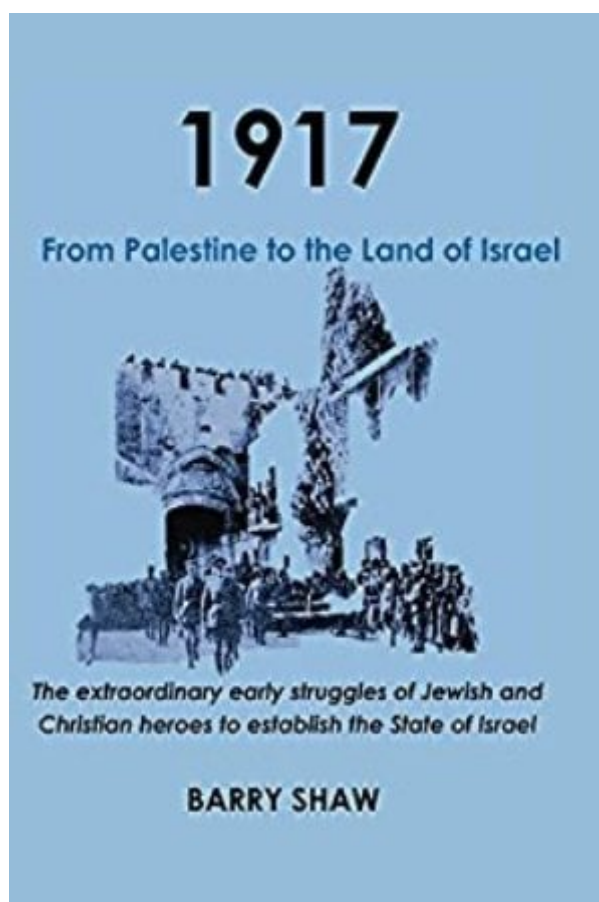


# 1917: From Palestine to the Land of Israel: The Extraordinary early struggles of Jewish and Christian heroes to establish the State of Israel – a Review



November 2, 2017 marked the centenary of the Balfour Declaration. It was a 63 word document issued by British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Lord Walter Rothschild. It is considered one of the legal pillars of the Jewish nation of Israel. Israel on May 15, 1948 in the midst of an invasion by five Arab Armies that failed through seven successive conflicts to extinguish the return of a people to a

land they once occupied.

The 100th anniversary of this fortunate event was celebrated in London at a gala dinner with both Israeli PM Netanyahu and UK PM Theresa May and representatives of the UK Jewish community and the Rothschilds.

The Balfour declaration was the culmination of a series of heroic acts by Yishuv Jews. It was assisted by Dr. Chaim Weitzmann, a leader of British Zionism and discoverer of acetone. His friendship with British Prime Minister Lloyd George who as Munitions Minister approved the manufacture of cordite that materially aided the British WWI effort on the Western front in Europe. PM George like Foreign Secretary Balfour and others in Cabinet and Ministerial positions such as Mark Sykes were also committed to Jewish aspirations to return to the biblical land of Ha Shem's covenant with his people.

A month prior on October 9, 1917, a Jewish heroine and leader of the Nili spy ring Sarah Aaronsohn succumbed to a self-inflicted gunshot wound after being tortured by Turkish authorities. They were trying to destroy this important spy ring that enabled the British to liberate Palestine. The critical information that had been passed onto British courier ships offshore of Atlit were relayed to her brother in Cairo, the world renowned Botanist Aaron Aaronsohn, a personal aide to British Commander of the combined British and ANZAC forces. This story and a host of heroes led to the destruction of the combined Turkish and Central Powers Army in Palestine. They liberated what ultimately became the Jewish Nation of Israel.

That important and critical history is captured in a compelling narrative style in a new book authored by Barry Shaw: [1917 -From Palestine to the Land of Israel: The Extraordinary early struggles of Jewish and Christian heroes to establish the State of Israel.](#) Shaw is Senior Advocate

for Public Diplomacy at the Israel Institute for Strategic Studies in Netanya. His commentary has appeared in *The Jerusalem Post*, *Israel National News* and *the Times of Israel*. We frequently hosted Shaw on the former Lisa Benson Show for National Security regarding contemporary Israel issues. His publications and commentary can be found on his blog, [The View from Israel](#).

1917 conveys in compelling detail the exploits the successful conquest of Palestine and Syria that represented the first major Allied victories following the disaster at Gallipoli in 1915. Shaw reveals the significant contributions of the Nili spy ring organized by Yishuv Zionists under the direction of Aaron Aaronsohn and his valiant sister and colleagues in Turkish occupied Palestine.

The information they obtained at great personal risk from Turkish and Arab sources, coupled with their understanding of the terrain and its hidden water resources enabled the mobility of the allied Desert Mounted Force. With that information and Nili trackers they achieved stunning victories and rapid advances.

Shaw introduces us to Christian Zionists among the field commanders and intelligence cadres of the Desert Mounted Force. Commanders like General Edmond Allenby, "Lord of Armageddon", who crushed the combined German and Turkish forces liberating Jerusalem on December 9th. Major General Sir Harry Chauvel and his ANZAC Mounted Division of formidable Australian and New Zealand Light Horsemen enabled the rapid advance and liberation of Jerusalem and the coastal plain.

That formation stunned the combined German Turkish force with the mounted bayonet charge by Australian Light Horsemen the pivotal Battle of Beersheba on October 31, 1917. The Beersheba victory was the due in some important measure to the highly inventive and enterprising chief of intelligence Major later Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen. He created the deception

plan that tricked German Commander Kress von Kressenstein into believing that Gaza was the target.

[Watch](#) this 1978 Australian docudrama of the Battle of Beersheba, *The Light Horsemen*.

Meinertzhagen was the Christian Zionist supporter of the Jewish Homeland and friend of Weitzmann who stoutly defended the Jewish cause against the post-war maneuverings of British Mandatory authorities colluding with Arab opponents of Jewish aspirations for a state of their own. Meinertzhagen befriended T.E. Lawrence at the Versailles Peace conference. Lawrence had been the promoter of the Arab revolt and the cause of the Hashemite Prince Faisal. He ultimately failed to establish Faisal's Hashemite rule in French Mandated Damascus. Faisal was later rewarded with a Kingship in Iraq created by Gertrude Bell from three Ottoman vilayets in 1921. The Hashemite Kingdom in Iraq lasted less than four decades with its bloody fall in 1958.

Meinertzhagen's prescient evaluation in a memo to British PM Lloyd George captured the emerging contest between Jews and Arabs at the Peace Conference: "This Peace Conference has laid two eggs- Jewish Nationalism and Arab Nationalism. These are going to grow up into two troublesome chickens; the Jew virile, brave, determined and intelligent, the Arab decadent, stupid, dishonest and producing little beyond eccentrics."

Aaron Aaronsohn, was involved in preparation of maps to be used at the Versailles Peace Conference in furtherance of the Jewish Homeland was tragically lost in a British mail flight that crashed in the English Channel.

The virile aspect is reflected in the combined efforts of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, Joseph Trumpeldor and British Zionist Lt. Col. John Patterson who had commanded the Zion Mule Corps that gave commendable service at the ill fated Gallipoli

campaign. That was realized in the formation of five battalions of British, American and foreign Jewish volunteers that formed the Royal Fusiliers. Patterson commanded the Jewish legion, the first “Jewish fighting force in two millennia.” They who fought valiantly during the campaigns that assisted in routing Turkish occupation of the Jordan Valley. The ashes of Patterson, who is considered the “godfather of T’zhal”, were interred at [Beit Hagdudim](#), the Museum of the Jewish Legion in Netanya, Israel in 2014.

[Watch](#) this video of Israel PM Netanyahu remarks at Patterson interment.

Shaw has done a masterful retelling of this incredible saga about the critical year of 1917 during WWI that ultimately led to the modern Jewish nation of Israel.