

Herzl:

Up close and Personal



A traveling exhibition celebrating the visionary of the Jewish state on the 100th anniversary of his passing

GATEWAY 1: GROWING UP HERZL

In this gateway, you will be introduced to the social milieu of Theodor's formative years. You will glimpse him as a child, a youngster, and a student, and trace the development of his identity as a Jew who felt very much at home in, and intellectually very much a part of enlightened Europe at the end of the 19th century – with little connection to the Jewish people and no Zionist consciousness.

Against this background, you will also be asked to reflect on the evolution of your own self-identity, and to consider what those factors are that impact on identity formation in general – with all the implications therein for those concerned with Jewish continuity.

GATEWAY 2: TRANSITIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

Here the exhibit will present the germination of the Zionist idea in Herzl's mind, and will trace the context of its evolution through his life in Vienna, and the manifestations of antisemitism to which he was exposed, climaxing in the Dreyfus Trial which he covered as prominent Viennese journalist. This will bring into sharp relief your own relationship to the general society in which you live, and that which pertains today between your own Jewish community and the broader non-Jewish world. You will also be asked for your own explanation for the persistence of antisemitism, and your thoughts as to how the Jewish community should be responding to it. Is there such a thing as a distinct "Zionist" response that is different from a "Jewish" response?

GATEWAY 3: BLUEPRINTS FOR UTOPIA

The publication in 1896 of *The Jewish State* was a defining event in the history of the Jewish people. Here you will be exposed to the essence of Herzl's thinking as articulated in this political pamphlet: that there is but one answer to the Jewish Question, and that is a Jewish state. You will also encounter the strong reactions Herzl's thesis provoked in his contemporaries.

This is also the context in which you will be challenged to consider the contemporary relevance of the Zionist idea and the Zionist movement today, and to define what it means to be a Zionist today – before declaring whether or not you consider yourself to be one.

GATEWAY 4: WILLING DREAMS INTO BEING

This section includes a visual record of Herzl's diplomatic fervor, as well as his organizational savvy in developing the infrastructure that would eventually result in the establishment of the State of Israel. The convening of the first Zionist Congress in Basle, the founding of the World Zionist Organization, and the creation of Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael are all documented here.

Such a record of accomplishment raises questions regarding the appropriate organizational structure for the Jewish world today. Are our current institutional frameworks suited for the circumstances and conditions in which we live? What are you doing to respond to the needs of the Jewish community today?

GATEWAY 5: REALITY CHECK

The exhibition concludes with a selection of quotations from Herzl's writings, primarily from *Altneuland*, his utopian novel setting out his vision of an ideal Jewish society. They are superimposed on a visual collage reflecting the complex reality of Israel today.

The display ends with the challenge of embracing Herzl's legacy, finding a personal way to join in the struggle of making the Jewish state all that it might be – a challenge to take away with you.

Produced by the Department for Zionist Activities, World Zionist Organization
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