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A NEW GOVERNMENT FOR PALESTINE PROPOSED.

COPY OF A LETTER OF SUGGESTION, WRITTEN BY
THE EDITOR WHILE IN PALESTINE, TO THE TWO
LEADING HEBREWS OF THE WORLD, BARONS
ROTHSCHILD AND HIRSCH.

November 20th, 1891.

The following is a copy of a letter, written while in Palestine, but afterward separated from me by the loss of my luggage *en route*, and only recently recovered. C. T. R. *Jerusalem, August 18th, 1891. To the Honorable* BARON HIRSCH.

RESPECTED SIR: – I, a Christian, but a lover of the seed of Jacob, especially because of the promises of God yet remaining to them and the Holy Land, address you upon a subject which I know lies close to your heart.

That you may know of my interest in your people, I will cause to be sent to you a copy of each of two volumes of my own writings, in which the promises of God to your nation are cited and commented upon.

At present, accompanied by my wife, I am in Palestine, taking a hasty view of the land of promise and its people, and considering the prospects of the soon fulfilment of the predictions of the prophets. As you will see from my books, we find the testimony of the prophets to be, that your nation will be greatly blessed and returned to divine favor between now and the year 1915, A.D.

The present persecutions in Russia we believe to be a mark of divine favor rather than the reverse. The Lord declares that he

will drive them out of all lands whither he has [R1342 : page 169] scattered them. We believe that so far from this persecution abating, the near future may see it greatly increased among the various nations of Europe in the midst of which Jews reside.

We believe that the Lord's Word teaches that the people are to be in great part gathered into the land of Palestine, and the fact that all entrance thither has recently been barred inclines us to think that the time has come for opening the door thither yet wider than ever before. This seems to be indicated in the words of the prophet. – See Jer. 32:37-44; 33:6-22.

As I do not own an inch of ground in this land, I cannot be accused of having any selfish reasons for offering the following suggestions of what appears to me to be the only immediate solution of the difficulty. My suggestion is as follows, and refers to all Syria: –

The revenues derived from Palestine by the Government amount to about L.100,000 per annum. This sum, however, is *absorbed* by the local government of Palestine, and it is doubtful whether Turkey ever receives one piaster of it – except in the way of bonuses paid by those who obtain official positions in the land. I have been unable to obtain any reliable figures respecting the taxes of Syria as a whole, but it is safe to assume that the results to Turkey are no more profitable than those from Palestine.

My suggestion is that the wealthy Hebrews purchase from Turkey, at a fair valuation, all of her property interests in these lands; *i.e., all the Government lands* (lands not held by private owners), under the provision that Syria and Palestine shall be constituted a FREE STATE, the government of which shall be in the hands of a board of thirteen Directors, appointed as follows: One Director to be chosen by each of the following Governments: – Great Britain and Ireland, France, Germany, Russia, Austria,

Italy, Turkey, Greece, and the United States of America, should they approve the scheme; and the remainder of the thirteen to be elected by the suffrages of the people of Syria, none being eligible to said election who has not lived in the land for three consecutive years.

Religious liberty should be fully guaranteed to all the inhabitants. Each Director should be a resident of the land during the tenure of office, and should receive L1,000 sterling per annum, and no other fees, emoluments or bribes, under penalty of disgrace and banishment. Those Directors appointed by the various Governments should also be the Ministers Plenipotentiary of those Governments without additional fees therefor.

Each of the nations invited to join representatively in the government should be required to contribute a sum of money, say L10,000, for the carrying out of the project and as a test of its interest in the welfare of the land and its people. Just at present all nations are interested in providing a home for the Russian exiles; and the poverty of Turkey would facilitate the purchase of her estate in Syria at reasonable figures. This I conceive to be a feasible plan, because all of the above nations are interested in Palestine, having directly or indirectly expended [R1343 : page 169] large sums of money there. The plan of making it a free state, under the control of all, I believe would be pleasing to all; whereas, to put the land under the control of any of them exclusively, would be strenuously opposed by the others. The land should, however, be free from all other nations, except through their appointed representative Directors.

A liberal Constitution should be drawn up, alterable only by the consent of at least nine of the thirteen Directors. In all other matters the majority should rule – under the limitations of said Constitution. The new blood and new ideas thus introduced into

the government would soon show upon the people and the land, and they would rapidly advance to civilized conditions in every particular.

You are no doubt well aware that, notwithstanding the large sums of money sent here by Hebrews and others, many of the people here are far from comfortable; and all will agree that the two things most needful to this land are a wise, just and good government and plenty of water.

The water is indispensable to health. The stench is dreadful as one passes through the city, especially in the Jewish quarter. I can only account for the absence of some plague by the extreme purity of the mountain air. In almost [R1343 : page 170] every other climate such filth and drouth would surely bring pestilence. In one more month, I am told, water will be selling at two or three piasters a skin.

The present government and laws, although said to be a great improvement on those of the past, all will admit are very far from *good*. The poor peasants or fellah are robbed of almost all they can earn – first, by the money-lender, who exacts from 10 to 50 per cent interest, paid in advance, and secondly, by the tax-collector, who extorts all he can possibly squeeze of the balance. Many of the Jews coming from Russia are poor, and many are wealthy. Seemingly, the latter consider it their business to grind profits out of their brethren and neighbors instead of helping them, while the former, following the example of Romanists and Greeks, think it their duty to spend all their time in prayer and ceremonies, while they are supported by the donations of friends in Europe and America. Your charities and those of Baron Rothschild and Sir Moses Montefiore have been productive of great good and are still beneficial (except, perhaps, the payment of so many francs per head for support of some of the colonists,

which is leading some to multiply their children and grandchildren as rapidly as possible in order to increase their income).

What is needed here, therefore, next to water and cleanliness, is a good government which will protect the poor from the ravenous and wealthy.

Banking institutions on sound bases, and doing business honorably, are also greatly needed. The poor, I am told, hide whatever money they can save, in holes in the earth, where it is ultimately lost to themselves and the world. These, no doubt, would deposit in banks of whose standing they would have no doubt.

I suggest further that as Jerusalem is so full of items of deep interest to the civilized world, as well as to the Jews, it would meet with general favor to introduce into the Constitution provisions guaranteeing that Jerusalem shall remain practically as it is at present – except that it be cleaned up – that all shops and business be prohibited inside the walls; that sanitary regulations be strictly enforced; that the city be sewered thoroughly – a very practical matter and one of but moderate expense if "Solomon's Quarries," underlying a great portion of the city, be utilized for the laying of the larger sewer pipes.

Outside the city the minimum width of the streets and the minimum size of building lots should be subjects of law, as the people have *narrow* ideas as to what "will do."

Under such an arrangement as above referred to, much money would be provided by lovers of the Holy Land for water, aqueducts, artesian wells, etc., etc., and soon the barren places would become a paradise.

I believe that now is the Lord's time for the long promised deliverance of Israel (and my reasons for so believing you will

observe in my two works mailed to you and above referred to); and that it will be accomplished by some such concerted project among the nations is, I believe, indicated by the prophet Isaiah:

"And they shall bring all your brethren out of all nations as an offering unto the Lord, upon horses and in chariots and in litters and upon mules and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain, Jerusalem, saith the Lord. ...For as the new heavens and the new earth (the Kingdom of God) which I will make shall have permanence before me, saith the Lord, so shall exist permanently your seed and your name." – Isa. 66:20,22.

See also Jeremiah 32:43,44: –

"And the fields shall yet be bought in this land whereof ye say, It is desolate, without man or beast.... Men shall buy fields for money and write it in deeds and seal it and certify it by witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the environs of Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the lowlands, and in the cities of the south; for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the Lord."

May the God of Jacob direct you, my dear Sir, and all interested with you in the deliverance and prosperity of Israel, and blessed will they be who, to any extent, yield themselves as his servants in fulfilling his will as predicted.

But please note, my dear Sir, that the sacred Scriptures predict the return *to Palestine*, and not a further wandering to the ends of the earth – to America or elsewhere. And, therefore, it is my humble opinion that Israel will find no rest for the sole of his foot until he finds it in the land of promise; and I pray you, **[R1343 : page 171]** therefore, not to waste your efforts in assisting emigration elsewhere, but concentrate them in the direction where God has indicated success. God bless you.

Yours in the Faith of the Sacred Scriptures,

C. T. RUSSELL.

P.S. A copy of this letter has also been sent to your compatriot, Baron Rothschild.
