THE LAST WORD

It's Too Late Now

They had the chance to remain and be accepted in the region, but they didn't play it right. They blew that chance, and it's too late now.

At the turn of the nineteenth century (around the year 1900), the Jewish population was approximately 5 to 7 percent of the total population of Palestine, which was estimated to be around 600,000 to 690,000. That's what Google says. According to ChatGPT, the total population of Palestine around the year 1800 was 250,000–300,000. The Jewish population was about 6,000 to 10,000, i.e., 2 to 4 percent. So granted, along with other ethnicities, Jews have always had some presence in Palestine. In fact, going back two to three millennia, the Jewish presence was significant. History records that the United Kingdom (Saul, David, Solomon) lasted about 100–120 years before splitting into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). But the vast majority of the Jews were forced to leave Palestine during the Babylonian Exile (c. 586 BCE) and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem (70 CE).

Over the past five millennia, the region called Palestine, a strategic crossroads between Africa and Asia, has been home to a diverse mosaic of cultures, peoples, and empires. Among those who lived in Palestine are the Canaanites, the Ancient Egyptians, the Philistines, neighboring nations (Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites), Arameans, and Phoenicians who were Semitic-speaking peoples and kingdoms that interacted with and often settled in parts of the region, especially during the Iron Age and Persian periods. At some point, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians lived here, then the Ancient Greeks, the Romans and the Byzantines, the Arabs (do read Dr. Ali Qleibo's amazing article in this issue), the Crusaders and Ayyubids, the Mamluks, and of course, the Ottoman Turks, the British, and – you guessed it – our last "guests," who admittedly were here in larger numbers two and half millennia ago.

I have always maintained that the Palestinians of today are the descendants of practically all of the above-mentioned cultures. They are the ones who have tilled the land and fed every occupier all along. The myth that Palestinians came to Palestine from neighboring countries is exactly that – a myth that feeds another myth of "a land without a people for a people without a land." I also maintain that most of the Jews who came to Palestine by boat during the first half of the twentieth century did not realize that they had been manipulated to be part of a conniving colonial project that aimed to rid Palestine of its Indigenous inhabitants and create a new Zionist entity. Why those naive immigrants did not react when they realized the real intentions of the perpetrators is a question for a later discussion. My point here is this: Had the "new arrivals" been kind to the local Palestinians and lived in a spirit that aimed to share the land and prosper together with the real owners of the land, these new arrivals would have had a chance to be accepted in the region. They did not do that; far from it in fact. And now it's too late for them to be accepted in the region.

Sani Meo
Publisher

