

# Weekly Teaching

## November 3, 2017

On November 2, we celebrated the centennial of the Balfour Declaration.

This important statement of British policy was sent from the then British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, a major leader of the British Jewish community, to Walter Rothschild.

The intention of the Balfour Declaration was to convey England's intention to support the establishment of a Jewish State in the Land of Israel.

The Balfour Declaration was later incorporated into the Sevres peace treaty with Turkey, and the Mandate for Palestine that was created under the League of Nations.

The text of the Balfour Declaration read as follows:  
Foreign Office, November 2, 1917

*Dear Lord Rothschild,*

*I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:*

*"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."*

*I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.*

*Yours sincerely,  
Arthur James Balfour*

The name "Balfour" belongs within the ranks of Herzl, Weizmann, Ben Gurion, etc.

His 1917 proclamation transformed the dream of Zionism into the beginning of a reality that would ultimately create the re-establishment of a Jewish self-autonomous state in our ancient homeland of Israel.

It's important to note that Balfour's Zionist support increased after the writing of his Declaration. Prior to his death he noted that "nothing he had done, or tried to do, would prove of more permanent value to the world than his support for the Jewish national cause."

Balfour was remembered for his support for Zionism by Winston Churchill.

In 1943, Churchill told a group of people that "after Hitler was defeated, Britain would have to ensure that the Jews were established in Palestine because Balfour had left him an inheritance that he had no intention of changing."

Balfour was also the forbearer of what is commonly known as Christian Zionism.

He articulated that Christianity owed Judaism an "immeasurable debt."

He felt that the religious persecution of Jews was “the deepest stain on Christian civilization.”

Balfour was not a naïve idealist. He recognized that significant problems would arise between Jew and Arab when the Jewish State would become formally re-established.

But, he felt that the Jewish claims to Israel were stronger than Arab claims. And while a political solution would be required, Britain could not deny the inherent right of the Jews to their homeland.

Balfour strongly supported the establishment of the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem.

In 1925, he attended the consecration of Hebrew University and noted that a “new era had opened in the history of the scattered people.”

He also endorsed Hebrew as needing to be the official language of a new Jewish State.

Balfour’s contributions to Zionism were beyond the simple greatness of his Proclamation.

He actively supported the establishment of a Jewish State in the land of Israel, and set the foundation for international recognition to occur on behalf of the Jewish State.

Jews used to commonly celebrate on November 2, Balfour Day.

Perhaps with this year’s centennial we can re-acquire the sacredness of the Balfour Declaration and all of the concerted efforts Balfour performed in support of our People.

May the memory of Arthur James Balfour eternally be for a blessing; Zichrono L’vracha.

Shabbat Shalom,

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