

THE CASE
for the
JEWISH
NATIONAL FUND

A CHALLENGE TO ZIONISTS

by
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THE OBJECTS OF THE
JEWISH NATIONAL FUND

(Defined by World Zionist
Conference, London 1920)

1. To acquire the land in Palestine with the voluntary contributions of the Jewish people, such land to be the common property of the Jewish people.
2. To lease the land exclusively on hereditary leasehold for cultivation or building thereon.
3. To facilitate the settlement of working farmers.
4. To ensure the cultivation of the land by Jews.
5. To ensure the right use of the soil.
6. To combat speculation in land values.

Keren Kayemeth is the Hebrew rendering of
Jewish National Fund.

THE CASE FOR THE JEWISH NATIONAL FUND

A CHALLENGE TO ZIONISTS.

DURING the present transition, or "consolidation" stage in Zionist work many accepted ideas have become subject to revision. That is an excellent thing, for progress is irreconcilable with stagnation in the realm of thought as it is with immobility in the physical world. It is all to the good that a "German" and an "American" School have arisen challenging methods and even principles which for long have secured the cachet of officialdom and custom.

But one warning must be heeded. In examining anew the foundations of the Zionist structure let us not poke too far lest in our haste to re-fashion, we undermine what is stable and permanent. Zionist work is still young—what is a quarter-century or so in a people's life?—and it may be too soon to remodel *everything* from the ground upwards. We must be selective in our criticism, cautious in our alterations, and slow to destroy.

*A
Warning*

It is only recently that in a frontal attack upon the whole policy of the Zionist Organisation there was first placed in question its fundamental principle that the land we acquire in Palestine shall be the property, not of private individuals, but of the whole people. The argument adduced was that as only private enterprise could build up the country and private enterprise meant private property in land, the J.N.F. was an obstacle in the upbuilding.

The doubt about the wisdom of national land for the National Home spreads the more easily because Zionists, who should be the guardians of this principle, have mostly neglected to acquaint themselves with the deep-lying motives as well as the incomparable advantages of that principle. The Keren Kayemeth has had the curious experience of being so popular sentimentally that its friends have not troubled about its intellectual support, the fate of a child whose physical beauty obscures its mental attributes. Now that critics of alleged deficiencies of the Keren Kayemeth on its practical side have arisen, the ideal of *Geulah Haaretz*, strong enough for many, is not sufficient reply to all.

*On the
Importance of
the Land
Question*

The challenge to Zionists is not, therefore, so much to defend the integrity of the Keren Kayemeth: we may safely assume that the hundreds of thousands of Jews who love the land, who are inspired by the *Torah* injunction to redeem the soil, and whose devotion to the Keren Kayemeth has brought it in pennies and Pfennige over 2 million pounds—these men and women will not easily endure any change in the constitution of the Keren Kayemeth which would render its 213,000 *dunams* of people's land so many parcels of private property.

The challenge to Zionists is to learn why, in addition to the purely national aspect, the Keren Kayemeth is essential, socially and economically, to the sound structure of the National Home.

In the first place it must be remembered that one of the chief considerations attached to the Keren Kayemeth is that it provides settlers who have no means of their own with the land on which to establish themselves. There is happily now a certain movement among moneyed immigrants towards agriculture which the J.N.F. welcomes and will assist. But our entire rural development cannot depend on the "middle-class" farmer. Room must also be kept for the young man and woman willing to reclaim barren lands by their own labour and who are entitled eventually, after many years of toil, to settle in their own homes on the soil.

But whether workingmen or Baale-batim (middle-class) settlements are required—*Moshavim* or *Moshavot*—the land question affects both equally significantly.

Usually when a new country is to be settled a competent authority is in charge of the distribution of the land. Either the Government itself allocates it—free, or on easy terms—or a concession is given to a corporation under certain control. It is recognised by holders of all shades of political thought that land is too valuable a thing, not only monetarily, to be subject to the pranks and fluctuations of private speculation. In old fully developed countries reformers of all kinds struggle to remove or mitigate the land monopoly which strikes at the root of every economic and social problem. Many who are not followers of Henry George realise that land is the key to prosperity and to treat it as a commodity made by man is a false conception. The pressure of progressive opinion in these countries reveals itself in measures designed to break up large estates held out of use and so to "free the soil for the people."

In newer countries like Australia and New Zealand laws have been passed in time to ensure a better distribution among all the inhabitants of the rent from the land. If elsewhere the land is vital to the nation, in Palestine, an old land which for us is new, it is trebly so. The argument that unless we possess the land we shall possess nothing, need only be stated to be understood. But when that is granted what is meant by "we"?

A site on the main road of Jerusalem has just passed from Jewish into other hands. Near Petah Tikva a similar case lately occurred. The "crisis" is to blame. But such financial depressions are inevitable and no nationalistic propaganda will avail against the temptation or necessity to sell to the highest bidder. So that land which was "ours" yesterday, is no longer so to-day! This is but one contingency against which the Keren Kayemeth was designed to protect us.

*How
Jewish
Labour
has been
Safe-
guarded*

Lately the Zionist world was agitated by a clash in a Jewish village between farmers and workmen, because the former were, if indirectly, employing non-Jewish labourers. Ignoring the merits of that dispute in themselves, it is clear that on Keren Kayemeth land such friction could never take place. That contingency, that Jews, even pioneers who sacrificed everything for Erez Israel, should be tempted or obliged to work their soil with non-Jewish hands, was provided for by the Keren Kayemeth. It can be confidently asserted that if the Keren Kayemeth had not given the Jewish labourer the possibility of establishing that Jews could work the soil, if it were not for Gan Shmuel and Nahalal, for Daganian and Kfar Gideon, then *Jewish labour would not have penetrated or persisted even in those private colonies where it is to-day the rule or tendency.* And how important that may be politically is only now being sensed. Palestine is under a mandate to be given self-governing institutions. Local government will first be tackled and the day is hardly far distant when the local suffrage will be given to the villages as it has already been given to the towns. In some Jewish villages the Jews may find themselves outnumbered by the Arab workers (it is a commonplace that like Gresham's law that bad money drives out good money, cheap labour drives out dearer cultured labour). It is not chauvinism to decry this possibility. Either Zionism enables a Jewish body politic, whatever its size, to be created in Palestine, or it fails. The most enthusiastic pro-Arab Zionist will not ask that in Jewish settlements the Jews should be a minority. It was G.K. Chesterton, no lover of our people, who in Palestine sneered that the Jew buys the land but the Arab ploughs it. Even our detractors require us to show what we, as Jews, can fashion. And only the Keren Kayemeth has safeguarded the 100% Jewish village.

IT is sometimes urged when contrasting the advantages of private against national land, that colonies which have flourished (meaning the plantations) owe their prosperity to the impetus derived from their personal ownership of the land. It is forgotten however, that in many of these colonies the land is not yet private property at all. It was purchased by the P. I. C. A.* which still owns much of it. The P.I.C.A., like the Keren Kayemeth, after

* Palestine Jewish Colonisation Association (Baron E. de Rothschild's Foundation).

*Private
Ownership not
an
Incentive*

acquiring the land in large tracts, improved it and then allotted it to settlers. The difference is that whereas the Keren Kayemeth retains title to its land granting a perpetually renewable lease, the P.I.C.A. signs a deed of sale. The repayments are small and spread over a term of years. But in spite of its easy terms how many P.I.C.A. farmers have still to pay back the cost of the land? How many of these individuals who are supposed to have been inspired to success by the magic of private ownership have not yet troubled or been able to possess that magical *Kushan* (title-deed)? The P.I.C.A., like the Keren Kayemeth, a public spirited and not a commercial institution, owns 400,000 *dunams*. Together with the National Fund's over 200,000 *dunams* their joint possessions are 60% of all Jewish owned land in Palestine. And of the remaining 40%, far from all is the property of private individuals. Large areas still belong to companies like the American Zion Commonwealth, which though formed to sell their land, have not yet disposed to individuals of more than a minor portion.

The Jew who is anxious to be a farmer indeed welcomes the co-operation of national institutions, either by their provision of free land, or credit, or by their paving the way, hard as it is, towards a free and economically sufficient life on the soil.

*National
Ownership not
Socialism*

THERE is a mistaken idea that on our national land the form of settlement must necessarily be Socialistic or even Communist. The error is due to national land ownership being often advocated as a first step to State Socialism, and also to the common management of their farms by Workmen's Groups who occupy J.N.F. land. There is much to be said for the highest form of co-operation in agricultural settlements. But it has to be remembered that Jews are inclined to be individualistic, and the Keren Kayemeth is not concerned to lay down one identical form of life which the settlers on its land should follow. Common control of the land or of its value does not imply Socialism. It does not compel but stimulates and facilitates group life and close co-operation. It is intended to safeguard certain fundamental public interests. Its object is indeed to reconcile private with public welfare. The group life that has developed at Daganah is not the product of any coercion—it could only grow on a voluntary basis, and in the same way the choice of the Nahalal inhabitants (who formerly lived in *Kvutzot*) for Individual Small-holdings was a free one. In both cases the national ownership of the soil has eased the building up of the respective structures while it has given rise to quite different forms. Again both Nahalal and Daganah are characterised in varying degree by liberal tendencies. But there are settlements on National land which follow scrupulously the most orthodox practices. Such is Hittim, for example, a Miz-

rachi village, or Kfar Gideon comprising pious Jews from Transylvania, or Mkor Haim, a suburban quarter near Jerusalem, or Nahlat Jacob, a Chassidic village near Haifa. Already life on the land of the Jewish National Fund runs the whole gamut of Jewish religious and social types. The middle-class *Baale-bait* is at Merhavia Moshav and Kfar Gideon; the young Halutz at Ain Harod; the mature Halutz at Nahalal; the Girls Groups at Nahlat Yehuda; the artisan in Borohow Suburb; the professional man in Nordia; the conservative Jerusalemite at Mkor Haim, and so forth. And these varied examples, drawn from so many strata of Jews, are found on a total of 53,000 acres. Proof enough of the broadness of JNF policy and the abundant scope for the expression of individualism which its leasehold tenure provides.

What then is the common denomination of all these settlements? In what respect does their being on National soil make them uniform? In other words, how does the J. N. F. influence them?

THE land of the J.N.F. cannot be subject to speculation. It cannot be held out of use until the need for it, public or private, forces a buyer to pay the owner many more times the price he paid for it. There can be no "vacant lot industry" on J.N.F. ground.

Land inevitably rises in value wherever development proceeds. You cannot prevent land values rising if population increases. The enhanced value is the product of the improvements which are effected on the land by the application of the labour and capital of the population. Land being essential to life and there being a *limited* quantity, the growth of the community increases demand and reduces the available supply. The owner of the land need do nothing to improve it but it will become in time more valuable owing to the efforts of others—road and rail construction, building of factories and then villages in its vicinity, etc. It is clear, therefore, that the difference between what is paid for undeveloped land and what it is worth because it is surrounded by a thriving population should accrue to that population to which it is due. Actually it falls into the pocket of the private landlord. In the case of J.N.F. land, however, this increased value does revert to the community because the rent which the tenant pays to the J.N.F. for use of the land is a *percentage of its value* which is periodically determined afresh.

These are economic advantages—the prevention of speculation with the exploitation and ruin which it involves, the gain for the whole people of the increased land value which their activities produce. We may well consider, however, other aspects of the national ownership of land.

*All Types
on JNF
Land*

*The In-
creasing
Value of
Land*

On Self-Labour

There is this further feature, that the J.N.F. only allots to a family such an area which it can itself work independent of employees. In private colonies the tendency, if not general practice, is for owners to acquire tracts of larger size which necessarily involves the hiring of labourers. In consequence the owner becomes not a farmer but an overseer. His function becomes that of employer rather than worker, business-man rather than cultivator. Likewise his family becomes divorced from the soil and village life; his children grow up with longings for the city. The economic problem which the hiring of workers introduces brings with it not only ordinary labour troubles but the Arab labour question also. Thus it is only on Keren Kayemeth land that you have *guaranteed* (though, influenced by the Keren Kayemeth policy, it exists also elsewhere,) the existence of a class of Jewish *working* farmers, with its beneficial sequel in the national and social senses.

Town Planning

The acquisition of large areas in advance of settlement by a public body (the J.N.F. Directors are chosen by the General Council of the Zionist Organisation at its Biennial Congress, the supreme authority of the Jewish National Movement), enables wise town and village planning to be laid down. Caprices, ignorance, indifference, or utilitarian motives of individuals cannot override the public interest in the sound planning of a J.N.F. village, or urban or suburban quarter. Moreover, once the land is developed the tendency towards congestion and slums is checked, for a lessee must not subdivide his plot without approval.

Social Ties

These advantages do not embrace what may be termed the moral implications of national land. The very fact that the land upon which they live belongs to no one person but to all, is bound to impress the psychology of the settlers and particularly of their children born on that land. Elsewhere people are divided into landlords and landless. In Erez Israel, to the extent that our settlement proceeds on J.N.F. soil, the nation will be bound by the tie of a commonly owned land. That this bond will exercise a healthy influence upon the young national Home can hardly be doubted by those who read the lessons of history. The poor, the Bible says, will never cease among us; the varying natural talents of the individual will create material differences also. But possession of the land which God promised to Israel will not become the means of creating a privileged "upper" class. In a J.N.F. village or suburb the schoolchildren can mingle on a free common basis—all live upon national land.

Political Significance

One need not dwell on the political significance attaching to the redemption of the land of Palestine by the whole people. Not because individual Jews are anxious or willing to immigrate and to settle in Palestine was the Balfour Declaration or the Mandate secured. The will of Jewry to rebuild its National Centre there is the basis of those documents. And this could hardly be

manifested more thoroughly and adequately than through the function of the Jewish National Fund which Lord Plumer described as "a practical expression of the desire of *the Jewish people* to revive the lands of their forefathers."*

THE re-setting out of the case for the Jewish National Fund with which no Zionist of 20 years ago was unfamiliar, may cause more recent recruits to wonder why it should now be the subject of attack. The experience of our practical upbuilding has certainly taught us some precious lessons, and informed and instructive criticism is always welcome. Ignoring those who probably object to the J.N.F. as part of their general anti-Zionist Organisation program, and ignoring those who frankly wish Erez Israel land to be the prey of real estate speculators (it has been urged that speculation spells prosperity), the objections to the J.N.F. system which remain are chiefly legal and commercial. It is asserted that the leasehold title is not adequate security for a mortgage loan which is the common method of financing land

*Some
Objections*

* Message of the High Commissioner of Palestine to Mr. Ussishkin on the occasion of the celebration at Jerusalem of the 25th Anniversary of the Fund. Author's italics. The Message continued: "The Government have constantly before them in new settlements on the land, visible evidence of the great work which the Fund has performed during the past twenty five years.

"The Government fully appreciate the benefits which have accrued to the country from the restoration to cultivation of land that was previously waste, from the reclamation of malarious swamps, and the settlement of Jews on the soil of Palestine."

Mr. J. N. Stubbs, the Director of the Government Lands Department, stated on the same occasion:—

"Will you allow me to give expression to my own appreciation of the work of the Fund as I have had the opportunity to see it. During the last six years I have been in very close touch with that branch of this movement which deals with land purchase, and through the courtesy of the officials of the National Fund, I have had the opportunity of visiting most of the areas which have been acquired during that time. I hope you will allow me to pay tribute to the wisdom with which those areas have been selected and to the energy and care which have been expended in developing them. In dealing with the affairs of the Fund I have always been struck by one article in particular of its Constitution. I refer to that article which prohibits the sale of property once it has been acquired by the Fund. That provision has appealed to me in two senses. First it reproduces a very fine sentiment in the ideal of keeping for the Jewish people those estates which the Fund is from time to time able to acquire. And secondly, it ensures that the land will be kept free from the grasp of the greedy speculator. It is no part of my function to condemn the work of those who make a living out of land speculation, but I cannot avoid the conclusion that Jewish land speculation is a waste of Jewish energy and a waste of Jewish money. And that it adds very much to the difficulties of that Fund whose activities we are celebrating to-night. It only remains for me to give expression to the hope that success may crown the efforts of your Fund and to express the hope that world Jewry will recognise its obligation to attain that success."

*And the
Answers*

development. It is true that in many countries such loans are only known to be granted on freehold property which in the case of foreclosure falls to the mortgagee. J.N.F. land, as it is not owned by the occupier, cannot be mortgaged by him. But there are cases in which the right of the lessee can and does serve as security for loan and the unfamiliarity of the procedure should not debar us from applying it in Palestine. Indeed some experts declare that leasehold, apart from its other advantages to the lessee, is a better security than freehold.*

It is also objected that the present state of the Palestine law, or prospective changes, will make it very difficult if not impossible to mortgage buildings apart from the ground on which they stand, and as J.N.F. ground cannot be mortgaged this will act as a brake upon the development of its estates. One can only reply to this argument that if indeed the law is or may be so framed, the interests of the Jewish National Home are important enough to secure a modification or withholding of provisions which prejudice them. The legal friends of the J.N.F. must find the formulae to meet the wishes of the Government without, however, destroying a cardinal principle of the Zionist movement. That the Mandatory Power will favourably regard the benefits of land reform which the J.N.F. system implies is surely to be assumed.

Another objection has been raised in certain quarters to the effect that the control which JNF ownership implies and requires for the public welfare will tend to an intolerable bureaucracy. That is a danger to be guarded against but it may be remarked that modern Governments are increasing rather relaxing their supervision over economic and social operations in which the community may suffer at the hands of the individual. The restrictions involved in Town Planning Acts are a case in point. At all events the subjection of private to public gain may be expected from those Jews who come to Palestine, since in the majority of cases they are wholly or partly moved by idealistic motives.

*An
Appeal*

The National Fund, which 26 years ago fired the imagination of the Zionist masses and has stood now for over a quarter century as the symbol and instrument of the return to the soil, as well as to the land of our fathers, turns now to its adherents and friends with the appeal to strengthen its hands, not merely by fund collecting, not only by propaganda for Erez Israel and for Zionism, but by spreading a knowledge of the principles upon which the Keren Kayemeth is based, by popularising its system of land tenure, and by explaining what that system portends for the future of the Jewish National Home.

* Julius Simon: *Das Kreditproblem bei der Erbpacht*. Erez Israel, No. 3, 1919; The Hague.

LITERATURE ON THE JNF.

The Head Office of the Jewish National Fund has prepared Study Material on various aspects of Palestine, Jewish colonisation, and the workings of the J.N.F. Applications for this material and other literature will be welcomed. Write to J.N.F., P.O.B. 283, Jerusalem.

STUDY MATERIAL.

"The Land Problem:" lecture by Dr. Eliezer Rieger. A popular address on growth of land values, land ownership, the various schools of land reform and the JNF in relation to all these.

"He is a Land Animal:" one page leaflet, by Wm. A. Black. Shows man's vital need for land.

"Land is life:" one page leaflet.

"National Land:" Leaflet, explaining principles of land nationalisation with particular reference to Palestine.

"Socialisation of the Soil:" Leaflet. Illustrates how National Fund land is used and the principles of tenure.

"Should the Land be Owned or Used:" Leaflet. Explains Hereditary Leasehold system of the JNF.

"Back to the Land:" by Louis F. Post. The theory of "back to the land" for all—not alone for the farmer, but through restoration of the land, forward to civilised and civilising lives for all.

"Our Share of the Land:" giving interesting statistics of Jewish and non-Jewish cultivated land, land available, etc.

A Chapter from Dr. A. Granovsky's book "Land Taxation in Palestine." The Palestine Government's land taxation system burdens Jewish agriculture; the author gives suggestions for the improvement of the antiquated land fiscal legislation.

"The Six Qualities of Land:" Leaflet.

"How Rent Grows:" Leaflet. Shows the modern system of land ownership and tenure and its evils.

"Scientific Agriculture." Surveys Jewish Agriculture in Palestine and the Jew's requirements and adaptability therefor.

"Avodah Azmit:" Leaflet. Meaning and implications of "Self Labour" in the agricultural life on National Fund land in Palestine.

"Yemenite Jews in Palestine;" The Yemenite Jews were brought over to Palestine in 1911 and have proved a valuable element in the upbuilding. Describes the settlement and what the National Fund has done for them.

"In Magdiel:" describes the "middle-class" settlement of Magdiel.

"Seder Mataim:" Takes the reader through the whole process of plantation of trees on JNF land.

"25 years of the Jewish National Fund:" Lantern lecture. A history of the organisation and activities since its foundation to 5687 (1926-27), its Silver Jubilee Year.

The above list is continually being augmented and at present there is in preparation, in addition to new Lantern lectures, a Palestine Education Course which will present in popular form the bases of the practical Zionist upbuilding.

BOOKS. *The Land Problem in Palestine* by A. Granovsky
Land Taxation in Palestine by A. Granovsky

PAMPHLETS. Land Tenure in Palestine: Oppenheimer and Ettinger.
The Land Factor in the Resettlement of Palestine.

By the Azriel Press, Jerusalem.