

::R0354 : page 7::

PALESTINE AND THE JEWS

Writing to the *Jewish World*, "a Russian Jew" says his brethren in Russia "are bent on emigrating at the earliest opportunity," but they do not wish to change the Russo-Jewish question to an American or Spanish Jewish question, but endeavor, with God's help to solve it once and for always in a manner promising to be permanent." "Unmistakably," he says, "their goal is the colonization of Palestine. In almost every town in Roumania, and in some of the principal cities of Russia, there have been formed Palestine Emigration Societies with funds of their own; and although the Russian government has not yet expressed its opinion on the movement there is a strong hope that it will not run counter to it. Long ago the wish had taken root among them, and having waited some time in vain for their Western brethren to take the initiative in the enterprise, they have at last of themselves taken the matter earnestly in hand. They have chosen Palestine, not on account of any wild dreams of ambition in the immediate future, but because it alone promises to supply the felt and universal requisite of a permanent abode, besides its possessing other qualities, such as the absence in it of undue competition, its proximity, to Russia, and the traditional friendliness of the Turkish government toward the Jews."

Mr. Lawrence Oliphant, in a letter to the *Times*, dated 11th of February, also mentions the existence of the Roumanian societies referred to, several of which have made appeals to him to aid them in their plans. He says:

"The dominant idea of the Eastern Jew, whatever may be that of his co-religionist in Western countries, is to return to Palestine. This sentiment is not confined to the poorer classes, many of whom may wish to go there in order to share in the charity which their richer co-religionists dispense all over Europe for their support; but the desire to return to the land of their forefathers is extremely strong, even among the more wealthy members of the community, whose highest ambition is to become landed proprietors on the soil endeared to them by the most cherished traditions. They are deterred from doing so partly from fear that they might be subject to extortions from the local officials, and partly by their ignorance of agricultural pursuits. Nevertheless, more than one wealthy Jew is carrying on farming operations successfully in Palestine, and a colony was formed about five years ago near Lydda."

"In regard to Russia," he says, "The correspondent of the *Jewish Chronicle*, in a letter dated Jerusalem, 27th January, writes: 'The movement for emigration to this country appears to extend

more and more in Russia. From divers places envoys have arrived here charged to secure eligible sites for their brethren,

::R0355 : page 7::

who are to follow next spring. A Russian gentleman has assured me that many Jewish capitalists of his country were firmly resolved to settle at Jaffa, in order to erect factories there. I have seen letters from old rabbis of the strictest orthodoxy, declaring that whoever puts his hand to the working of the soil of the Holy Land acts more meritoriously than he who passed his time day and night with the study of the Beth Hamedrash."

The *Times* supports his appeal to some extent in a leading article, from which we quote a sentence or two:

"The Jew is in many countries not a stranger; in Syria and Palestine his race is at home. Palestine is a land of rocks and wilderness, which it would tax a wealthy empire to reclaim, but with intervals of the most fruitful soil, waiting only the husbandman to be converted from a waste into a garden. Religion forbids the Jew to ever forget Judea. He has always longed to see colonists of his race return to it. The men are available, through the savageness of a mob, to take up the Hebrew inheritance. Resources seem also fast flowing in, through the pity of civilized nations, sufficient to replant the Jew in the seat of his forefathers. Such is the scheme which Mr. Oliphant presents to us."

We have before expressed our opinion that some portion of the Jewish people would be replanted in their ancient city and land without having been converted to belief in the claims of Jesus to be their Messiah, and would be in course of time subjected there to a final invasion and siege by their Gentile enemies, from which they would be delivered by "Him whom they had pierced." (Zech. 12:9-10.) It is not our province to say by what means this partial resettlement is to be brought about. But we watch and record with ever-increasing interest those events of our time which seem bringing it nearer the range of actual fulfillment.—*Messenger*.

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— May, 1882 —



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