

The Reason Israel Thrives Despite Enemies on Every Side

Unless you experienced some significant event—like birth or marriage—on Nov. 2, it's very likely the day passed as just another day of the year. However, on that date 96 years ago, **Jews** around the world had cause for celebration and breathed a collective sigh of relief following decades of political and diplomatic activism—and centuries of prayer—to reestablish a Jewish **homeland** in the land of Israel.

At the time, since the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in the year 70, this was arguably the closest Jews had come to the **restoration** of Jewish sovereignty in the land. World events outside the control of any one individual came together to make this possible, clearly guided by the hand of God. But it would be three more long and painful decades—at the cost of millions of Jewish lives—before Israel was to be reborn, fulfilling God's promise and as a clear sign of biblical prophecy.

From 1919 to 1948, Great Britain occupied the land of Israel, calling it Palestine. The occupation followed the defeat of the Ottoman Turkish Empire, which had controlled the land for centuries (1516–1917). The British took control from the Ottomans, who took control from the Mamluks (1260–1516) and so forth, in a trail of one foreign conqueror and occupier after another for more than 1800 years.

Yet during the decades preceding 1917, Jewish leaders from throughout the Diaspora increased and intensified their lobbying to political and religious bodies throughout the world to realize the dream of modern Zionism—the movement to restore Jewish sovereignty to the **Jewish homeland**.

Here is a letter, dated Nov. 2, 1917, on behalf of the British

government by Foreign Secretary Lord Arthur Balfour to Baron Walter Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community. The "**Balfour Declaration**" was clear, concise and unambiguous:

"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."

Following a nearly two millennia dream to return to the land, Jews around the world were filled with hope. As events unfolded, particularly in Europe, where life for Jews was never a walk in the park and getting worse, the level of urgency for reestablishing a Jewish homeland took greater importance. The Balfour Declaration was a meaningful light at the end of a very long, dark and painful tunnel.

Today, it's clear the milestone of the Balfour Declaration is one that ought to be celebrated by **Jews** and **Christians** alike. Indeed, many notable Christians were active **Zionists** and supported the movement of the Jewish people's return to the land, as that has multiplied many fold over the decades since.

Given the way Jewish nationalism and the modern state of Israel have been beaten up by hate-filled antagonists who seek to delegitimize Israel at every turn, it's essential to note that Zionism is not **racist**. At no point in the movement to return to the land did Jewish leaders seek to do so at the expense of other inhabitants of the land. (There are many ways in which this is documented, including Israel's Declaration of Independence.) And Israel doesn't represent **apartheid** any more than the world champion baseball team, the Boston Red Sox, represents the hallowed halls of Harvard University.

Yet is it also clear that for those who understand the **prophetic** significance of the Jewish people's return to our land, the first three words of the Balfour Declaration might be met with a chuckle.

While Great Britain would control the land of Israel under the League of Nations mandate following WWI, under the monarchy of King George V, we know that His Majesty, whose government "viewed with favour" the establishment of a national homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine, was not, is not and never will be the authority that determines Israel's existence or its prosperity.

Despite all the odds—foreign conquerors, the **Holocaust** or the daily threats of its neighbors still today—**Israel** exists simply because of the promise of the God of Israel, the one true Majesty.

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