

Martyrs will be a memorial whose meaning even the passing stranger cannot fail to mark. To the kinsmen of those whose memory the forest keeps green and to all who have dedicated themselves to the struggle against hatred and the oppression of one people by another this forest will be a source of living inspiration. In a thirsty and eroded land it will help to replenish the soil and to hold in it part of the moisture which will give it life and growth. These trees will protect the countryside from searing winds, give refreshment in the heat of summer and comfort and warmth in the winter cold. They will represent those twin principles of conservation and creativeness on which all genuine human progress must be based.

In our own day scientists have taught us to recognize the direct relationship between forest preservation and the maintenance of a sound economy. Not all of the many peoples, however, who have inhabited Palestine in the past three thousand years of its changing and cosmopolitan history have understood this; and not all who did understand have had the means to plant forests or to protect them after they were grown. Subject to repeated invasions by warring armies from other lands which used Palestine as a battlefield or a convenient corridor for invasion torn by internal conflict among the descendants of the many peoples who had come to stay, Palestine has had its cycles of conquest and development, of colonization and war, of fertility and barrenness. It has known the flow and the ebb of production and destruction which reflect man's striving after orderly development and witness his failure hitherto to achieve on any permanent basis that stable international society which has now become essential if civilization itself is to survive.

In the various periods of colonization and upbuilding in Palestine, the gains were laborious and slow, while the tale of recurrent disaster and destruction was often quickly told. We recall that from the time when the Jews of Babylon financed the first Jewish colonies which returned to the Jerusalem area until the time when the Jews recovered Galilee there passed some four hundred years, marked not only by internal conflict but also by the warring against each other on Palestinian soil of the Great Powers of that day. Nevertheless, the movement was upward. In particular the practice of agriculture improved and by the time Josephus wrote he was able to say, perhaps with some poetic licence, that in the Galilee of his day not an acre of land lay unfertilized. Palestine filled up with a busy and prosperous population. In the parched land south of Beersheba and the Dead Sea, moreover, another people, the Nabataeans, had, even earlier, invented means of using subterranean water for irrigation purposes and for conserving the infrequent rainfall. For several generations they built those terraces and water-courses whose faint traces are sometimes noted today by the new settlers in the Negev. They cultivated every acre of land in the area, and supported in prosperity a sensible, orderly and healthy population who lived at peace among themselves, and proved to their world that this desert area was capable of supporting many thousands of inhabitants in comfort. Israel is about to prove this again, although for long before and after the Nabataean period the Negev remained an empty and desolate waste.