

THE PROTOCOLS OF THE END-ALS OF ZION

Yes, you read that title right.

No, it's not a spelling mistake and no, I'm not about to spout some antisemitic tropes from a fabricated Russian book about a Jewish plot to take over the world that's been the bible of Hebrew-haters since the days of Ra-Ra-Rasputin and Tsar Nicolas II.

It's the end-als of Zion I'm interested in here – and with Israel (a) about to celebrate its 77th birthday and (b) the target of a global demonisation and delegitimisation campaign, it seems an apt time to reflect on the basis for the bond that I, we and in fact the overwhelming majority of Jews worldwide feel with Israel – or Zionism for want of a better word.

And that's where we come to the end-als: words that end in 'al' that are at the root of that bond.

First it's biblical. In Genesis, God

ZEDDY
LAWRENCE



promised the land to Abraham and his descendants, hence the Promised Land.

It's also historical – there's always been a Jewish presence in Israel even after we were dispersed.

It's spiritual. Those of us in the Diaspora have always longed to return. We look towards Zion, we pray towards Jerusalem. And throughout the year, we declare on yom tov 'L'shana haba'ah b'Yerushalayim'.

It's commercial. In the 1850s, Sir Moses Montefiore built the Jewish neighbourhood of Mishkenot Sha'ananim outside the Old City, and in the years that followed other philanthropists and philanthropic

organisations purchased property for Jews to live in.

It's agricultural. Starting in the 1870s, Jewish pioneers drained the swamps, and worked the land,

It's critical. The pogroms, persecution, prejudice – and ultimately the Holocaust – showed that Jews weren't safe living in even the most civilised of societies – we needed a country of our own.

It's legal. One hundred and three years ago, the League of Nations voted in favour of the Mandate for Palestine, handing administration of the region to the British, with the aim of establishing the Jewish national home there as mentioned in the 1917 Balfour Declaration. And then 78 years ago, the United Nations voted in favour of the partition plan, which established the Jewish state.

It's statistical. Israel has the largest Jewish population of any

country. And almost 75 per cent of its total population are Jewish.

It's logical and rational. Given all the above, it makes perfect sense that Israel is where a Jewish state should be.

And if all that isn't enough, it's musical. In Psalm 137, made famous by the band Boney M (of earlier-mentioned Ra-Ra-Rasputin fame), when we're by the rivers of Babylon, we weep there as we remember Zion.

If Boney M doesn't do it for you, how about Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*. In the song *Close Every Door to Me*, the protagonist Joseph sings, Children of Israel are never alone, For I know I shall find my own peace of mind, For I have been promised a land of my own.

And if that doesn't convince you, let's try a bit of Disney. In the song *Deliver Us* from *Prince of*

Egypt, the slaves sing "Lord of all, remember us here in this burning sand! Deliver us! There's a land you promised us! Deliver us to the promised land."

Biblical, historical, spiritual, commercial, agricultural, legal, statistical, logical, rational, musical ... and Herzl.

Ok, so Herzl doesn't strictly end in 'al', it just ends in 'l'. But it makes the same sound. As does Basel, which is where Herzl put them all together when he convened the First Zionist Congress in 1897. And in his memoirs, he declared that was where "I founded the Jewish State".

All of which brings me to my penultimate end-al ... festival.

On Thursday, May 1, we'll be celebrating Israel's birthday with the biggest party in Melbourne's community calendar – the Yom Ha'atzmaut Family Festival. There'll be rides, arcade games, food trucks, DJs, musicians, community stalls, a shuk and a concert. So make sure you join us. It'll be wonderf-al.

Zeddy Lawrence is executive

We join our Jewish community in