

**Source Sheet Class 20-“2000 Years of Jewish History”-Rabbi Menachem Levine**

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**Source 1**

**“I have come down to rescue them from Egypt’s power. I will bring them out of that land, to a good, spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey...”**

**Exodus 3:8**

**Source 2**

**For the whole area is excellent for crops or pasturage and rich in trees of every kind, so that by its fertility it invites even those least inclined to work on the land. In fact, every inch of it has been cultivated by the inhabitants and not a parcel goes to waste. It is thickly covered with towns, and thanks to the natural abundance of the soil, the many villages are so densely populated that the smallest of them has more than fifteen thousand inhabitants.**

**Josephus, The Jewish Wars; Book III 3:2 Penguin edition, p. 192**

**Source 3**

**“So devastated will I leave the land that your enemies who live there will be astonished... Your land will remain desolate, and your cities in ruins.”**

**-(Leviticus 26:32-33)**

**Source 4**

**Similarly, that which He stated here, and your enemies that shall dwell therein shall be desolate in it, constitutes a good tiding, proclaiming that during all our exiles, our Land will not accept our enemies. This also is a great proof and assurance to us, for in the whole inhabited part of the world one cannot find such a good and large Land which was always lived in and yet is as ruined as it is [today], for since the time that we left it, it has not accepted any nation or people, they all try to settle it, but to no avail.**

**-Ramban on Leviticus 26:32**

**Source 5**

**Until today no people has succeeded in establishing national dominion in the land of Israel... No national unity or spirit of nationalism has acquired any hold there. The mixed multitude of itinerant tribes that managed to settle there did soon lease, as temporary residents. It seems that they await the return of the permanent residents of the land.**

**-Professor Sir John William Dossion in “Modern Science in Bible Lands” London (1888) Pp. 449-450**

#### Source 6

We traversed some miles of desolate country whose soil is rich enough but is given wholly to weeds - a silent, mournful expanse... A desolation is here that not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life and action. We reached Tabor safely... We never saw a human being on the whole route. We pressed on toward the goal of our crusade, renowned Jerusalem. The further we went the hotter the sun got and the more rocky and bare, repulsive and dreary the landscape became... There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country. No landscape exists that is more tiresome to the eye than that which bounds the approaches to Jerusalem... Jerusalem is mournful, dreary and lifeless. I would not desire to live here. It is a hopeless, dreary, heartbroken land... Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes.”

Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, 1867

#### Source 7

... Then the Almighty will bring back your captivity and have mercy upon you; and He will return and gather you from among all of the nations where he has dispersed you. If your dispersed ones will be even at the ends of the heavens, from there G-d Almighty will gather you and from there He will take you. And G-d your Lord will bring you to the land that your fathers inherited and you shall inherit it and He will do good for you and make you more numerous than your forefathers.

(Deuteronomy 30:1-5)

#### Source 8

As long as Israel does not dwell on its Land, the Land does not give of her produce as she is accustomed. When she will begin to reflowerish, however, and give of her fruits in abundance, this is a clear sign that the end -- the time of Redemption -- is approaching, when all Israel will return to their Land.

-Maharsha, R. Shmuel Eliezer Aidel (1555-1631)

#### Source 9

Were I to sum up the Basel Congress in one word which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly, it would be this: At Basel I founded the Jewish State. Perhaps in five years but certainly in 50 everyone will know it.

- Diary of Theodor Herzl

### Source 10

**We surely know that if we were believers and truly trusted in the salvation of the Lord and were observers of the commandments of G-d, we would even today be dwelling in our Holy Land... Why did the Land perish? ‘Because they abandoned My laws which I put before them.’ It has already been made clear that the Zionists reject all the commandments and cleave to every manner of abomination... It may be assumed that if the Zionists gain domination they will seek to remove from the hearts of Israel, belief in G-d and in the truth of Torah... They have thrown off their garments of assimilation and put on a cloak of zeal so that they appear zealous on the behalf of Judaism. They are in fact digging a mine beneath our faith and seeking to lead Israel from beneath the wings of the Shechina, the Divine Presence.**

**-Rav Tzadok Hacoheh of Lublin (1823-1900)**

### Source 11

**Secular Zionists may think they do it for political, national or socialist reasons, but in fact - the actual reason for them coming to resettle in Israel is a religious Jewish spark in their soul, planted by God. Without their knowledge, they are contributing to the divine scheme and actually committing a great Mitzvah.**

**The role of religious Zionists is to help them to establish a Jewish state and turn the religious spark in them into a great light. They should show them that the real source of Zionism and the longed-for Zion is Judaism and teach them Torah with love and kindness. In the end, they will understand that the laws of Torah are the key to true harmony and a socialist state (not in the Marxist meaning) that will be a light for the nations and bring salvation to the world.**

**-Rav Avraham Yitzchok HaCohen Kook**

### Source 12

**“[In Haifa] the four members watched a ‘gruesome operation.’ The Jewish refugees had decided ‘not to accept banishment with docility. If anyone had wanted to know what Churchill meant by a “squalid war,” he would have found out by watching British soldier using rifle butts, hose pipes and tear gas against the survivors of the death camps. Men, women and children were forcibly taken off to prison ships, locked in cages below decks and set out of Palestine waters.’**

**“When the four members of UNSCOP came back to Jerusalem, Eban recalled, ‘they were pale with shock. I could see that they were pre-occupied with one point alone: if this was the only way that the British Mandate could continue, it would be better not to continue it at all.’”**

**-Martin Gilbert, Israel: A History (p. 145)**

### Source 13

**“The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here the spiritual, religious and national identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to the world...**

**“Exiled from Palestine, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of the dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and restoration of their national freedom.**

**“Accordingly we, the members of the National Council met together in solemn assembly today and by virtue of the natural and historic right of the Jewish people and with the support of the resolution of the General of the United Nations, hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine to be called Israel...**

**“We offer peace and amity to all neighboring states and their peoples and invite them to cooperate with the independent Jewish nation for the common good of all...**

**“With trust in the Rock of Israel, we set our hands to this declaration at this session of the Provisional State Council in the city of Tel Aviv on Sabbath Eve, 5th Iyar 5708, 14th day of May 1948.”**

**- Israel’s Declaration of Independence**

### Source 14

**“Our survey of three and a half millennia of Jewish history is closed. But the story which we have set ourselves to tell is unending. Today, the Jewish people has in it still those elements of strength and endurance which enabled it to surmount all the crises of its past, surviving thus the most powerful empires of antiquity.**

**“The Jews have played an all-important role in history. They are pre-eminently an historical people and their destiny reflects the indestructibility of the divine decrees. Their destiny is too imbued with the “metaphysical” to be explained either in material or positive historical terms.**

**I remember how the materialist interpretation of history, when I attempted in my youth to verify it by applying it to the destinies of peoples, broke down in the case of the Jew, where destiny seemed absolutely inexplicable from the materialistic standpoint. And, indeed, according to the materialistic and positivist criterion, this people ought long ago to have perished. Its survival is a mysterious and wonderful phenomenon demonstrating that the life of this people is governed by a special predetermination, transcending the processes of adaptation expounded by the materialistic interpretation of history.**

**The survival of the Jews, their resistance to destruction, their endurance under absolutely peculiar conditions and the fateful role played by them in history; all these point to the particular and mysterious foundations of their destiny...**

**The historical not only represented man’s external relations, but that it might also reveal the very phenomenon and essence of his being. The peculiarity of Jewish destiny**

**consists in its incommensurability with either the pre-Christian or the Christian era. Scientific criticism applied to traditional Biblical history can neither discredit the universal role played by the Jews nor offer a satisfactory explanation of their mysterious destiny. Nor does this criticism grapple with the absolutely peculiar tie existing between the Jews and the 'historical,' and their extraordinarily intense feeling for history."**

**- The Meaning of History by Professor Nicholai Berdyaev Moscow Academy - London 1935, pp. 86-7**

#### **Source 15**

**Throughout our history there have been weaker elements who have shirked the sacrifices which Judaism entailed. They have been swallowed, long since, in the great majority; only the more stalwart have carried on the traditions of their ancestors, and can now look back with pride upon their superb heritage. Are we to be numbered with the weak majority, or with the stalwart minority? It is for ourselves to decide."**

**- Cecil Roth, A History of the Jews, (Oxford University: Shoken Books, 1961) pg. 423**