**An Eternal Bond / Lilach Barak**

**Chapter 1 | The Formative Years**

**1901–1917**

**The establishment of the Jewish National Fund \* Zionism in Britain \* Modest beginnings \* The formation of the JNF Committee in England \* Irregularities and reorganisation \* Activity during World War I \* The Balfour Declaration**

In December 1901, the British delegates to the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel made their way back home exhilarated and exhausted. During the train ride, one of them noticed that their shoes had not been polished in over a week and commented on the matter. In response, Rabbi Jacob Koppel Goldbloom from Stepney in London’s East End, founder of the Ivrith b’lvrith (‘Hebrew in Hebrew’) Talmud Torah (boys’ school), jokingly offered to shine their shoes, provided that the beneficiaries of his service would donate his fee to the new Jewish National Fund. The amused delegates agreed at once and Goldbloom, without further hesitation, took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, pulled out a brush from his case, and began polishing. There were twelve pairs of shoes, and when he was finished, he made sure to charge everyone—one shilling per pair. This marked British Jewry’s first public fundraising for Keren Kayemet le-Israel*,* the Jewish National Fund (hereinafter: KKL).[[1]](#footnote-1)

Altogether, twenty-five delegates and guests represented the British Zionists at that Congress, held on 26–30 December 1901 in the Stadtcasino concert hall in Basel, Switzerland. In his keynote speech, the founder of the Jewish national movement and the president of the Congress, Dr Theodor Herzl, announced his intention of bringing to a plenary vote the delegates’ approval of the establishment of a Jewish national fund. The institution he envisioned would pursue the objectives of raising resources throughout the Jewish Diaspora for the purchase of land in Ottoman-controlled Eretz Israel (Palestine) and neighbouring countries so that Eretz Israel, the inalienable property of the Jewish people, would become a safe homeland for Jewry.

It was not a new idea. At the First Zionist Congress, convened in the same hall in Basel in 1897, Zvi Hermann Schapira, a professor of mathematics at the University of Heidelberg in Germany, broached the idea of a national fund for land purchases in Palestine. The Congress accepted his proposal in principle but postponed its implementation until it could be shaped into a coherent plan with rules, regulations, and a valid legal foundation. No less important was the need for the Zionist Movement to create a financial mechanism through which the national fund could raise and manage the donations efficiently without competing with membership dues to the Zionist Movement through the sale of ‘Zionist Shekalim’.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The Congress [the First Congress?] assigned the task of determining the character and legal foundations of the national fund to a smaller action committee. Given that Herzl devoted most of his energy to diplomatic action towards obtaining a concession (charter) from the Powers, the committee had difficulty in making real progress towards formulating a systematic plan. By the Fourth Zionist Congress (1900), some in the movement were expressing concern that the desultory pace of action would cause the momentum to be lost and that the grand expectations of the national fund would wither away. There was no alternative but to set the Action Committee an explicit goal: to bring about a scheme that would be put to a plenary vote at the Fifth Congress. Despite these efforts, the Action Committee failed to generate a comprehensive scheme. However, even though the fund initiative was insufficiently formed—foremost in terms of legal registration—Herzl was determined to present it to the Congress for resolution as it stood.

During the plenary sessions of the [Fifth?] Congress, a tortuous debate took place over whether it was the right time to formally announce the creation of a national fund. The attorney Dr. Max Bodenheimer, who headed the opposition, managed to convince the majority of the delegates to vote against and the establishment of the national fund was postponed once again. Herzl, however, found a defect in the voting process and exerted all his efforts to convince the delegates to vote again, this time in favour. His exertions bore fruit: In the repeat vote, the establishment of the fund was approved by a majority of 105 to 82 and the recommendations of the Action Committee for the principles of its operation were adopted as well. Since the question of the legal establishment of the fund remained unanswered, it was decided to assemble a special legal committee that included Herbert Bentwich, a London lawyer and a close associate of Herzl’s, among its members. The committee was instructed to undertake the legal registration of the National Fund in a European country.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Thus, on the evening of December 29, 1901, to thunderous applause, Herzl announced the establishment of the National Fund. It was immediately followed by a fundraising campaign among the delegates. The first to assent was the industrialist Johann Kremenezky, one of the Fund's architects, who contributed £10 in honour of Schapira, who had passed away without seeing his vision realized. Herzl was the second donor. Both were inscribed in the first Golden Book created by JNF-KKL to commemorate those individuals and organisations who made significant contributions to the Zionist Movement.

A month after the Congress, Kremenezky was elected to head the National Fund and established its headquarters in Vienna. He began to formulate the function and principles of the Fund and devised new methods of raising money. In addition to paid inscriptions in the Golden Book, he hit on the idea of selling KKL-JNF stamps, priced at the value of the smallest coin in each country’s currency. The idea behind these stamps, which had no postal worth, was to affix them to official Zionist documents as well as personal letters. In addition, Kremenezky happily accepted an offer from Haim Kleinman, a bank clerk from a small town in Galicia, to manufacture a tin box for collecting small coins. These Blue Boxes were intended to be distributed in every Jewish house, firm, factory, school, and organisation around the world. They later became the most identifiable symbol of the Jewish National Fund.

In 1903, the basic principles and policy of KKL-JNF were agreed upon: to serve as the organ of the Zionist Movement for the purchase of land in Palestine and Syria and settling it with Jews. The lands acquired were to be held in trust by KKL-JNF in the name of the entire Jewish nation. The Fund would be prohibited from selling these lands and might only parcel them out by lease for a term of forty-nine years. It was also decided that the Fund would begin its operation until it had achieved a minimum share capital of £200,000.[[4]](#footnote-4) [= *NOT* begin its operations? viz., not begin buying land until it amassed this amount of share capital?]

Upon the return of the delegates from the Fifth Congress, a large gathering of English Zionists took place in late January 1902, where the delegates [from Britain?] shared their impressions of the Congress. The *Jewish Chronicle*, the principal organ of British Jewry, also covered the inauguration of the National Fund extensively and reported on £10 in donations that had already been collected in Britain from the sale of stamps (a halfpenny per unit). However, the newspaper expressed its doubts about whether this measure alone would suffice to accumulate the necessary capital to finance the Fund’s ambitious goals.[[5]](#footnote-5) This doubt was well-founded. Not only was the fundraising mechanism insufficient, but the broader Jewish community showed scant interest in being involved in Zionism. At this time, the dawn of the twentieth century, the leaders of the community faced enormous challenges, and promoting the Zionist cause was not one of their main priorities.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, tens of thousands of Russian and East European Jews reached British shores, part of a huge wave of emigration of mostly poor Jews fleeing persecution, pogroms, and economic pressures and heading towards the New World. Although their main destination was indeed America, many went to Great Britain, South Africa, Canada, and Argentina in the hope of religious and spiritual freedom and a better economic future for themselves and their families. By the end of the 1870s, the core Jewish community of Great Britain, some 60,000 strong, had grown by the influx of approximately 100,000 refugees who had made Britain their home. The vast majority were destitute and preserved the Jewish ghetto culture in their language, clothing, and religious conduct. They were concentrated mainly in the teeming and impoverished East End of London. \*\*\*EDIT UP TO HERE\*\*\*

The arrival of these new immigrants shook the community to its foundations and threatened to change its character. Those mainly anxious by this were the notable Jewish families who were bound together by complex business and marriage ties. Those, already well-versed in British public life, politics, and the economy of the Empire, led the fairly small and well-organised community that was represented vis-à-vis the government since 1760 by the *Board of Deputies of British Jews*, to gain the privilege of religious liberties, equal rights, and a secure its position among the general society. Thus, the main efforts of the community leaders were to resolve the "East End problem" by creating mechanism of ensuring that the new commers will maintain in a low profile and will not become an economic burden on British taxpayer – a matter that had a tremendous risk of rekindle repressed anti-Semitic feelings towards the entire community. Simply to put, the leadership main concerned was to rush the immigrants through a rapid process of ‘Anglicization'. Hence, help them become a proper Englishmen of the Jewish faith, loyal and grateful citizens to Great Britain that had been generous enough to accept them.

It was in this spirit that when Herzl paid his first visit to London, although he indeed was honoured by a polite and restrained welcome from the leadership of the community, soon he realized that the majority of them are streak opposition to his ideas of Jewish nationalism and establishment of Jewish state, so much so that only few of them were willing to join him. It was precisely among the immigrants that Herzl found the enthusiastic welcome he had futilely sought to receive from the leadership. Nevertheless, even among the newcomers, the rates of support summed up to only a very small percentage. Zionism has not 'caught on' among Anglo-Jewry.

A quick featuring on the state of Zionism in Britain: At the first Zionist Congress in Basel held in August 1897, there were eight representatives from Great Britain, among them was the London-born journalist, Jacob de Haas, one of Herzl’s associates. He addressed the Congress on the state of British Jewish community where he remarked that only 3,000 people had been signed as members of the various associations affiliated to *Chovevi Zion* (Lovers of Zion)[[6]](#footnote-6), however “the interest of the members in the work of settlement is less than before”.[[7]](#footnote-7) About six months later, on 6 March 1898, Bentwich arranged for the first national English Zionist conference at Clerkenwell Town Hall, London. In this conference it was announced of the intention to form 'The English Zionist Federation' (hereafter, the EZF). Herzl who could not attend the assembly, he sent a congratulatory letter in which he expressed his disappointment at the poor support for Zionism in Great Britain:

*“In the council hall in Clerkenwell, only members of a single country will gather, and its participation in Zionism is not particularly large. In other countries, the percentage of Jews who participate in our movement is much larger because their political, social, and economic situation surely affects them, that they will become attached to our organisation. There is no other country in the world in which Jews are to be found in such a good condition as they are in the Kingdom of Great Britain; this is the last happy island for modern Jews.”[[8]](#footnote-8)*

Few months later the EZF had come into being, forming as the central umbrella organisation of the Zionist activity in Great Britain and representing it at the World Zionist Federation. Sir Francis Montefiore, a firm supporter of Herzl, agreed to serve as its first president and led the organisation to support Hertzl's path of political Herzlian Zionism. The aspiration that the EZF will succeed in uniting the different factions - the political ideology on the one hand, and the practical ideology on the other –soon came to understanding as irrational. The sharp conflict was with a wide friendly benefit society - *The Order of Ancient Maccabeans*. This society founded in 1896 by the Zionist novelist and teacher, Ephraim Ish-Kishor, originally aimed to serve as a sick and burial society only for those who declare themselves adherents of the Zionist movement, became a champion of practical Zionist work in Palestine.

Despite Herzl's gloomy expectations, within just a few years, Zionism have risen and succeeded to double its rates of support. During the Fifth Zionist Congress (1901, at which the establishment of the National Fund was announced) it was again de Haas who gave the report on the Zionist activity in the British Isles. Although he expressed somewhat satisfaction with the progress made, he also remarked that out of the community, numbered about 160,000 strong, only 4.5% (7,155 women and men) were registered members in one of the seventy-six different societies, under the EZF. He told the audience that those societies operated in rather modest conditions, mainly assembled for deepening Jewish education and culture, and Zionist propaganda.[[9]](#footnote-9)

The establishment of the Jewish National Fund breathed a new spirit into the Zionist Societies in London and the provinces. Some began instantly and independently with organising social events to promote the fund's objectives. During the first years of the Fund's existence, this activity bore the character of a local initiative, deprived of guiding hand; it was not systematic and was completely voluntary. For example, it was local Zionist groups such as the women’s Zionist Society *Daughters of Zion* from Manchester or *Dorshei Zion* from the East End that issued a call to encourage others to organise and hold fundraising initiatives. These calls received little response and the number of events dedicated to raising funds for the newly national fund were relatively minor. The few fundraising activities that did take place were social in nature. The gatherings were held in private homes or in a conference hall, initiated by an association or a well-known communal personality, who invited members of their close circle to listen to a lecture by a key speaker. These events were usually accompanied by playing the piano to entertain the guests who were treated to light refreshments. The proceeds from the sale of tickets for these events constituted the first donations in Britain to the National Fund.

Up until 1908, the KKL-JNF in Britain had been represented through a small committee composed of several members within the EZF. Their activity summed up by encouraging the societies/organisation to appoint designated joint regional JNF committees that would work in collaboration to encourage propaganda and fundraising for the Jewish National Fund. These rather small groups did the actual selling of the stamps, the distribution of the ‘Blue Boxes' and the promotion of inscription in the Golden Books.

The main activists in fundraising were typically the youth and the women. They initiated creative ideas to promote the Fund, such as, in the summer of 1903, during the ‘National Fund Day’ about one hundred youngsters, men and women from several Zionist youth societies spread out across the streets of East London and distributed pamphlets. The fruits of the campaign resulted in donations the respectable sum of £10.[[10]](#footnote-10) The collectors were instructed to avoid sending the money collected to the EZF's office, instead they were asked to deposit it directly into the KKL- JNF bank account in the Zionist movement’s banking arm, the *Jewish Colonial Trust* - (hereafter, JCT).[[11]](#footnote-11)

During the initial years KKL-JNF headquarter concentrated more on the statutory character of the organisation, its structure, propaganda and developing fundraising methods, rather than on actual land purchases. In fact, it took almost five years until the head office was able to establish efficient work processes to enable it to manage such a complex international organisation. The very sporadic land purchases that eventually took place included, the establishment of a study farm and an agricultural school for the orphaned children of Kishineff; land purchases in Atlit to establish an Agricultural Experimental Station; and others.[[12]](#footnote-12)Yet another reason for these minor scale of land acquisitions is largely due to the lack of substantial capital. Jews, all around the diaspora did not engage themselves to the task.

This attitude by Anglo-Jewish community was no different than in the rest of the diaspora. In fact, up until 1908, it is difficult to point to any special effort done by the EZF to encourage fundraising in aid of the fund. The financial reports of the Federation show that in the first month and a half following the announcement of the establishment of the National Fund, the Federation treated the event rather indifferently. No special donations were made, and the only income came from the sale of the stamps amounting to £10 (equivalent to £1,200 today). Half of this amount the EZF bought for its own use, few organisations and ardent Zionist made the other half. Additional small income was received from the inscription of several associations in the Golden Book and this for a donation of £20, which could be paid in installments.[[13]](#footnote-13) An appeal upon the synagogues' rabbis to dedicate two Sabbaths services in the aid of the fund, seemed to remain unanswered, as in the following two years the revenues from the community maintained low level. In 1904, its revenues amounted to £26.5 obtained solely from the sale of stamps and in the following year the revenues rose to £97, out of which £10 were from the sale of the stamps.[[14]](#footnote-14)

This relatively 'significant' increase in income stemmed from the conducting the first ‘National Fund Day’ activity - during which the EZF called on all associated organisations to hold social events and meetings in support of the Fund. Leaflets printed in Yiddish and English sent from the head office were distributed to the public and articles, praising the significancy of the fund were published in the community's press. Additional source of income came from *Selbstbesteuerung*- Self-imposed tax towards the National Fund.

The following year, relaying on the outcomes of the 'National Fund Day', the societies and groups were requested to hold a similar events for the festival of Purim. This time, the EZF sent out several distinguished speakers to leverage the meetings. Purim events proved to be a remarkable success and yielded a great income, yet the annual income amounted to only £640 who proved once again that the National Fund had not yet gained the desired foothold within the community.

Upon the legal committee recommendation, the National Fund was registered on April 8, 1907 under the name *Keren Kayemeth Le Jisroel Ltd* as legal entity in England.[[15]](#footnote-15) The Funds' Board of Directors consisted representatives of the major Zionist federations in the Diaspora, One of these directors was Herzl’s close associate, the Londoner mining engineer, Leopold Kessler, who also owned the *Jewish Chronicle*.[[16]](#footnote-16) Kessler was joined on the board by the Lord Mayor of Bradford Jacob Moser. Once the Fund was legally registered, at the Eighth Zionist Congress, held in The Hague, Dr. Bodenheimer accepted the invitation to serve as the Fund’s second Chairman and moved its Head office from Vienna to Köln, Germany. In this Congress Moser obliged to contribute to construct a building to house the first Hebrew High School in Tel Aviv, which was given the name *Herzliya Gymnasia* as honour to Dr. Herzl, who died in 1904.

Another tribute to Herzl's memory was carried immediately after his death by the Executive committee of the Zionist movement. The committee decided on creating a special fundraising that would collect money for securing land and the plantation of olive trees forest that would bear Herzl's name. KKL received the task of executing the project, which would become its very first afforestation project. In May 1907, after several years of fundraising, the KKL Board decided that the forest consisting of 100,000 trees would be planted in an area of ​​2,000 dunams in the vicinity of Hulda. To make the project operational, the KKL-JNF contacted the *Olive Tree Fund*, (*Verein Oelbaumspende*) headed by the German Jewish botanist, Professor Otto Warburg, with the intention of making the fruits of the forest a source of revenues for funding Zionist educational and cultural institutions in Palestine.[[17]](#footnote-17)

In accordance with the legal anchoring of the and its initial significant operations in Palestine, the EZF was forced to increase its efforts to the benefit of the Fund. Consequently, in May 1908, the EZF convened a Special Committee whom its members were: A. Englander, Jacob Zelkind and Percy Baker, to deal solely with the affairs of the National Fund.[[18]](#footnote-18) Clearly those efforts were still very little, since during the semi-annual conference of the EZF, serious claims were made by the General Secretary of the Commission, that the National Fund was being neglected in Britain.

The dismal status of the KKL in Britain did not go unnoticed by the Head Office. In September 1908, the Headquarters decided to intervene and re-organise the committee to a proven successful organisational Structure in other Diaspora communities. The Committee became an independent Sub-Committee within the EZF under the name **The Jewish National Fund Commission for England** (hereafter, the Commission). By focusing on developing the activities and advocacy of the National Fund in Britain its specific aim was to “make the objectives on the KKL known in all parts of the United Kingdom where Jews reside.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

Leopold Kessler agreed to serve as the commission first chairman, and together with its members (L. Eisen, Mark, Shaffern and Dr. J. Salkind) it was all voluntarily. There was however, only one person that received payment for his work, the General Secretary, Mr. M. Hart, who also served as a temporary Treasurer. He was responsible for the general correspondence, coordination of activities with the provincial branches, generating reports and managing the meetings. since the Commission had not yet premisses of its own, it operated from the JCTs' office at Brook House in Walbrook, London.

Dr. Bodenheimer arrived in London in January 1909 to participate in the first annual conference of the commission at which representatives of Zionist societies were also present. In his speech he said that he came to London to become acquainted with the conditions under which the work on behalf of the Fund was carried. His impression was that although the Fund had greatly increased in the course of the year, yet there was much left to be desired. He presented Statistics showed that not even one halfpenny per year per head of the Jewish population of London had been given towards the Jewish National Fund. He concluded his speech with a question and a rebuke: "Was it unreasonable to expect of every Jew to contribute at least one halfpenny per week towards one of the most useful institutions connected with the Zionist movement? For months' past not a penny came in from England in aid of their funds?”[[20]](#footnote-20)

The criticism was heard loud and clear. Within just a few months the modest Commission improved the work procedures and became more visible to the public - Administrative meetings were held on monthly base; Street and house to house collection were made and lengthy list of contributors names were published frequently in the community Press. The directors also embraced new creative initiatives to expand the range of donations methods. Such initiative came from the General Secretary of the *Zion Association of East London Zionists* who appealed the community to collect postage stamps and forward them to the Commission so they can be sold to professional collectors. Another Zionist association from Manchester, which had 100 subscribed members, managed to raise £10 over the course of a year for the benefit of the National Fund by selling Zionist leaflets and arranging various fundraising events.[[21]](#footnote-21)

In June 1909, Parallel to appointing new General Secretary, the Central Office of the Commission moved for an abbreviated period to a new location at 150 Whitechapel Rd. In October the same year, they moved again to 4 Fulbourne St. Whitechapel, where they remained for almost a decade. To economize, they were encouraged by the EZF, which also aimed to concentrate the Zionist activity in London in one area, to share the office with the *Zion* Association. The Commission, was able to use the office daily only from 7 pm to 10 pm.

At the end of 1909, the Commission Central Office in London operated 25 provincial commissions, and it seemed obvious that the activity for the National Fund in Great Britain had increased. Of the several thousand Blue Boxes sent from the Head Office in Cologne, half were distributed through Zionist organisations in London and the other half scattered throughout the provinces. Boxes were distributed to whoever showed interest in having one, without placing any procedure to track them – Ther was no orderly record of where they were placed or when they were last emptied. Not to mention, by whom? Unfortunately, many boxes left neglected; others got lost or were stolen.

In parallel, The English and Yiddish press increasingly covered the National fund activities. and the amount of money collected on the various social events. Yet, the most powerful channel of fundraising that stood out above all other methods appeared to be the detailed lists of the names of the donors and the amounts of money they contributed that were published consistently in the press. While some methods were popular, others failed to attract the donors – such was the self-taxation which received little response, if at all. Only a small number of people in London (and no single person in the provinces) obliged for it, therefore the total amount from this source summed to £2.2 in 1909 while the total income of the Commission rose to the climax of £609.15.[[22]](#footnote-22)

On the Fifth anniversary of Herzl's death, despite much effort, the Head Office failed to collect the sufficient financial means needed to plant The Herzl Forest. The Commission turned to provincial sub-commissions to organise memorial celebrations to the benefit of the Olive Tree Fund.[[23]](#footnote-23) Both Dr. J. Salkind, as the new Hon. Treasurer and Kessler, the Chairman saw the need to publish a letter in the *Jewish Chronicle* in which they stated that no commission whatsoever is paid to the EZF or any other association, and that all funds collected are handed direct to the bank account of the Jewish National Fund.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Although almost a decade passed since the inception of the Jewish National Fund, yet it continued to struggle to collect substantial amounts of money, not only in Britain but throughout the Diaspora. In an effort to maximize the profits of the Fund, KKL lawyers petitioned to the British income tax and legal authorities in 1910 to change the classification of the National Fund from Limited Company into a charitable status to benefit from tax exemption as granted to charitable companies. The request was declined with the claim that the Jewish National Fund was considered to be organisation with a political agenda. Within the next two decades several attempts were made in order to change the legal classification of the Fund, but they all were rejected for the same reasons.[[25]](#footnote-25)

While KKL tried unsuccessfully to change its statutory status, the Commission decided to pay special tribute to Kremenezky's 60th birthday by inscribing the celebration in the Golden Book. the money for this was collected by the sale of postcards with the portrait of Kremenezky sent from the Head Office. With a steady growth of activity additional sub-commissions were formed in the provinces and on Purim 1910, young volunteers went out in the streets of the East End and walked from door to door with Blue Boxes. Those youngsters, some under the age of 16 who succeeded to collect more than half a shilling were awarded with a special medal. The donations for Herzl Forest also continued to stream as the Commission kept appealing the public while emphasising that the forest will yield a permanent annual profit of over £15,000, that it already "gives employment to a number of Jews in honest, healthy and remunerative work; it accelerates settlement in the Holy Land and, as the profit is to be given to Jewish cultural institutions in the land, it will provide a means of developing intellectual Jewish life in Palestine."[[26]](#footnote-26)

Since the Head office had to rely on the funds from the Diaspora to execute its projects, they assured that the Diaspora Commissions (the term "Branches" was also in use) will always be kept informed with the progress of the projects, therefore. The Commissions were provided with propaganda, literature, speakers, and other marketing material to best support the Commissions work. One of these creative initiative, was made by the sociologist, economist, and German-Jewish historian, Dr. Franz Oppenheimer who presented a scheme to establish Co-operative Agricultural Colony on a land owned by KKL in the Jezreel Valley.

In September 1910, Dr. Oppenheimer intended to visit Britain to further his scheme and raise contributions. Prior to his arrival, the provincial sub-commissions received a letter from the Central office asking whether they desire to arrange an event and host Dr. Oppenheimer, however, if they do intend so, it will be on the condition they will be certain that they will receive generous donation or else, he will not bother to visit.[[27]](#footnote-27) Only Glasgow accepted the challenge and yet, Oppenheimer’s trip was not fruitful. Several months after the visit, the Head Office wrote to the commission that the contributions from England for the Co-operative Agricultural Colony Named *Merhavia* were meagre. Even though, Merchavia came into being and is holding a special remark in the Zionist history of the *Yishuv.[[28]](#footnote-28)* despite not much of financial support was received in Glasgow, the visit did leave its remark. In March 1912, several Chovevi Zion families from the Glasgow *Olei Zion* association emigrated to Palestine and joined Merchavia.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Such visits were commonplace. Zionist keymen came from the Continent to Britain frequently, and when the Commission felt that it needed a guiding hand, it turned to the Head office for advice which was happily been given, even though it was not necessarily been accepted. Such was the case in November 1910 when one of the Head office directors attended the commission's board meeting. In this meeting various issued were discussed: one of them was an enquiry made by Zionist youth association in Edinburgh asking how to handle a request from a Blue Box holder that wanted a key for his own, and to send the money collected from his own direct to the Central office in London. After much consideration the Board, agreed to grant the key, provided that the box be opened in the presence of an official representative of the local commissioners. The General Secretary also raised for vote a proposal made by the *Palestine Wine & Trading Co.* Th*e* wine import and marketing company of the brand *Palwin* – The first Palestinian kosher wine who wished to have an advertisement printed on the back of the receipts book.[[30]](#footnote-30) Though the committee inclined to approve this request, Palwin later withdrawn its offer.

Most of the discussion however, focussed on an alarming diminishing in donations. The board explained it as the reflection of the present position of Zionism within the community, and by a fundraising made early in year by the *Order of Ancient Maccabeans* which resulted in less donations to the National Fund. In order to cut costs, the KKL's Director suggested the board that the Head Office will assist the commission with £200 per year, provided some reorganisation will be made and in addition, in order to cut rent cost, that they move to a cheaper location. After a penetrating discussion, the board remained of the opinion that the problem with raising donations lay in the weakness of Zionism in Great Britain and not, as the management claimed, in their ineffective work. They therefore decided that for the time being they would remain in their office in Fulbourne Street while agreeing to establish a sub-committee to examine the Head Office’s proposals.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Two new members had joined the Commission: Norman Bentwich (the son of Herbert Bentwich) who in 1920 became the Attorney-General under the Mandatory Government, and Paul Goodman. The General Secretary, Morgenstern reported that the standard Hanukkah leaflet had been sent to all the provincial commissions these had been produced in a standardized manner in several languages by the Head Office ​​and were distributed to all the various national committees—but thus far only the Leeds and Manchester communities were sufficiently well-organised to prepare a donation. He also reported that additional unsuccessful attempts had been made to establish local committees throughout London. Those present were also informed of a request from Rabbi Morrison to establish a local committee in Southampton, and after Helz had agreed to pay for Morgenstern’s invitation as a propagandist out of his own pocket, it was agreed that he would travel to Southampton to speak at the first convention. The General Secretary’s reports discussed difficulties in the remote management of the provincial commissions, the motivation for independent activities of the various associations, and notably the effort invested to strengthen the community’s awareness of the work and goals of the JNF given the limited resources. Another update was given on the poor activity of the Manchester branch that had lasted for several months due to the private circumstances of the local chairman.

The committee also encountered difficulties in organising regional Zionist associations to cooperate with one another. Several East End associations approached the committee and asked to hold fundraising activities for the National Fund separately and independently of the ‘Zion’ organisation headed by Rabbi Goldblum, who, as a board member, was the person responsible for fundraising in the entire East End. ‘Zion’ opposed this application, and it was consequently decided that the General Secretary would try to persuade them to act within ‘Zion.’ However, if they were still to insist on individual activities, they would have to define the geographical area of ​​these activities and undertake to act only within that area. To strengthen the relationship with the provinces, it was also decided to establish a committee of three — Rubinstein, Goodman and Eisen — who would be responsible for distributing summaries of the executive meetings to the provincial commissions and requesting them to reciprocate by sending the summaries of their internal meetings. It was also decided that the amounts received as donations from local committees would be published in the press, so as to encourage them and be an incentive to act more vigorously. The committee also decided to contact the main management with a request to print 3,000 copies of leaflets addressed to women only and in addition, to prepare leaflets in Yiddish.

The financial report showed that the discussions at the commission meetings revolved around insignificant amounts — the income from donations collected in November and December 1910, amounting to only £119. The expense column showed modest management costs — office rental, some refreshments, coal for heating the office and the General Secretary’s salary — all amounting to £17 for the two months and which made up about 15% of the income. A grant of £50 to purchase furniture that the committee had requested from the Head Office was late in arriving However they sent £5 to participate in the expenses of the ‘Zion’ association and the Liverpool committee for reimbursing catering expenses and to the *Jewish Chronicle* for advertising expenses. To reduce advertising expenses, the committee decided to contact the editor of the Yiddish *Jewish Express* with a request to publish the lists of the names of all the donors in the newspaper without payment, otherwise the committee would cease its other publications in that newspaper. The travel expenses of the visitors and speakers at the provincial conventions were covered by the local committees from their income from various activities. An important matter that the committee dealt with had much to do with the handling of the Blue Boxes. In general, it was agreed that paying a salary to those distributing and emptying the cash boxes was not desirable and as much of this work as possible should be left to volunteers. Private matters were also discussed in the committee, such as the request of Mr. Louis Berwitz of Belfast who had purchased land in Palestine in for £10 several years earlier and had offered it as a gift to the JNF in exchange for assistance in obtaining documents confirming his legal claims to additional lands in his possession. The matter was referred directly to the main management.[[32]](#footnote-32)

In April 1911, Ginzburg resigned and was replaced by Isaac Goodman, who also served as General Secretary of the EZF. Kessler was forced to announce his resignation as Chairman of the commission due to the burden of his obligations and S. B. Rubinstein was elected in his place in September 1911 as temporary Chairman. Despite his many duties, Kessler continued to chair the meetings from time to time until a new permanent Chairman was elected. Kessler, as an ardent Zionist, a businessman and one of the owners of the *Jewish Chronicle,* proved to be a great asset to the fund because of the publicity given to National Fund’s enterprises in that prominent newspaper. These enterprises included the settlements in Degania and its surroundings, assistance to urban dwellers in Haifa and Jaffa, the Technion in Haifa and the Bezalel Art School in Jerusalem and the plantation of the Herzl Forest. These projects served as a ‘poster’ for the achievements of the National Fund and were highlighted in newspaper publications, in which the public was also called upon to support and send donations of in any amount directly to JCT’s bank account, with a promise that their name would be published in the press.[[33]](#footnote-33)

The committee continued to try to examine new means of increasing awareness of the JNF’s activities in Britain. To this end, it turned to Murray Rosenberg, one of the founders of the Federation, who had just returned from a visit to Palestine, during which he made what is now known as ‘the first film to be shot in Palestine’ dedicated to Herzl as a result of which the committee requested him to present his films and talk about them. Rosenberg agreed but conditioned his agreement on the committee bearing all the expenses associated with the screenings. The committee had difficulty meeting the financial expense and instead suggested that Rosenberg take part in the committee, a proposition to which he responded negatively.[[34]](#footnote-34)

The committee initiated its large fundraising events around two Jewish holidays — *Yom Kippur* and *Hanukkah*. On the eve of *Yom Kippur*, the streets of the community’s Jewish neighbourhoods were bustling with people all preparing to pray in the synagogue and give alms as atonement. On *Yom Kippur* 1911, all the heads of the provincial commissions were instructed to become street activists and hang banners in all the synagogues near where they lived. The members of the committee were also instructed to draft articles in the press in the Yiddish language.

The year 1911 was marked by great tension between the two main Zionist bodies in Britain, a fact that exhausted the already slender power of Zionism in Britain in its struggle for authority and influence. On one side stood the Federation, which supported Herzl’s approach to political activity whereas on the other there was the *Order of the ‘Ancient Maccabeans,’* which had a branch in Jerusalem, and which advocated practical Zionism and supported the activities of English Zionists. These struggles led to a year of low income from donations, despite lectures on what was happening in the Land of Israel, film screenings, gatherings on holidays and on the anniversary of Herzl’s death. As a result, the Zionist leadership had to intervene to reconcile the parties and sent Professor Warburg and Dr. Arthur Hantke (a member of the JNF board and chairman of the Zionist Organisation in Germany) to London to attempt to find a formula that would allow cooperation between the two combative bodies.

The discussions on this matter continued into the Eleventh Zionist Congress in Basel in August 1911. This marked the end of the ideological struggle between advocates of political Zionism and practical Zionism, with a decision to merge the two approaches into a synthetic Zionism. Another decision of the Congress was to permit the representation of independent unions *(Sonderverband)* in the Zionist movement, on condition that each would appoint at least 3,000 shekel buyers and would represent specific views on Zionist work. Despite the Federation’s opposition, the *‘Ancient Maccabeans’* received recognition of this special status on condition that a joint Zionist council be established in Britain, consisting of representatives of both the Order and the EZF.[[35]](#footnote-35) In February 1912, the parties reached an agreement to establish the *Joint Zionist Council.*[[36]](#footnote-36)

The income of the committee in 1911 amounted to only £465, a drastic decrease compared to the previous year. Goodman, the General Secretary of the commission, went to a meeting with the management in Köln in early 1912 to advise on how to increase the income. On the face of it, there was no satisfactory explanation why the income in England failed to take off, since it had stabilized in terms of organisational structure. It now numbered 15 members who met seven times a year and expanded into areas beyond the capital where two branches operated. The committee had another 25 branches in the provinces and cities — in Belfast, Bradford, Cardiff, Dublin, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds Liverpool, Limerick, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Southampton, Sunderland, Swansea, Tredegar and more.[[37]](#footnote-37)

The committee did not overstate office expenses, and apparently the office inventory was quite modest: as of mid-1912 (a decade after the JNF had been founded), it had a large table, a counter, two desks, two chairs with handles, 29 regular chairs, a duplicating machine, a large blackboard, 29 cash boxes, bookshelves, notices and leaflets for Purim, Hanukkah, Herzl Memorial Day, appeal notices for women and several booklets on ‘The Zionist Work in Palestine.’[[38]](#footnote-38) There are clear written working procedures that the committee and provincial commissions were to follow.

Goodman did his job faithfully. The highly detailed report he wrote correctly reflected the Fund’s position in Great Britain and presented the many weak points that defined clearly why the National Fund had failed to generate significant income in Great Britain. Goodman claimed this by writing that donations to the JNF were made by individuals on special occasions such as engagements, marriages, circumcisions, bar mitzvahs, various jubilees (silver or golden weddings) and sometimes spontaneously and independently for no particular reason. Voluntary collections took place on Jewish holidays and dozens of volunteers, notably teenagers and women, were deployed in streets with Jewish concentrations, especially those with immigrants. The 3,500 cash boxes received from the head office and distributed in the UK were sporadically distributed everywhere without registration, management or any control mechanism having been arranged ­— and above all the regular emptying of the cash boxes — and even when they were emptied, the holders of the cash boxes were not given receipts for their contents. Although each of the cash boxes had a serial number stamped on the tin and a special key, the committee failed to find any lists with the numbers of the cash boxes or the location of those to whom they had been given, any key records or when they had last been emptied. Many cash boxes were either lost, stolen, or forgotten.

In these new circumstances, Goodman made a commitment to the management in Köln to complete these records and construct an efficient mechanism for management — the boxes would be emptied once a quarter and in cities would only be distributed to members of the Zionist associations that had contracted with the National Fund Committee in England. It would also be possible to distribute funds to people or institutions personally known to some of the members of those Zionist associations. Only people paid a salary were to be given the keys to the cash boxes and to dispense cash and empty them. However, the committee made a reservation, stating that it could not take any responsibility for securing the cash. Regarding those collecting donations on the streets, it was concluded that this would be done two or three times a year during the Passover, Yom Kippur, and Purim holidays when each group would have received police permission. The central office of the committee was to be informed of any public donation over the holidays at least three weeks in advance.

In addition to supplying the Blue Boxes and propaganda materials, the head office also sent the committee visual aids for the use of the lecturers and participated partially in office expenses, including the payment of the General Secretary’s salary. The involvement of the management in the activities of the national committees also manifested itself by instilling a uniform method for raising donations through the Fund’s traditional means, while simultaneously encouraging local originality and listening to the community for suggestions of what might be more to their taste. In the United Kingdom, registration in the Golden Book at a cost of £10 proved to be a very attractive and effective means for organisations and individuals. The Blue Boxes became very popular but, in contrast, the use of Zion stamps did not. Over the years, the JNF and the committees perfected these measures and new ones were added to them — the stamps being upgraded to a series bearing portraits and landscapes of the country and telegrams with designs were added, the use of which the national committees were requested to promote in correspondence between Zionist organisations.

The Head Office also established and perfected dedicated funds to promote a variety of initiatives. Contributors to the ‘Olive Tree Fund’ amounting to six shillings for planting and nurturing one olive tree received a small certificate. A donation of a guinea for the planting of five trees received a more luxurious certificate with the donor’s name in Hebrew and English. Most of the publicity around the donations to this fund was affected around the annual Memorial Day of Herzl’s death and a special leaflet was even produced in Yiddish and English and distributed by the Head Office for this purpose. The Head Office also promoted a new initiative, the *‘Landesfond,’* in which individuals were, for a single donation of £2, offered to redeem of a plot of land measuring a tenth of a dunam on which an olive tree would also be planted. Another dedicated fund was aimed at supporting the cooperative settlement of Merhavia. All these donations allowed the publication of the donor’s names in the community press as well as a ceremonial certificate issued by the management in Köln, which was awarded to the donors through the committee. The management of the Fund also directed the committees to organise fundraising events during community holidays and celebrations and other public events.

Generally, the committee preferred that donations will not reach the central office or the provincial offices at all but be deposited directly into the bank account of the National Fund at the Jewish Colonial Trust (JCT). Generally, this rule was followed but occasionally the money was sent to the office in London and in such instances, a receipt was issued. Every fortnight, the commission General Secretary received an account status report that contained the names of the donors and the amounts donated from the branch of the JCT in London, and the lists of the donors published in the press were prepared from this list. The total sums were sent to the central office for publication in the Zionist movement’s publication *Die Welt*.

In June 1912, Goodman announced that he was leaving his position in favour of a much-desired position in South Africa. Following this, the ‘Joint Zionist Council’ decided on a reorganisation of the committee’s management. The entire existing committee resigned and representatives of the two leading Zionist organisations in England were elected to the executive committee in their place. Joseph David Jacobs was elected chairman; Elijah Wolf Rabbinowice was elected treasurer and Leonard Stein and Yaakov Kopel Goldblum, both from the Ancient Maccabeans, both from the Zionist-English Federation, were elected as vice-chairmen. Shmuel Lifshitz was elected as a new General Secretary.

The two new deputy chairmen were asked to prepare a comprehensive report that apparently pointed out additional failures in the activities of previous committee activities, including irregularities in the records of the sale of stamps received from Cologne and the distribution of the Blue Boxes. They also discovered that no orderly record had been made of funds deposited in the Fund’s bank account and that funds donated had been deposited in the bank account with considerable delay and that the names of the donors, which were supposed to have been published in the press, were published very late (if at all), a matter that led to many grievances on the part of the donors and drastically affected continuation of additional contributions.

It was also noted that committee meetings were not held in an orderly manner and even when they were held, minutes had not been prepared. In addition, books sent from the Head Office and intended for sale in the U.K. had disappeared without trace and essential information missing in the financial statements presented a picture that did not reflect the financial situation of the committee — expenses had exceeded income. The management in Köln was updated with the findings and to allow the continuation of the committee’s activity in Britain, some of the new members of its management had to pay from their own pockets to cover the debts left by their predecessors. The KKL-JNF Head Office also sent money to help cover these losses.[[39]](#footnote-39)

Jacobs’s arrival injected energy into the organisation in the U.K. The committee’s first year of work in its new structure focussed on regulating work procedures, covering debts, and updating records, and less on fundraising activities. He formed a reduced Board of Directors and called on other Zionist associations to join to raise funds for the JNF and to work together to deepen Zionist consciousness among the community, this time by appealing to a new audience — the children.

One of his first actions was to mark December 8, the first day of Hanukkah week, the festival of the Maccabeans, as the Fund’s national day, and he appealed to all branches to organise festive events to mark the day and promote donations.[[40]](#footnote-40) A special proclamation addressed the children in language designed to appeal to them, encouraging them convince their parents and relatives to pray for the Land of Israel and the need to redeem it, by building a home in the Land of Israel for their needy brothers from distant lands— and maybe even for themselves.

After a challenging year, the first annual report of the English Committee for the years 1912-1913 was produced in October 1913. It highlighted the initiatives on which the fundraising in Great Britain had been focussed.

The “Olive Tree Donations” fund for the continuous planting in the Herzl Forest continued to be marketed, even though it was in the midst of a severe crisis because of the undercalculation of the amount for the donation of a tree, errors made in planting the trees, understanding that the benefits from the trees would be lower than forecast, rethinking about the planting of other trees, excessive expenses in establishing a building for the management and such like.[[41]](#footnote-41) Another fund that the JNF established and marketed in England was to support the ‘Bezalel’ colony of Yemenite artists in the village of Beit Arif and craftsmen who worked at ‘Bezalel’ in Jerusalem. A donation to this fund was £40 per person and several fundraising events for this yielded £109. And here, too, it became clear over time that these donations had not been successfully invested and this settlement experiment ended in failure in January 1914.[[42]](#footnote-42)

The series of new procedures put into operation ensured that the activity of the JNF board in England would do better than expected from an organisational point of view. Board meetings were arranged to be held once a week or a fortnight at the least. The board was divided into subcommittees, each of which assumed responsibility for a different aspect of activity. Special attention was given to locating and documenting the 2,500 Blue Boxes distributed by the previous committee and it was found that 1,650 boxes had been distributed in the provinces but that only 1,250 of them had been located, resulting in an income of £59.[[43]](#footnote-43) In London, 850 cash boxes had been distributed, of which only 650 had been located and in which the total amount was £43. The committee, which had begun to hire the services of a person paid to empty the boxes in London, issued a new procedure for emptying the cash boxes regularly every quarter or earlier, if an application had been received from the person holding the cash box. Another important procedure was to make sure that the names of the donors were published in the community press, a feature that created excitement, anticipation and pride among the donors and encouraged them to donate more.

The work procedures with the provincial commissions were also designed to improve efficiency measures and ensure the supervisory control and communication mechanisms between them and the management in London. As most of the committee’s activities in London and the provinces were conducted by volunteers, it was necessary to ensure that all funds would be deposited in the bank at least once a quarter, that all donors would get receipts for their donations and that the receipt books in the hands of the donors would be checked at least once every six months by an external auditor. The empty receipt books were to be sent to the central committee in London with the amounts in accordance with the deposits in the bank.

The weakest link in the committee’s work was the slipshod relationship with the provincial commissions. The new committee concluded that a branch could not contain the representation of just a single Zionist organisation (which in most cases were local branches of the ‘Ancient Maccabeans’ which had approximately 2,000 members with networks throughout Britain) but had to have at least two, and that both would have representation in managing the branch. If this was impossible and there was only one organisation in the community, it was determined that the branch head was to be elected only in respect of his being known as someone who could be trusted. If that was not enough, the management committee in London became responsible for matching that person with representatives of reliable Zionist organisations. The heads of the branches were also required to prepare orderly lists of donors signed by two people so as to improve control of the income; the management demanded a commitment to comply with these new procedures, which were then printed and distributed as circulars to all the branches. The inducement offered in return was to give them the opportunity of sending a representative on their behalf to the management accompanied by a promise to try to send one of the committee members to be present at the next team meeting to be held in each of the provinces.

The actions of the new committee laid the foundations for proper administration, supervision, and control of the organisation. Its aim was to expand further and open new branches in every city and area where there was a Zionist organisation or company and to pay special attention to areas where there was no activity of the National Fund. But it was not only provincial activity that was considered, for London also required special attention, since until then most of the activity had been focussed on the East End. Consequently, the committee decided to break through this framework and establish committees that would operate in neighbourhoods in West, Southwest and North London. The new procedures and the regulation of the relationship with the provinces proved their effectiveness as was manifested in an increase of amounts donated. From January 1913, there were obvious signs of an exit from the crisis and of recovery visible and so that every month income increased. The largest improvement was in the small provincial centres: Swansea, Sunderland, Glasgow, Belfast, and Liverpool brought in a third of all income from donations, while the larger communities of Manchester and London actually lagged behind. The average income of the committee was about £80 pounds a month.[[44]](#footnote-44)

In local terms, this was a dramatic improvement. During this challenging year, the new committee managed to hold fundraisers all over the UK on the eve of Yom Kippur by deploying fundraising stations in the streets. In addition, the provincial heads were instructed to contact the rabbis of the synagogues and present them with bowls designated for donation to the National Fund. 20,000 leaflets in Yiddish and English were printed and distributed and at the same time there were publications in the Yiddish press. On Hanukkah, the National Fund’s holiday, posters were printed in English and Hebrew and distributed to synagogue rabbis and informational meetings were held all over the country. On Purim and on Herzl’s Day, various events were organised, which also brought in revenue, inscription for the Golden Book were made on average once a month, and efforts were made to increase the number of donors with regular commitments. Indeed, in this specific year they managed to get several such donors, albeit this number not yet was particularly large.

In the same year, the JNF management also began to consider and examine the legal implications of organising a framework for donations in wills and legacies. Ideas abounded on how to create fundraising methods and means, increase propaganda and information, and intensify the connection and transparency in the JNF’s operations. The JNF administration in Köln welcomed the progress in London and sent helpful advice. With self-assured steps, it seemed that the committee was on the high road, proof of which was the success of the first ‘Flower Day’ set for October 19, 1913, during which 75 volunteers walked the streets of London, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Swansea, and Nottingham, selling blue-and-white roses, which brought in handsome revenues. The *Jewish Chronicle* also praised a refreshing initiative that did not hide behind cultural righteousness: “There is nothing inappropriate in promoting initiatives for Jewish affairs only. Experience has shown that flowers will do what the past methods of pleading letters and desk top-ups did in the past, but which have almost lost their power. There is no reason why the Jews should not advance in the spirit of the times.”[[45]](#footnote-45) Indeed, following its success, it was decided to hold a ‘Flower Day’ every year. The calendar year 1913 ended with a record gross donation of £1,000, collected in 24 different cities. After offsetting local expenses, £850 pounds were deposited into JNF’s bank account.

The year 1914 opened with several festive events - a concert organised by the East London Council, to which a band from St. Petersburg was invited to play and sing from its repertoire Jewish folk songs, Jewish national music, and operatic arias. The violinist Marjorie Bentwich, daughter of Herbert Bentwich, also volunteered to take part in the concert to which all the women who had volunteered on Flower Day were invited. In January, the North London Council with the help of the ‘Zionist Women’s Organisation’ organised a dance dedicated to fundraising for the Herzl Forest and the Yemenite Fund. These promising signs did not go hidden from the eyes of the JNF management in Köln, who agreed to consider the committee’s request to finance opening a larger office positively. For the JNF management, this was an opportunity to anchor their relationship in an agreement with the Committee for the first time.

In January 1914, Bodenheimer wrote to the Commission that although the Head Office only bankrolls the opening of an office for the JNF representative and the salary of a General Secretary in countries where the annual income is over £2,000, because of the special importance of Great Britain, even though the income did not reach that amount, the management would nevertheless give exceptional approval in the 1914-15 budget to finance an office. This was done on the assumption that, considering the size of the population, the committee would be able to meet this financial goal or at least £1,500.[[46]](#footnote-46) Until then, given the dynamics of the relationship between the management and the English committee, and due to shared interests and visions, there actually were consultations accompanied by recommendations to optimize the work of the committee and preparation of the budget. However, the work of the committee was conducted quite independently, unencumbered by having to meet financial goals, conditions on its activities or from any obligation regarding financial reports or the delivery of regular management reports.

This did not mean that the Committee did not regard the JNF management as having professional authority. This Bodenheimer letter illustrates that the Committee submitted its budget proposal for the following year’s activities to the Head Office and Bodenheimer responded with his own proposals to amend several sections of the budget. For example, he recommended increasing the budget for printing and mailing expenses due to the importance that the JNF saw in increasing propaganda. In addition, he also proposed a different way of distributing the expenses, totalling £300. Considering the level of income expected the expenses of the local office (salaries, office rental, printing, mailing and travel expenses) would constitute about 20% of the income anticipated. However, these were only recommendations. Bodenheimer attached to his proposal a draft framework for a standard agreement made with other countries in which the JNF had agencies, adapted to England, in which the following conditions were specified:

1.The National Fund office to be established in Britain would be a branch of the central office in Köln. The office in Britain would receive instructions from the head office and execute them accordingly.

2. The supervision and management of this British Commission is a matter for the JNF board in Britain which will be elected by the organisations in Britain and approved by the board of the National Fund.

3. The work of the committee would be divided into various departments and a role would be defined for each member of the committee. The Treasurer would be a member of the committee and would be unable to serve as General Secretary.

4. The committee members must appoint one or two external auditors who should be approved by the Board of Directors of the Head Office.

5. Minutes of meetings of committee members should be documented and archived. Committee meetings should be held at least twice a month. Copies of the meeting summaries should be sent to the Head Office.

6. All the income of the committee should be backed up by receipts and registered as the income of the National Fund. The income list should be published internally once a week.

7. The maintenance expenses of the branch office would be as it appeared in the proposed budget and amount to £300. Total income should amount to £1,500 with office rental not exceeding £25 pounds annually.

8. The General Secretary’s salary would be £150, that of the assistant £35, printing and mailing expenses £70, office rental £25, and reimbursement of travel expenses, £20.

9. The auditor should declare and sign the financial statements and send them to the Head Office.

10. The branch employees were to be employed exclusively by the Head Office. Commission members would be appointed as follows: the General Secretary by the Board of Directors of the Head Office and the members of the committee jointly. The other committee members were to be chosen by the committee members themselves, provided that the General Secretary had approved the appointments.

11. This agreement was valid for one year from March 1, 1914, to March 1, 1915.[[47]](#footnote-47)

There is no evidence as to whether the English Board signed this agreement or whether there might have been negotiations to change some of its clauses. The bottom line was that the committee failed to raise more than £1,000 in 1914. There had been promising signs during the first half of the year, with the volume of the committee’s activity increasing significantly until it was decided that the General Secretary, Lipshitz, should work full-time.[[48]](#footnote-48) In addition the external financial auditor, Herman Newman from JCT, praised the committee’s achievements in making much satisfactory progress in the committee’s activities, both from the points of view of organisational and the significant increase in donations. He also pointed out that because of the increase in the volume of activity, it would not be possible for the next audit to require the employment of a paid external auditor.[[49]](#footnote-49)

While the clouds of the First World War had begun to darken over the skies of Europe, in June 1914, the ‘Flower Day’ was held again with flowers sold in twelve different cities, including the western and northern neighbourhoods of London, which until then had not been bastions of support for Zionism but which yielded the sum of £75. In the view of the committee, ‘Flower Day’ had been a resounding success. A total of 800 girls and women responded to calls in of the press to volunteer for this project in almost every significant Jewish centre throughout the British Isles. Overall, 95,000 blue and white roses were sold. East End neighbourhoods generated the largest donations and surprisingly, it was not only Jews who bought the flowers, but also non-Jews who came to visit the busy Petticoat Lane market. The income from ‘Flower Day’ amounted to £408 and offsetting expenses, there was a net profit of £335, a third of the total revenue for that year and double the total revenue of the previous Flower Day. But the far-reaching exposure in the streets also resulted in less desirable reactions. Donors encountered condescending comments from non-Jews and in Hampstead, the volunteers also encountered statements from Jews who said that “they are not in the National Fund and have no intention of returning to Palestine.”[[50]](#footnote-50) In addition, the many volunteers were awarded a festive medal.

When it seemed that the committee’s activity was just taking off, Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914, because of Germany’s invasion of Belgium the independence of which Britain had promised to maintain in the Treaty of London of 1839 and through whose territory Germany planned to invade France. This was just the opening shot by Great Britain prior to declaring war on the Ottoman Empire, together with France on November 5, 1914, and which brought the empires into the Great War and the Land of Israel into a war zone.

The JNF management was forced to respond at once and make new decisions to accommodate the emergency as it affected Palestine. Initially, the Head Office was moved from Cologne to The Hague and the Dutch banker Jacobus Henricus Kann became its head. The main effort was to raise donations to alleviate the plight of people in the *Yishuv* who had suffered from unemployment and hunger due to the war. The emphasis was not to use the donations for poor relief but to continue to maintain the workers of the Zionist enterprise — paying the salaries of the workers who cultivated KKL's lands and ensuring emergency or voluntary work for the workers and arranging housing for them. Despite feverish efforts had been made by the Head Office to raise donations for these emergency plans, it encountered considerable difficulty in initiating emergency works, let alone preparing construction plans. For example, the area that the JNF had intended to develop near Jaffa for 100 workers and their families was proscribed by the Ottoman authorities for military reasons and there was a lack of building materials in the country, and these were costly. And it was only with difficulty that the JNF managed to finance 20 residential buildings in Merhavia and around the Sea of ​​Galilee.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Signs of the impact of the war were etched into the activities of the commission in Britain, which was now encountering great difficulties in raising donations for the Land of Israel. During the war, appeals were made in personal letters to potential donors to help with donations to the people living in Palestine. Voluntary donors were assigned to social events, synagogues and various community gatherings and the message transmitted referred to “a duty.” It was the duty of every Jew, large or small to contribute to the National Fund.[[52]](#footnote-52) The messages referred to a dire situation and an emergency — “We will always be persecuted,” “We must join forces to build a home for our people in the Land of Israel,” and “Anyone who feels that he is a true son of our people must donate his money to the National Fund.”

These messages did not gain much traction in the community. The amounts collected in Great Britain in 1915 amounted to only £286. But even though Palestine was considered as an enemy territory, the British government agreed to allow the transfer the money to its Jewish residents as a humanitarian matter. The transfer of funds to Israel was accomplished in cooperation with The American Jewish Relief Committee Foundation.[[53]](#footnote-53)

Although the activities of the commission slowed down due to the war, the number of branches increased and stood at 28 in March 1916. Lifshitz left in November 1914 with George Liverman being appointed to replace him. As expected, London topped the donation income table, followed by Leeds and Manchester. Even though social and cultural activity had almost completely ceased, the committee attempted to maintain a routine as far as possible. Donations were sought house to house, from containers placed in synagogues, by the sale of Hebrew yearbooks; donations were also made during the holidays, mainly Hanukkah, Yom Kippur, Passover, and Purim, when various gatherings were organised. However, the income from them was small. Registration in the Golden Book became the main source of income, accounting for almost a third of the total, and the Blue Boxes also continued to bring in adequate income.

In this year, the committee’s messages for fundraising purposes shifted from land redemption and focussed mainly on the need for donations to build houses for workers, to help Yemenite Jews, and tree-planting.[[54]](#footnote-54) The printed propaganda materials were decorated with pictures of settlements around and on JNF land, of Yemenite workers, the development of the city of Tel Aviv and of the ‘Bezalel’ building. From The Hague, the JNF Head Office continued to issue instructions and messages to the national committees that needed to be fostered. These circulars dealt with stamps or with slogans such as “No home should be without a Blue Box” and these were distributed by the national committees to the heads of the provincial commissions in their respective countries.[[55]](#footnote-55)

As the war continued and despite the great difficulty in organising events due to a depressed national mood, the committee tried to continue the routine of its mission for the Land of Israel as far as possible. Although some fundraising events had to be postponed due to date conflicts with fundraising events of other organisations, nevertheless, after receiving the permits from the local police it was possible to also hold ‘Flower Day,’ a fundraising ritual adopted by other Jewish associations.

In March 1916, General Secretary Lieberman resigned and was replaced by Reuben Hyman Feinblum.[[56]](#footnote-56) Feinblum’s tenure was also short and lasted only about two years.[[57]](#footnote-57) Despite the poor national mood, the activity of the committee recovered, and this was expressed in the amounts donated. Surprisingly, and despite the great rise in emergency relief and charity funds established for Jewish conscripts, war victims, &c., donations totalling £787 were raised in 1916.

In February 1917, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, then lecturer in biochemistry at Manchester University, was elected to head the EZF. Weizmann streamed fresh and high energy into the promotion of Zionist activity and goals among the community. The Federation established a propaganda committee in synagogues and issued a call to rabbis to use their spiritual influence on Passover and dedicate their sermons on one of the holidays to Zionist propaganda to stimulate their communities to support a fund “the sole purpose of which is to redeem our land from foreigners and return the property of our ancestors to our people. [...] Every penny [raised] for the JNF is dedicated to purchasing land in the Land of Israel.”[[58]](#footnote-58) The Federation also called on all the associations under its umbrella to cooperate with the local JNF committees in England. However, the outcome of all these efforts still did not manage to budge the community from its apathy to raising donations for the National Fund.

In October 1917, the commission was again reorganised in England. While Weizmann and his contingent worked tirelessly in the political field to obtain an official document from His Majesty’s government to support a Jewish National Home in Palestine. [while trying to neutralize opposition from the non-Zionist leaders of the community to such a declaration, fearing that English Jews might be suspected of dual loyalties], the agronomist Jacob Ettinger, the representative of the KKL-JNF Head office in The Hague, was sent to England that same month. Ettinger examined the committee’s work closely and was aware of the need for changes.[[59]](#footnote-59) Once again, the main Zionist organisations in England, led by the EZF, the Ancient Maccabeans, and the Workers of Zion, were invited to send representatives to form a committee which would become a new management comprising 20 members. Ettinger encouraged the committee not to be content with selling stamps, not to encourage donations for the purchase, to take care of drafting dunams of Land of Israel. Not to sell only individual trees, but Nahalas, because that is the only way that The JNF can become a large and influential pioneering fund. The representatives of the Zionist organisations responded to the call — M. Levy from the ‘Council of Friendship Associations,’ M. Myers and G. Pomeranz of *‘Poalei Zion,’* Israel Ziv, Percy Baker, Moed, Aaronovitch and Max Shir were added as representatives of the British Zionist Federation to the representatives of the Federation and the Ancient Maccabeans were added to the committee. Each individual was entrusted with a different section of ​​the committee’s work.

The impact of these organisational changes was felt immediately. Two Yiddish-language newspapers (*The Zeit*, and Express) regularly published the lists of all donors, large and small, while the *Zionist Review*, in which Kessler, a member of the JNF Board of Directors, was also involved, limited the publication of the names of donors for amounts above 10 shillings. They helped with a donation of £5 to cover the costs of advertising in the newspapers. Since the police had cancelled the permission to holding ‘Flower Day', the committee found an alternative by organising fairs (bazaars) as an equally successful means of fundraising. Two successful bazaars were held, one in Liverpool by the organisation of ‘*Ma’agal* — Young Women Zionists’ and the other in West London; each managed to raise about £200. In Manchester and Glasgow public meetings were organised by Rabbi Goldblum and in Swansea by Adler. There was also fundraising at a gathering of workers in London to bid farewell to Ettinger as well as at other public gatherings throughout the provinces. In addition, new committees were opened, and the existing ones were strengthened by Zionist organisations involved in joint work.

But not everything was rosy. There were still communities throughout Britain where the idea of ​​the importance of supporting the National Fund had failed to take root even though appeals had been made to the heads of those communities. And there were also communities where, although they had Zionist associations, did not make any real mark. Public criticism of this was heard not only within the committee itself but also in the press and towards the National Fund Committee in Great Britain, which was satisfied with just a small number of actions amounting to annual revenues of hundreds of pounds Sterling for land redemption and some relief and charity funds — various ‘distribution’ funds directed mainly towards institutions of the *Yishuv*. These managed to attract donations five and six times higher than the National Fund without any special effort.[[60]](#footnote-60)

**Aappendix 1: Amounts collected in selected provincial communities 1916-1917**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Location** | **Size of the Jewish community**  | **1916 Year** | **1917 Year** |
| **London** | 160,000 | £352 | £615 |
| **Manchester** | 30,000 | £66 | £165 |
| **Leeds** | 25,000 | £152 | £171 |
| **Liverpool** | 7,000 | £48 | £92 |
| **Glasgow** | 8,000 | £19 | £14 |

Source: The National Library PV 6047 1:1918. Report of the first annual meeting of the KKL England committee, August 1918.

By the end of 1917, the total gross income of the JNF from all the Diaspora committees amounted to £380,000, but after deducting the committees’ expenses, currency exchange losses and various administrative expenses of the Head Office, the net amount was £259,300.[[61]](#footnote-61) We do not have exact figures for amounts donated from Great Britain between 1902 and 1908 but these were amounts that ranged from a few tens of pounds to several hundred. The year 1917 ended with a record income for the Fund amounting to £1,400 but it did not dramatically change the total percentage that British Jewry contributed to the Fund during the period in question, which was only approximately 3%.

**Table 2: Income from donations in the years 1908-1918**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **1908** | **1909** | **1910** | **1911** | **1912** | **1913** | **1914** | **1915** | **1916** | **1917** |
| **Income in pounds** | £640 | £640 | £750 | £465 | £618 | £850 | £912 | £286 | £787 | £1,400 |

Source: The National Library PV 6047 1:1918; CZA A61\69

There are many interrelated reasons why the goals of the Jewish National Fund failed to win the hearts of the community. To a large extent, public indifference to the Fund’s goals was the main stumbling block, in addition to struggles for prestige within the Zionist organisations and an unsound organisational structure, which made it difficult to communicate with communities far from the British capital.

This indifference faded away when, on November 2, 1917, Lord Rothschild received the ‘Balfour Declaration’ in which His Majesty’s Government declared that it viewed favourably the establishment of a National Home for the Jewish people in the Palestine. A few days later, southern Palestine was conquered under the leadership of Field Marshal Edmund Allenby. On December 11, 1917, he and his officers entered Jerusalem on foot through the Jaffa Gate, and the era of British military rule in Palestine had begun. Diaspora Jews, led by British Jewry, were filled with hope for a new era and with an ambition to contribute their share to the development and prosperity of the Land of Israel as the Jewish National Home.

1. *JC*, 28 Oct. 1955. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Shiloni, *The Jewish National Fund*, 5–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid., 6–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Katz, *The Battle for the Land*, 13; Shiloni, *The Jewish National Fund*, 7. The value of £1 in 1900 is equivalent to ~£120 today. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *JC*, 24 Jan. 1902. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Chovevi Zion, also known as 'Chibat Zion' were variety of groups which were founded in 1881 in Eastern European countries with the aim to promote Jewish immigration to Palestine, and advance Jewish agricultural settlement there. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Quoted in Oren, *Chibat Zion in Britain*, 137-143. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. (Translated from Hebrew by the author). Herzl's letters, in *Project Ben-Yehuda* website. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *JC*, 3 Jan. 1902 - De Haas’ speech at the Fifth Zionist Congress*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *JC*, 3 Jul. 1903. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. In Hebrew – 'Otzar Hityashvuth HaYehudim'. A decision to establish the bank was made as early as the Second Zionist Congress. The initial goal was a bank with a capital of £2  million, however they managed to raise only £250,000 by 1899. The funds were used to set up a banking operation in London, which proved quite unsuccessful. Its most significant investment was conducted in 1902, when a decision was made to establish the Anglo-Palestine Company (APC), which would later become the Anglo-Palestine Bank, and  later yet – Bank Leumi. JCT opened its first branch, who was headed by Zalman David Livontin in Jaffa in 1903. see: Nakdimon, *The Bank*. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Shiloni, *The Jewish National Fund,* 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. CZA, A61\122. EZF's balance-sheet, 15 Feb. 1902. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid. balance-sheet for the year 1905. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Company number 92825. In January 1926, the name was updated into *'Keren Kayemeth Leisrael' Ltd*. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Kessler was one of the chief architects of the ‘El Arish Plan’ from 1902-1903 to negotiate with the British Government for settling a Jewish colonisation in the Sinai Peninsula. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. On the emergence of the idea of afforestation in the Zionist movement and the saga surrounding the planting of the Herzl Forest, see Shiloni, *The Jewish National Fund*. 71-96. On the 'Olive Tree Fund' see: Bein*, Toldot ha-hityashvut*, 40-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *JC,* 15 May 1908. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. CZA A61\69, from a brochure produced in 1912 by the General Secretary of the Commission, reviewing the history of the commission in England since its formation. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *JC*, 29 Jan. 1909. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *JC*, 21 May. 1909. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. CZA, A61\58, Financial statement for 1909. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. CZA A61\69, Leaflet printed in 1909 calling for promoting the Herzl Forest. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *JC,* 15 Apr. 1910. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Sandberg, *From JNF to Viva Palestina*, 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *JC*, 15 Jul.1910 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. CZA A61\69, from Gunzburg (General Secretary) to the province offices, 13 Sep. 1910. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. The term used for Jewish community in Palestine pre the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See: Gutman, *The Story of a Dream: The Ascension of 'Olei-Zion' from Glasgow to its Region* [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. In 1898 Rishon LeTzion and Zichron Ya'akov wineries, founded by Baron Benjamin Edmond de Rothschild, decided to distribute their kosher wines (later 'Carmel Mizrahi' and today 'Carmel') also in Britain, and the product was an immediate success. 'Palwin' has become one of the most recognized Israeli brands in the community.
 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. CZA KKL1\606, Meeting Minutes 3 Nov. 1910. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. CZA KKL1\606, summary of a meeting of the committee from 31.12.1910. The land in question belonging to Berwitz was in Hadera. Berwitz bequeathed £500 in his will from 1926 to the Fund. See: CZA KH4\20571. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. *JC,* 26.5.1911 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. KKL1\606, Summary of a Committee meeting of September 3, 1911. Link to Rosenberg's film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35MemIqQDeA [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. *JC,* 27.10.1911 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Hashal PV 6047 1:1918. A historical overview of the state of Zionism in Britain from the report of the first annual meeting of the JNF Board of England, August 1918. See also: Cohen*, English Zionist and British Jews*, p. 119. In the 1930s, the 'Ancient Maccabeans' lost the special status given to them. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. KKL1\670, from reports prepared for the 11th Zionist Congress on the activities of JNF committees in the Diaspora [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. CZA A61\69, from the report on the review of the committee's activities in 1912 produced by the General Secretary, Isaac Goodman. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. CZA A61\69, a private and confidential report on the British Commission, October 7, 1912. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *Ibid.,* a circular from the new executive committee to the heads of the provincial commissions dated November 8, 1912, and also: *JC*, 15.11.1912. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Shiloni, *The Jewish National Fund*, pp. 92-94. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. On the colony in detail, see: Gideon Efrat, *The Artists' Colony in Ben Shemen*. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. From a memorandum distributed by former General Secretary Isaac Goldblum on the state of activity (apparently in the first half of 1912). it is claimed that 3,500 Blue Boxes were distributed in Great Britain. See: CZA A61\69, (no date). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. CZA A61\69, First annual report of the Committee for the years 1912-1913. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *The JC,* 10.10.1913 [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. CZA A61\69, from Bodenheimer in Köln to the members of the commission in Britain from January 23, 1914. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. CZA A61\69, from Bodenheimer in Köln to the members of the committee in England from January 23, 1914. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. *The Jewish Chronicle,* 17.4.1914 [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. CZA A61\69, results of an audit report for the nine months of activity of the new committee by Herman Newman dated June 5, 1914 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. *JC,* 5.6.1914 [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. CZA A61\69, Letter from the principal office of JNF in The Hague to the national agencies dated March 3, 1916 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. *Ibid.* Circular from the end of the First World War. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. *Ibid*. Details from a personal address to the donor dated January 29, 1915. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. I*bid.* Report of donations and activity for 1916 [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. *Ibid.* Letter from the central office of JNF in The Hague to the national committees dated March 3, 1916 [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. *The Jewish Chronicle*, 24.3.1916 [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. In 1924, immediately after his marriage, the young couple emigrated to Israel and settled in Jerusalem. In Israel he served as an official in the Mandate government [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. CZA A61\59, Declaration, Passover 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. This visit is mentioned in *JC* 26 Oct. 26, 1917. The Re-organization brought about by Ettinger can also be learned from the speech of the chairman, Rabinovitch, during the first annual meeting of the commission in England, August 1918, Hashal PV 6047 1:1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. *JC*, 28.12.1917 [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Elitzur, *The National Capital and the Building of the Nation*, 124-125. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)