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CROSS-CURRENTS IN AMERICAN JUDAISM

The Struggle For and Against a Zionist State

ONE of the chief problems with which the Peace Conference at Paris has had to grapple has been that of Zionism. The entire project of a "Jewish homeland" is beset with difficulties. While President Wilson, the Vatican and the governments of Great Britain, France and Italy have all gone on record as favoring the Jewish State, the Jews themselves are far from being of one mind in relation to the plan. Journals of the type of the Chicago *Israelite* frankly oppose Zionism. The *American Hebrew* (New York) is afraid that "the cause of liberty for the Jews of the world has been lost sight of in Paris, due to the Nationalist agitation." American Jewry has sent to Paris a petition signed by Henry Morgenthau, Adolph Ochs, David Belasco, E. R. A. Seligman, and many more, protesting against "the demand of the Zionists for the reorganization of the Jews as a national unit." And Congressman Julius Kahn, of California, who carried the petition, took occasion, just before his departure, to make (in the New York *Times*) the statement: "This whole question as raised by the proposal of a separate Jewish State is much more serious than appears on the surface; and now, before a final decision is reached, is the time to face the issue squarely." He bases his opposition to Zionism on four main grounds:

"First—It creates a divided allegiance, as between our country and its Stars and Stripes and Zion with its white flag with the blue star. The Zionists, even in this country, are bent upon following their flag. The real American Jew knows but one flag, the Stars and Stripes. The American Jew sings 'The Star-Spangled Banner' as his national anthem. The Zionist sings 'The Hatikvah' as his.

"Second—The Zionist doctrine is in conflict with our own free institutions. The Zionists believe in the foundation of a government which shall embrace both Church and State. That is not in keeping with the trend of modern statecraft anywhere. In that respect Zionism is decidedly reactionary. Besides, the Jews of Palestine are a small minority of the population. Will the other people who live there consent to domination by this minority?

"Third—There is the practical objection

against the huddling together in a confined territory of enormous numbers of the Jewish people. As everyone knows, Palestine is small; it could never support the millions of Jews who live in countries where Jewish persecution is a matter of common occurrence. That huddling together has had a baneful effect in Russia, Rumania, Galicia, and Poland. The result would be a continuance of these disadvantages in the proposed new home.

"Fourth—The greatest danger to the Jews in all those countries where they are on an entire equality with every other class of citizens is that, with the establishment of a separate Jewish State, they would be looked upon as aliens where today they are respected citizens. They would frequently be told to go to their own country, Palestine, by those agitators and fanatics who have a hatred of the Jew in their hearts. In fact, I have had a number of letters recently which stated the opinions of the writers. They suggested that it would be a good thing if the country got rid of the Jews."

The arguments of anti-Zionists are met in a recent article in the *Century* by Israel Friedlaender, Professor of Biblical Literature and Exegesis in the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York. He deals, in particular, with the objections that the Zionists want to establish a theocracy and that their rule will involve a violation of the principle of self-determination. To quote:

> "The idea that the Zionists wish to establish a theocracy in Palestine will cause a riot of mirth among those who are acquainted with conditions in modern Zionism. Dr. Theodore Herzl would turn in his grave could he listen to the charge that he was the protagonist of a Jewish theocracy. Dr. Max Nordau, Louis D. Brandeis, Dr. Weizman, nay, even Ahad Ha'am, the famous champion of 'Spiritual Zionism,' and many other leading Zionists

who are in the van of modern thought, will be amazed, or possibly amused, at this implication. . . . There is no question that the relation between religion and state will be one of the most momentous issues which will confront the new Jewish commonwealth, and those Zionists who are thoroly permeated with the religious spirit of Judaism fervently hope that a solution will be found that will harmonize the ancient ideals of Judaism with the requirements of modern times; but . . . there is no Zionist who wishes for the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth that will in any way contradict the ideas of justice and equality such as are at the bottom of every modern body politic."

In regard to the second objection, that a minority of Jews in Palestine (some 100,000) propose to force their régime on a majority of 630,000 non-Jews, Professor Friedlaender says: "The fact of the matter is that the Mohammedan Arabs of Palestine, forming nine-tenths of the Palestinian population, have heretofore been in favor of Zionism, seeing what the Zionists, under most adverse conditions, have already done for the rejuvenation of their desolate land; and the Greek-Orthodox Christians, who form an overwhelming majority of the Christian population of the Holy Land, have repeatedly expressed themselves in the same manner." Professor Friedlaender continues:

"Palestine is neither historically nor emotionally an Arabic country. When the Arabs dream of their ancient glory, they think of Nejd and Hedjaz, the cradle of their race and religion; they think of the splendor of the Ommiads at Damascus, of the magnificence of the Abbassides at Bagdad, of the power of the Fatimites at Cairo; but they do not think of Jerusalem. Spain is far more intimately and far more gloriously interwoven with Arabic culture than is Palestine. During the twelve hundred years and more that the Arabs have lived in Palestine they have, despite their remarkable achievements in other lands, never developed an Arabic culture that is worth speaking of. Nor have the Christians managed to do so, altho they have been backed by the powerful influences and resources of various European governments. But the handful of Jews who have come to Palestine as the land of their fathers and have been willing to brave the dangers and hardships, which can be paralleled only by the similar experiences of the early colonists of New England, have succeeded in setting up a civilization, or, rather, the beginnings of a civilization, which, in the judgment of all unbiased observers, is the greatest cultural factor in the Palestine of to-day. To mention only one example; in less than one generation the Jews of Palestine have performed the greatest linguistic miracle known in history by making again the ancient tongue of their prophets a living language, after its having served as a purely literary medium of expression for nearly two thousand years. The Jews, who are of the same race as the Arabs—a kinship cemented by the profound and beneficent influence which their cultures exercized upon one another for many centuries—have genuine sympathy with their aspirations, and look forward to the reestablishment of ancient Arabic glory; but they see no reason why on the vast expanse of a new Arabic world which is now being set up by the great powers, they have no right to claim a little corner in which they may rejuvenate the ancient glory of Zion."

While controversialists debate, the actual fabric of the Jewish State is being created. During recent weeks, as we learn from a Publicity Bulletin of the Zionist Organization of America, elections have been held for a Constituent Assembly in Palestine. Three political parties have participated. Women have voted, as well as men, and every candidate had to speak in Hebrew. The powers of the Constituent Assembly are to be limited to internal affairs. Questions of national interest are to be left to the Zionist Organization.

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