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OUR NATIONAL
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ISRAEL BELKIND

**Our National Work
in Palestine**





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Our National Work in Palestine



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The first of these four articles was published in the **American Hebrew**, in **January, 1917**. The others in Jewish periodicals. They are now translated and presented to the **English-reading Jews** in consideration of the new activity which awaits us in our **Beloved Land** of our **Past and Future** in the land of our **Fathers** and our **Children**.

THE SPIRITUAL CENTER IN PALESTINE

The recent great events bring us nearer and nearer Palestine, and we truly believe that we shall see in the very near future our long cherished hope realized.—our people will rebuild the old home in the land of their fathers.

There will surely be many who will ask: "What will we gain by it? How valuable will this land be in creating a new life for our people? Then, again, it seems incredible that the many millions of Jews scattered in so many different parts of the world will all find place for themselves within the boundaries of such a small country. How great will be its influence on the Jews who will remain in other countries? Nor can we see the wonderful things, which our diplomats together with those of other nations have accomplished." In the following lines we shall endeavor to give a concrete answer to all these questions.

The cycle of our history which was completed a short while ago with the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, is undoubtedly one of the most important periods in our historical life. It may justly be considered as great as the other two terrible eras; the destruction of our Temple, and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.

It is true that even more than 2,000 years ago many of our people were scattered among other nations, but the bulk of the Jewish nation lived in Palestine. Pales-

tine was the centre, the point towards which everybody's eyes were focused, the heart of the entire nation. And therefore its influence was great even on those who lived in other countries. Palestine was renowned for her schools and colleges, and all those who craved for learning came there.

The Holy Temple was the symbol of the unity of the entire Jewish nation. But soon came the destruction. Thousands of Jews were slaughtered, thousands driven into captivity, to be devoured by wild beasts in the arenas of Rome and other large cities.

Many others perished in slavery. The Holy Temple, too, was demolished: and thus came to an end the Palestinian centre.

The loss of the centre was in itself a greater calamity than the devastation of the land and the destruction of the Temple. It weakened and greatly discouraged the people and thus made the work of the founders of Christianity quite easy. Their first propaganda was in the localities where the Jewish exiles had found refuge, such as Egypt, Asia Minor and Italy. They knew how to utilize the state of despair and discouragement among the Jews to their advantage. It happened not infrequently that entire communities became traitors to their religion and to their people. In this manner the new religion spread, and with it originated also the hatred of Jews.

But not all at once and not without a long, bitter struggle did the ancient glory of the Jews perish.

For a certain length of time, Palestine was still

considered our centre, particularly while the "chiefs" were still in power and while the great college of which Joehanan Ben-Zakkai and his followers were the founders, was still in existence. The Jews who were left there, with Bar-Kochba as their leader, tried once more to break the chains of slavery and free themselves from the yoke of the enemy. But an end was soon put to all their aspirations. Only then did Palestine cease to be a Jewish centre. The scholars had to flee the Holy Land for fear of the enemy. They settled in Babylon, where they hoped to continue the educational work begun in Palestine. The Parthians, as well as the Persians, were friendly disposed towards the Jews, because they had all been allied in their fights with the Romans, and accorded the refugees many privileges. Thus it became possible for the Jews to lead the life they had been accustomed to. The Hebrew scholars founded colleges of great learning in Babylon in order to strengthen and fortify the Jewish religion, make it capable of withstanding all the adversities of the exile, and give the Jews courage to endure all the material and spiritual hardships and persecutions to which they were subjected by the mighty nations among whom they settled. And so Babylon became and continued to be the spiritual centre of the Jews, for a period of about 500 years.

We witnessed similar events during the third period of our history, about 500 years ago. During the Dark Ages the Jews were scattered all over Europe, but the majority of them lived in Spain. Thanks to the liberal Arabian régime which lasted for over 700

years, the Jewish communities had an opportunity to develop, and Spain became a new centre of Judaism.

The Spanish Jew exerted also a pronounced influence in politics, especially through such representatives as Eben Shaprut, Samuel Hanagid, and many others.

Their welfare, however, was not of long duration. Since the end of the fifteenth century, for about a hundred years in succession the most dreadful persecution raged against the Jews in Spain. Their property was destroyed, their wealth confiscated, thousands of them burned at the stake or compelled to adopt Catholicism. Finally a decree was issued expelling all the Jews from Spain, and later also from Portugal.

Again hundreds and thousands were slaughtered by the mob, incited against the Jews by the Catholic clergy; thousands of others adopted Catholicism because the unspeakable sufferings and persecutions robbed them of their strength of character and weakened their spirit. And thus the Jewish centre in Spain was entirely destroyed because there were no Jews left there.

The expulsion from Spain was only one act in the long drama of suffering and persecution that was staged during the Dark Ages throughout Western Europe.

The persecutions in Germany drove the Jews more and more eastward, to Poland, which after Spain became the next centre of the Jews. Here the Jews found a broad field for their activities and favorable conditions to live under. Poland lacked entirely a

middle class, but there was a demand for it and the Jews therefore were welcomed as a class of middlemen. The Polish Kings protected them and granted them certain rights. True, even there they soon began to feel the animosity of the Catholic clergy, but having become hardened to worse treatment in Spain and in Germany, the persecutions in Poland appeared to them rather mild.

Within a short time Poland and later after her division by the neighboring states, Russia, became the the division by the neighboring states, became the greatest Jewish centres and have remained so to this day.

Again we see that the events which took place in the first centres repeat themselves elsewhere. For many different reasons Jewish life became unbearable in Russia. We felt as though we were living on the crater of a volcano. Not a single day passed during the last thirty-five years but a new restriction was imposed on the Jews. There was a time when we were in fear of being expelled from Russia altogether. This, however, could not have happened. Yet there were many cases of partial expulsions. There was the expulsion from Moscow, expulsions from the villages, expulsions from many states and cities, expulsions from business and from different trades and professions and also from schools and universities. Expulsions, nothing but expulsions!

Jewish massacres became an every day occurrence. And we are so accustomed to them now that our heart does not stir with indignation when we hear of these

Roumanian outrages on entire communities perpetrated by gangs of drunkards and degenerates. No wonder that the Russian Jews felt as though they were becoming paralyzed, and degenerated, and the Jewish centre as a whole began to show an inclination to abandon the country.

During the last thirty years about 2,000,000 Jews emigrated from Russia, Rumania and Galicia. The direction, however, which the stream of emigration followed in our days is not the same as before. In the Middle Ages we were pressed towards the East; now we are driven westward. Almost in all the large cities in Germany new Jewish communities sprung up, whose members came from Russia, Roumania and Galicia. An increase in membership in Jewish communities is noticeable also in Switzerland and Belgium. The same is true of France, particularly of Paris. A great many of the immigrants, about 200,000 of them, settled in England, but the greatest attraction for them was held out by America, especially by the United States, where New York itself counts about a million and a half of Jews.

While talking about Western Europe we must take into consideration also South Africa and Australia, where the mode of life is similar to that in the West.

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The current of emigration increases more and more and our people spread to all parts of the globe and we may safely state that there is hardly a place on the earth where Jews are not to be found. But while

the Jew creates for himself new centres, has Judaism also found new centres for itself? At least one new centre? Unfortunately, we have but a negative answer to this question.

If we make a study of Jewish life in Western Europe and America we shall soon come to the conclusion that there is no hope for Judaism there. Their communal and political life is based on such strong foundations that it absorbs every new element. It effaces its individual traits and forces it to assume the prevalent shape and form.

When the Jews settled in Babylon their standard of culture and civilization, was by no means lower than the Babylonian, and for this reason they could survive as Jews and did not assimilate with the people among whom they settled.

Our ancestors who came from Spain and Germany to settle in Poland, also possessed a higher culture than the natives, and therefore could retain their national identity. And since the process of evolution was rather a slow one, the Jews could lead an individual life for hundreds of years undisturbed. It is an entirely different state of affairs in our days: the standard of culture and civilization of the people in the West is a great deal higher not only than that which the new comers possess but is also above the culture of the country from whence they emigrated. The new element coming in contact with a stronger culture is by no means able to withstand its influence. The consequence is—a perfect submission to the new environment, and within a short time the becoming assimilated

with the people of the stronger culture, without leaving any traces of themselves.

The greatest tragedy in our situation is the fact that the higher the social level of his fellow citizens the harder it becomes for the Jew to exist as such. While as single individuals we welcome every step which leads humanity towards progress and success, as Jews we fear its results.

As one of the instances we shall cite the law passed in every civilized country to the effect that each and every parent be compelled to send his children to school. How beautiful, how humane such a law is! It originated with the Jews, yet from the Jewish standpoint it is of great harm to us. It robs us of our children. Our younger generation is entirely estranged from Judaism, from our language, from our history, in fact, from everything which is dear and sacred to us. It is being brought up in a new, strange atmosphere which becomes part and parcel of the young generation. Even our own history they study from non-Jewish books, in a non-Jewish language, and from a non-Jewish standpoint. Is it surprising then that they look upon our most important historical events with the eyes of strangers? We are too weak to fight such conditions! Children who spend practically the whole day in the public school, and are taught so many different subjects, cannot find time to study Hebrew. The parents cannot think of adding still another subject to so many. If, however, some do so, there is great danger that the child will hate Hebrew because he feels that it robs him of his few

hours of recreation after school. No wonder that the Jewish father is only too happy when the boy knows how to read the "Prayer Book" and the "Law" at his confirmation. And usually, at the age of thirteen, the Hebrew education of the boy ceases. The girls are not given even this meagre education.

Such are the conditions in Germany, in England; it is a great deal worse in France and in Italy; not very much better in this country. We are not speaking about exceptional cases. You will no doubt find many exceptions to the rule. There are many enthusiastic teachers who will ignore all obstacles in their way and devote their entire energy to spreading Hebrew culture among the various classes of Jewish society. There are, too, many Jewish parents who try their utmost to obtain for their children a truly Jewish education. But the number of these enthusiasts is very small.

Again, there is a law prescribing that every person must have at least one day of rest a week. From the humane standpoint, we can't help admiring this law, which had its origin with us. But we cannot deny that this law, too, brings to us a great deal of harm. In most countries the law demands that the day of rest shall be Sunday. And so we are compelled to choose either one of the two: to observe two days, which means a great economical loss to us; or to break the Sabbath. The majority cannot sacrifice so much to do the first and are compelled to resort to the latter. Thus disappears one of our most beautiful institutions which played such an important part in our life for

so many years; one of our most fundamental principles which helped develop in the Jew and in Judaism its characteristic traits and features.

Let us not deceive ourselves: Sunday will never become to us Jews what Saturday had been. The sacredness, the spiritual elevation, the poetry with which we associate our day of rest will never be transmitted to another day.

Let our radicals say what they will, but I still insist that with the abolition of the Sabbath there will be left a great scar in the soul of our nation. True, it is quite hard to solve these two problems because they come in conflict with the laws of the land, but there are many other problems which for many social and educational reasons we took the liberty to solve by ourselves. So, for instance, we often disregard the problem of "Kosher" food and many other dietary laws. Kosher meat is too expensive and in some places it is very hard to obtain, because there are only a few Jews there or because the Government interferes with the Jewish laws of slaughtering cattle. Let us also not overlook the fact that our Jews are great artists in imitating, but it is rather strange that for the most part they do not necessarily copy what is best in others.

I heard many complaints about the lives of our eastern brethren in Paris from Jews who themselves are not very religious. It is strange that the very same Jews who in the old country are so pious, who used to spend most of their leisure time in the synagogue and carry out every law to the letter,—that these self-same Jews as soon as they come to Paris shook off

their religious and moral principles, as something unwanted and superfluous. You can find them in the cafés, in the saloons where they spend a great deal of their time in playing cards; their family life is also very far from our pure Jewish traditions. It is a fact that they are indifferent to everything which is considered sacred, to us Jews, and bring about a state of degeneration which in the end leads to apostasy and inter-marriage. Who can count the great numbers we have lost in Western Europe through apostasy? It is a fact that while in other countries there is an increase in Jewish population nothing of the kind is noticed either in France or in Germany.

The causes are conversion and intermarriage. How many families of great repute were lost to us through conversions? In such a way disappeared the families of Crémieux, Heine, Mendelsohn and many others. Together with the people perished also the Jewish wealth because in most cases it is only the millions which attract the Gentile to marry a Jewish girl. The parents, as well as the girl, are ready not only to pay with their good money, but to sell even their souls for the great honor, which the Gentile confers on them, particularly if he happens to be of the nobility.

Such are the spiritual and moral conditions of the Jews in Western Europe, and not much better are they in this country. Is it surprising then that New York in which we find today the greatest and richest Jewish community in the world, could not rise to become a spiritual Jewish centre? There is not room enough in a city with such a population for a Hebrew

paper and the two which are in existence have had to face a struggle of life and death from the very first days of their appearance, and could not exist without subsidies.

The situation of the Jews in the East is approaching with gigantic steps the situation in the West. Its tendency towards assimilation was noticed among our intellectuals as long as fifty years ago. Those intellectuals looked upon Hebrew as upon a temporary necessity which had to be tolerated until the mass would master the Russian language. One of our famous poets, J. L. Gordon, perceives this danger and the cry of his aching and wounded heart finds expression in the following lines: "Oh, who can foretell the future, who will inform me whether I am not the last Hebrew poet? Who knows whether you, too, my reader, are not the last one."

It is a fact that the children of the intellectuals did not know Hebrew at all. The children of Gordon, Smolensky and other great writers could not read the works of their fathers. True, Zionism brought back many of those gone astray, but the movement is not strong enough to influence the entire nation. The many sufferings which our people endured in Russia weakened their spirit and threw them into a state of despair. The economical struggle is growing harder from day to day, and the mass cannot devote its time to ideals. Hebrew gives way to Russian; Hebrew literature is replaced by universal literature and the indifference to everything Jewish becomes more and more pronounced. Russia is now not what she had

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been before. A new life is being born there, a life of freedom and happiness. An end has come to the Jewish sufferings there. The Jews, too, will relish freedom.* But who can tell whether the result of this freedom will not be the same as in the Western countries—*i. e.*, assimilation?

If the Jews desire to exist as a distinct people, if we strive to maintain Judaism, if we really wish to transmit to future generations all we have inherited from our ancestors, we must devote all our strength and energy to create a spiritual centre in Palestine, in the very country, which has already been our spiritual and economical centre during the first two thousand years of our historical existence, and which has been our bright star during the last 2,000 years: the star which lighted our way and gave us courage to endure all the adversities and humiliations of the long exile. There, and only there, we must create the Jewish centre, the national Hebrew centre, which will exert a strong influence and give inspiration to all our brethren in the lands where they are scattered.

This centre will perform the same function as does the heart in the human body, which sends the blood coursing through the veins and gives it vitality. We need not prove here that without the heart the body would decay and that, similarly, without a national centre there is no future for a nation,—it would degenerate and perish in the end. We do not doubt that

*This article was written before the present Bolshevik regime, and before the outbreak of the pogroms of Poland, Ukraine etc. of today.

the creation of such a centre would put an end to assimilation, which has long been the greatest foe of our people; and, who knows, may perhaps bring back to us all those who went astray. "Sight is more effective than imagination," said our wise King Solomon. This proverb helped a great deal in the foundation of our modern pedagogical science and will also assist us in spreading our national ideals.

When we used to come to a Western Jew and talk to him about Hebrew culture, about the possibility of conveying all our ideas and modern conceptions in the language of the prophets, he would not believe us. He looked at us as though we were insane or dreaming. . . . And with a scornful smile upon his lips he would ask us: "Tell me, where is that country where Hebrew is spoken? Where is the country in which Hebrew culture is developed? Show me the country where the Jews lead an independent, cultured life without being assisted by others. Let me see it, and I will believe you." If we could answer him with pride that a six or seven day journey from London or Paris will bring him to this wonderful land, then he, too, will believe in the Renaissance of his own people, and will not look upon practical facts as if they were dreams. The nationalistic feeling which has been slumbering in his heart until now will re-awaken with double strength. He will take pride in the fact that he, too, is a son of an ancient nation, and will not be ashamed of his people any longer when he sees that they lead a free, independent life in their own country and are not fed upon crumbs, fallen from the

table of strangers. If this Jew ever visits Palestine and sees in reality what we now see in imagination, if he actually beholds the country where the Jews lead a natural existence, a life of honest labor, a life of culture, when he sees people who speak Hebrew, whose schools and colleges are conducted in Hebrew, people who have Hebrew papers, Hebrew theatres,—if he sees all this,—who can tell what a revolution this may bring about in his heart? A thousand enthusiastic lectures cannot do as much!

There are facts that have proven to us the truthfulness of such a statement. Although our numbers in Palestine are still very small, our power there very weak, our population at present less than 100,000 and of those only not more than 30,000 participating in our national work, nevertheless we already see a new life being born there. Hebrew became a living language spoken by most of the population. Even foreigners see the necessity of learning Hebrew. Dozens of Hebrew schools spread the language among all classes of society. But what is especially important is that we can already detect the influence of this centre on the Jews in the lands of exile. We must not overlook the great magical power that Palestine sways over the Jews. The things which our small national army consisting of but about 30,000 pioneers has accomplished is of a great deal more importance than the activities of a million Jews in New York. Can you imagine what great, wonderful things we could have accomplished had we a greater number of our people participating in our work? Is there a

reason why we could not expect to found a university in Palestine in the near future? Or an academy of Arts and Sciences and many other important institutions?

However, we do not want you to form the false conception that all we want is to make Palestine a spiritual centre, a centre of Judaism without Jews. This is not our intention.

We shall understand very well that Judaism is as closely connected with the Jews as the soul is connected with the body, as the flame is connected with the candle. It is impossible to imagine one without the other. A centre of Judaism without a centre for the Jews as well, is an impossibility. All those who study this problem can see clearly that a healthy Jewish spiritual centre is the outgrowth of a healthy Jewish element. And just as in order to build up a fire we must add coal, so in order to strengthen Judaism in Palestine we must first of all strengthen and build up the Jewish material life there. Our first activities will be to strengthen our old positions in Palestine and also to create new ones; to increase the number of colonies and improve the conditions of the old ones; to create new industrial centres; to regenerate the inhabitants of the old settlement, the Jews who are still living on charity. And then, when all this is accomplished, spiritual Judaism will come as a natural result of a healthy national life of a people in its own land.

LESSONS DERIVED FROM THE JEWISH COLONIZATION IN PALESTINE

The colonization of Palestine up to the present time has been the work of pioneers. It had to give answers to the two questions: Is Palestine fit for the Jews? Are the Jews fit for Palestine?

There is no doubt that in principle the answers to both questions are in the affirmative; Palestine is suitable for the Jews, and the Jews are the right people for Palestine; but when we regard the situation in detail we must modify both answers with considerable "buts."

Palestine is twice as large as Switzerland, three times as large as Belgium, and once sustained a population of many millions of people, *but* the land has been laid waste during the last fifteen centuries because of the many wars which were waged there. Her forests and orchards are cut down; her fields are covered up in many places by thick layers of sand; her mountains are barren and the rains have washed off the fruitful soil in many places; her cisterns, water reservoirs, and conducts are destroyed; her rivers have become marshes and breeding nests of malaria. All these things must be improved, reclaimed in order to make Palestine capable of sustaining a considerable population. Under the present conditions the land lacks even the capacity of containing any considerable portion of the Jewish Nation, not to speak of giving refuge to

the entire people. In short, in order, that Palestine may be for the Jews what it *should be*, it must be first considerably improved.

But the same is true of the Jewish Nation!

For fifteen hundred years the Jews had been torn away from their land and from Nature. During their wanderings in many various lands they have become used to the moderately cold climate (Palestine belongs to the belt of moderately warm climates). They became adept in commerce and industry and almost entirely alienated from agriculture. Palestine, however cannot at once give occupation to many industrial workers and merchants. She must first become colonized: first there must be established an agricultural laborers' class. And this was the first attempt of the pioneers.

But here we come to a new difficulty. It is generally thought that all that is necessary in order to make an agriculturist of a Jew who was born and lived a considerable part of his life in a city as a merchant, artisan or professional, is to have him buy or otherwise get into possession of some land and the necessary appurtenances.

This opinion is radically wrong, as experience has proven, and it is time to abandon it.

Agriculture, just as any other occupation, must be studied, even as one must learn to be a doctor, engineer, a tailor or a shoemaker.

Nay, even more than that.

In every trade there is at the present time a division of labor which tends to make the work much easier. This system cannot, however, be applied to

agriculture. The agriculturist must be able to do every part of his work. He must be able to plow, to sow, to harvest, etc. He must know how to plant all kinds of fruit-trees and vegetables and how to take care of them. He must know how to rear the cattle which help him in his work or supply him with milk, and how to attend to his fowls, bees and silkworms. He must know how to use to best advantage every part of his land, of the nature around him, of every moment of his time. He must also be handy with the axe and the hammer and other tools so as not to have to call upon the artisan at every emergency.

Then, too, in almost every other industry the work is being done indoors, in shops or factories specifically built for the purposes, and the workers do not depend very much upon the weather. The agriculturist, however, is constantly depending upon it. He must be used to the cold and the heat. Angry winds and raging storms cannot keep him inside if he has to attend to his cattle or do some other important work.

There is a tendency nowadays to reduce the number of working hours a day in all industries. The artisan and the shop worker, having worked a definite number of hours, come home, and forget their work and are able to think of other things. The agriculturist has not even that privilege. He cannot go to sleep until he has fed his cattle, he must rise early in the morning in order to prepare himself and his cattle for work. Then when the time comes for sowing or harvesting, he must work with all his strength and certainly cannot limit his work to fixed hours. Due

to all these circumstances agriculture is a many-sided, many-colored occupation, very agreeable, very wholesome, but not easy. It takes a long time until the colonist gets the necessary knowledge, until he is able to accommodate himself to the life of the real agriculturist.

All the agriculturists of the world, are accustomed to their work because their way of living passes as an inheritance from generation to generation. From their childhood the farmers live and work in their own peculiar way and accommodate themselves to their surroundings. But from whom could Jews inherit all this?

The first colonists reached their goal by dint of their great enthusiasm. But there were very many who did not have enough enthusiasm or will-power, who could not traverse the entire road, and returned or fell by the way. If some of them could not make up their minds to abandon their ideal, they could not, however, keep their children with them, and many of them went away, leaving their parents alone.

Enthusiasm is not under our control, and we cannot rely upon it!

The enthusiasm of the Maccabeans gave them a complete victory over the Greeks, but the enthusiasm of the last Jewish heroes of the times of Bar Giyora and Bar Kochba could not save the Temple from destruction and did not avert the great disaster to the country and the Nation. The enthusiasm of the Greeks saved them from the Persians, but it failed later to

save them from the Macedonians and later still from the Romans.

It is yet too early to cite the example of the great World War. We can only recollect that a hundred and twenty-five years ago the French, due to their enthusiasm, had vanquished almost all European nations which had united against them, but forty-eight years ago neither the proclamation of the Republic nor the strains of the *Marsellaise* were able to save France from a terrible defeat. A thousand Garib. Fans have by their heroism created the new United Italy; the United Italy however does not want to rely merely on the heroism of her sons, but keeps on enlarging and strengthening her army and navy. And the same thing is being done by all other European Nations, who can point to many pages in their history, telling of enthusiasm and heroism, when their countries were in danger. There is no doubt that in the future too, enthusiasm and patriotic spirit will play their great part in the History of mankind; but it is dangerous to rely upon them alone, and just as all nations are preparing armies for wars, we too, must prepare a peaceful army, an army for work, and only through education in schools established for this purpose can we create such an army. We need only recollect how much importance was attached to the education of children by the ancient nations: the Spartans, the Athenians, the Romans. We must recollect how the children of foreign birth, captured by Turkish Janizaris, were reared by the Turks, and became the most zealous warriors of Islam and the Turkish Empire. We must recollect

the Jewish "Cantonists" of Russia, the feeble anaemic children who with vigorous, certainly a too vigorous, training grew up to be strong and healthy as the famous soldiers of Nicholas the First. We must recollect the great struggle for the schools which is taking place in Modern European Society, and we will become convinced that in all times, under all circumstances, it was education which produced the people which were necessary to accomplish a specified ideal.

Neither can our ideal be an exception; and only through education can it obtain the men it requires.

The colonizers are already taking the first step in that direction. They give preference to young men, who learn their work on farms, and prepare themselves to become colonists.

But, as I pointed out before, it is not sufficient to know the work in order to be a good agriculturist. One must grow up in the atmosphere of the work and be brought up on the farm, and this consideration must face those who are interested in the progress of the "Yishuv" (colonization). To make the further step, to look for the colonizing material they must look not among grownups, but among young children, who would be trained in the proper schools as agriculturists.

It is understood that there will always be found Jews, particular young men, who will have enough will power and zeal to overlook all difficulties, just as was done by the first colonists. Napoleon said that in the kit of every soldier lies a marshall's baton. Still there were only twelve marshals in Napoleon's army. And just as every Jew can transform himself

into a good agriculturist, the percentage of such Jews cannot be very great.

Therefore, if a Jew wants to buy himself a farm and, on his own responsibility to become a farmer in Palestine, we wish him God Speed! But if we want to create a normal class of agriculturists, and if we want not to incur too great an expenditure in money, energy or human sacrifice, we must make use of the best means which has ever existed—the training of young children.

Just as Palestine, which has been waste for fifteen centuries, must be now reclaimed in order that she may give what we expect of her, so the Jewish nation, which has become just as desolate as its land, must be reclaimed in order that it may be able to come back to life in its land and become what it is destined to be.

And training is only effective in case of children. Plastic childhood easily assumes all forms. The young child who is brought up under the influence of "Mother-Earth," will remain attached to her forever. He will not abandon her and will fight vigorously against being torn away from her.

The Russian poet, Nekrasoff, in one of his songs, about the children of the village says:

Now, play little children, be gay in your freedom
This is why childhood was given to you,
Forever to cherish your field and to love it
May it forever remain to you dear. . . .

HOW TO PERPETUATE THE EMANCIPATION OF THE JEWS IN RUSSIA¹

This article will come a little too late. About three or four months ago the entire Jewish Press had taken up this question and then naturally was the time for me, too, to speak. For certain reasons, however, I could not do it then, but I feel now like saying: it is for the best. During the honeymoon of the Russian Revolution, my words would have been of no avail; I would have been considered as a mourner among so many wedding-guests.

But a few months have already elapsed. Many horrible massacres have broken out and still more attempts have been made. Again like "in the good old times" the Jews have been accused of using Christian blood for ritual purposes. And our Mr. Winaver who can be suspected of being anything but a Zionist, even he came out with a warning to Russian Jews to look out for a new form of anti-Semitism, which is in an early stage of development there.

The first excitement and enthusiasm have already subsided, and we can now make an impartial observation of what has taken place in Russia.

I wish, however, to make clear that I am very far

¹)Written in the summer of 1917, a few months after the Russian Revolution. Soon after it a project was proposed in the Press to perpetuate with a monument the emancipation of the Jews in Russia.

from underestimating the great happenings which have taken place. As great as that of many other Jews, and perhaps still deeper, is my joy to think of the political and social freedom which our brethren in Russia have gained. My joy is of a two-fold nature: I rejoice as a Jew, and as a Zionist. The Jewish point of view is clear to everyone, and does not require any explanations. What I want to say is a few words from the Zionist's point of view.

For the last 35 years I have had an excellent opportunity of studying all those who immigrated to Palestine, and after long observation, I have come to the conclusion that the one who comes on his own accord, stimulated by his love for our country, our people and our National work, is worth ten of those who come to escape the Russian whip and fear of persecution.

In anticipation, I especially dreaded the time after the war. If the Russian Revolution had not taken place, and our brethren there had not become freed in that great land of Tzarism, hundreds of thousands would have been compelled to leave Russia after the war. A great number of these miserable, ruined creatures would have come to Palestine where under present conditions it would have been impossible for so many of them to make even a bare living. This would have been a great catastrophe and would have endangered the entire Yishub there.

Now, thanks to the Lord, the danger is over.*

*Unfortunately, our joy was premature.

The happiness of the Jews all over the world was certainly very great at the news of the Jewish Liberation in Russia. But just as we should not underestimate the value of this freedom, so is it unadvisable to overestimate its value. The Russian People broke its chains, but did not tear from its heart the deeply-rooted hatred to the Jews. On the contrary, the new situation will give fresh nourishment to this feeling. For the mass, the Jew is too revolutionary; for the extremist too conservative. Pretty soon, we shall hear complaints that the Jew fills the schools, the colleges, monopolizes all the free professions, overcrowds the towns and cities. The mass will make the Jew responsible for all his troubles and treat him accordingly.*

In short, we may say that the life of the Jews in Russia after a while will not be any better than in any other civilized country, as for instance, in Germany, France, England and in America. Yes; they will have rights on paper, freedom according to the law of the government, but jealousy, hatred and boycott from the people. If then, the position of the Jews in Russia will not differ from the position of the Jews in any other country permit me to ask: why perpetuate the Russian Freedom more than any other? Did the Jews in any way at all perpetuate the emancipation of the Jews in France, where they were the very first ones to become freed after so many years of persecution and sufferings? Did they perpetuate it in Germany, in Austria, or in England? Was not the exultation and

*Alas! How soon our prophecy has been fulfilled!

enthusiasm there in those days as great as it is, no, not at present, but was four months ago, in Russia?

But let us assume that in former years people did not think of doing it; they did not know enough then to perpetuate such an important historical fact. Now, however, this question has become a part of the day's program, and we must consider it.

There are two reasons why we should perpetuate the Emancipation of the Russian Jews. First: although I believe that in quality this historical fact does not differ in Russia from any other country, still as far as quantity of the Jews is concerned it differs greatly. When all those provinces which are now in the hands of the Germans will be restored to Russia, then the Jewish population in Russia, besides Poland, will be 6,000,000, almost half of all the Jews in the entire world.

The Emancipation of the Jews in Russia will reflect favorably upon the position of the Jews throughout the world.

The second motive is that there are now such people who can and are willing to do it. When the other Revolution took place, not only in France, but also in Germany, Austria and in England, American Jewry was not in existence. The Russian Jewry was too much oppressed and persecuted to even think of such things. Now thanks to the Lord, we have America with a great free rich and powerful Jewry, which is able to spend millions of dollars for something worth while.

Maybe it is after all a good plan to erect some-

thing for the perpetuation of the Jewish Liberty in Russia. But what?

Several different plans have been suggested. Some have proposed the building of a Temple of Peace in Petrograd, the function of which will be to unite all the different nations that inhabit Russia. Others have suggested that a copy of the American Statue of Liberty be presented to Russia. This proposition has found many supporters, and a sum of money has already been collected to carry out this plan. There was also one who proposed that with the consent of the Rabbis, the story of the Liberation of the Russian Jews should become a part of the Hagada which we read on Passover at the "Seder." But, I believe that to this plan the Hagada itself will be greatly opposed. It is clearly stated in the Hagada: "For our emancipation and spiritual freedom." As far as political freedom is concerned, we will surely have it in Russia, but spiritual and moral freedom—we are far from it. The best we can do is to make some kind of a Purim Festival in order to commemorate this fact. Such festivals have already been introduced by many Jewish communities. But leave Passover in peace. A New Passover, A future one, as the Hagada calls it, we shall celebrate when we will actually become delivered from all our troubles. We—that means all the Jews—when we will become a nation equal to other nations on our own soil, when we will free ourselves from the Goluth in all its different forms, then we will celebrate this new Passover in our own country. The statement "Spiritual Freedom" will help us to solve the prob-

lems which is of great interest to us now.

There is not the slightest doubt that all those who want to participate in the perpetuation of the Jewish freedom in Russia are all nationalistically inclined, because those who are inclined towards assimilation do not want even the name of the Jew to be mentioned. What they want is that the entire world together with themselves should forget about the existence of the Jew. It is against their principles to come out in the open in the eyes of the entire Gentile world and all by themselves erect a monument for the commemoration of the Jewish Freedom. This can be the desire of faithful nationalists only. And these nationalists must first of all desire that the Jew should continue his national activities, should not be compelled to leave the historical stage, should not perish, or become assimilated among other nations.

Now we come to the most important question. The founder of our nation, Moses, lived for 120 years, and was as strong and healthy in his old age as a young man. According to the Hagada, the Angel of Death with all his subordinates could not take his soul. But he had to die as all mortals do, and God wanted him to die before the Jews entered Palestine, so God took his soul with a kiss. Since then it has become a known fact, that the Angel of Death has no influence over the Jew, but you can quite easily get his soul with a kiss. This fact becomes plain to us when we look over the history of the Jews for the last 2,000 years. There was a great powerful rich community in Egypt at the time of the Second Temple. Where is

this community, which created a man like Philon? Already in the next generation, his nephew became an idol-worshipper and helped Titus to destroy Jerusalem. Where is the Jewish aristocracy of Spain? Only the poor and a small number of the rich left the country; all others accepted Catholicism either in pretense (Maranes), or in reality. Of those Maranes only a small number survived, the others yielded to their fate and also became Catholics. Where are the French Jews? Where are the descendants of Rashi? the children of Cremieux? Where are the German Jews? The children of Moses Mendelsohn? Where are the Italian Jews? Did not our national poet as we have noted in the first article in Russia Jehudah Leib Gordon, bewail this fact already fifty years ago? Did he not express his fear in one of his most beautiful poems, "Who can tell me if I am not the last Hebrew Poet and if you are not the last Hebrew reader." The sufferings and persecutions on one hand, and the strong national movement on the other, gave a different direction to the Jewish life in Russia. But now when the real cause of persecution of the Jews is abolished, and the Russian Jew received the kiss, do we not have to fear that in exchange for it, they will give away their souls? It is a fact, that many of them will surely do so.

But let us not talk about Russia. Let us do the way the writers used to do at the time of the censorship. Let us talk about Roumania. One's heart bleeds when one reads about the terrible persecutions, which the Jews have endured there. We are waiting with

impatience for the happy day when the Roumanian Government will willingly or unwillingly give recognition to her Jews and begin to treat them in a humane way. You will then see how proud the Roumanian Jew will have become of the fact that he is a Roumanian. He will then try his very best to prove that he is a direct descendant of the Roumanian soldiers, who were settled in the Danube section by the Roman Emperor Trajan. Then the Jewish Nation will surely lose a great number of her sons and daughters. Will the world at large gain by the fact that a number of the children of an ancient cultured nation have reached such a state of degradation? They will have become assimilated into a people of no importance whatsoever; one of the most barbarous people of Europe and as our poet, Goldfaden has expressed it: "He will sell his Torah, his history and his entire wonderful 'Yichus' for a saloon license."

There are many times when I ask myself: what I wish for? Would I rather have the Roumanian Jew go on suffering and being persecuted, but at the same time remain a Jew, remain my brother; or that all these sufferings and persecutions should come to an end, but with it the Jew there should also cease to exist? This is one of the most terrible tragedies for which we ought to thank our long Goluth.

The only remedy to oppose the kiss, or rather, its influence is a strongly nationalistic feeling. When we now see the many Jews coming back to their people; when we observe the strongly national tendency in Russia, may it express itself in any shape or form: Zion-

ism or territorialism or in the nationalism of Dubnoff and his followers—all these isms are due to the great nationalistic movement which originated 35 years ago and expressed itself in the settlement of the colonies in Eretz Israel, and in the rejuvenation of the Hebrew culture and the Hebrew language.

The person who is interested with his heart and soul that the Jew continue his existence and continue to act as a distinct people; the person who craves that the Jew should keep on creating a better life for himself, such a person will do all that is in his power that the national movement should not die away, but on the contrary should become more and more powerful and become of some benefit to our brethren in the lands of their exile. But in order to give to this movement enough strength, it must assume a concrete shape, it must go hand in hand with the Yishub in Eretz Israel and help to create new settlements. It is a known fact that every step we make in Eretz Israel, every new colony which is created makes a powerful impression upon the Jewish world, and acts as an Elixir of Life upon the deadened limbs of our people. But in order to build new colonies we must have the fittest human material. The work of 35 years gave us not only a great number of Jewish colonists and laborers, but also a great deal of knowledge and experience. These 35 years showed us the great difficulty of this gigantic undertaking.

The Jew as already demonstrated in the previous articles had been torn away from nature for over 2,000 years. The Jew is a typical city man and it is

very hard for him to adapt himself to the life of a farmer and colonist. We must not forget that in our days even those who were born and brought up on the farms when they grow older leave the farm and settle in the cities. This fact shows us how difficult it is for a city-man to return to farm-life. We say, therefore, that in order to get the fittest human material, people who can adapt themselves with the least sacrifices, with the least effort and money, we must go back to the old trodden path, to the old experiment—of education and bringing up. The entire history of the world will assist us in proving that education always gave to mankind those people who were wanted by her.

Now we come to the climax of our problem. This terrible war has already made and will yet create a still greater number of orphans. Some count them already as many as 50,000. But who can fortell what the number of these unfortunates will be the day after the war will cease? A sacred duty is imposed upon the entire Jewish nation, that of caring for these orphans. But who is going to do it, and how? Hundreds of Jewish communities lie in ruins. Even those communities which have not been directly destroyed by the war have also suffered enough and will have their hands full before they will succeed in adjusting their own affairs. Let us suppose for a minute, that they will succeed even in interesting the entire Jewish world in the welfare of all those unfortunate children, even then, America is expected to do the greatest share in this work. But what should be done?

It is no doubt, that all these starved youngsters, who saw death face to face more than once, are physically as well as mental wrecks. In order to bring these children to a healthy normal condition, we must take them out into the open country, provide for them enough fresh air and nourishment. Would not a farm in Eretz Israel be the fittest place for them? Do you not think that to teach them agriculture would mean to prepare them for life with a good future as farmers in Eretz Israel?

We shall have a double gain by solving this difficult problem in this manner: we shall not only save all these thousands of children from starvation and perish, but we shall also render a wonderful support to our national work at the same time; we shall in that way assist in the restoration of the Jew to his Fatherland. Besides, the great interest we Jews will all take in these children will serve as a pledge or guarantee, that the kiss which the Russian Jews have just now received from history shall not become a fatal one, but on the contrary will stimulate them to a new, free life; the orphans who will belong to the entire nation will serve us as a security that the Jewish Nation will not perish, will not disappear among other stronger nations, but will continue its historic existence, its national activities in the direction of general civilization.

Kiriath Sefer

Kiriath Sefer is the institution called upon to solve these problems, which were mentioned in the last two articles. This institution will realize all those ideals already mentioned. Kiriath Sefer wants to be the pioneer on the road of the noble work of bringing up young children, boys and girls to become good faithful Jews and able farmers.

K. S. is considered an agricultural school. In reality, however, it is a large ideal family, where all the members lead the same kind of life and strive towards the same goal.

A few points about the plan and system of the school will give a clear view of it.

(1) The aim of Kiriath Sefer is to give to the students a pure Jewish Nationalistic bring-up and to fit them to become useful workers and able farmers.

(2) Children of both sexes between the age of 10 and 12 who are physically and mentally developed and who know at least to read and write Hebrew are admitted into the school.

(3) The curriculum is subdivided into two stages. The first consists of a course of 3 years devoted to study. The Hebrew language is taught. Holy Writ. and parts of the Mishna and Talmud are studied, as are Jewish as well as general history and geography. Special attention is given to the geography of Palestine. Arithmetic, bookkeeping and natural science, as

much as it is necessary for their occupation are also taught, as well as music, singing, gymnastics, etc.

The pupils study four hours daily; the rest of the time they occupy themselves with light farm work.

When the students complete this course, they are promoted into the next stage, at the age of 13-15. Here they devote most of their time to work. They are occupied the entire day and get instructions only during the evenings or during the days of rest, in order to complete the necessary requirements.

The work consists mainly of agriculture in all its different branches. They plough, plant, reap and thresh. They plant vines, almond trees, olive trees, orange trees, and many other fruit-bearing trees. They work in vegetable gardens, are engaged in cattle breeding, dairy work, poultry raising, bee raising; the silk-worm raising industry, etc.

On those days when there is nothing to do in the field or in the garden the children occupy themselves with different industries; woodworking, metal-working, etc. The purpose of this is not to make tradesmen of them, but to give them a little knowledge of everything, so that when the need arises they will not be helpless.

The mode of life is in accordance with the Jewish laws and regulations. They lead the life of a large family in which the teachers and leaders are the big brothers and sisters. The different entertainments given at the school such as frolicking in the open fields, outings with the teachers or musical recitals and plays given frequently,—make the life in the school very

pleasant and the children feel in their own home.

The language used at the time of study, play or rest—is Hebrew only.

The resources of the school. The income consists of:

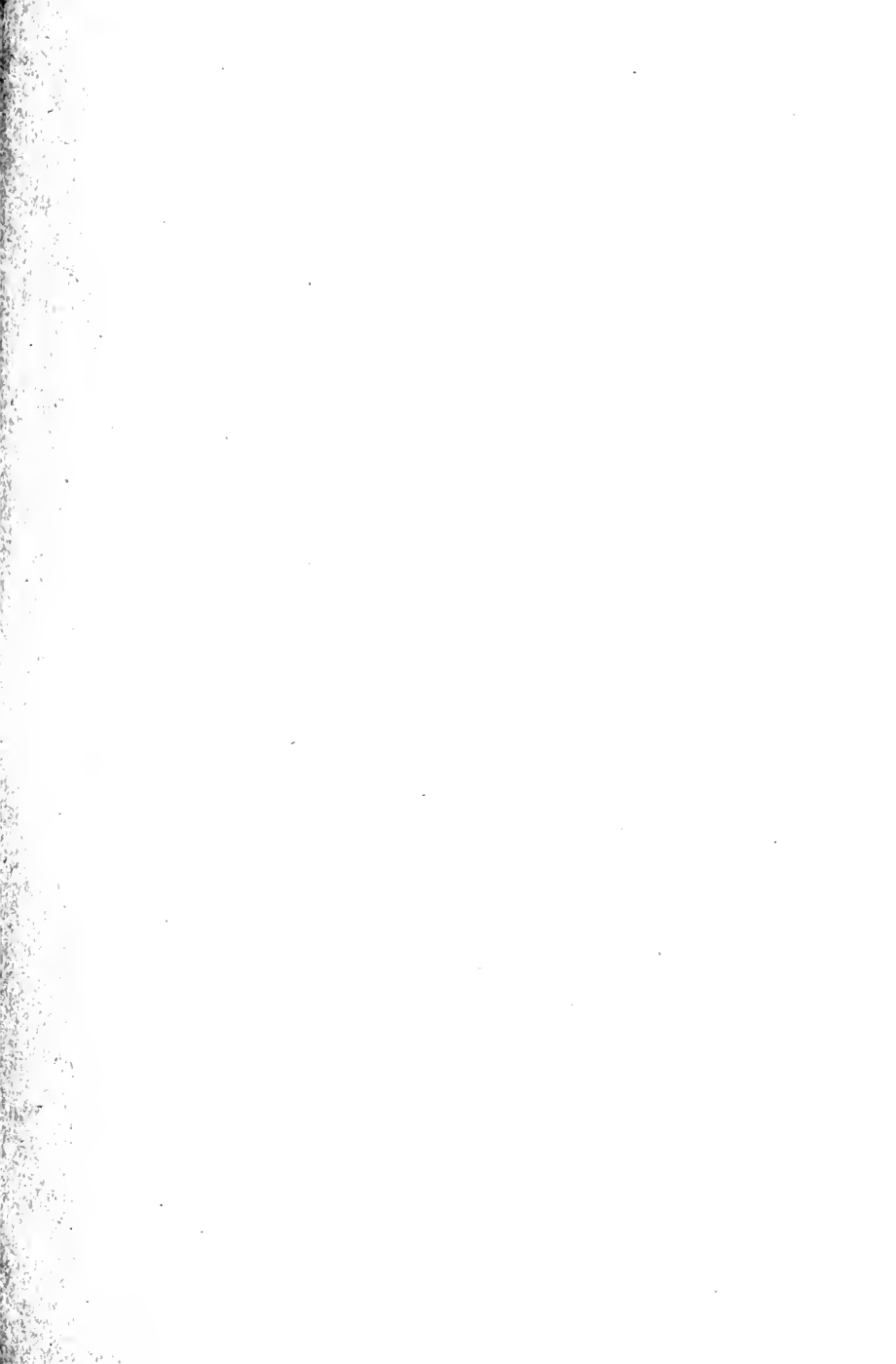
1. Tuition fees which either the parents or relatives of the child pay.

2. Money brought in from sale of products or labor of children.

3. Support received from foreign societies and private persons. This money goes towards the tuition of the poor. Tuition is paid only during the first 3-4 years and consists in total of the sum of \$500 or Fr. 2500. Money is paid only for the first stage when the child spends most of his time studying; in the last stage, however, his work at school makes up for his tuition.

The future of students: Students are allowed to remain as laborers at school until the age of 20-21. During these years they accumulate a great deal of knowledge and become very experienced farmers. It is also possible that some should save up a few dollars. In such a way these students will be the best candidates for the colonization of Palestine. There is no doubt, that if any colonization work will be undertaken by the National Fund, or the J. C. A. these students will be considered as the most fit ones to work with.

Without taking the direct responsibility, the school provides also for the future of its students. A great deal has already been done in this direction.



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