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Centenary of the Mandate for Palestine: *Part 1 - The Balfour Declaration*

■ Hugh Kitson

Writer, Director and Producer of the *Whose Land?* documentary

July 24 this year will mark the centenary of the ratification of the British Mandate over the territory then known as Palestine. While most people in the Jewish communities around the world know something about the British Mandate—especially in Israel—not many Christians know about it, and only a tiny percentage of people in the general public have any knowledge of it at all. So, what is the Mandate for Palestine and why is it so important? We will be examining this question in a series of six articles, beginning with this one.

What Led to the Mandate?

The Mandate for Palestine was one of a number of Mandates that were formed after the First World War to enable people living in what would be perceived today as 'Third World' countries to prepare themselves for self-determination and independence. These were countries or territories in various parts of the world, mainly in Africa and Latin America, but also in the territory that had been under the control of the Turkish Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. Included in those Mandates was the Mandate for Palestine, which we will examine in detail in forthcoming articles. But first, we need to backtrack a bit and examine what led to the Mandate for Palestine.

There were two major milestones preceding this particular Mandate. The first one was the vision encapsulated in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. The second one was the Resolution that came out of the San Remo Conference of 1920, which itself was an adjunct of the Paris Peace conference of 1919.

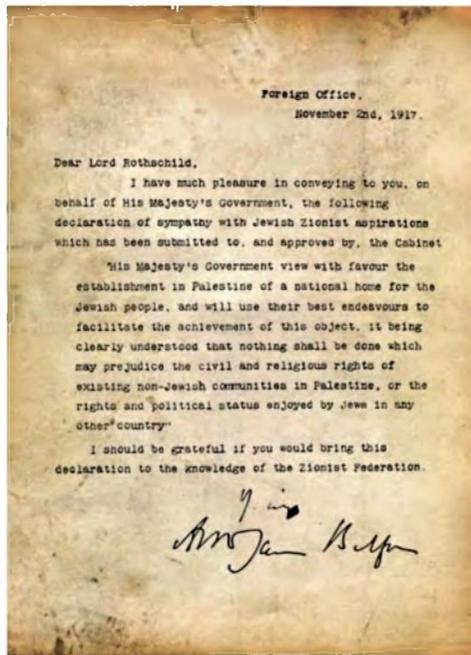
From Vision to International Law

Chaim Weizmann (then leader of the Zionist movement and who would later become the first President of the State of Israel), addressing the annual Zionist conference in July 1920, described the San Remo Resolution as "the most momentous political event in the whole history of our movement and it is perhaps no exaggeration to say in the whole history of our people since the exile."¹

Across the Atlantic, the Zionist Organisation of America declared: "that the decision of the Supreme Council of the Principal Allied Powers [in other words, the San Remo Resolution] crowned the British declaration [which was, of course, the Balfour Declaration] by enacting it as part of the Law of Nations of the world."²

The San Remo Resolution of April 1920, in many respects, is even more significant to the Jewish people than the Balfour Declaration of November 1917. The Balfour Declaration, in legal terms, was nothing more than a statement of Government policy. The San Remo Resolution and the Mandate for Palestine that resulted from it, both of which encapsulated the Balfour Declaration, raised it to the legal status of an international treaty.

The San Remo Resolution, and the Mandates that resulted from it, were not isolated events. There was a back-story—especially as far as the Mandate for Palestine is concerned—that continues to have both prophetic and spiritual ramifications to this day, both now and into the future.



1917 Balfour Declaration



Arthur Balfour

Biblical Title Deed to the Land

Most Christians, who share God's love for Israel and the Jewish people, know that the title deed to the land, originally known as the land of Canaan, as being the sole inheritance of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob forever. It is referred to many times in the Hebrew Bible.

The best example is found in *Genesis 15*, where the Lord entered into an unconditional covenant with Abraham, especially regarding the land that became known as Israel. Behind the scene at San Remo in 1920 the Lord did a remarkable thing. He enshrined that ancient 'title deed' into international law in the modern era. The ratification of the Mandate for Palestine in July 1922, and its subsequent implementation in 1923, was the blueprint for its realisation.

Theodor Herzl's Vision

The Balfour Declaration was the vital stepping-stone to that happening. However, what became known as the Balfour Declaration was not an isolated event either. We need to rewind back even further to the 1890s, when there was a rise in anti-Semitism in Europe.

This was epitomised by the Dreyfus Affair in France, when a Jewish army officer, Alfred Dreyfus, was falsely accused of treason because he was Jewish. Among those reporting on the trial was a Jewish Vienna-based journalist. His name was Theodor Herzl.

Herzl came to realise that only persecution lay ahead for the Jewish people in Europe, and in 1896 he published a booklet entitled *Der Judenstaat*—The Jewish State. The following year, 1897, Herzl organised the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland, where he predicted there

would be a Jewish State within 50 years. In 1900 the Zionist Congress was held in London, where Herzl said: "Zionism demands a publicly recognised and legally secured home in Palestine for the Jewish people. This platform, which we drew up three years ago, is unchangeable."³



Theodor Herzl