

2013 Speech Contest  
Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver  
Jacob Berman  
Vancouver Talmud Torah, Grade 4  
Reference Number is 20655277

Hello my name is Jacob Berman.

I promise by the end of this speech you will learn more about Zionism, about our families, and our shared history.

My topic today is about the father of the Labor Zionist movement before WWI. His name is Berl Katznelson. He was a caring, smart man who was good with people. He helped improve conditions for workers by bringing leaders together to improve conditions for workers all over Palestine.

Here are just a few of his many accomplishments that helped shape the state of Israel today:

He built several kibbutzim, and a Jewish defense force;  
Served on several Labor councils;  
Founded the Histadrut, General Federation of Jewish Labour,  
Founded the first Jewish newspaper in all of Palestine, called the Darvar;  
Founded the Ha-Mashbir, the consumer cooperatives;  
Founded the Sick Fund, Kuppat Holim, known as the Medical Insurance Fund;  
and he published books that helped educate the Israeli Defense Forces.

Many of these are well established institutions in Israel.

He was the voice of his generation, a spiritual guide for the labor movement.

Katznelson's young followers parachuted into Nazi-occupied territories to aid Jewish survivors. In 1939 he used his leadership to push for Jewish immigration into Palestine with an eye toward establishing a Jewish homeland which would later become the State of Israel.

I chose to speak about him, not only because he sounds like a great role model, but more than that, he is my Great, Great Uncle.

He also believed workers should have access to higher education. He built Hebrew schools because Jewish children had not learned the Jewish language since the destruction of the second temple. I feel that Jewish children should learn Hebrew since it is one of the most important parts of their heritage.

His early home life was a lot like mine. Both of our parents owned their own businesses. He and I like to read a lot. His father, like my parents, often talked about politics and things that needed to be fixed in society. Just like my parents, Berl Katznelson's father believed in education, observing Jewish traditions and learning the Hebrew language.

He went to Palestine at the age of twenty-one in 1909. At that time, the Jewish traditions were in peril. He is different from other Zionists because he was one of few voices in the Labor Movement to press for the observance of the Sabbath and festivals.

If my Great, Great Uncle were alive today, I would ask him so many questions, like: How did you get to be such a great leader? How did you feel when your father died? What are your hopes for children of my generation?

His life reminds me that life should be filled with love, pride, bravery and confidence. Berl Katznelson had all of those things inside of him. I will think of him, as not just a leader, but as a life long guide that will always be in my heart.

Thank you for listening!