

A Letter Set in Motion End-Time Prophecy

"The LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where He scattered you." (Deuteronomy 30:3)

"When they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God." (*Leviticus 26:44*)

A letter issued by the British government favoring the establishment of a national home for the Jewish People began the process fulfilling Bible prophecy concerning Israel in these last days.

The consequences of that letter, the Balfour Declaration of 1917, still reverberate around the world today. **In fact, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas would like to sue Britain over this letter.**

A few years ago, he told the UN General Assembly:

"We ask Great Britain, as we approach 100 years since this infamous declaration, to draw the necessary lessons and to bear its historic, legal, political, material and moral responsibility for the consequences of this declaration, including an apology to the Palestinian people for the catastrophes, misery and injustice this declaration created and to act to rectify these disasters and remedy its consequences, including by the recognition of the state of Palestine. This is the least Great Britain can do."

Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded to this far-reaching attempt to delegitimize Israel by telling the UN Assembly:

"That's almost 100 years ago. Talk about being stuck in the past! The Palestinians might as well sue Iran for the Cyrus declarations [that allowed Jews to return from exile to Judea in 539 BC], or file a class action suit against Abraham for buying land in Hebron."

According to *And the Hills Shouted for Joy; the Day Israel Was Born*, "**The Balfour Declaration was the first public acknowledgment by a Great Power of the Jewish connection with Palestine as well as an undertaking by that government to help restore the Jewish people to its homeland.** For the first time, a sovereign government had entered into a pact with a people scattered over the face of the earth to return them to a land."

The Balfour Declaration—the fruit of 12 months of intensive negotiations between Foreign Office officials, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and leading British Zionists—was **issued by Arthur James Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, to Lord Walter Rothschild, a British Jewish leader who was to convey the news to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland.**

Here is the complete text:

Foreign Office, November 2nd, 1917.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country".

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely, **Arthur James Balfour**

Bible Prophecy Fulfilled

The Balfour Declaration was incorporated into the Sevres Peace Treaty with the Ottoman Empire and the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine, which gave **international sanction for the establishment of a national Jewish homeland** and, therefore, became the legal cornerstone for the Jewish State.

The door opened by the Balfour Declaration helped fulfill Bible prophecy that foresaw God would “gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” (*Isaiah 11:12*)

God was moving through a world power to fulfill countless Bible prophecies concerning Israel, as well as His covenant promises to return His people to their land.

“Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain.... And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” (*Isaiah 11:11–12*)

Apparently, Lord Balfour was aware of God’s plan for Israel. According to *The Jewish Chronicle*, “The Balfour Declaration was born out of religious sentiment. **Arthur Balfour was a Christian mystic who believed that the Almighty had chosen him to be an instrument of the Divine Will, the purpose of which was to restore the Jews to their ancient homeland—**perhaps as a precursor to the Second Coming of the Messiah.

“The Declaration was thus intended to assist in the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. This appealed to Lloyd George, whose private immorality did not prevent him from believing in the prophecies of a Bible he knew inside out.”

Israel Splits into Two Kingdoms

“I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out My sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins.” (*Leviticus 26:33*)

We read in the Torah (Five Books of Moses) that God set before the Israelites blessings and curses. The blessings would flow from obedience to God’s law. The curses would flow from disobedience to His laws. **Part of the curse called for exile from the Promised Land, but God nevertheless promised that He would eventually bring His people home.**

Israel’s disobedience did not take God by surprise. From the beginning, the Lord knew that the people whom He had chosen were stiff-necked and that they would eventually be driven from the land that He had given to Abraham’s seed as an inheritance.

This first happened to the northern tribes of Israel. **Following the reign of King Solomon, about 980 BC, the kingdom of Israel was split.**

The ten northern tribes rebelled against King Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, the son of David, of the tribe of Judah.

After King Solomon died in 931 BC, his son King Rehoboam told Israel that rather than making their burden lighter than what it had been under his father Solomon, he would make it heavier.

“My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions,” Rehoboam said. (*1 Kings 12:11*)

This caused the ten northern tribes to rebel, cutting themselves off from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; still, **1 Kings 12:15** states:

“This turn of events was the will of the LORD, for it fulfilled the LORD’s message to Jeroboam son of Nebat through the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh.”

This refers to a prophecy near the end of Solomon’s reign, when the prophet Ahijah told Jeroboam, the future king of the northern kingdom:

“Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to you.” (*1 Kings 11:31*)

As king, however, Jeroboam worried that he would lose control over those people who went up to Jerusalem to worship.

To deliberately distance the people from worship at the Holy Temple, he set up false gods in local towns to be worshiped by the northern tribes. This resulted in further moral deterioration.

“If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.’ So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, ‘**It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel**, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.’ He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.” (*1 Kings 12:26–29*)

The First Scattering and Regathering: Israel and Judea Fall to Babylon

By about 712 BC, the immorality and pagan worship of the northern tribes brought about the collapse of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Assyrians invaded and took the ten tribes captive. (*2 Kings 17:6*)

The Assyrians scattered them throughout the Levant, which brought about the beginning of the Diaspora (dispersion).

Why didn't the Assyrians also invade the Southern Kingdom of Judah? The obvious answer is that it was not God's will for them to do so. The king of Judah at that time, Hezekiah, “did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.” (*2 Kings 18:3*)

Nevertheless, due to rebellion against God, around 606 BC, the Babylonians invaded the Southern Kingdom, taking Judah captive to Babylonia.

Seventy years later, in fulfillment of Bible prophecy, the Babylonian kingdom fell to the Medes and Persians and **the new king, Cyrus, permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem, at which time the walls and the Temple were rebuilt. (*Ezra 1:1–4*)**

But many of the Jewish people had assimilated foreign practices and worship, practices they brought back to Israel. As well, many were assimilated into the land of their captivity and did not return to the Promised Land.

By 200 BC, Israel had become a part of the Greek Seleucid Empire until the revolt of Judah Maccabee resulted in the Hasmonean dynasty of kings who ruled Judah for over a century.

The Maccabees destroyed pagan altars that had been set up in the villages, and reinstated circumcision of newborn male offspring which had been outlawed by the Greek Hellenistic government. They also re-entered Jerusalem and ritually cleansed the Temple, re-establishing traditional Jewish worship.

Judah Maccabee, the Cohen (priest), who led the revolt against the Seleucid Empire made an alliance with Rome, instead of trusting in God alone. (*1 Maccabees 8:17–32*)

Nevertheless, the alliance with Rome did not prevent the Greek Empire from sending in massive military forces. **Judah decided to stand his ground instead of withdrawing, dying in the battle.**

So for a brief period of about one hundred years, devout observance of the law returned to Judah under the Hasmonean Kingdom.

When the matriarch of the Maccabees died, the two sons rivaled for power over the kingdom. Even during their feud, though, they agreed to keep up the sacrifices of sheep and goats at the Temple—until one day one of the sons sent a pig to the altar.

The Talmud states that when the pig swiped his hooves against the Temple, Israel shook for 400 miles.

Not long after, the Roman invasion of Jerusalem in the first century BC brought this period of religious and civil independence to a close. (*JewishHistory*)

The Second Scattering: Judea Falls to Rome

Under Rome, Herod the Great ruled Judea until his death in 1 BC. Following his death, his kingdom was divided among his three sons as a tetrarchy.

This was the political situation in Judea at the time when Yeshua (Jesus) was born.

Yeshua prophesied regarding the impending destruction of the Temple and the scattering of God's people. (*Luke 21:5–6*)

He also warned his **Talmidim** (disciples) of events that would occur within their lifetime, as well as in the last days. (*Matthew 24:15–22*)

In fulfillment of His prophecies, after His death and resurrection, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70 during the Jewish Revolt, further scattering the people throughout the world and into distant lands.

Seventy years later, the Jews again revolted under the leadership of Simon bar Kokhba and established the last Kingdom of Israel, which lasted three years.

The final destruction came when the Roman Emperor Hadrian, who was determined to wipe out the identity of Israel, completely destroyed the Jewish city of Jerusalem, plowing it under and building a city called Aelia Capitolina on top of it. In AD 135, Hadrian changed the name of Israel to Syria Palaestina, essentially in honor of Israel's enemies.

Zionism Emerges: God's People Are Regathered

"For I will give the command, and I will shake the people of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not a pebble will reach the ground." (*Amos 9:9*)

In 1800, only 6,700 Jews lived in what was now Ottoman Palestine.

Although the Jewish People were spread virtually everywhere on the planet, God had not forgotten His people, nor had He forsaken His promises and covenant with them.

By the 19th century, it became evident that God was actively at work among His people, drawing them to Himself. And it became evident that end-time Bible prophecies concerning the land of Israel were in the process of being fulfilled.

By 1880, the emerging Zionist movement worked to return the Jewish People to the Land, and at that time about 24,000 lived there. By 1915, that number had more than tripled, reaching 87,500. (*New World Encyclopedia*)

The term Zionism is derived from the word Zion (צִיּוֹן—**Tzi-yon**), which refers to Mount Zion—originally Mount Moriah, where Abraham took Isaac to be sacrificed. It was here that King Solomon built the first Temple.

Generally, Zion now refers to all of Jerusalem and even Israel. **Today, anyone who supports the right of the state of Israel to exist and the return of the Jewish People to Israel is a Zionist.**

God is a Zionist too:

"So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who dwells in Zion, My holy mountain." (*Joel 3:17*)

A major leader behind the Zionist efforts was Theodore Herzl, the Austrian journalist who had worked to restore the Jewish people to their land. He created the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and held its first congress at Basel, Switzerland in 1897.

In 1917 during WWI, the British replaced the Ottoman administration of Palestine and occupied the region, including Jerusalem, allowing for the Balfour Declaration to have political leverage.

The Balfour Declaration

"For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you." (*Isaiah 54:7*)

With the British in Palestine, the hopes and aspirations of the Zionist cause to return the Jewish People to their land reached a new height.

During the First World War, the Russian chemist Chaim Weizmann (who would become the first president of the Jewish state) invented a process to produce the explosive cordite without the use of calcium acetate, an ingredient available in Germany, but not in England.

Without cordite the British would have lost the war.

When Lord Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, asked Weizmann what payment he required for the process, Weizmann responded, **"There is only one thing I want: A national home for my people."**

Before WWI, in 1906, the British offered Kenya (some say Uganda) to Zionists as a Jewish homeland. The Zionists rejected this.

When Balfour asked Dr. Weizmann why only Palestine could be the Jewish homeland Weizmann said, "Anything else would be idolatry," adding, **"Mr. Balfour, supposing I were to offer you Paris instead of London, would you take it?"**

"But Dr. Weizmann," said Balfour, "we have London."

Weizmann responded, **"That is true, but we had Jerusalem when London was a marsh."**

Some say that Weizmann was rewarded for his service on November 2nd, 1917 when the Balfour Declaration was handed to Rothschild.

Although God used this declaration to set in motion a series of events upon which the Jewish state was reborn in one day, it was not without challenges.

As God began drawing larger numbers of the Jewish People to their homeland, much treachery erupted.

The British did not hold fast to their promises to help establish and protect the new nation, and the British Mandate for Palestine continued, causing the Jewish People to once again struggle for their very survival as they held their own against British and Islamic intrigue.

While some governments do renege on their promises, God does not.

Though things may look bleak for Israel 104 years later, as Palestinians kill Jews for being Jews and anti-Semitism once again rears its ugly head around the globe, we know that **with God, Israel has a hope and a future.**

God has miraculously re-established the Jewish state and the Hebrew language—something that has never happened for any other country or people.

As we thank God for the Balfour Declaration, we can also thank Him that He is true to His Word.

Even if we cannot see the end from the beginning, we can be sure that God always keeps His promises to all Believers and to Israel.

Israel is and will be a nation and a people forever.

"I will bring my people Israel back from exile. They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God." (*Amos 9:14-15*)

The Balfour Declaration played a role in the prophetic fulfillment of Israel's rebirth as a nation in May 1948.

While this important event reminds us that God's hand is on Israel, the Bible links the creation of the State of Israel to the end times when the nations will come up against Israel and be judged in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

“In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning My inheritance, My people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up My land.” (*Joel 3:2*)

Since we are living in the Last Days with Yeshua's (Jesus) return not far away, let us be diligent to redeem the time.

"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12)

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