation of his own contribution. Nothing would be more meaningful to Dr. Parkes than advancing the dialogue.

I propose a selection of significant figures and scholars, representing various countries and religious persuasions, who have made or are making noteworthy contributions to the area of mutual concern, and who have had a personal or scholarly acquaintance with Dr. Parkes. A working list is attached. A few individuals have already consented to write a chapter, and they are marked with an asterisk.

I suggest simultaneous publication in the U.S. and Britain, with attention also to sales in Canada and Israel. I would hope that a paperback edition could accompany a cloth edition in order to encourage the use of the book by classes and study groups.

## WORKING LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

John Pawlikowski - James Parkes - Pioneer in the Study of the  
(R.C., U.S.) Christian-Jewish Encounter

Krister Stendahl - The Covenant in Judaism and Christianity  
(Prot., U.S.)

Marcel Simon - The 'Old' and the 'New' Israel During the First  
(Jew., Fr.) Six Centuries

\*Charlotte Klein - Catholic Anti-Judaism in Modern Times  
(R.C., Gr. Brit.)

Alan Davies - Protestant Anti-Judaism in Modern Times  
(Prot., Can.)

\*Marc Tanenbaum - The Unknown Past: Positive Aspects of the  
(Jew., U.S.) Jewish-Christian Encounter

\*Uriel Tal - Uncovering the Roots of Modern Antisemitism in Germany  
(Jew., Is.)

\*Edward Flannery - The Injurious Results of the Separation of Church  
(R.C., U.S.) and Synagogue: observations on present alienation

Norman Cohn - The Persistence of Antisemitic Myths  
(Jew., Gr. Brit.)

Willehad Eckert - The Consequences of the Holocaust for Christianity  
(R.C., Ger.)

Emil Fackenheim - The Holocaust and the State of Israel  
(Jew., Can.)

Marce Dubois  
(R.C., Is.)

or

Douglas Young - The State of Israel: A Unique Meeting of Jews  
or and Christians

J. Schoneveld  
(Prot., Is.)

Roland deCorneille - 1967: A Testing of Dialogue  
(Angl., Can.)

H.D. Leuner - Jewish-Christian Relations in Western Europe Since  
(Prot., Gr. the Holocaust  
Brit.)

A. Roy Eckardt - Christian Theology about Jews and Judaism: The  
Dialectic in Past and Present

Terence Prittie - The Arab-Israeli Conflict as an in  
(?, Gr. Brit.) Christian-Jewish Relations

\*Franklin Littell - Particularism and Universalism in a Religious  
(Prot., U.S.) Perspective

Cornelius Rijk Implications  
or A Christian View of the Theological Dimensions  
Christopher Hollis of the State of Israel  
R.C.; Rome or Gr. Brit.)

R.J. Zwi Werblowsky - Eretz Israel, Diaspora Jews, and the Christian Community  
(Jew., Is.)

W.W. Simpson - An Annotated Bibliography of James Parke's Writings  
(Prot., Gr. Brit.)

\*Person has agreed to write a chapter.

No Eastern Orthodox scholar has been included in the list, mainly because I am not familiar with their work in this field or with their possible connection to James Parkes and his work. However, if someone meets these qualifications, he could be added.

This list was devised with a joint British-American readership in mind. It would be altered probably if our orientation were different.

Other persons one might consider include: Archdeacon Witton-Davis (Angl., Gr. Brit.), Marcel Dubois (R.C., Is.), Claire Huchet Bishop (R.C., U.S.), David Flusser (Jew., Is.), W.D. Davies (Prot., U.S.), Stuart Rosenberg (Jew., Can.), Manfred Vogel (Jew., U.S.), Bernard Blumenkranz (Jew., Fr.).

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# CJR

Study Centre for Christian Jewish Relations  
(Sisters of Sion)

17 Chepstow Villas London W11 3DZ Tel 01-727 3597

1st Oct. 1972

## AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

My dear Alice,

A real miracle has happened! Mr. Kessler has spoken to Dr. Geza Vermes - a scholar of world-renown and who owes James Parkes a lot and is a friend of his - and he would be ready to bring out something within the framework of The Journal of Jewish Studies, of which he is the editor, i.e. a sort of special number. One would have to discuss the how and when and who etc. I am just making an appointment to meet Dr. Vermes, who is at Oxford, and hear more of the details and show him your list and mine. I am sure a collaboration is possible. It would solve almost all, if not all, financial problems! Isn't it marvellous? I am sure if an American publisher would like to bring out something at the same time everyone would be pleased. I just wanted to let you know as much as I know as soon as possible and shall keep you informed of my meeting with Dr. Vermes, which - I hope - will take place within the next 10 days. - I have 2 harrowing weeks behind me. I "dared" to speak out against the pope's ruling of the position of women in the church and the papers and TV got me down as "Nun criticises Pope," - which is quite true! Only some of it happened to be a bit too sensational. I got the most awful poison-pen letters....

My love to you and Roy, shall write again soon,

Yours,

Charlotte

October 11, 1972

Marcuse Klein  
Centre for Christian Jewish Relations  
1050 St. Viate  
Montreal, Quebec H3B 1R2

Dear Dr. Plotte,

I have to respond to your enthusiastic letter with a cold-  
showering one, but I am afraid I must do so, as Roy and I are  
both quite stunned by all the ramifications of such a venture as  
you and Kessler now suggest. Let me tell you why.

1. Bringing out a special number of The Journal of Jewish  
Studies in honor of James may be a fine idea on some grounds, but  
not on the grounds of the undertaking we have been discussing. In  
fact, to use Roy's words, "it torpedoes the whole project." Let  
me quickly say that neither of us is thinking of my or our part in  
it when we make this judgment.

2. To honor James' work in this way would only bring to cul-  
mination the tragedy of James's life. As you know only too well,  
he has received almost no support or recognition from the Christian  
community over the years, except for isolated instances. A book of  
the type I envisage would hopefully win his work some belated and  
more widespread attention among Christian readers and foster con-  
tinued concern with those very matters he has been dealing with.  
But a special issue of a Jewish publication would do nothing of  
the kind. It would merely perpetuate the seclusion of it all within  
Jewish circles where it is already known and where, by and large, it  
is not needed.

3. Scholars are not honored by journal issues, but by hard  
cover Festschriften. To do otherwise with James would be an unin-  
tentional insult, I believe.

4. Such a specialized journal issue would have no impact at  
all on the continuation of scholarly work in the field among non-  
Jews, or on the widening of interest among students. These are  
certainly some of the reasons for doing such a collaborative study  
by people whose work has been influenced and even inspired by  
James's endeavors. A journal issue would never become a "text"  
for a class or study group, whereas a book might.

For all the above reasons, Roy and I could not accede to such  
a proposal, though of course we can have nothing to say about what  
Dr. Vermes does on his own. However, I must insist that my list and  
suggestions not be used in such a project, as I intend to pursue the  
matter further and see if I can interest another publisher in  
the original project. Roy and I talked with Marc Tanenbaum last

(before your letter arrived) and he is going to see if someone in ~~the~~ ~~area~~ may be able to help in this regard.

We also discussed to hear about your harrowing experiences with nasty letters. Roy has had some similar experience and knows how upsetting it can be. The only consolation is knowing that people one respects do not feel this way, and that those who write such letters are unworthy of respect.

Have a wonderful vacation in Israel. And don't let either the poison-pen letters, or the negative Eckardt letters spoil it!

With love from both of us,

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES

CC: Mr. David Kessler

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September 13, 1968

Judy Banki

Rabbi A. James Rudin

As you know, I will be attending orientation classes the week of September 16th. Fran Rosenberg has arranged for Dr. James Parkes to be interviewed on the CBS radio program, "The Worth of Religion". The taping is scheduled for Tuesday, September 17th, at the CBS News Studio, 524 West 57th Street at 3:30 P.M. The producer is Mr. Larry Nathan. I had promised Fran that I would escort Dr. and Mrs. Parkes to the studio, but I find now that I will be attending the orientation sessions. Would you be able to escort them? Thank you.

AJR:FM

c.c. Fran Rosenberg  
Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

JAMES W. PARKES

The Rev. James W. Parkes, M.A., D.Phil., Hon. D.H.L., is a Church of England clergyman who for nearly forty years has devoted his time to research into almost every aspect of the relations between the Jewish people and their neighbors. A Channel Islander, he was born in 1896. After four years at Oxford he became International Secretary of the Student Christian Movement. Then for several years he worked in a university organization in Europe where he became interested in the Jewish question. In 1935 the Nazis came to the conclusion that his knowledge was dangerous and tried to murder him in Geneva. He has traveled widely in America, Europe and Israel. He was President of the Jewish Historical Society of England in 1949-51, and was Charles W. Eliot lecturer at the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York in 1946-47.

He has also written under the pen name of John Hadham. He adopted this name because, as he explains, "He was already engaged in one very controversial subject as James Parkes, and he didn't want to get his controversies mixed." One of the most widely read books by "John Hadham" is Good God, which served as a source of inspiration to countless Englishmen during the Battle of Britain. Other books which he has written which pioneered and provided the scholastic foundation for the current reappraisal of Christian-Jewish relations in the past, present and future are:

Excerpts from address by Prof. James Parker, eminent British historian and pioneer in scholarship on relations between Judaism and Christianity, before meeting of Christian and Jewish scholars, held at the American Jewish Committee, Monday, September 16, 1968, sponsored by the AJC and the National Conference of Christians and Jews, co-chaired by Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee, and Dr. G. Arild Olsen, National Program Director, NCCJ.

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I came over here because of my concern with the dialogue between Jews and Christians. Any kind of dialogue which is genuinely based on mutual respect is better than no dialogue. But dialogue will only become creative, and really help the world to understand itself and its needs, when it is dialogue without any qualification between equals.

And that today seems when Christians, believing in the central Christian tradition of the incarnation, can accept the permanence and equality of the central Jewish tradition of the permanent value and continuous unfolding of the revelation of Sinai.

I do not believe that either replaces the other or can absorb the other. Their relationship is ~~not~~ intended by God to be creative tension between the two qualities of man, social being, and unique person in himself. The tension has been there in the past but it has been entirely destructive, and has not only led to the constant contempt of Judaism, but to the appalling evil of antisemitism. [The most monstrous recent example of how even latent antisemitism can affect the judgment of the Christian Churches has been their silence during those tense weeks of 1967 when the Arabs

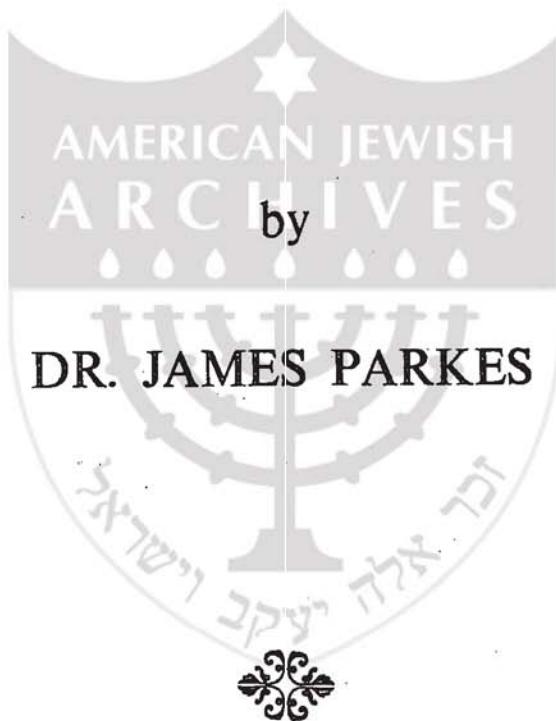
were threatening in speeches, broadcasts and even precise army orders to kill every Jew they could in Israel -- even though half the Jewish population of Israel have never lived anywhere except the Middle East and are as much indigenous as the Arabs themselves.

I am so concerned with the Christian-Jewish dialogue because I am convinced that the world will always need religion, but cannot be helped by a religion which is not contemporary and engaged on every front where good and evil are fighting. Today that fight is basically political, and the political record of Christianity is at best good ambulance work. And the reason for that is to be found in the conditions under which the Roman Empire made peace with the Church sixteen hundred years ago. In that peace the Church made a fundamental surrender from which she can only recover in dialogue with Judaism.

A stable society is based on two basic factors: persons and property. The Roman society was based on property, and that is the fundamental reason for the failure in political influence of the churches. But the community revealed by Judaism is based on persons. That is why Jews are so numerous and so influential in every movement for increased social justice and understanding.

Of course I do not mean that no Christians have been concerned with person, and no Jew with property, but in the political thought of the two religions, the Christian always saw himself ever against society, and the Jew, when the majority allowed him, saw himself transforming it. That is why the Christian today needs the dialogue with the Jew.

# ISRAEL IN THE MIDDLE-EASTERN COMPLEX



ANGLO-ISRAEL ASSOCIATION

## PREFACE

*It is difficult for a non-scholar to write a preface for anything written by Dr. James Parkes. Indeed I will not attempt it.*

*This pamphlet, coming as it does before the publication of the Dinner Brochure which will be devoted to modern Jerusalem in honour of Teddy Kollek, provides an historical background to the making of Israel, and to the understanding of the Balfour Declaration.*

*Many articles and many 'letters to the Editor' have appeared in the Press, which unknowingly or knowingly confuse the current reader. I thought, therefore, that this revised statement by an accepted scholar might throw light rather than emotion on a modern controversy and more particularly help members and friends to look at Israel sub specie aeternitatis or at least in historical perspective.*

*Finally, it gives me personal pleasure, towards the closing period of my stewardship to acknowledge the contribution that James Parkes has made over a long period to this Association and to the Jewish people.*

September, 1972

KENNETH LINDSAY

Further copies of this pamphlet may be obtained at 30p. Details of earlier publications in this series are to be found at the back of this pamphlet. All are obtainable from Research Publications Services Ltd., Victoria Hall, East Greenwich, London, S.E.10.

# THE ANGLO-ISRAEL ASSOCIATION

9 Bentinck Street, London W1M 5RP

Telephone: 01-486 2300

4th October, 1972

Dear Member,

The enclosed pamphlet written by Dr. James Parkes is one man's attempt to give the background of the present Israel-Arab conflict. Professor David Daiches writing recently in a letter to the Times (Sept. 14) after the Munich massacre said: "One can perhaps help a little toward a solution of this intractable problem by clearing away some of the myths." Later in his letter he appealed for a start to negotiations. "Isaac and Ishmael were brothers and their descendants must sooner or later recognize their relationship."

It is hard to reconcile these admirable statements by eminent scholars with the harsh and brutal facts of Palestinian Terrorism; but far more insidious is the anti-Semitism (rife in almost all Arab countries) which like a creeping disease has infected the so-called 'Arabists', holding important positions in this country. Thus it is not only the Terrorists, but the P.L.O. and its milder friends in London and Western Europe who are out to prevent any settlement by negotiation.

This Association, along with countless others, mourns the death of Dr. Ami Shachori. He spoke about agriculture to our Younger Group only a few months ago. The time has come for International Action; it would be encouraging to know that our Government was taking the lead.

We ask our own members to co-operate with us in presenting tickets of admission at the forthcoming Annual Dinner and subsequent occasions. This is a small matter, but important.

Yours sincerely,

Kenneth Lindsay  
Director

Encls. Pamphlet No.38

# ISRAEL IN THE MIDDLE-EAST COMPLEX



Published by THE ANGLO-ISRAEL ASSOCIATION

9 Bentinck Street, London, W1M 5RP

*Pamphlet No. 38*

September, 1972

## INTRODUCTORY

The area known today as the Middle East has these unusual characteristics. There is no other place on the surface of the globe where three continents meet geographically, where so many ancient civilisations meet culturally, or where politics have played so confusing and inadequate a role. It is a mosaic of peoples. It is the birth place of the three ethical Monotheisms which between them claim the allegiance of the majority of mankind. It possesses an overwhelming proportion of the producing oil-wells of the world. So many lines of communication pass through it that all the world powers manoeuvre for the control of its politics.

In the centre of this area, and an inextricable part of it, lies the country which up to 1948 was known as 'Palestine', though its area had corresponded to the frontiers of no state or even provincial administration for a millennium. Its identity was recognisable by Jews and Christians as 'the land of the Bible'.

There is no doubt whatever that Jews, Christians and Muslims, all have rights in Palestine. That is the correct way in which to phrase the complicated issue. The use of the Arabic language is a modern and deceptive basis for a judgement. To take a non-controversial example; the Armenian Church is not an Arabic-speaking Church, but it has unchallengeable rights in Jerusalem, where it possessed a place before the Arab conquest of the city. It still owns a substantial portion of it. A real judgement about the future can be founded only on an objective study of the history in which these different rights developed, and an equally objective examination of the contemporary period, to ascertain whether these rights are necessarily incompatible.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE MODERN PERIOD

The modern history of the country begins with the invasion of Syria in 1831 by Ibrahim, son of Mehemet Ali who was Pasha of Egypt since 1831 (confirmed by the Sultan only in 1805) Mehemet Ali was a remarkable character, an Albanian in origin, who ended by rebelling against his master, and setting out to modernise Egypt. In the circumstances of the time this inevitably meant opening his dominions to western influences, and Mehemet did this both in his pashalik of Egypt and in his new territory of Syria. This, at that time, included the whole of

Palestine and Lebanon as well as the present territory of the Syrian State.

Mehemet and Ibrahim welcomed representatives of political, archaeological and religious interests to Jerusalem. In the political field the British were the first to establish a consulate in the city. This they did in 1838, and they were soon followed by other European powers as well as by the USA. The mere presence of the consuls gave a certain protection to the minorities, Christian as well as Jewish. When the European powers forced Ibrahim to retire from Syria in 1840, the consuls remained and their presence obliged the returning Turks somewhat to amend the corrupt and incompetent rule with which they had hitherto been contented.

The activity of the consuls were anticipated by the enthusiasm of both the Churches and the archaeologists; and here also the return of the Turks was unable to close the doors. For the first time for many centuries it became relatively safe to travel through the country; and the result was, on the one hand, the opening of schools and hospitals by the western Churches and, on the other, the profound archaeological study of a country which was intimately entwined in Christian origins and history. The continuous presence of men and women of distinction in political, religious and scholarly fields meant that from the middle of the nineteenth century the land and peoples of Palestine were better known in Europe and the United States than almost any other country in western Asia or Africa.

#### 19TH CENTURY JERUSALEM

The new situation in Jerusalem, however, produced another quite different result. The American biblical archaeologist, Dr. Edward Robinson, calculated that in 1838 the city contained 4,500 Muslims, 3,500 Christians and 3,000 Jews. In 1872, a little over thirty years later, the 9th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (about as objective a witness as one could find) gives the figures as 5,000 Muslims, 5,300 Christians and 10,600 Jews. While better conditions had raised the Muslim population by a tenth, and the Christians by a half, the Jewish population had multiplied itself three and a half times and had just passed the combined total of the members of the two other religions.

To understand the reason for this disparity of growth is to understand the place of Jerusalem in the minds of Muslims,

Christians, and Jews. To the Muslims it was always unquestionably a holy city. Since it had had Muslim rulers for more than a millennium, its Muslim population can be fairly taken as representing the Islamic interest in it. There were not innumerable Muslims who had previously been restrained from living in it by the stagnation and the incapacity of Turkish rule. The Christian figures show that there had been previously an unsatisfied Christian interest. The addition probably represents primarily the interest of the western Churches, both in the city itself and in the members of the eastern Christian Churches. There was probably also an increase of pilgrims, coming from many parts of the Christian world, including especially Russia. But the immense jump in the Jewish figures requires its own explanation.

It is often claimed that the modern Jewish interest in the country and in the city of Jerusalem has been primarily due either to persecution elsewhere or to Zionist propaganda. It is, therefore, interesting that the year in which they are recorded as a majority, 1872, predates the emergence of modern antisemitism, and comes within the period in which the Jewish position everywhere seemed to be improving. It also predates the founding of any sort of Zionist organisation. It was, in fact, a spontaneous movement from the Jewish communities of east and west, evidence of the place which Jerusalem occupied in the Jewish heart and mind.

#### THE QUALITY OF JEWISH HISTORY: A PEOPLE LACKING GEOGRAPHICAL UNITY

Behind this special attitude to Jerusalem there lie two thousand five hundred years of Jewish history. For that is the length of time during which the Jewish people have been in the very unusual situation of possessing at least two geographical centres of cultural and spiritual dynamic. The origin of this strange destiny lies in events which took place in the sixth and fifth centuries before the Common Era.

The biblical kingdom of Judah was destroyed by the Mesopotamian empire of Babylon at the beginning of the sixth century. Thousands, including the leading citizens, were transported to Mesopotamia, not as slaves, but to minimise the danger of rebellion in a distant province. They were settled in fertile land, given substantial autonomy, and 'Babylonian Jewry' re-

mained an important cultural, religious and numerical centre of Jewish life until Mesopotamia was ravaged by the Mongols in the Middle Ages. Thereafter Babylonian Jews shared the stagnation of local life, but there was a substantial Jewish community in the area until 1948.

The Babylonian empire was destroyed by Persia in 538 BCE, and the Persian King allowed those Jews who wished to do so to return to Judea. Some hundreds, and finally some thousands, came back. Though the towns and villages were largely in ruins, and though the land was, in any case, less fertile than that which they had left, the Jews who returned gradually re-established both cultural and religious life in the ancient Homeland.

In the fifth century there returned to Jerusalem, with a new caravan of returning Jews, a religious genius, Ezra the priest; and it is with him that one can say that the Jewish people stabilised their curious role of having at least two centres where a vigorous cultural and spiritual dynamic existed simultaneously. For Babylonian Jewry was neither politically subordinate to Jerusalem, nor less productive of a vigorous Jewish life. It had created the worship of the synagogue and had begun the collection and editing of a canon of holy scriptures before Ezra and his companions decided to return to Jerusalem.

So far as the numerical centre of gravity of the Jewish people is concerned, it has never been in the Homeland since the biblical kingdoms were destroyed. It remained in the Middle East until the passing of effective political control of their empire from the Arabs to various Turkish tribes. In the dark age which followed, new centres of Jewish civilisation began to emerge in western Europe. Spain was still Islamic for some centuries and Spanish Jewry was one of the greatest and most productive communities in the whole of Jewish history. But new centres sprang up in Italy, in France and on the Rhineland while Christendom came to its full flowering in medieval Europe.

Christendom proved increasingly intolerant. Jews were more and more thrust out of their established communities in the west and concentrated in the eastern kingdom of Poland, where they enjoyed great prosperity until intolerance caught up with them again in the 17th and 18th centuries. The partition of Poland by Russia, Prussia and Austria brought the majority of them under the evil heel of Russia. But in the 19th century

emancipation brought new life to the small but prosperous communities of western Europe and created the immense community of the new world, the Jewry of the United States.

During the whole of this period the community of the Homeland, though it has passed through grievous vicissitudes, and though it has nearly always had indifferent and hostile foreign rulers, has a record of unbroken continuity. There has never been a time when there have been no Jews in the biblical 'Promised Land'.

It is important to realise this, because it is often said that after the war with Rome the Jews were totally dispersed and none were left in the Homeland. The evidence for Jewish survival is that, within less than a century of their total defeat and immense losses in Judea, the Jewish community in Galilee was so important that its head, the Patriarch, was regarded as one of the great officials of the eastern Roman empire. He continued to be so until the fifth century. Even then his degradation in 425 CE was more an exhibition of Christian prejudice than evidence of the disappearance of the Jewish community.

### THE UNIQUE ROLE OF THE HOMELAND

So tangled a history inevitably involved the people from time to time in a crisis which threatened their future identity and even survival. It was in these crises that the Jewry of the Homeland was always able to play the part which the genius of Ezra had initiated. Yet its external history would scarcely suggest such a destiny, since, in fact, on each occasion there was a contemporary community far larger, more cultured and more wealthy than itself.

### IT MEETS THE FIRST CRISIS: THE WORK OF EZRA

Convinced that the exile had been a just punishment for their disobedience to their divine calling, Ezra and his colleagues set out to turn the magnificent generalisations of the great prophets of the Bible into a way of life for a whole people. Instead of continuing to denounce idolatry, they introduced the congregational worship of the synagogue on every Sabbath and in every town and village where Jews lived. Instead of proclaiming that the time would come when all men knew the Lord God, they founded schools and introduced a programme of

national religious education. Instead of preaching a remote utopia when justice would be universal, they spent infinite pains on the administration of the law courts. So one could go on, for the Judaism which they initiated is not primarily a metaphysic but a pattern of daily living, not for the priesthood nor the professionally pious, but for a whole people.

Such a task naturally took more than the life-time of a single generation. But its fulfilment established the pattern of subsequent centuries, that, when there is need of a new initiative to ensure Jewish survival in the Dispersion, it is from Jerusalem and the Homeland that it has come.

The centuries which followed Ezra were obscure and peaceful in the Homeland. When it emerged again into prominence it had become politically a Syrian province, and the Syrian King, Antiochus Epiphanes, tried to suppress Judaism.

It was ordinary Jews, men and women, who refused to obey his edict and the consequence is described in one of the noblest and most pathetic passages in the Jewish story: "Howbeit many in Israel were fully resolved and confirmed in themselves not to eat any unclean thing. Wherefore they chose rather to die, that they might not be defiled with meats, and that they might not profane the holy covenant: so then they died." (I Maccabees 1: 62 f.)

#### IT MEETS THE SECOND CRISIS: THE SCHOLARS OF JABNE

Though Jewry survived it, yet the crisis which resulted from their double defeat by Rome, in 70 and 135 CE, struck at the very roots of Jewish life. It destroyed not only their political, but their religious hierarchy, and left the people with no centre of their national life.

The story of Ezra repeats itself. Though in Alexandria and Babylon were two communities which had not been involved in the war and were very much richer and more numerous than the community of the Homeland, it was the Judean rabbis, working at Jabne, who carried on the work of Ezra and secured the future both of the people and of its religious heritage.

The scholars of Jabne took the way of life evolved by Ezra and his successors and laid on every Jewish community the

responsibility for its performance. They created a decentralised way of life for a completely decentralised nation. They proclaimed that genuine repentance equalled all the propitiatory sacrifices in the Temple; they left the priesthood only the privilege of uttering a special blessing; they made all their worship congregational, and the leadership of each community an oligarchy of laymen. The rabbi was neither priest nor president, but the expert and guide.

Their task performed, the leadership of the people passed to the dispersion and, before they were called on again for their work of rescue and guidance, important changes had taken place in the Homeland.

### THE EMERGENCE OF CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

In the first place the new daughter religion of Christianity had come into separate existence, and had defined its relationship to the land of its birth. In the beginning it expected an immediate end to the Age and had little interest in geography. Jerusalem was a bishopric, but it was subordinate to the archbishopric in the Roman capital of Caesarea, which in turn was subordinate to the Patriarch of Antioch. Interest in the sites where Jesus had lived, preached and died, developed only in the fourth century, under Constantine, the first Christian emperor. The importance which the country then assumed had nothing to do with the hierarchical structure of the Church or with any primacy of theological scholarship. It was venerated as a unique centre of pilgrimage, as much the possession of the most distant Christians in Britain as of the nearest in Asia.

With the emergence of Christianity, and especially when it became a dominant faith, doubtless many of the mixed population of the country, Greek and Roman as well as Jews, became Christian, and the Jewish percentage dwindled. In the seventh century Islam appeared and yet another religion came to venerate a special relationship to the land, and especially to Jerusalem.

For Muhammad himself, though politics dictated the transfer of the centre of Islam to the city of Mecca, Jerusalem remained possessed of a unique sanctity. When he first proclaimed his faith, it was towards Jerusalem that he directed that his followers should face when at prayer. Later, in what he considered a supreme moment of his career, his ascent to heaven, he placed

the site of the event in the Temple area of Jerusalem—at a Jewish shrine in a Christian city. Later, of course, it became the venerable Muslim shrine of the Haram ash Sharif and Al Aksa mosque, but that was after the death of the prophet.

Though, with the coming of Islam, Palestine became the home of three religions, it must not be thought that its story can be conveniently divided into a Jewish period, a Christian period and a Muslim period. That is true only of its government. The people have remained basically the same throughout. Naturally, as it is sited at the cross roads of the ancient world, the meeting place of three continents, it has never in all its long history had a completely stable population. Movement of peoples began long before there were historians to record it. And the same is true of the religious story. While a Jewish king sat on the throne, the less enthusiastic pagans in due course became Jews by religion. Some centuries later the less enthusiastic Jews became Christians under similar circumstances. Finally the less enthusiastic Jews and Christians repeated the pattern—with the additional argument for the change that, while there was very generous toleration of their previous religion, the member of the government-sponsored faith was largely freed from paying taxes. There is, therefore, a continuous Jewish, and a continuous Christian, history of the country after the government became Islamic.

The Arab political control of the country had already passed to Turkish adventurers when the Jewish community was called on for the third time to exercise its special function. It was a period when, as already described, the centre of gravity of Jewish life was passing from the western Asiatic world to Islamic Spain or Christian western and southern Europe. Islamic Spain prolonged the good relations between Jews and Muslims which had existed during the period of Arab rule. Christian Europe posed a new problem.

#### IT MEETS THE THIRD CRISIS: THE MASORETES OF TIBERIAS

The rabbinic way of life, while its ultimate authority was the Bible, was codified in the second century CE in a work entitled *The Mishnah* (study). But a way of life allows of, indeed demands, endless definition and explanation. For example, the

Bible forbade work on the Sabbath. But what is 'work'? So the Mishnah in turn became the subject of endless commentaries, collected together in *The Talmud* (teaching), which then itself became the subject of further commentaries.

But when the Jewish centre of gravity passed from Islam to Christendom, it was the Bible which returned suddenly into prominence. For the Muslim, the Quran had completely replaced the Jewish scriptures. For the Christian they had remained sacred, and constituted '*The Old Testament*'. In and around the tenth century a group of Jewish scholars, living obscurely at Tiberias, set out to recover an authoritative text of the Bible. They cannot have known how essential their work was to be; but within a couple of centuries it formed the basis of an important school of Biblical commentators in Northern France who won the respect of Christian theologians and played an important part in Jewish-Christian relations. These scholars of Tiberias are known as *Masoretes* (meaning uncertain, but probably 'traditionalists') and Jewish and Christian students to-day still base their work on 'The Masoretic text' of the Old Testament.

### THE DECLINE OF MEDIEVAL PALESTINE

Between the period of the *Masoretes* and that of the crusaders the country was ruled by a succession of military adventurers and presented a sad picture of decline. The centre of power was sometimes in Syria, sometimes in Egypt, sometimes even further away. As one can expect in such a situation, the minorities, Jewish and Christian, suffered most but life for the Muslims in town and village, though they now probably formed the majority of the population, was little better.

The period of the crusaders was, after initial massacres of both Jews and Muslims, one of prosperity for members of both religions. The crusaders needed the food they grew and Jewish villagers fared better than Jewish townsfolk. Though some skilled artisans were able to establish themselves once more in Jerusalem, the main strength of the Jewish community was still in Galilee.

The crusading kingdom lasted less than a century in Jerusalem, and for the next three hundred years the country was increasingly misruled from Egypt. To prevent raids from Christian Europe, the whole coast was left desolate and became malarial swamp

alternating with encroaching sand dunes. The towns were stagnant and the villages increasingly exposed to raids from the bedouin. But in 1517 the Turks conquered both Syria and Egypt and established Turkish rule which lasted up to the first world war and the British conquest in 1917.

During the sixteenth century Turkey was the most highly organised empire in the world. It was a profound tragedy for Eastern Europe as well as for western Asia that internal faults in its very inelastic structure brought it so quickly to a state of inextricable corruption and decline. The sixteenth century, which saw Turkey at its zenith, saw the Jewish people of Christendom enduring calamity after calamity. Harried or expelled from almost every centre of northern and western Europe, their one prosperous community was in Poland. In Spain an increasingly powerful and intolerant Church had replaced Muslim tolerance in the fourteenth century and, at the end of the fifteenth century, decreed compulsory baptism or departure for the whole Jewish population. The result was a number of insincere 'conversions', which remained for centuries an acute Spanish problem, and a mass flight, largely directed towards the enlightened dominions of the Turkish Sultan.

#### IT MEETS THE FOURTH CRISIS: THE MYSTICS OF SAFED

A leading Spanish Jew, Joseph Nasi, who was born a 'Christian' and resumed his Judaism after his flight from Spain, became a favourite of the Sultan and was given a lease of a wide area around Tiberias with the idea of founding there an autonomous Jewish community where refugees from Europe could build new lives. For various reasons the plan failed, but the improved conditions of the time led to a wave of Galilean prosperity of which the main beneficiary was the hill town of Safed. There, for the fourth time, the Palestinian community made a vital contribution to Jewish survival at a time when almost everywhere else Jewish life seemed in the doldrums, doldrums which the prosperous Polish community was soon to enter. More than three hundred years of poverty, persecution and ultimately flight, lay before that community, centuries in which the work of the Jews of Safed provided essential illumination and escape.

The first came from the success of a Safed rabbi, Joseph Caro, in introducing order and clarity into the complexity into which rabbinic scholarship had inevitably been drawn by centuries on centuries of commentary on commentary. The second came from a Safed mystic, Issac Luria, who took an ancient and obscure strain of theocentric mysticism and turned it into a popular movement which provided joy and illumination to the Jews of Safed and was in the following centuries to provide a world of escape for the seemingly endless Polish-Russian night. For Safed provided the inspiration of Chassidism.

As already said the Turkish splendour was soon obscured, and the Jewry of the Homeland, after its brief noon, passed into an obscurity made deeper by one of the most tragic episodes in Jewish history, the dramatic appearance in their midst, in the middle of the 17th century, of a false messiah, Shabbetai Zvi. For a time he persuaded thousands of Jews, in Europe as well as in the East, that their deliverance was at hand. He set out for Constantinople, where he promised that he would be recognised by the Sultan. Instead he was offered Islam or the bowstring—and he chose Islam.

### IT MEETS THE FIFTH CRISIS: THE COMING OF ZIONISM

So we come back to the picture already given, of the sudden and spontaneous return of Jews to Jerusalem between 1838 and 1872. In the latter year the figure was 10,600. By the end of the century the Christian figures had a little more than doubled; the Muslim had risen by about a third, but the Jewish figure had reached 30,000, and five years later 40,000. But now vision and organisation had been added to the spontaneous desire to live in the Homeland. The Zionist organisation was actively in existence, though technically it was forbidden by the Sultan for a Jew to settle in the ancient territory of his people. All other provinces were open to him, but they held no attraction. Better to be in Zion illegally than to enjoy the approval of the Turkish government elsewhere in the wide empire.

The Zionist movement was the product of two developments in the dispersed Jewish people, of whom the immense majority were in Tzarist Russia until the flight to the West began after 1881. The first development was the return of antisemitism,

a product of the battle of the old ruling classes against the new industrialism and the new urban development, as well as of the Church against the rise of secularism. Church and landowner combined to make the Jews the scapegoat of their anger. Little seen in Britain or America, it was powerful in Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary and—which shocked the Jewish people more than anything else—in the France of the Third Republic, France the pioneer of emancipation.

The second cause was this same emancipation and its consequences. Scattered through a thousand ghettos, the Jewish people had preserved their unity. The Talmud was their ‘portable Homeland’; one way of life identified Jewry from China to Peru. But as small but powerful groups of Jews became citizens in modern democratic countries, as they fell with enthusiasm and excitement on the opportunities now opening to them in a rapidly expanding industrial and cultural world, the old unity of Jewry was inevitably broken. The Judaism of the ghetto appeared ill-suited to the salons of London and Paris. Reform was in the air, for religion as much as for politics. Judaism, instead of being the uniting force of a dispersed people, became the divisive force of a people conscious of the extreme differences that existed within it.

There had always been a deep and unusual link between religion and people within Jewry. It had been founded two thousand five hundred years earlier in the unity of Babylon and Jerusalem. Now that *religion* was failing as a bond of unity, Zionism emerged calling for the unity of Jewry as a *people*, a unity expressed in a return to the ancient Homeland. Needless to say, in organisational forms Zionism turned out to be far from being a uniting force. But in Jewish self-consciousness it made its way steadily as tragedy was piled on tragedy after the first glory of emancipation had faded.

This is the background of the Balfour Declaration. And for the fifth time the community of the Homeland proved that it had not lost its ancient responsibility. European Jewry could provide leaders and know-how. American Jewry could provide funds; but it was the community of the Mandate and of Israel which provided a new home, first for those who were able to escape from pre-war Hitlerite Germany and then for the survivors of the Holocaust. In both cases it was the new feeling of spiritual security which was probably even more important than the

physical safety which Zionism had been able to build up by its activity.

### THE BALFOUR DECLARATION AND THE MANDATE

The British government which issued the Declaration in 1917, giving their support to the conception of "a Jewish National home in Palestine" and embodying the approval in the text of the Mandate, was not acting in ignorance of the facts. It had had intimate connections with the country of the most varied kinds for eighty years. It knew that there was an abundance of room for further population. It had deliberately left vague the development of relations between the older, mainly Muslim, inhabitants and the new settlers; but in approving the phrase a "national home in Palestine" and not "Palestine as a national home", it intended to safeguard the rights of the rest of the population.

Why then did it fail so disastrously? We can dismiss the idea that the British deliberately ignored the existence either of the non-Jewish population or of their ambitions. But they were faced with a problem which had no obvious solution and, in a typically British way, they left it to time to solve.

### THE PROBLEM OF IDENTITY

In a nutshell the problem was that the terms so familiar to Jews and Christians—"Palestine", "the Holy Land", or "the Promised Land"—had no existence in Muslim thought or tradition. The territories included in the Mandate make that abundantly clear. Any Jew or Christian, looking at a map, can identify the area of the British Mandate as approximately coinciding with the map in his Bible. But mandatory Palestine was carved from a bit of the Vilayet of Damascus, a bit of the Vilayet of Beirut, the independent Sanjak of Jerusalem, and an area around Gaza and the Negev which belonged to none of these. That is why, in the Balfour Declaration, the majority of the inhabitants are designated simply as those who were not Jews. To have described them as 'Palestinians' would have meant nothing to them.

In the same way, just as the Jewish and Christian holy land had no corresponding Muslim identification, so also it had no Muslim history. There was an Arab province of Filistin, but

its frontiers were not those of the Holy Land or Palestine, and had no special significance and in any case it had never had an independent existence or ruler. It had always been part of a territory whose centre was elsewhere. In consequence the 'non-Jewish population', whether it was Muslim or Christian, whether it was Arabic, Armenian, Greek or other in language, began by feeling itself part of some other unit than the Palestinian. There was no Palestinian loyalty which could draw it above family and local feuds, or unite it in pursuit of a single destiny.

### ERRORS OF INEXPERIENCE

The Zionists, and the propaganda which they issued throughout the Jewish world, were equally unfortunate from the stand-point of winning the co-operation of the non-Jewish population. If they had based their case on their continuity of residence and on the wrong impression created by their small numbers at the time of the Declaration, they would have had a common ground for discussion, even if their claims had been disrupted point by point. But—and this was natural enough—their real excitement was that they were recreating a normal peoplehood destroyed nearly two thousand years earlier. Even today Israeli propaganda is constantly making use of that disastrous phrase—"we have returned after two thousand years". That is exciting for an Israeli, but as the basis for a political claim its validity involved too complex and unusual an argument to be convincing elsewhere.

The second mistake made by Zionist spokesmen was to emphasise the legal authority of the Declaration and the Mandate. Again it was a natural mistake. For centuries, whether in Christendom or in Islam, Jewish settlement had always depended on some special legal authority or charter. That they were in Palestine "as of right and not on sufferance" was inevitably a phrase very dear to Jewish hearts. But legal rights have played no special role in the history of the rest of the population. When the Zionists were prepared to discuss everything "provided they accepted the Balfour Declaration", they were asking the Muslim or Christian neighbour to accept in advance exactly what he desired to challenge.

These were immense misfortunes for the non-Jewish population. But they were not 'injustices' deliberately thrust upon them; and the final misfortune has been the 'pro-Arab' propa-

ganda which has deluged the world since 1917 with a completely false picture of the real problem. The situation in 1917 was, obviously, not the consequence of deliberate action by the majority then alive. It was the result of centuries of a history which had reduced the minorities to a number greatly below what it would have been had there been no oppression and no stagnation. Had there been as many Jews in Palestine as there were Christians in Lebanon, there would have been no problem of principle involved in the Balfour Declaration, whatever bargaining there had been over details. The fact that Jews were reduced to a few tens of thousands by the beginning of the modern period, did not make their increase, once Turkish corruption and incompetence had been removed, into an 'imperialist intrusion'. What would have been unjust would have been a situation where the arrival of newcomers made the original inhabitants unable to continue and develop side by side with them. But this did not happen, for during the whole period of the Mandate, the 'Arab' population not only maintained itself, but showed an increase by immigration from neighbouring countries.

The national identity of the 'non-Jewish' population was made more difficult by the British creation of the amirate of Transjordan. As a geographical entity, Palestine stretched naturally from the Mediterranean to the desert. It was wholly unprecedented and unnatural to make the Jordan into a political frontier. Though it was certainly not intended to be an injustice it did, in fact, make the position of the inhabitants of what is now known as 'the West Bank' more difficult and their identification more problematic. It reduced the number of Muslims and Christians who had to consider a possible danger to their identity from the increasing presence of the Jews; and it very much reduced the area within which their future development could take place. Jewish competition seemed much more dangerous, Jewish demands much more intolerable, when set against a land deprived of the great empty spaces of Transjordan and a population which they saw reduced to a minority in their Homeland by the continuous Jewish immigration from Europe.

### CONCLUSION

Such problems would have demanded great statesmanship in any continent and to any people. They inherited a crowning misfortune from past centuries that their alien rulers, Mamluk

and Turk, had denied the native people of Palestine any opportunity to acquire political experience, an adequate educational system, or the necessary social development which would have made them at home in the twentieth century and masters of the problems which the whole region had to face if it was to reawaken the glories of more than a thousand years earlier. In fact the people failed to produce any leader during the mandatory period who was able to meet the needs of the time. It was as unreasonable for them to demand complete control of the future of the country, as it would have been to deny them any share in it. But all proposals for a gradual devolution of responsibility met with a refusal to compromise and the end of the mandate found the Muslim population as far from a realistic assessment of how to meet their responsibility for their future as they had been at the beginning. They were still demanding terms that would have been completely unjust to the Jewish population.

It is not a situation which can be met by blaming one side or the other. It would have been unreasonable to expect the Jews to accept a continuation of their past rightlessness as to expect the Muslims to produce political super-men. And both sides had to consider the situation of a third party, the Christians, western as well as eastern. Today, out of years of frustration and misery, a Palestinian consciousness has begun to emerge and it would be tragic if it were not able to reach a fruitful fulfilment to a long and frustrating journey.

It is still too soon to prescribe the form which the new sense of a Palestinian destiny should assume. But, whatever the details, it will not succeed unless it accepts the basic characteristic of the Land; and the same is true for the Israelis. A cross road can never belong exclusively to a single community. A true solution will see the Muslim tradition, the Christian tradition, and the Jewish tradition, each master of its own house, but each conscious of the presence of the other as a neighbour with whom it is an enrichment to co-operate.

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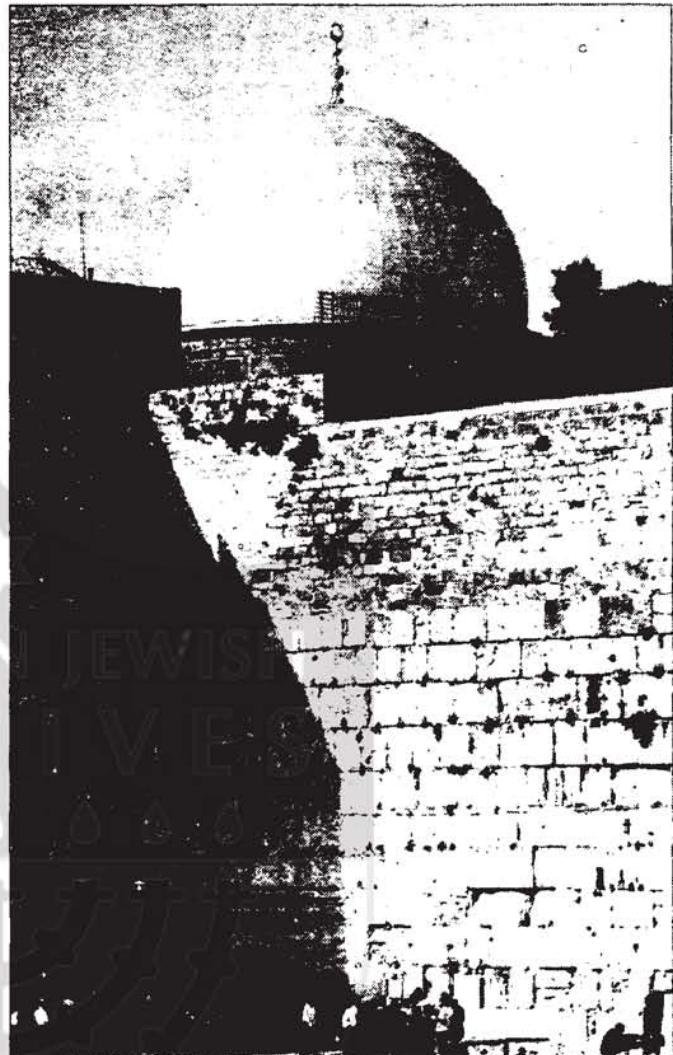
# The Palestinian Jews: did someone forget?

James W. Parkes

Dr James W. Parkes, distinguished church historian, examines Palestinian history from the time of Massada to the Arab dispersion in 1948 and presents his conclusions on the part played by Palestinian Jews before the Balfour Declaration in 1917.

In 1946 my wife and I spent three months in Palestine, and I asked so many historical questions, to which I could not get a satisfactory answer from anyone, that I came home and spent the next couple of years in writing the history of Palestine from 135 to 1948. For this task I had three assets. Firstly, I was not personally involved in the issue. I was concerned equally with the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims. I had no *parti pris*. Advocacy of the Zionist programme had not been part of my concern. Secondly, I was as much a theologian as a historian, and again was concerned with the whole theological background, Jewish, Christian and Islamic. Thirdly, as a historian I was concerned with the whole of Jewish history, so that any discoveries I made about Palestinian Jewish history found an inevitable background in my knowledge of Jewish history outside Palestine at the time with which I was concerned.

It was because, with such a background, I was determined to present objectively the relation of the different religions and peoples involved that I began to scrutinize very carefully the commonplace statement that "Palestine was the home of the three monotheisms". It was soon clear that the relationship of each monotheism was *sui generis*, and this involved detailed study of each relationship in its own terms. For Christians, for example, Palestine has never had any primacy either in the development of Christian theology or in the hierarchy of Christian institutions.



TWO CULTURES: *the Dome and the Wall*

It was only in the course of this study that the uniqueness of the Jewish relationship and its amazing quality became clear. I did not acquire the idea ready made from any previous writer. Indeed, it was quite natural that Jews themselves had never questioned and analysed the precise constituents of their relationship to the Land of Israel. One does not analyse what one has always taken for granted.

It was only when the Jewish primacy in interest was challenged by Arab nationalism and its supporters that the *quality* of the Jewish relationship became a matter of supreme significance; and by that time, the argument from legality, so strong in Jewish minds because of Jewish history, has assumed unchallengeable authority in Zionist and Israeli publicity.

There is a second, more academic, reason why this aspect was never treated in depth at the time of the discussion leading up to the Balfour Declaration. East European Jewry, Jewish mysticism and oriental Jewry, tended to be seen through the west European, strongly rationalist eyes of Heinrich Graetz whose authority as a Jewish historian was supreme. While many specialist articles existing before 1914-1917 are quoted in my bibliography (*History of Palestine* pp. 366, 370, 371) these are not enough by themselves to give a complete picture.

Finally, the indigenous Jewry of the Land at the end of the nineteenth century was not of such a physical or spiritual

attraction that it would occur to a Zionist viewer that it embodied an essential clue to Jewish history and survival. It is a characteristic of the picture I have drawn that on each vital occasion the contribution of Palestine Jewry was exactly geared to the special needs of its time.

Now Jewry has always been an indissoluble unit of people and religion. In the period of Zionism it was the indissolubility of the Jewish people which was vital, and in that perspective the pre-Zionist nineteenth century Jewry of the Land was a tragic irrelevance. It would certainly have been incapable of providing either the spiritual or the physical dynamic for the Jewry of the epoch of modern antisemitism, Nazism and the Holocaust.

In one way this was not a novelty. The Jews of sixteenth century Safed were immigrants as much as the nineteenth century Zionists. In the past the Jewry of Palestine has needed continual renewal from the diaspora, not because "Jeshurun had waxed fat and kicked", but because so many others had kicked Jeshurun that finally, like a hermit crab, he had had to retire into a shell which was not natural to him. Today and tomorrow I am sure that the indissolubility of Israel and Diaspora is of basic importance for the spiritual and cultural well-being of both.

This is the unique part played by the Homeland in Jewish history: from the time of the Babylonian Exile, in the sixth century before the Common Era until today, the Jewish people has maintained a consistent pattern, demographically and spiritually. Demographically it has spread to every accessible continent; spiritually it has received nourishment from many civilizations; many influences have flowed into its life stream; but *every renewal in time of crisis has come, not from the Dispersion, but from the Jewry, however impoverished and diminished, of the Homeland, the Land of Israel.*

That there have been crises of unusual severity in the life of the Jewish people is the inevitable result of their unique position. During the whole of the two and a half millenia in which a substantial proportion of the people lived as minorities among other cultures, religions and peoples, it has been a voluntary act for a Jew to remain a Jew. The majority was always prepared to receive him, and often rewarded him for his desertion of his ancestral faith. Since the end of the Second Jewish Commonwealth in 135 of the Common Era, the same has been true also of the Homeland. It is, of course, true that the choice was not presented every day or to every Jew and Jewess. But at some time in the life of every intelligent Jew the question must have arisen in his or her mind: Is it worthwhile to go on with all the disadvantages of a minority status? To continue to face discrimination, persecution and even the threat of massacre? It is not surprising that the history of Jewry contains periods of desperate crisis. Its fascination lies in the variety and skill with which those crises were met.

## **RELIGION WITH A DIFFERENCE**

The first crisis, of course, was the challenge offered by Cyrus when he permitted those peoples who had been deported from the frontiers of the Babylonian empire to return to their homelands. Jews were not the only people affected, and there was apparently no compulsion. It would be fascinating to know what the response of others was.

In any case, the offer made to the Jews was not an offer of a better life: far from it.

The lands in which they were settled in the lower Euphrates were rich and fertile, amply sufficient for their needs. They were in the midst of a great trading empire with many economic opportunities open to them; they were practically autonomous; and they had evolved a religion which was at once novel and completely appropriate to their needs: the Sabbath worship of the synagogue.

Moreover, to stay in Babylon did not involve forgetting their past, for the original deportees had taken with them all that they could gather of their historical and religious literature. It was in Babylon that they had sifted and edited it. The land of Israel could have remained a sentimental memory, as is Great Britain to millions who can look back to many generations in the United States or the Dominions. And yet enough came back to re-establish a substantial people in and around Jerusalem.

It was in Jerusalem that the pattern for the future was established; and the essential element added to what Babylon had created. It was this that ensured the creative survival of the Jewish people. Ezra and his successors took the synagogue and the Scriptures from Babylon. They added regular and nation-wide religious education and the regular training of competent teachers.

In the Bible itself the teaching of the whole nation is ascribed to the good kings Jehoshaphat and Josiah by the Chronicler (*II Chron. 17: 7-9 and 35: 3*); but it is significant that neither of these passages has any parallel in the earlier account of the activities of these kings in the Book of Kings (*1 Kings 22: 41-46 and II Kings 23, 21-23*). It is therefore probable that the Chronicler has anticipated a post-exilic event, and that the regular educational programme followed the solemn reading of Torah by Ezra (*Nehemiah 8: 1-8*) in which it is emphasized that the reading was followed by explanation: "they gave the sense so that the people understood the reading".

The educated Jewry prepared by Ezra and his successors proved its value in the persecution initiated by Antiochus Epiphanes. It was not the Temple hierarchy, but ordinary men and women who prepared to fight and die for their faith. The Maccabean martyrs mark a new epoch in the history of human courage. For the first time religion had become something in the daily life of a nation for which the supreme sacrifice was willingly made (*I Macc. 1*).

## **CHURCH AND TEMPLE**

The next challenge to the survival of the Jewish people was the most severe of all. It followed the destruction, first of the Temple and its national liturgy, then of the whole judicial and political hierarchy, resulting from the two disastrous wars with Rome. At that period there were two great Jewries outside Eretz Israel.

The largest and wealthiest was at Alexandria, and, though they suffered some disturbances during the period of the first war with Rome, they were more powerful than the Jewry of Judea. The second Jewry was that of Babylon. Outside the Roman Empire, it was untroubled until the Emperor Trajan invaded their country in the second century, and the Babylonian Jews rose against him, and suffered for their sympathy with their Judean brethren.

So far as we know, neither of these Jewries made essential

in Jerusalem; and there were Jewish centres east of the Jordan, and even nomads who practised Judaism.

Half a millennium passed before the challenge to the survival of Jewry came to them again. Meanwhile the Jewry of Babylon had completed the Talmud. For several centuries the authority of the Babylonian Jewish communities and academies was recognized throughout the Jewish world. When the Abbasid Caliphate lost its authority to successive Turkish mercenary leaders, and Jewish life declined, the Jewry of the western caliphate in Spain was at the height of its prosperity. It began to assimilate the philosophy of Greece, which the rabbis had rejected in its Alexandrian form nearly a thousand years previously; and it laid the foundations of Hebrew grammatical studies, largely influenced by contemporary Arab grammarians.

## THE CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT

The magnificent achievements of Jews in Babylon and Spain had two basic limitations. The *Talmud* crowned the *Mishnah*, and commentaries crowned the *Talmud* in endless succession, withdrawing essential Judaism from the masses and confining it too closely to the scholars who alone could keep abreast of the subtleties of their fellows. And at the same time even Aramaic, which had replaced Hebrew, was being replaced by Arabic as a vehicle of independent Jewish intellectual activity.

Not merely poems were written in Arabic, but the philosophy of Saadiah Gaon was composed in that language, and later Maimonides also employed Arabic in his writings. The task which fell to the Jewry of the Homeland was to take all that had been done to expound the holy text of scripture itself, and by systematic editing and elucidating recall the people to their most precious possession in the Bible.

This was the work of the Masoretes of Tiberias, and to them is owed also the system of representing vowels by appropriate points. How efficiently they did their work we are today in a better position to recognize than were the scholars even of the last generation. For the Dead Sea Scrolls have given us texts a thousand years earlier than the oldest Masoretic manuscripts. There are variants, of course, but in essence the texts agree.

During the same period, the most obscure in Jewish institutional history, when the authority of the Babylonian academies had been lost, and Egypt was not ready to take over the leadership, a shadowy academy of Gaon Jacob came to rest from Babylon in Galilee, to disappear during the crusades at Damascus. It was the last expression of Jewish unity. For, with the Masoretes, the emphasis passes from the Jewries of the East to those of Europe. The main beneficiaries of their work were the European Jewish scholars of the Bible of whom the greatest was Rashi in northern France.

The scene shifts completely. The leading environment is no longer provided by Islam but by Christianity. Islam had drawn from rabbinic sources its system of commenting on the Scriptures in the Hadith—the science of tradition. But Islam and Judaism did not share the Scriptures themselves. Now patristic and rabbinic commentaries were as different as they could be. But the two religions shared a single Bible, even if Christianity had added a New Testament which Jews did not accept.

In spite of all the horrors of medieval persecution, whether from Church or State, Christian reverence for the Hebrew scholarship of the rabbis was unquestionable. Maimonides was a venerated figure for Thomas Aquinas, and the scholastics did not even know that the name Avicenna concealed the identity of the Spanish Jew, Solomon Ibn Gabirol.

But the good relationship between scholars, though it provided a fascinating bye-way in a tragic story, could not save European medieval Jewry from its ultimate and almost inevitable destruction. While the Bible was sacred, rabbinic writings were not, and the Church and the Inquisition so successfully destroyed Jewish centres of learning by the steady burning of their books, that today only a single copy of the *Talmud* has survived from the Middle Ages.

The end came in the explosion from the Iberian peninsula in 1492 and 1496. At that time the most numerous and prosperous Jewry in existence was in Poland, where the "Waad of the Four Lands" enjoyed an enviable autonomy, and Jewish commercial expertise was an essential element in the Polish economy. But again salvation came from the Jewry of the Homeland, and Polish Jews themselves, after their prosperity had been shattered by the Cossack rising in the middle of the seventeenth century, were glad to drink at the springs which flowed from the Galilean hill-town of Safed.

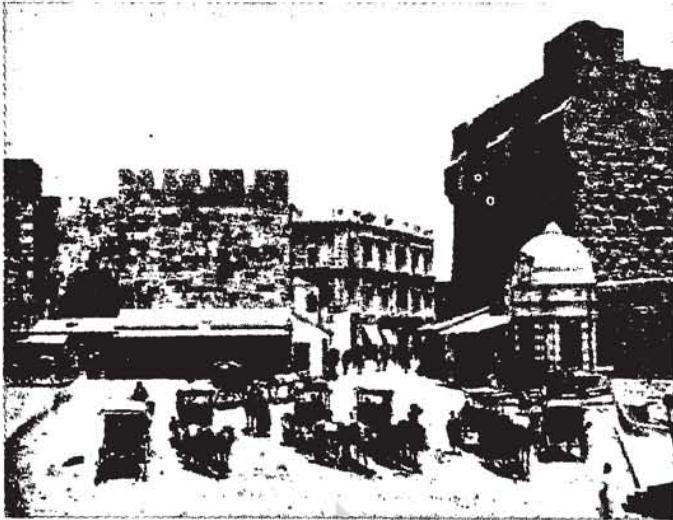
It was a fortunate moment for the Jewry of the Homeland. The Ottoman Turks were at the height of their power, and their unrivalled army and civil service had not shown the fatal weaknesses which were soon to convert the Turkish empire to a stagnant mass of incompetence and corruption. Already, while Spanish Jewry was declining and north European Jewry was at its last gasp, Isaac Zarfati had sought to draw his compatriots over to Turkish territory where he could promise them toleration and prosperity. But, when the moment arrived, it was far more than that was to come out of Safed.

## ISRAEL'S TITLE DEED

There is again a repetition of what was by now a bimillennial pattern. The Homeland produced the stimulus to survival, and it drew on sources from the dispersion to perform its task. The two key figures are Isaac Luria, an Ashkenazic Jew born in Jerusalem, and Joseph Caro, a Sephardic Jew born in Toledo. Both came to live in Safed in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Joseph Caro, though himself mystically inclined, produced in the *Shulhan Aruch* an ordered summary of Talmudic law which is still, with the comments of the Ashkenazic Moses Isserles, the standard basis of orthodox practice. Meanwhile his contemporary, Isaac Luria, evolved from the ancient mystical tradition which had always lurked in rabbinic and pre-rabbinic Judaism, a colourful popular mysticism, which provided light and joy to the Jewries of eastern Europe during the dark centuries which followed. From Luria the Chassidic movement spread, its direct founder being the Baal Shem Tov.

The strongly rationalist tradition of Jewish historiography established by Jost and Graetz despised eastern European mysticism. But the juster appreciation of it which came in Europe and Jerusalem from Martin Buber, in America from Louis Newman, and among Christians from the charming writings of Jérôme and Jean Tharaud,



THE JAFFA GATE AND THE CITADEL:  
*Passage or barrier?*

have set it in its true perspective as a quite essential element in Jewish survival between the Baltic and the Black Sea, until these deeply Jewish communities were wiped out in the Holocaust, but not before both their orthodoxy and their mysticism had found roots both in Israel and in western Jewish communities on both sides of the Atlantic.

The flowering of Safed lasted barely a century, after which the Jewry of the Homeland reached its nadir in disaster after disaster, the chief among them being the appearance of the false Messiah, Shabbetai Zvi. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, when European Jewry was fully occupied in the struggle for emancipation and citizenship in the lands of the diaspora, the Jewry of Galilee and Judea had sunk to its smallest size, in a country where the whole population was shrinking also through the neglect of the authorities and the lawlessness of the inhabitants. When, after the conquest of Syria by Mehmet Ali and his son, Europe intervened to preserve Turkish rule, the possibility of handing the Biblical Holy Land over to the Jewish people was mooted. But it evoked no response at the time, and one might well have decided that the ancient *élan* had at last evaporated.

That this was not so was proved by a single example: the nineteenth century story of Jerusalem. Except for one village in the mountains of Galilee (Peqi'in-al' Buqeia') Jews were able to live only in the four towns of Safed, Tiberias, Hebron and Jerusalem, and in all of them the Jewish population was probably dwindling in 1800. In Jerusalem itself there were probably not more than a thousand Jews. Then in 1839 a British Consulate was established, soon to be followed by other European powers. Life for the minorities (Christian as well as Jewish) began to be secure, and the British Consulate had an expressed aim to protect the interests of Jews who were not represented to the authorities by any other power. Within ten years Jews had outnumbered the Christians and their numbers were coming up to that of the Muslims. By 1872 they outnumbered both groups together, though at this time there was no organized Zionist movement in existence. By the end of the century the figures were: 30,000 Jews, 11,000 Christians, and 7,700 Muslims.

This is the background of the fifth repetition of the ancient pattern. And again the Jewry of the Homeland was infinitely less powerful than that of the United States. But the survivors of the Holocaust and of European persecution

could not be rescued by American Jews. These could provide the money and some of the personnel. But the essential contribution, psychological as well as physical, came, and could come, only from the Jewry of the Mandate and of Israel.

But this time there has been a significant change of pattern, but a change within, and not external to, the traditional picture. Previously it had always been an impetus within Judaism which rescued the Jewish people. This time it was the Jewish people who took the initiative, and the contribution of Judaism is still to come. But, as on previous occasions, I suspect that it will come from an initiative in the Jewry of the Diaspora, not from the much more limited experience of the historic Judaism of Jerusalem. This is not a new pattern, but a new variation, for Judaism and the Jewish people are a single entity. Rabbinic Judaism never became a Church. It remained the expression of the covenant relationship between God and the people of Israel.

The unique compilation of Talmud and Midrash has rightly been called "a portable homeland." So long as ghetto gates enclosed the whole people, whether in Christendom or in Islam, it was possible to recognize a single people.

Novel experiences broke the unity of Judaism, narrowed and exhausted by the strain of centuries of persecution and restriction. New ambitions broke the unity of the people, and western Jews in Europe and America sought to become self-governing minorities, but with equal civic and political rights, within the new democratic societies of the western world. The unity of Jewry was still expressed in boundless charity: but its religious and social expression had been lost.

In such a situation a new expression of unity became an overpowering, even if often unconscious, urge. The Judaism of the time could not provide it: the rifts within the religion were too wide. It was inevitable that it should come from the people. It is only when this essential foundation is laid, that it becomes meaningful to speak of it adopting the forms of self-expression becoming current among contemporary peoples. Zionism is not a *creation* of nineteenth century nationalism; that it had parallels with other nationalisms, which were nineteenth century creations, is only to be expected.

The search for unity naturally expressed itself in a broadening interest in the possibility of creating a "national home" in the ancient Homeland. Though "the land without a people for the people without a land" was an exaggeration and a tactless one in the circumstances, it was still true that the land was in a desolate and under-populated condition; and it seemed—not unreasonably—significant that there never had been a political unit or a native ruler since the Jewish state perished, and that Jerusalem had never been the capital of any other state—the brief Crusader kingdom is a partial but relatively insignificant exception.



I am convinced that the story told in the previous pages has been told without exaggeration, and that its significance cannot be exaggerated. It may be that Massada is more dramatic, but this story, spiritually as well as physically, is every bit as heroic. And in my belief, it constitutes the real title deeds of Israel in a way in which the most dramatic event of two thousand years ago cannot.



THE FIRST VIEW OF JERUSALEM, 1898:  
*Unchanging horizons*

contributions to Jewish survival. It was left to the little band of scholars collected by Johanan ben Zakkai at the half-Gentile townlet of Yavneh in occupied Judea to evolve a Judaism which ensured the survival, under totally unfamiliar conditions, of the whole Jewish people.

It may well be that it takes one who is not a Jew to realise how extraordinary was the work which was begun at Yavneh. The Jewish scholar is so familiar with its origin and its results; it is so much part of his own experience, that it is difficult for him to realise how unique a novelty the men of Yavneh and their Galilean successors created. It was a religion so tailored to the precise needs of the nation that it could survive, not merely the loss of the religious, judicial and political hierarchies of Judea, but the total dispersion of the people for nearly two thousand years of their history.

The loss of the great Temple at Jerusalem was not merely a national shock. Every religious reform of the preceding millennium had emphasized its uniqueness in the life of every Jew. Its presence had brought success to the campaign to destroy the ancient high places scattered throughout the country. It had become a duty, even for Jews scattered to the remotest parts of the dispersion, to make a pilgrimage there once in their lifetime.

The New Testament is full of references to its universal significance. The Temple was not merely the centre of great national sacrifices; events in the life of the simplest Jew brought him to its altars. There atonement was made for the sins of the whole people. But there also the individual Jew offered sacrifice for his own failings. There the well-being of the Roman emperor himself was daily made the subject of sacrifice, while the emperor in his turn recognized the God of his Jewish subjects by paying for a daily sacrifice.

The rabbis of Yavneh inevitably treasured every memory of the lost greatness of the Temple. They detailed exactly the formulae of its ceremonies; but all that they could say to the nation was that prayer and repentance earned the forgiveness and favour of God as well as sacrifice. It is not surprising that there is still evidence a hundred years later that ordinary Jews could feel that with the loss of the Temple they had lost the means of obtaining the grace of God, and that for a while the sacrifice of Isaac and the merits of the fathers appear in Jewish thought as a substitute

for the atonement presented by the Christian missionary as the most powerful evidence of the claims of Christianity.

Consciously or unconsciously the rabbis had the wisdom to avoid both the philosophizing of Alexandria and the systematic theologizing of their Christian rivals, each of which could have proved fatal to a totally dispersed people. Instead they made Judaism a way of life for ordinary living so interwoven with the human and the divine that its complex pattern provided sustenance to men and women of the most diverse occupations, and yet left them the maximum of intellectual freedom by the very fact that it involved neither a philosophy nor a systematic theology. The *Shema* was all the theology required, for the work of the Pharisees had removed all fear of polytheism or of pagan customs creeping in. Even their folklore was centred in their unchallenged monotheism.

Withal they made their system at once flexible and all-embracing. The traditions embodied in the *Talmud* and the *Midrash* were the *whole* of Jewish literature, not just its "religious" aspect. Surrounding it was a fence. Christian writers have made much of the legalism and narrowness of the fence. Modern rabbinical passion about *Shechita* and the Sabbath tend to appear proof to the outsider that rabbinic Judaism is indeed all that the Gospel denunciations of the Pharisees describe.

But, in fact, the fence around the Jewish way of life is no higher than the fence the Christian theologian built around the Christian way of faith in the Christology of the Church. And both were justified. The strict theology of the Church preserved the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth, the unity of God, and the supremacy of faith. The strict way of life of rabbinic Judaism enabled Jewry to meet the charm and challenge of every philosophy and culture from China to the Atlantic.

## BEGINNINGS OF ASSIMILATION

It did something more. It enabled every Jewish community to be autonomous. The rabbis evolved nothing comparable to the patriarchal, episcopal and parochial system of Christendom. Even when they had a patriarch at Tiberias for a couple of centuries, he can have had but a very nominal authority over distant Jewish communities. When he was disgraced by a Christian Roman emperor and his office contemptuously abolished, nothing was needed to take its place.

A system so subtle and so complex was neither evolved nor accepted in a hurry. For its elaboration many contributions ultimately came from the dispersion. But in its essence it was the incomparable gift of the Jewry of the Homeland to the Jewish people as a whole. Its effect can be expressed in a single sentence: it made a Jew contented to be a Jew in a world in which he was constantly being tempted to abandon the covenant.

Once the basic Judaism of the rabbis was accepted amongst Jews, the curtain goes down in the Homeland, and the succession passes to the great academies of Babylon. In Galilee, Christian legal restrictions and monkish violence gradually turned the Jews into a minority. Their economic life was still unhampered. As many lived in the villages and farmed the land as were to be found in the towns. Judea was not deserted, but the southern hills lacked the fertility of the north. Whenever they could they formed a community



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