The Recovery of Palestine, 1917

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Jerusalem for Christmas

By

Stanley Weintraub

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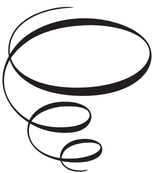

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“Jerusalem before Christmas”

—Prime Minister David Lloyd George’s orders
to General Edmund Allenby, June 1917

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A Note on Names and Sources

Place names and proper names in these pages depend largely on what the reader may recognize. From pre-biblical times to contemporary usage, names have undergone linguistic, historical, political and translation changes. Observers have abbreviated or spelled inconsistently some place names (Jebel Serd becomes Serd; Akaba becomes Aqaba; Yarmuk is alternatively Yarmouk; Dera'a now was formerly Deraa), and proper names can be mistaken or spelled in alternative ways (Mehmed Cemal Pasha or Djemal Pasha). Some place names from the Bible have vanished (as have the sites) on present maps, and have been replaced or repopulated, as have most of the five cities of coastal Philistia. Some place names may represent current Israeli or Arab usage in Englished spelling.

Place names and proper names in quotations may differ slightly from those in unquoted lines, and the inconsistencies will continue. Titles and ranks may depend upon usage, or the date, as a lieutenant can rise to lieutenant colonel, or a colonel to general. Where possible, alternative proper names appear in the index.

Source notes are largely identified in backmatter unless their origins are cited in the pages themselves. Footnotes are explanatory and placed where they do not impede the pace of the narrative.

PREFACE

THE LONG FUSE

"And was Jerusalem builded here . . . ?"

Long ago in 1963 I was a visiting professor at UCLA. My Modern Drama class was planned to seat a maximum of 35 students, mixed graduates and undergraduates. Registration came to a surprising 284, flooding the hallways. We hunted for a vacant auditorium. Given the unanticipated numbers, I was offered two graders from a to-hire list to sit in and assist me–an actor and an actress treading water while waiting for screen gigs in Hollywood.

We improvised. The campus bookstore was unprepared for the demand and had only thirty-five textbook anthologies in stock. Until more copies arrived, my assistants would perform dramatic readings, much of the dialogue from plays that they had never read or experienced. They were game, and the alternative delighted the students, who were briefly downcast when emergency books came, and with them reading assignments.

Just before the mid-term exams my two assistants vanished. Student papers overwhelmed me and had to be put on hold. Then, exhausted but happy, the graders returned–and explained. They had been booked as extras for the Sermon on the Mount episode in *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, which director George Stevens had filmed in Monument Valley, Utah, a setting which fit his concept of biblical Jerusalem. Although I worried that another crowd scene would come along at final exam time, I escaped catastrophe. But Hollywood had rediscovered Jerusalem, and big box office returns, and films would revisit the Holy City again and again. The fascination of Jerusalem has a long fuse.

I had been invited to UCLA following the publication earlier that year of my biography of the postwar T. E. Lawrence, *Private Shaw and Public Shaw*. To hide in the limelight, "Lawrence of Arabia," now by choice a lowly private, had changed his name in the 1920s first to J. H. Ross and then, legally, to T. E. Shaw. A decade after my Lawrence book, on research in Jerusalem, I was waiting outside my hotel in the pre-dawn darkness for a shared taxi to Ben Gurion Airport. Another passenger who

huddled nearby in the wintry chill proved to be a talkative Anglican priest. On his retirement he had been given a purse by his parishioners to undertake a Christmas journey to the Holy Land. He had never before been abroad. As we passed through the Old City while the sky lightened, he pointed out to me enthusiastically details of sites I had already explored on my own. “You may wonder,” he said, “how I know all this after such a brief exposure to Jerusalem. When I was a student at Cambridge my professor of archeology, then a young scholar, was Arnold Lawrence–you know, the youngest brother of the famous Lawrence of Arabia. A splendid man.”

“Yes,” I agreed. I did not explain that although I had never met the dour A. W. Lawrence, I had exchanged letters with him, and as his brother’s executor he had read, in pre-computer and pre-photocopy days, a typed carbon paper-on-onion-skin copy of my Lawrence book, to approve (or disapprove) its contents for publication. After a search I had located him on an African dig in Ghana.

At the airport I bid goodbye to my cheery clerical companion, but not to Jerusalem. I would be back. The Old City would not shed its magnetism. Nor would Lawrence of Arabia.

Places have often focused human sensibility. Jerusalem has had such a multitudinous history associated with faith that overwhelming spiritual experiences related to the city have been christened the *Jerusalem syndrome*. The past for such of the afflicted becomes real, and unshakable.[1] As William Blake wondered in rhapsodic verses printed in 1808, a bucolic dream looking back to “ancient time” from the bleak and smoky industrializing land that was replacing England’s “mountains green,”

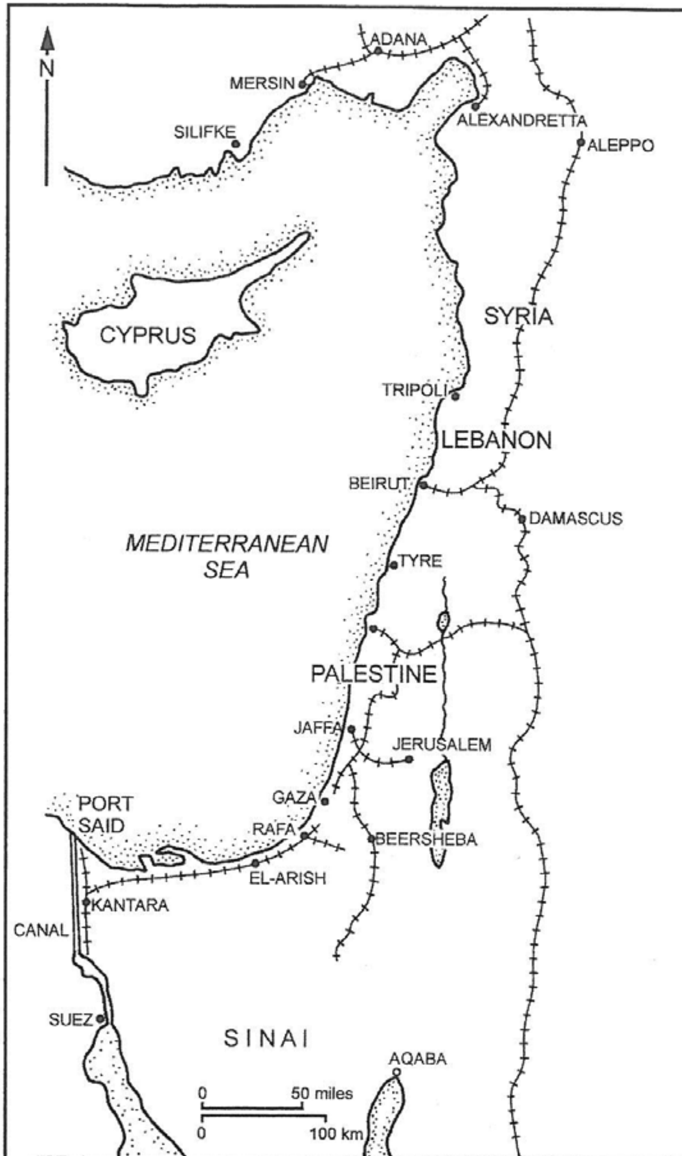
> . . . did the Countenance Divine,
> Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
> And was Jerusalem builded here,
> Among these dark Satanic Mills?

A contemptuous saying among the Arabs in wartime, although they disliked Ottoman rule, dismissed the idea of any change in Jerusalem itself. “When the waters of the Nile flow into Palestine, then will a prophet

---

[1]A retired diplomat has written, “During my time in Israel, there were cases of Americans–usually younger people–showing up as tourists or pilgrims and almost losing their normal mental faculties in the Holy City, to the extent that they needed embassy/consulate intervention to get a ticket home. We used to call it the ‘Jerusalem syndrome.’”

of the Lord deliver Jerusalem from the Turkish yoke.” Yet Blake’s own prophecy seemed to be coming to pass in curious fashion. The mills of the war of 1914-1918 were now turning out the weaponry of death–cannon and rifles, bullets and bombs, gunpowder and armor plate. The mystical Jerusalem of passionate remembrance would be in jeopardy.



Palestine and the eastern Mediterranean, from Cyprus and Turkey south to Sinai and Suez.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DREAM OF JERUSALEM

"The very center of the earth . . . ."

Almost as long as there has been language, Jerusalem has been embedded in recorded memory. The oldest surviving map of the known world, dating to 565 CE, is the mosaic floor of the Byzantine church in Madaba, Jordan, in which Jerusalem is at the center of the earth. A millennium earlier Jerusalem was the imagined center of the western world–the site of the temple of David and Solomon and its Holy of Holies, although all that apparently remains of the fabled edifice is a shard of pottery. The post-Temple *Midrash* claims, "Just as the navel is positioned in the center of a man, the Land of Israel is positioned in the center of the world, as the Bible says [in *Ezekiel* 38:12], 'dwelling at the very center of the earth.'"

The oldest reference to Jerusalem has been found on pottery shards in Luxor, on the Nile, estimated as from 1878-1842 BCE. In the biblical land of Canaan is "Rushalimum," or "Shalem has founded [it]," referring to the Syrian god Shalem, worshiped as embodying the evening star. In sound, *Shalem* suggests the Hebrew "*ha Shem*," or "the name [of God]."

Some centuries later, in 597 BCE, when the elite among the Hebrews who had populated Canaan had been deported by the Chaldean king, Nebuchadnezzar, to Babylon, the lost, devastated, city of Jerusalem gained a mystical aura among the survivors and their successors. The destination of their desire and return is remembered in *Lamentations* and, in the 135th Psalm, as the abode of "the Lord from Zion, he who dwells in Jerusalem." The despair of exile, to be repeated again and again, reached its zenith two psalms later in the sorrowful

> By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept,
> When we remembered Zion. . . .
> How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?
> If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither!
> Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth
> If I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy!

When Cyrus the Persian conquered Mesopotamia, he permitted the Jews to resettle in Jerusalem, but in two turn-of-the-millennium wars, the Romans destroyed the restored Temple and emptied Jerusalem of its Jews. In 70 CE under the emperor Trajan, Roman coins were inscribed *Judea Capta* and the looted city *Aelia Capitolina.* Those who returned were exiled or killed during 132-135 CE. For centuries thereafter, although the fading Romans permitted a docile patriarchate, returnees were few and their lives always at risk.

The earliest surviving *Haggadah*, the narrative ordering of the *Seder* ritual at the beginning of Passover, dates from the ninth century CE. It closes, as do all succeeding texts, with the hopeful "Next year in Jerusalem."

Such longing would appear again and again far into the next millennium, as the lost city, remote from its fought-over and drab actuality, seized by early Muslims in 638, conquered and then lost by generations of fervid Crusaders, and in the hands of Islam since Saladin in 1099, remained utopian only from the distance of dreams. Anna Commena, a 12th-century Greek historian of the origins of the First Crusade, wrote of "a certain Kelt, Peter by name, . . . [who declared] that they should all leave their homes and set out to worship at the Holy Sepulchre and to endeavor with heart and mind wholeheartedly to deliver Jerusalem."

The holy places, an Eden in imagination but not in reality, and a magnet for disparate faiths and sects, over the centuries became a focus of political rivalry. A British consulate had been established in 1838, largely through the efforts of Sir Moses Montefiore, as a protector of persecuted Jews. In 1841 the Prussians entered the competition, combining with evangelical Englishmen, to alternate appointments of a missionary under the Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews. The first appointee was an ex-rabbi from Posen, about whom Benjamin Disraeli wrote sardonically that the congregation other than the two consuls were "five Jews, whom they have converted at twenty piastres a week, but I know they are going to strike for wages."

To establish a presence, the French opened a consulate in 1843, ostensibly as patron of Catholics of the Maronite Levant. An American consulate was established in 1856 to oversee Protestant missionaries from the States; and the Russians followed, ostensibly to protect Greek Orthodox residents, in 1857. After the fall of Byzantine Constantinople to Islam in 1453, the Russian czars had claimed Moscow not only as a third Rome, but also as a New Jerusalem, for the holy places of Christendom in the Old City had been ruled by the Ottomans since 1517. The devout believed that, once in a lifetime, they should make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and dip their shrouds into the Jordan. Since the Jordan was largely unreachable, for pilgrims in spirit the czars from St. Petersburg blessed the waters of the nearby River Neva (and

the Moscow River for distant pilgrims) for the masses every January 6, the Orthodox Christmas.

Among the Protestant clerics were "restorationists," a growing following in "replacement theology" in England and America, which read into *Revelation* an apocalyptic prophecy that only when Jews were re-established in Jerusalem would the Second Coming of Jesus be possible.

The dream of Jerusalem, for whatever reason, and there would be many, included pre-Zionist visions. One of many in mid-nineteenth century came from Abraham Lincoln, who said in 1863 that restoring the Jews to their national home in Palestine "is a noble dream and one shared by many Americans." As a young adult Lincoln lived in New Salem, Illinois, one of the many American towns already named for Jerusalem. Even earlier, in England, another aspiration came from the ostensibly Anglican Benjamin Disraeli, for whom that longing was politically hazardous, as at twelve he had been converted by his father, Isaac D'Israeli, to open opportunities in Ben's future. Nevertheless, taunted in the House of Commons by Daniel O'Connell, Disraeli (dropping only the apostrophe from his surname) responded witheringly, "Yes, I am a Jew, and when the ancestors of the right honourable gentleman were brutal savages in an unknown island, mine were priests in the temple of Solomon."

On a wintry walk in 1851 with Lord Stanley, a future Earl of Derby, Disraeli, "with great earnestness," according to Stanley, paused to recall his "Grand Tour" visit to Palestine as a young man in 1830. He mused–overly sanguine–that with the Ottoman empire "falling into ruin," the Turks might sell land for a "Jewish nation." Syrian Palestine, he contended, had ample natural resources and needed only "labour, and protection of the labourer." The "question of nationality might wait."

Palestine had a long history of conquest, expulsion and occupation. The Philistines of the Bible lived along its shoreline from about 1175 BCE until the Assyrian conquest in the Eighth Century of the new millennium. *Palaestina Prima* from 390 to 636 CE was a Byzantine province in the Levant, comprising the Galilee and northern Jordan valley. *Palaestina Secunda* comprised the shoreline and inland hills of the southern Levant, the Biblical Judea and Samaria, including Jerusalem. *Palaestina Salutaris* was a Byzantine province, largely desert wasteland, established in the 6th century CE and encompassing the little-inhabited Negev and present Jordan east of the Dead Sea. The Byzantine Christian provinces above would become Muslim by edict after the conquests of Muhammad and his successors.

According to Lord Stanley, Disraeli saw in Ottoman Palestine "only a single obstacle: arising from the existence of two races among the Hebrews, of whom one, those who settled along the shores of the Mediterranean, look

down on the other, refusing even to associate with them. 'Sephardim' I think he called the superior race." The other "race"–Disraeli always used the term loosely–were the Ashkenazim, resident in central and eastern Europe, especially in Czarist lands, where they were harassed at best, only marginally educated and restricted to menial occupations. German and Austrian (including Czech and Hungarian) Jews, also Ashkenazim, had better educational and economic opportunities, and it was there that political Zionism arose, primarily through the zeal of Viennese journalist Theodor Herzl.

The grotesque scandal of the court martial of French army captain–and Jew–Alfred Dreyfus, who was sentenced to prison exile in 1894 on fabricated charges of treason, had energized Herzl, who had been the Paris correspondent of the Vienna *Neue Freie Presse.* In 1896, after evidence clearing Dreyfus was quashed in a two-day re-trial cover-up, Herzl published *Der Judenstaat*, a manifesto for an independent Jewish entity. In 1899 Dreyfus would be returned to France from Devil's Island in French Guiana for another trial, convicted again, but pardoned reluctantly in a concession to public outrage. Only in 1906 was he finally exonerated and reinstated in the French Army as a major.

As a symbol of persecution, the gross miscarriage of justice stirred political Zionism beyond national frontiers. Herzl had declared in *Der Judenstaat* that the Jews were a people, not a sect or a race. "I do not make up fantasies," he wrote. "I deal entirely with real factors . . . and the fantasy lies only in the[ir] combination." The English novelist and Herzl contemporary Israel Zangwill called him "the first Jewish statesman since the destruction of Jerusalem." Awakening interest in Britain proved difficult. The English edition of *The Jewish State* sold only 160 copies.

Herzl's friendship with the publisher of the Viennese *Neue Freie Press*, on which Herzl ran the literary pages and was its highest-paid professional, was complicated by Eduard Bacher's open distaste for Zionism. Like some of his contemporaries he guarded his public influence, fearing conflicting and problematic loyalties to one's country. Yet Bacher felt the ache of their shared past, once telling Herzl as they left the *Presse* office together, "an old Prague legend he had heard in his youth."

According to Bacher, a poor, elderly Jewish woman, peering out of her window, saw a black cat struggling to give birth. She rushed outdoors, held the cat, and assisted in the delivery. Then she made a bed for the stray and her kittens in her coal box. Soon the cat and her litter vanished, but the coals on which she had lain had turned into gold. She showed the gleaming nuggets to her husband, who declared that the cat must have been sent purposefully by the Almighty. He offered the gold to finance a synagogue–the famous Prague

Altneuschul. But the pious old man had two wishes beyond Prague. He wanted to see the black cat again to thank her for the mysterious gift, and he hoped to die in Jerusalem.

Much time had passed when, looking out her window, the old woman noticed the cat in its former nesting place and summoned her husband. As he rushed out to fetch the cat, it vanished into the *Altneuschul,* disappearing into the floor of the synagogue. Reaching the spot he noticed an opening in the floor–apparently through to the cellar. Plunging through into a dark passage, he trudged on until daylight gleamed in the distance. Finally emerging, he found himself in a strange city, unlike any he knew. When the people he encountered explained that he was in Jerusalem, he died of joy.

The fable, Bacher conceded, revealed how the longing for Jerusalem dwells within the Jewish soul "always and everywhere," even below the threshold of consciousness. It even "glimmered through" to him.

A Yiddish tale by the American Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer, "The Little Shoemakers," would reinforce the impossible dream. From the Patriarchs to the pious Abba Schuster of Frampol, shoemaker and gravedigger, "stretched an unbroken chain of generations. . . . He and his sons were the seed whose number had become like the sand and the stars. He was living in exile because the Jews of the Holy Land had sinned, but he awaited the Redemption, and he would be ready when the time came." Although Abba Schuster barely survived in his utterly poor village in Poland, he often thought that when the Messiah came at last to return the Jews to the Land of Israel, "he, Abba, would stay behind in Frampol, in his own house, on his own hill. Only on the Sabbath and on Holy Days would he step on a cloud and let himself be flown to Jerusalem."

Whether it was Vienna, Budapest or Frampol, the rich or the poor, the mystic vision never lost its urgency. The Jesuit distinction between myth and truth fits both folk and faith concepts of Jerusalem. Myth is that which never happened, but is forever true.

Although anti-Semitism remained rife in Vienna, personified by Karl Lueger, its demagogic mayor from 1897 to 1910, German-speaking central Europe included significant Jewish businessmen, scientists and industrialists who had succeeded despite years of widespread and often virulent bigotry. Herzl sought to persuade such influential compatriots that Jerusalem, which meant Zionism, could be a covert means of extending German power eastward. Philipp, Prince of Eulenberg and the Kaiser's closest friend, conveyed Herzl's ideas to Wilhelm II, who accepted the irrational and atavistic myth that however submerged over the centuries, the elite of Jewry possessed subtle and indestructible influence that might be exploited. Well versed in English, his mother's and his grandmother Victoria's tongue, he

probably knew, or knew of, Disraeli's famous novel of 1844, *Coningsby*, and its enigmatic Sidonia, who has no other name.

"I am of that faith," he explains to young Harry Coningsby, "that the Apostles professed before they followed their master." The mysterious, solitary Sidonia, very likely based on the Rothschilds, whom the novelist knew, was beyond political frontiers the most influential banker in Europe. Born to wealth but shut out from universities, the fictional Sidonia studies mathematics and philosophy with a Sephardic tutor in England significantly named Rebello, then travels the world "to exhaust the sources of human knowledge." He was "proud of his origin, and confident in the future of his kind. . . . When he reflected on what they had endured, it was only marvelous that the race had not disappeared. They had survived exile, massacre, despoliation, the degrading influence of the constant pursuit of gain; they had defied Time." All over Europe, the imaginative Sidonia–or Disraeli–sees crypto-Jews managing affairs: professors, composers, artists, thinkers, bankers, generals, ambassadors, councillors, and cabinet ministers.

"It shouldn't be forgotten," the Kaiser suggested to Eulenberg, purveying the dysfunctional fantasy of centuries that Disraeli had drawn upon, "that, considering the immense and extremely dangerous power which international Jewish capital represents, it would be a huge advantage to Germany if the Hebrews looked up to it in gratitude." Accordingly, Herzl managed to arrange an audience with Kaiser Wilhelm, who was planning a state visit to Turkey and Ottoman Palestine, which was the southern sector of Syria. The *sanjak* (province) of Jerusalem, the Byzantine *Palaestina Secunda*, ran southward from Jaffa to the Egyptian Sinai. An on-site meeting to air Herzl's views in what was then referred to as Asia Minor seemed promising.

In October 1898 Wilhelm II and Kaiserin Augusta embarked in an imperial flotilla to Constantinople with the German foreign minister, twenty other courtiers, eighty maids and servants, two physicians, and a retinue of bodyguards. With four Zionist colleagues, Herzl followed by rail on the Orient Express to what he described in his diary as "an astonishingly beautiful and filthy city." The view toward Asia over the Golden Horn, an inlet of the Bosphorus from his hotel window, Herzl wrote, was one of "Whistlerian twilights, nights glittering with lamps, wonderful rose-tinged morning mists, the grey-blue and deep violet of the evening vapors. The ships melt into the fog and then emerge again. On moonlit nights, powdery veils. . . . Above, the delicate sky, below the oily waters sparkling with the silver splash of oars." He was convinced that Constantinople, however coveted by European powers, would for that reason alone ever remain Turkish. No rival nation would countenance another having it.

The official seat of government, nominally headed by the Grand Vizier,

was the Sublime Porte, the Ottoman equivalent to Whitehall, "a ruinous, filthy, magnificent old pile" next to the fabled Seraglio, housing the ministries of foreign affairs and home affairs. The place of real, autocratic, authority was the Yildiz ("Star") Kiosk, a sprawling estate that included the creaking palace of the Sultan, Abdul Hamid, who issued the commands which the Porte executed.

Formally gloved and top-hatted, Herzl had a ceremonial audience with the stooped, bearded old Vizier, Kahlil Rifat Pasha. Following an exchange of banalities through an interpreter, Khaireddin Bey, the Vizier's secretary-general, Herzl explained that he was seeking an opportunity to purchase land for a Jewish settlement in the Holy Land. "Palestine is large," the Vizier answered with courteous insincerity, "what part of the country did you have in mind?"

"It would have to be weighed," Herzl said with deliberate imprecision, "against the benefits we offer. For more land we would make [a] greater sacrifice."

Soon the Vizier half-rose and offered Herzl his wrinkled hand. The audience was over. In an anteroom afterwards Khaireddin explained ambiguously that Khalil Rifat was "pleased that you fulfil your obligations as he fulfils his." But the Vizier possessed no authority. The Sultan effectively did, but would claim (through an intermediary), "The Turkish people own the Turkish Empire, not I. I can dispose of no part of it. The Jews may spare their millions. When my Empire is [forcibly] divided, perhaps they will get Palestine for nothing. But only our corpse can be divided. I will never consent to vivisection."

According to Herzl's diary on June 19, 1896, he was at first "touched and moved by the lofty words of the Sultan, although for the time being they put an end to all my hopes. There is a tragic beauty in this fatalism which foresees death and dismemberment, yet fights to the last breath, if only through passive resistance." Herzl's hopes rested in the transitory "time being."

The Sultan spoke through his adviser's "barbarous French." Those Jews who "enter as colonists," warned Abed Izzet Bey, "must not only become Turkish subjects, but must renounce their previous allegiance." The elderly Ibrahim Hakki Bey, Izzet's assistant, added, "And perform military service if His Majesty calls them to the colors." Further, any land acquisition would have to be through "an Ottoman corporation"–a transparent device for bleeding the entity of its funds.

Reaching the "weak, craven" Abdul Hamid, however futile the effort, was a labyrinth of petty bribery. "The indecent clutching for hand-outs, which begins at the palace gate and ends only at the foot of the throne, is probably

far from the worst of it. Everything is done for what there is in it, and every official or functionary is a swindler."

At the time a rising nationalist cadre calling itself "Young Turks" was pressing for a role in the enfeebled, bankrupt regime. And Kaiser Wilhelm, realizing that Britain was the chief adversary of the Turks, and already occupying an undeclared "protectorate" in Egypt now only nominally an Ottoman province, sought influence in the less than sublime Sublime Porte.

On a second trip to Constantinople in October 1898, the tireless Herzl had his invited audience with the Kaiser, who was en route to Jerusalem. They met in a reception room in the Yildiz Kiosk. The Kaiser wore a dark Hussar's uniform. With him was his foreign minister, Count Bernhard von Bülow. As Herzl entered, an aide de camp "of Prussian elegance" scrutinized the cut of his morning coat, the crease of his trousers, the shine of his shoes, the silkiness of his hat. "I forgot to take off my right glove, a lapse in prescribed etiquette."

Wilhelm was tall–as tall as Herzl–"with great sea-blue eyes." Herzl wondered if the Kaiser "felt a twinge of embarrassment at having a shorter right arm . . . than all other men." The birth deformity had driven him to insistent efforts to convey masculinity via strenuous horsemanship and splendid military apparel that partially concealed his deformity. "Where should I begin, Your Imperial Majesty?" Herzl asked, and expounded his *Judenstaat* proposal.

Implying German ambitions to exploit Zionism in the Middle East at the expense of Russia, France and Britain, the Kaiser asked how he might intercede with the Sultan to resettle in Palestine Jews indebted to Berlin. "A chartered company under German protection," suggested Herzl. An Ottoman equivalent was unworkable.

Sultan Abdul Hamid, Caliph of Sunni Muslims from Morocco to India as ostensible heir in continuity to the great Suleiman, had already rejected any opening to the Jews, whatever its potential, explaining to his daughter, much as he told Herzl, "The Jews may spare their millions. When my empire is divided, perhaps they will get Palestine for nothing. But only our corpse can be divided." The Sultan worried about his corpse. As a gift the Kaiser had brought the latest German rifle, but when he tried to present it, Abdul Hamid shrank away in fright, fearing that he was about to be assassinated. A despot who anticipated violent death, he employed food tasters and kept a eunuch at his side who took the first puff of each of the Sultan's many cigarettes. Nevertheless, in the permissive Ottoman world, Abdul Hamid allowed his subjects, even Christians and Jews, to follow their own religious practices and use their ethnic languages as long as they paid their taxes.

After being feted by banquets and fireworks in Constantinople, Wilhelm

and Kaiserin Augusta departed in full panoply for Jerusalem. He had offered to meet with Herzl again in Palestine. At mid-afternoon on October 29, 1898, wearing a helmet topped by a Prussian gold eagle and a gold-threaded white uniform, and preceded by his official photographer, the Kaiser cantered on a black charger through a triumphal arch erected by Palestinian Jews (there was also a colorful Turkish arch) and into a breach in the historic wall made for him at the Jaffa Gate. Prussian hussars and the Sultan's lancers accompanied his entourage. Crowds in colorful holiday attire followed. After Wilhelm dismounted at David's Tower, he and Augusta walked into the city of sun-gilded ochre stone buildings to view sites traditionally associated with Jesus. His ostensible mission was to dedicate the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, intended, in the politics of faith, as a rival to the Anglican and Roman Catholic edifices. Arab merchants, including women with their heads covered by scarves, sat patiently in the dense street markets and outdoor coffee shops until the entourage passed.

"How did you like the German Emperor's speeches during his visit to Palestine?" Czar Nicholas would ask his widowed mother. "The pictures of the journey through the Holy Land," the former Czarina Marie wrote back about the Czar's cousin, "would have made me laugh if the whole thing were not so revolting. All done out of sheer vanity . . . . That pilgrim's cloak, that pose of Ober-pastor, . . . and she wearing the Grand Cross in Jerusalem, all this is perfectly ridiculous and has no trace of religious feeling–disgusting!"

On November 2, at a sprawling encampment for the Kaiser north of Jerusalem's Damascus Gate–thirty large, billowing, and elaborately furnished white tents guarded by an Ottoman regiment–Wilhelm affably received Herzl and four German Zionists. "The land needs water and shade," the Kaiser advised. "There is room for all. The idea behind your movement is a healthy one." Herzl agreed that supplying water and planting trees was expensive but feasible. "Well, you have plenty of money," said the Kaiser, "more money than all of us." Although he offered the fiction that all Jews were cosmopolitans–merchants, bankers, middlemen–he also alleged the opposite, that the Jewish settlements in Palestine were burgeoning with a poor refugee underclass. "Sixty thousand of these people are [already] here, greasy and squalid, cringing and abject, doing nothing but trying to fleece their neighbors for every farthing–Shylocks by the score." Shylocks were rare. Among Jerusalem's 45,000 inhabitants, most of them in miserable alleyways, were about 28,000 Jews. Attempting to reconstitute a lost world that never existed as they imagined it, migrants from eastern Europe were settling in villages on the Mediterranean coast or as far north as the Galilee.

After disembarking from a Cook's Travel Agency steamer in Jaffa, Herzl and his party of four had visited Mikveh Israel, to him an "excellent"

agricultural school, then went on to Rishon LeZion, flourishing with vineyards of French origin sponsored by Baron Edmond de Rothschild. Herzl guessed cynically that the Baron's local representative left the villagers "quavering" with concern that their tilling of the unresponsive soil thus far had not lived up to Rothschild hopes. Long antagonistic to the Rothschilds, Herzl suspected that their apparent hostility to the *Judenstaat* concept was its potential as a conflict in loyalties. The banking family led by Nathaniel Rothschild in London engaged all of Europe. Besides, deplored Lord Rothschild to Herzl, "We would never obtain Palestine."

At the hamlet of Wadi Chanin which Herzl visited, "the children sang; [and] an old man presented me with [the traditional] bread and salt, and wine from his own vineyard." Yet Herzl was dissatisfied that such settlements had no collective identity under Ottoman rule. Realizing that required a *Judenstaat.*

Herzl urged Kaiser Wilhelm that under a *Judenstaat*, Jerusalem could be shared. "We shall extra-territorialize Jerusalem so that it will belong to nobody and everybody; its Holy Places the joint possession of all Believers." Wilhelm remained noncommittal. After all, the land belonged to another potentate, the obstinate Ottoman sultan. And the rival churches, mosques and synagogues, and their adherents, seemed backward and irreconcilable. A German presence already existed beyond Jerusalem. Sarona, near Jaffa, was an agricultural colony of a Lutheran millenarian sect, producing oranges and grapes for its winery.

Change would come slowly. Early in the European war T. E. Lawrence, for whom the mystique of faith had no appeal, would write from Egypt, "Jerusalem is a dirty town which all Semitic religions have made holy. . . . In it the united forces of the past are so strong that the city fails to have a present; its people, with the rarest exceptions, are characterless as hotel servants, living on the crowd of visitors passing through." There were two kinds of Jews in Palestine, he wrote in the years after Herzl: villages of "aboriginal" settlers who never migrated, "speak Arabic and good Hebrew," and have "developed a standard and style of living suitable to the country, and yet much better than the manner of the Arabs"; then there were the "foreign (German inspired) colonies of agricultural Jews, who introduce strange manners of cultivation and crops, and European houses (erected out of pious subscriptions). . . ." They spoke "a bastard Hebrew and German Yiddish, more intractable than the Jews of the Roman era." He found "a deep-seated [Muslim] antipathy to Jewish colonists and aims that is such an unlovely feature of the Jerusalem area."

Herzl visited the huge limestone blocks that were the ruin of the Western Wall, the contested site of the Second Temple destroyed by the Romans in 70

CE. Still revered by Jews as the Temple Mount, it was known to Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary), one of the three holiest sites in Islam. He wrote in disappointment, “Any deep emotion is rendered impossible by the hideous, miserable, scrambling beggary pervading the place.” Very likely Herzl would not have been appeased had he been told of the tradition that when the Romans set fire to the Temple, six angels descended from heaven, alighting upon the massive ochre stones of the Western Wall. As the fire intensified, the angels wept, their tears keeping the flames away from the remnant of the Temple that survives. On Mount Moriah, Muslims venerated the Al Asqa mosque and the Dome of the Rock shrine, built in 691 CE, about sixty years after the death of Muhammad. Already missing was a fragment of physical evidence from the first century–a warning stone in Greek admonishing visitors not to trespass into the partitioned outer wall area built by Herod in 37 BCE and reserved for Jews. Discovered in 1871, it was brought by the Ottomans for display at the Archeological Museum in Constantinople.

Herzl found the tourist-filled but tatty Church of the Holy Sepulchre[1] and the Mosque of Omar also devoid of awe. “What superstition and fanaticism on every side!” He wrote. Yet distance and perspective soon stirred him as it would not move Lawrence. From an ancient synagogue he “enjoyed a view in the morning sunshine of the Temple area, the Mount of Olives and the whole storied landscape. I am firmly convinced that a splendid New Jerusalem can be built outside the old city walls. The old Jerusalem would still remain Lourdes and Mecca and Yerushalayim.”

In a sour mood, Herzl left for Vienna on October 31, 1898. “When I remember thee in days to come, O Jerusalem,” he wrote, “it will not be with delight. The musty deposits of two thousand years of inhumanity, intolerance, and foulness lie in your reeking alleys.” Its future required something better. What he would call “the chief tenet of my life” was that “Whoever wishes to change men must change the conditions under which they live.” As for the Jewish people, he predicted, despite all, the end of an outsider status for those who wished a *Judenstaat* to materialize. “So build your State, that the stranger will feel contented among you.”

Tirelessly he sought his Jerusalem–indirectly, yet that remained his only expedient. Conferring in Vienna in December 1899 with the American

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[1] The unsteady structure over which the faithful believe is the empty tomb of Jesus is jealously guarded, and brawled over, by Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests. In 2016 the feuding Christian sects, rather than risk the collapse of the structure, agreed to permit conservators to repair and restore the building, exposing remnants of the ancient limestone cave.

ambassador to the Sublime Porte, Oscar Straus, the first Jew of that rank across the sea, Herzl found Straus pessimistic. He recommended a site in mostly barren Ottoman Mesopotamia. As for Jerusalem, "The Greek and Roman Catholic Churches would not let us have it." Further, the province symbolized by Baghdad "was the original home of Israel. Abraham came from Mesopotamia; and thus it too provides us with the mystic bond of tradition."

Herzl, nevertheless, had already established a Jewish Colonial Trust in London, to accrue capital for land acquisition in Palestine. Curiously, he was encouraged by the Hungarian former Jew, Arminius (once Haim) Vámbêry, at seventy a clever Asian adventurer and retired professor of Oriental Languages in Budapest. He had sampled a slew of religions and had been a cleric in a number of them. He claimed to Herzl to have met Disraeli, who allegedly had said, "You and I belong to a race which can do everything but fail."

Conferring again with Nathaniel Rothschild in 1902, Herzl, keeping possible options open, offered his plan for a British-chartered land company for the Sinai (the El Arish coastal area west of Gaza), Palestine and Cyprus. Lord Rothschild offered to intercede with the British Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain. "But I do not wish to make a big experiment, under any circumstances. Only small, at most, 25,000 settlers." El Arish had a mosque with minaret, and tamarisk and fig trees. Herzl was, at first, interested, as it would abut the *sanjak* of Jerusalem, "which I shall somehow acquire from the [Ottoman] authorities at the first opportunity." But a limitation to 25,000 settlers, amounted, to him, not to an opening opportunity, but close to a "refusal."

Meeting with Chamberlain, he recalled his frustrations with the Ottomans. "You know what Turkish negotiations are. If you want to buy a carpet, first you must drink a half dozen cups of coffee and smoke a hundred cigarettes; then you discuss family stories, and from time to time you speak again a few words about the carpet. Now I have time to negotiate, but my people have not. They are starving in the Pale.[1] I must bring them an immediate help."

Chamberlain's "imperturbable mask . . . laughed." He liked the Zionist idea, he claimed, but could only offer land in a British possession "not yet inhabited by white settlers. He had no idea where El Arish was. Herzl explained that he wanted "an assemblage center for the Jewish people in the neighborhood of Palestine."

[1] From 1791 to 1917, beginning with an edict by Czarina Catherine, Jews in Russia were largely restricted to the Pale of Settlement, comprising lands in Poland, Lithuania, and other western fringes of the empire, and further restricted to mostly lowly occupations.

Chamberlain suggested meeting with the Foreign Secretary, the Marquis of Lansdowne. "Reassure Lord Lansdowne that you are not planning a Jameson raid from El Arish into Palestine." (A British raid into Afrikaan[2] territory from colonies in South Africa had set off the calamitous Boer War, just concluded.) Lansdowne turned out to be "gracious" but only promised that he would "return to the matter on some other occasion." Apparently he saw no urgency, but Herzl hoped that at the least the approval of a land charter for somewhere might happen. Parched El Arish, requiring Nile water, furnished Lord Cromer, the Vice-Regent of Egypt, an excuse for denial. Herzl still hoped to Chamberlain for "a small buffer state" not too distant from Jerusalem.

Hope alone suggested more ambitious ideas, now published in a novel, *Altneuland*, with echoes of the Budapest synagogue of the fable which Herzl had learned of in 1896. "If you will it," went its epigraph, "it is no fable." Herzl depicted life in a flourishing Jewish state in Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital, twenty years into the future. He sent copies to the Kaiser, Lord Rothschild, and other worthies. In a copy to the Grand Duke of Baden, a confidant of Wilhelm II, Herzl wrote, "The book deals with a new society. I believe that all nations are ever on the march toward a new society." A reviewer, Hugo Ganz, scorned the prophecy, writing, "No Moses enters the Promised Land."

As Herzl had envisioned a future in Palestine via a chartered company for the hoped-for restoration and ingathering, he engaged an influential London lawyer to draft a settlement charter. David Lloyd George was a glib, forty-year-old Welshman and rising Liberal politician. Herzl also arranged with European Zionists to quietly purchase from Arab landowners prime property on Mount Scopus for a future Hebrew university. Dying at forty-four in 1904, Herzl would never see it. In his will he asked to be buried next to his father in Vienna, "to remain there until the Jewish people will carry my remains to Palestine." On August 16, 1949 his remains were interred on a ridge facing Jerusalem from the west, renamed Mount Herzl.

While Herzl's dream briefly languished, Sultan Abdul Hamid's few powers would continue to fade. He would make no difference in the empire. He was deposed in 1909, replaced by Mehmet Rashid, who did what he was told to do. Balkan wars then crippling his government were disastrous, costing the Turks much of their remaining lands in Europe. On January 13, 1913 an officer in the rising Young Turk movement, Ismail Enver, thirty-one, slipped into the Sublime Porte and shot the Sultan's war minister. Seizing power with two other conspirators, Mehmet Talaat and Ahmed Djemal, Enver

[2] Of Dutch descent.

created a reformist triumvirate of the Three Pashas, naming himself Minister of War. Talaat became Minister of the Interior and then Grand Vizier, or prime minister. Djemal at first would be military governor of Constantinople.

The Pashas intended the "Turkization"–the rejuvenation–of the rotting Ottoman empire, realizing that military defeat would mean further partition and that non-Islamic peoples in the population were likely to be disloyal if a new war came. Time to prepare proved short. A widening European war erupted early in August 1914. Djemal favored France, with its link to Britain and Russia, but Enver, who admired German militarism, would prevail. The British made the choice easy. The Turks had ordered two warships to be built in Britain. When war appeared imminent, the Admiralty canceled the sale although Ottoman sailors to man them had already arrived. The Germans had two ships at risk in the Mediterranean, the battle cruiser *Goeben* and its escort, the *Breslau.* As the Admiralty feared their involvement, once the war began, its ships chased after the two, which turned toward Turkey and under pressure from Liman von Sanders in Constantinople were permitted to steam through the Dardanelles and anchor in the bay of the Bosphorus. Since Turkey was still a neutral and Russia was at risk, the British protested. But in tit for tat, the Ottomans took technical custody, pretending that the German sailors had become Turks and the warships flew the Turkish flag. Enver's Ministry of War also filled up with fez-attired Germans. A pun quickly surfaced–*Deutschland über Allah*.

When the Sultan declared war on Britain in November, the self-appointed Ahmed Djemal arrived in Jerusalem as effective dictator of Greater Syria, setting up headquarters of his Fourth Ottoman Army in a German edifice on the Mount of Olives named for Kaiserin Augusta Viktoria. In early December an elderly sheikh arrived at the Damascus Gate bearing the Islamic green banner from Mecca. A procession of soldiers followed by Muslim residents paraded through the Old City chanting "*Allahu akbar*" (God is great), and at the Dome of the Rock, the squat, bearded Djemal accordingly declared holy war. Jubilation continued in Jerusalem until just before Christmas, when the pro-Turk sheikh from Mecca suddenly died. It appeared to the faithful as an omen.

Far off in Britain, William Blake's nearly forgotten "Jerusalem" verses took on unintended but renewed urgency in the dark early years of the war, as the toll of the dead reached such numbers that newspapers began publishing the names of the lost in smaller and smaller type. With uplift badly needed, in 1916 the Poet Laureate, the jingoistic Robert Bridges, published a patriotic anthology of verse, including Blake's "Jerusalem," and asked composer Sir Hubert Parry to set what he envisioned as a hymn to vanished glory to appropriate music. Bridges wanted a singable score "for a Fight for Right

meeting in Queen's Hall . . . to brace the spirit of the nation, . . . simple, suitable music for an audience to take up, and join in."

The rousing setting was an immediate success, but Parry would have misgivings about the seemingly endless and unwinnable war. In 1917 he considered withdrawing his score, but it had been taken up by the National Union of Women's Suffrage. For them he re-orchestrated Blake's "Jerusalem" for voices and organ. In 1922 Sir Edward Elgar re-scored the anthem for full orchestra. Hearing it for the first time, King George V confessed that he preferred it to "God Save the King." Blake's "Jerusalem" has since become an immensely moving alternative national hymn. In many ways the concluding, seemingly medieval, lines, in which Blake had deplored the bleakness of the early industrial revolution, could be reinterpreted in 1917-18 as the grim industrialization of modern war:

Bring me my Bow of burning gold,
Bring me my Arrows of desire.
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

Late in 1917 the gold had been British payoffs in golden sovereigns to Arab tribal chieftains whose allegiances were more mercenary than political. Unfolding then from the clouds were warplanes no longer mere flying kites but purveyors of bombs. The chariots of fire had become Rolls-Royce armored motors carrying Hotchkiss machine guns–still only a few in the desert, but the world of war was changing. The medieval and the modern were becoming entwined.

Until the necessities of war intervened, Jerusalem, despite the zeal of Theodor Herzl, had not been a British destination either–only the glowing metaphor from William Blake's concluding lines early in another century:

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green & pleasant Land.