

Zionism Class #1:

The Beginnings of Zionism and Modern Aliya

Timeline

1854 New Jewish community in Motza

1860s new Jewish neighborhoods outside Jerusalem's Old City

1870 Alliance Israelite Universelle founds Mikveh Israel, an agricultural school

1878 First attempt to settle Petah Tikva

1881 Beginning of wave of pogroms in Russia, May Laws limiting Jewish residence to the Pale of Settlement, first Hovevei Zion societies

1882-1903 First Aliyah (25-35,000 people)

1882 Leo Pinsker writes Auto Emancipation, BILU leaves for Palestine

1882 Rishon LeZion, Zikhron Yaakov, Rosh Pina founded

1884 Gedera founded by BILU, Mazkeret Batya, Bat Shlomo and others founded with assistance from Baron Rothschild

1889 Shmitta controversy

1897 First Zionist Congress in Basel Switzerland

1900 Baron Rothschild transfers his support to JCA: Jewish Colonization Association

The First Shmitta Crisis (1888-9)

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spector

As the shmitta year is approaching . . . And if we forbid working the land the colonies will be destroyed and hundreds will die of starvation, in order to save these souls and to save the settlement project, to save body and money, we have found a way to permit [work] for this year 5649 (1888-9) by selling the land and the vineyards to non Jews , with the condition that they are returned after the sabbatical year when we return the deposit money. . . Obviously those colonists who can hire non Jewish workers to farm the land should do so but the poor may work the land themselves, based on the rulings of the rabbinical court in Jerusalem. All this is said only about the upcoming sabbatical year, not for others that will follow it.

Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Berlin

The Land of Israel is still holy today and the spirit of the Torah is why it survives, just like the existence of Israel among the nations is because of keeping the Torah. . . A piece of land is not the reason for our survival but Judaism is our land and our existence .

And we must understand that we are not here to settle the land of the Philistines but to settle souls in a land holy to God and to Israel His people.

Avoda Ivrit – Is This the Way?

Ahad HaAm 1889

What wonder, then, that so great an ideal, presented in so unworthy a form, can no longer gain adherents; that a national building founded on the expectation of profit and self-interest falls to ruins when it becomes generally known that the expectation has not been realised, and self-interest bids men keep away?

This, then, is the wrong way. Certainly, seeing that these ruins are already there, we are not at liberty to neglect the task of mending and improving so far as we can. But at the same time we must remember that it is not on these that we must base our hope of ultimate success. The heart of the people -- that is the foundation on which the land will be regenerated. And the people is broken into fragments.

The Old Shall Be Renewed and the New Shall Be Sanctified

Tmol Shilshom S.Y. Agnon

In those days, Jaffa was full of young fellows who had studied Talmud and had practiced exegesis, and when they gathered together, and their heart would assail them, they would sweeten their sitting with Hasidic stories and Hasidic tunes or with homilies. The generation before them sang songs of Zion, for this generation those songs became trite, and when the yearning soul yearned it went back to seek what was lost. Anyone who could sing sang tunes he had brought with him from his hometown, and anyone who could tell tales sat and told tales, and the Lithuanians who don't know the Hasids pretend to be preachers and expound homilies. And here a thing happened that did not happen to their fathers, the sons of Misnagdim found delight in Hasidic tales and the sons of the Hasids found delight in homilies and they didn't distinguish between the imitation and the original because of the desire to exalt the soul. Out of their affection for those things whose tang is mostly in Yiddish, they sometimes gave up Hebrew, on condition that the things were not said in public; in a small party of friends, they weren't sticklers about their language.

HaDor from Belkvei HaTzon 1906 (my translation) Rabbi Abraham Isaac
HaKohen Kook

Our generation is a magnificent generation, a generation that is full of wonder. It is hard to find its like in our history. It is made up of opposites, light and dark are mixed together. It is low and downtrodden, also high and lifted up, it is wholly guilty also wholly innocent.

The hearts of the father will begin to see the treasures of good and the hidden specialness in the sons, in the depths of their living and awoken souls. And the sons will see the holiness and purity, the glory and grandeur that fill the hearts of the fathers, who have kept them as an inheritance for generations. . . It is only through the spiritual uniting of young Israel with old Israel that the redemption will come. . .