

visitor's
guide

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

Herzl:

Up Close and Personal

in pursuit of the Zionist vision



Department for Zionist Activities
World Zionist Organization



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A project of the
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Introduction

In pursuit of the Zionist vision

Visions alone grip the souls of men. And anyone who has no use for them may be an excellent, worthy, sober-minded person, but he will not be a leader of men, and no trace of him will remain.

History has bestowed upon Theodor Herzl the authority to have made this statement. His life lasted a scant 44 years, and he dedicated only the last nine of them to the Zionist cause. But in this brief and extraordinary span of less than a decade he was able to mobilize the forces and craft the infrastructure that would revolutionize the Jewish world and bring about the realization of the Jewish people's age-old dream of returning to Zion.

Yet with all that the Zionist movement has achieved since then, Herzl would be the first to counsel us that the cause he so passionately advanced a century ago, continues to be vital today. Two months before he died, he wrote:

I truly believe that even after we possess our land, Zionism will not cease to be an ideal. For Zionism includes not only the yearning for a plot of promised land legally acquired for our weary people, but also the yearning for ethical and spiritual fulfillment.

Now, 100 years after his passing, it is up to a new generation to embrace Herzl's legacy, and make it its own. That is why we created this exhibition. It's not only about Herzl; it's also about you.

While a century has passed since Herzl's death, many of the matters which occupied him continue to be germane today.

Anti-Semitism has not vanished, as Herzl predicted it would. Jewish communities are still engaged in defining their relationship to general society. Assimilation continues to threaten Jewish continuity. The Jewish state has been established, but it is still far from being welcomed by the nations of the world as Herzl believed it would be. And the challenge of fashioning Israel as the exemplary society Herzl envisioned remains unmet.

As you wander among the panels and peruse these texts, we hope that you will allow these issues to become your own, giving some thought to the meaning of Zionism today, and its relevance to your own life.

We wish you a successful journey as you set out in pursuit of the Zionist vision. Echoing the words of Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav, we are confident that wherever it leads you, it will bring you to the Land of Israel.

Next year in Jerusalem,



**Dr. David Breakstone
Head of the Department for Zionist Activities
World Zionist Organization**



Exhibition Overview

This exhibit is divided into five gateways, each of which is comprised of a number of panels covering contents and themes as follows:

- Gateway One** **Growing Up Herzl** **page 4**
- The social milieu of Theodor's formative years
The relationship of a Jewish community to its host society
Factors impacting on identity formation
- Gateway Two** **Transitions and Transformations** **page 8**
- Herzl's encounter with anti-Semitism and his analysis of the Jewish condition
The germination of the Zionist idea
Anti-Semitism as a contemporary phenomenon
- Gateway Three** **Blueprints for Utopia** **page 12**
- The publication of *The Jewish State*
Reaction of the Jewish world to the Zionist idea
The transformational power of Israel and Zionism today
- Gateway Four** **Willing Dreams into Being** **page 16**
- The creation of an organizational infrastructure for the Zionist movement
Herzl as an indefatigable diplomat
From thought to action in the Jewish world today
- Gateway Five** **Reality Check** **page 20**
- Herzl's sacrifice for the Zionist cause
Herzl's vision of the Jewish state
The challenge of fashioning Israel as an exemplary society

Experiencing the Exhibition

Together with the panels, we offer you this set of complementary pages, four for each gateway. They are meant to accompany you as you go through the exhibition, providing insight into Herzl's world and stimulation to wrestle with the same questions he did - against the backdrop of today's realities. They are arranged as follows:

The first page corresponding to each gateway state's the section's themes.

The second page includes:

Historical background

introductory remarks providing a context for understanding the various elements displayed on the panels

In his own words...

a quote from Herzl pertinent to the gateway's contents, followed by our reflection on the text

The third and fourth pages include:

From the pen of...

supplementary texts excerpted from the writings of Herzl and others

Biographical sketch

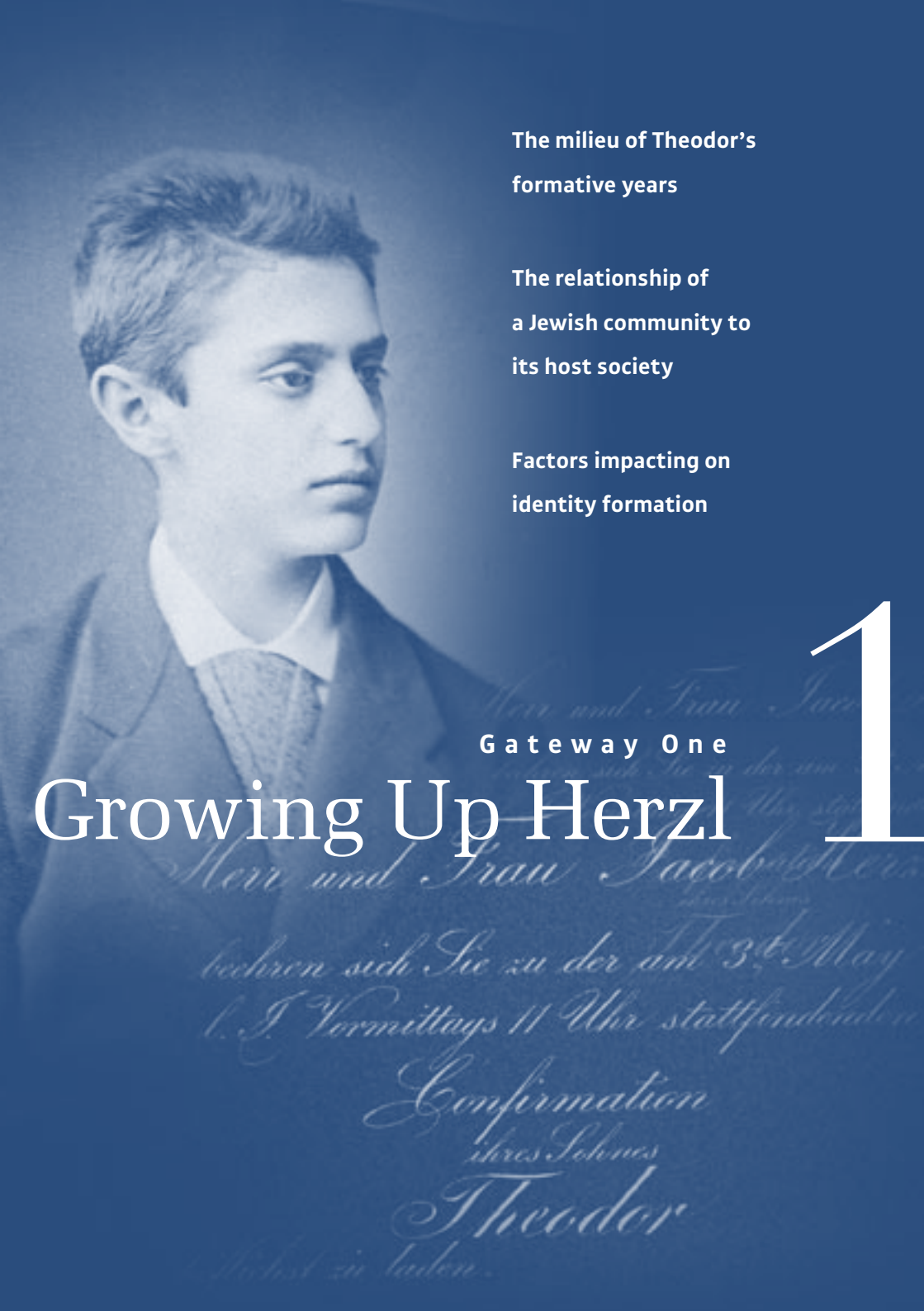
a vignette of Herzl related to the themes of the gateway

Herzl and me

thoughts on the relevance of the issues raised to contemporary Jewish life

Together we hope that these sources will provide you with an enriching and interactive experience. All of the material, of course, should provide stimulus for reflection – and action - even once you have left the exhibit behind.

Now onward, *in pursuit of the Zionist vision!*



The milieu of Theodor's formative years

The relationship of a Jewish community to its host society

Factors impacting on identity formation

Gateway One

Growing Up Herzl

1

*Herr und Frau Jacob Herzl
beehren sich Sie zu der am 3. May
l. J. Vormittags 11 Uhr stattfindenden
Confirmation
ihres Sohnes
Theodor
Herzl zu laden.*

Historical background

Theodor Herzl was born at a time and in a place where things appeared to be better for the Jews than they had been for thousands of years. Budapest, in the center of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a good place to be in 1860. In the year before Herzl's birth, right next to the family house, the Jewish community inaugurated an enormous and very beautiful synagogue, deliberately modeled on the ancient Temple of Jerusalem. The message was clear: *We are at home here*. They felt a part of their host society and were grateful to the enlightened empire that was accepting them in a way that Jews had perhaps never before been accepted in the Diaspora.

This was the milieu in which Herzl grew up, in a home that was prosperous, modern, and Jewish. He had the rudiments of a Jewish education and celebrated his Bar Mitzvah, but his primary self-identity as a young man was that of a European intellectual of the late nineteenth century, accentuated as a result of his having moved with his parents to Vienna as a teenager. Though Herzl studied law, his passion was theater, and still in his twenties, he was confident of a future as a major literary figure of his time.

In his own words...

I went to a Jewish preparatory school, where I was treated with a certain respect because my father was a well-to-do merchant. My first memories of this school center round the thrashing which I got because I did not know all the details of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. Today there are many school-masters who would like to thrash me because I remember it too well.

Theodor Herzl, Autobiographical Sketch, London Jewish Chronicle, 1898.



Theodor Herzl is a remarkable figure, among other reasons because he had both the will and the ability to reinvent himself mid-life. A talented, witty but not very deep writer transformed himself into a profound and courageous statesman. Initially propelled by thoughts of self-advancement, he would abandon a promising career in order to embrace a cause rooted in a sense of duty to the Jewish people.

The quote above succinctly captures this transformation, and hints at the opposition Herzl would encounter as he attempted to organize the basis for a new exodus that would redeem the Jews from the modern oppression of anti-Semitism and bring them to the promised land of Israel. For good reason he was frequently referred to as a modern-day Moses. But in order to become that, he had to overcome the strictures of his milieu, the wealthy bourgeois society of Jewish Vienna, with its cynical and world-weary absence of concern and lack of deep thinking about the Jewish situation as a whole. This society he would witheringly satirize in the first chapter of his 1902 novel *Altneuland* (Old-New Land), an excerpt from which appears below.

Growing Up Herzl

In *Altneuland*, Herzl offers us an insight into the well-to-do Viennese Jewish community at the turn of the 20th century through the following conversation, staged at a dinner party in one of their homes.

From the pen of...

Attention was diverted from the humorists when an elderly gentleman sitting next to Mrs. Loeffler remarked...that things were becoming worse in Moravia. "In the provincial towns," he said, "our people are in actual peril. When the Germans are in a bad mood, they break Jewish windows. When the Czechs are out of sorts, they break into Jewish homes. The poor are beginning to emigrate. But they don't know where to go."

Mrs. Laschner chose this moment to scream to her husband, "Moriz! You must take me to the Burg Theatre the day after tomorrow!"

"Don't interrupt!" replied the broker. "Dr. Weiss is telling us about the situation in Moravia. Not pleasant, 'pon my honor..."

"I feel it coming," cried Laschner, "We'll all have to wear the yellow badge."

"Or emigrate," said the rabbi.

"I ask you, where to?" asked Walter. "Are things any better anywhere else? Even in free France the anti-Semites have the upper hand."

Dr. Weiss, a simple rabbi from a provincial town... did not know exactly in what company he found himself, and ventured a few shy remarks. "A new movement has arisen within the last few years, which is called Zionism. Its aim is to solve the Jewish problem through colonization on a large scale. All who can no longer bear their present lot will return to our old home, to Palestine."

He spoke very quietly, unaware that the people about him were getting ready for an outburst of laughter. He was therefore dumbfounded at the effect of the word "Palestine". The laughter ran the whole gamut...

The old rabbi, deeply embarrassed, did not again raise his eyes from his plate while the humorists zealously dissected the new idea.

Biographical sketch

While his boyhood, it is true, failed to kindle in him any marked enthusiasm for being Jewish, it would be far from the truth to imagine that his family and background were innocent of Judaism. He came to the Jewish scene as no outsider, no total stranger, no Moses out of a heathen Egypt, as some of his East European colleagues, half-bewitched and half-suspicious, regarded him when he lifted up the banner of Zion.

During his boyhood the essential Jewish customs were observed in the Herzl household, the festivals were celebrated in the traditional manner, particularly Passover and Chanukah, and little Theodor accompanied his father to the Tabakgasse Synagogue every Friday evening and Sabbath morning. From the age of six to ten he attended the local Jewish Community School – there were no normal public schools – and the reports show that in “Religion” and “Hebrew Subjects” his marks ranged from good to excellent... Later in life, when entering upon a new critical venture, he never failed to ask for the parental blessing – a Biblical observance that weathered Johann Strauss’ Vienna. The home ceremonies and the regular synagogue attendance, with their inevitable exposure to something of the Hebrew language and Jewish spirit, were bound to leave on a sensitive nature impressions which the outer world would blanket but never could efface.

- Marvin Lowenthal, from his introduction to *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*

Herzl and me

Issues of Jewish identity are high on the agenda of the Jewish people today. And while many are busy counting the *number* of Jews in the world, perhaps the really important issue is the place that being Jewish figures in the self-identity of each - and what those factors are that make being Jewish more central to one person than another. After all, while Herzl was never a person to deny or be embarrassed by his Jewishness, we know that it certainly figured differently in importance to him at various stages in his life.

Where does being Jewish figure in your own sense of identity?

What have been the formative Jewish experiences in your own life?

What does being a member of the Jewish people mean to you?

What responsibilities does that membership carry? What burdens? What privileges?

*Is your own life an expression of Jewish pride? Would you be prepared to engage in a modern-day “duel” to protect Jewish honor, as was Herzl? (See **Biographical sketch**, p. 11)*

Herzl's encounter with
anti-Semitism and his
analysis of the Jewish
condition

The germination of the
Zionist idea

Anti-Semitism as
a contemporary
phenomenon

Gateway Two

Transitions and Transformation

2

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CHAMBRE DES DÉPUTÉS

Session

Tribune des Journalistes.

Presse Étrangère.

Dr. Théodore Herzl

Historical background

It was as a student in Vienna that something changed for Herzl. He began to encounter anti-Semitism personally, which had not disappeared in spite of the Emancipation. Until then, it had been easy for him to accept the comfortable duality of his identity as a European and a Jew. But from this point on, the problem would prey on his mind.

However, it was not anti-Semitism alone that concerned Herzl, but also the context that he believed nourished it. He saw the old Europe beginning to deteriorate, and believed that the liberal states that had provided a safe haven for Jews for most of the 19th century were about to disappear - to be replaced, he felt, by a far more threatening reality.

In 1891, he became the Paris correspondent of the great Viennese newspaper the *Neue Freie Presse*, and bore witness to rising anti-Semitic sentiment in France. Increasingly gripped by the Jewish question, he began to ponder different ways of responding to it. At one point, he flirted with the idea of promoting the mass conversion of the entire younger generation of Jews, which he ventured would solve the Jewish problem once and for all. But the trial of Alfred Dreyfus, an assimilated French Jewish army officer falsely accused of espionage, brought Herzl to the determination that the Jewish question required a national and political solution. Thus was born Herzl's Zionist vision, articulated in *The Jewish State* in 1896.

In his own words...

We have honestly tried everywhere to merge ourselves in the social life of surrounding communities and to preserve the faith of our fathers. We are not permitted to do so. In vain are we loyal patriots, our loyalty in some places running to extremes; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of life and property as our fellow citizens; in vain do we strive to increase the fame of our native land in science and art, or her wealth by trade and commerce. In countries where we have lived for centuries we are still cried down as strangers. But the distinctive nationality of Jews neither can, will, nor must be destroyed... This has been demonstrated during two thousand years of appalling suffering.



- Herzl, *The Jewish State*

Herzl's Zionist vision was furiously rejected by many of his contemporaries, who continued to be convinced that liberalism would triumph and that the Jews were on their way to being fully integrated into the societies in which they lived. He was, in fact, accused by many of undermining their attempts to further this goal. One who believed as Herzl did was his trusted lieutenant, Max Nordau, whose speech before the first Zionist Congress is excerpted below.

Transitions and Transformation

But while it is fair to say that Herzl's transformation into a Zionist was caused by the negative impact of anti-Semitism, it would be doing him an injustice to overlook his positive attachments to Judaism. "It is true that we aspire to our ancient land," he said in an address to one of the Zionist Congresses, "but what we want in that ancient land is a new blossoming of the Jewish spirit." In another, he asserted that "Zionism is a homecoming to the Jewish fold even before it is a homecoming to the Jewish land." This attitude is also apparent in the transparently autobiographical story, *The Menorah*, that he wrote in 1897, excerpted below.

From the pen of...

In the honeymoon period of the Emancipation... Christian feelings were evoked which were warm and accepting of the new status of the Jew. Well nigh intoxicated, the Jews rushed to burn all their bridges immediately. They now had another home, so they no longer needed a ghetto; they now had other connections and were no longer forced to live only among their coreligionists... In place of being different, which had been the Jew's salvation, the new policy was thoroughgoing mimicry. For one or two generations the Jew was allowed to believe that he was merely a German, Frenchman, Italian and so forth, like all the rest of his countrymen.

All at once... after a slumber of thirty to sixty years, anti-Semitism once more sprang out of the innermost depths of the nations of Western Europe. It revealed to a mortified Jew, who thought anti-Semitism was gone forever, the true picture of his situation.

Max Nordau, address to the first Zionist Congress, 1897

Deep in his soul he began to feel the need of being a Jew. His circumstances were not unsatisfactory; he enjoyed an ample income and a profession that permitted him to do whatever his heart desired... His Jewish origin and the faith of his fathers had long since ceased to trouble him, when suddenly the old hatred came to the surface again in a new mob-cry. With many others he believed that this flood would shortly subside. But there was no change for the better; and every blow, even though not aimed directly at him, struck him with fresh pain, till little by little his soul became one bleeding wound. These sorrows, buried deep in his heart, and silenced there, evoked thoughts of their origin... and now he did something he could not perhaps have done in the old days – he began to love his Judaism with an intense fervor.

The significance of anti-Semitism in the evolution of Herzl's worldview is apparent in these quotations from his esteemed deputy, Max Nordau, and his own story, *The Menorah*, published in the same year that he convened the first Zionist Congress.

Biographical sketch

Herzl joined the students' union called Albia... Owing to the constant wrangling about political questions, the students developed a high degree of sensitivity and were quick to seize upon any remark... they considered a reflection upon their honour. Such an affront could be avenged only by a duel... Members... were therefore expected to devote a good part of their time to fencing...and they all had to fight at least one duel to maintain their corporate honour. Herzl fought his duel on May 11, 1881, with a member of the student union Allemania, and both retired with gashed cheeks... After this "satisfaction of honour", Herzl was applauded at the "beer evening" for which the members of the Albia assembled later.

...Students of the German nationalist party gradually began to predominate in the Albia... The effect... was not only to arouse in Herzl a keener sense of his Jewish consciousness but also to provoke in him a feeling of resentment at the gibes and pinpricks that were all too manifest... [and] he decided to send in his resignation. In his letter he wrote that he was apparently disqualified for continued membership as he was tainted with "Semitism." The reply that he received rebuked him for showing a lack of respect ... and informed him that his request for an "honourable discharge" could not be granted, but that he had been expelled.

- Israel Cohen, *Theodor Herzl*

Herzl and me

There are those who believe that anti-Semitism will never disappear, though they might advocate different strategies for dealing with it. Others have been more optimistic, believing that it is a phenomenon that can be eradicated by the encouragement of liberal social trends, or radical social upheaval. Herzl was one of the latter. He believed that Zionism would actually eliminate the problem, that the establishment of a Jewish state would result in its abrupt disappearance. History has proven him wrong.

What is your explanation for the persistence of anti-Semitism? What do you believe to be its underlying cause?

Do you believe that it might eventually disappear? If so, under what circumstances?

How should the Jewish community be responding to the phenomenon today?

The publication of *The Jewish State*

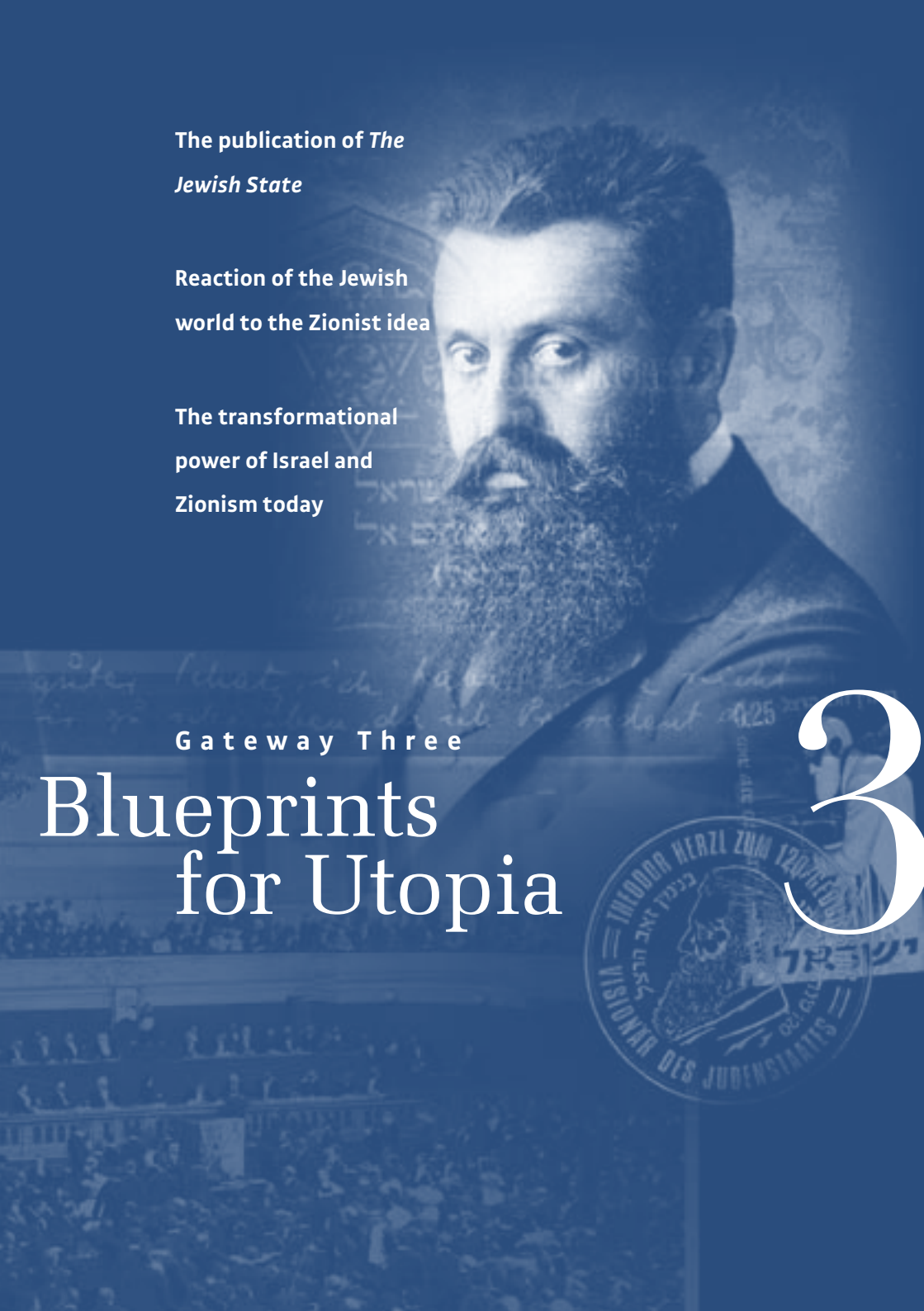
Reaction of the Jewish world to the Zionist idea

The transformational power of Israel and Zionism today

Gateway Three

Blueprints for Utopia

3



Historical background

In a frenzy of activity beginning in mid-1895, Herzl started meeting with influential Jews in order to gain their support for his Zionist vision, and, at the same time, he began committing his ideas to writing. After weeks of drafting and redrafting, and disappointed with his failure to recruit many of those with whom he met to the cause, he determined that the time had come to go above the heads of the established Jewish leadership and appeal to a wider public. In early 1896, he published his landmark political treatise, *Der Judenstaat, The Jewish State*. In it, he put forth his thesis that there was but one answer to the Jewish question: a Jewish state. Herzl was above all a rational man, and he developed his ideas in a manner that he was sure would appeal to reason, both on the part of Jews and on the part of the nations, which he believed would enthusiastically embrace his plan to rid themselves of their “Jewish problem.”

The appearance of the pamphlet provoked passionate discourse, with much of the intellectual elite rejecting his program either for ideological or practical reasons. But the Jewish masses embraced his ideas in a manner more appropriate for a prophet than a statesman. Indeed many saw him as a modern-day Moses. To them, this most unlikely of candidates, a worldly Viennese Jew, a man of European culture, was about to realize the age old Messianic dream of returning the Jewish people to Zion.

In his own words...

No human being is wealthy or powerful enough to transplant a nation from one habitation to another. An idea alone can achieve that ... “Next year in Jerusalem” is an ancient phrase of ours. It is now a question of demonstrating that the dream can be converted into a living reality...

The entire plan is in its essence perfectly simple... Let sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the earth's surface that is sufficient for our rightful national requirements. We shall take care of everything else.



- Herzl, *The Jewish State*

It was between the years 1895 – 1897 that the Zionist idea completely took hold of Herzl. A glance into his diaries and the accounts of those who knew him at the time leave no room for doubt that Herzl had experienced the equivalent of a religious vision. The power of the idea was all encompassing, and filled his life with a meaning and purpose that would drive him until his premature death in 1904.

Many were as enthralled as was Herzl with the Zionist idea, and went through similarly transforming experiences that would effect their lives

Blueprints for Utopia

forever. Others reacted with cynicism and dismissive worldliness. Many - Western European Jews in particular - felt threatened by the suggestion that emancipation had failed, and were deeply affronted by the outrageous suggestion that the place of the Jew was in a Jewish state. They had spent their whole lives trying to prove exactly the opposite and now here was a man whose delusional vision threatened to upset the foundation of their existence. Herzl's conviction, and the position of those who opposed it, are reflected in the texts below.

From the pen of...

Herzl's passion for Zionism was equaled only by the fervor of those who rejected it as a threat to their position. His diary entries, one of which appears here, reflect a keen awareness that his ideas were rebuffed by mainstream Jewry.

Today I am an isolated and lonely man, tomorrow perhaps the intellectual leader of hundreds of thousands - in any case, the proclaimer of a mighty idea.

- Herzl, Diary, June 15, 1895

I was still in the Gymnasium when this short pamphlet appeared; but I can still remember the general astonishment and annoyance of the middle class Jewish elements of Vienna. What has happened, they said angrily, to this otherwise intelligent, witty, and cultivated writer? What foolishness is this that he has thought up and writes about? Why should we go to Palestine? Our language is German and not Hebrew, and beautiful Austria is our homeland. Are we not well off under the good Emperor Franz Josef? Do we not make an adequate living, and is our position not secure? Why does he, who speaks as a Jew and who wishes to help Judaism, place arguments in the hands of our worst enemies and attempt to separate us, when every day brings us more closely and intimately into the German world?

- Stefan Zweig, author recounting the effect of the publication of *The Jewish State* on the Jewish community of Vienna

What glory awaits those who fight unselfishly for the cause! A wondrous generation of Jews will spring into existence. The Maccabees will rise again. Let me repeat once more my opening words: The Jews who wish for a state of their own shall have it. We shall live at last as free men on our own soil, and die peacefully in our own homes. The world will be freed by our liberty, enriched by our wealth, magnified by our greatness. And whatever we attempt to accomplish there for our own welfare, will spread and redound powerfully and beneficially for the good of all mankind.

- Herzl, *The Jewish State*

Biographical sketch

During the last two months of my stay in Paris I wrote the book *The Jewish State*. I cannot remember ever having written anything in such a mood of exaltation. Heine tells us that he heard the flapping of eagles' wings above his head when he wrote certain stanzas. I too seemed to hear the flutter of wings above my head while I wrote *The Jewish State*. I worked at it daily, until I was completely exhausted...

When I had completed the book I asked my oldest and best friend to read the manuscript. In the midst of the reading he suddenly burst into tears. I found this natural enough, since he was a Jew; I too had wept at times during the writing of it. But I was staggered when he gave me an entirely different reason for his tears. He thought that I had gone off my head, and since he was my friend he was touched to tears by my misfortune. He ran off without saying another word. After a sleepless night he returned and pressed me hard to leave the entire business alone, for everyone would take me for a lunatic.

- Herzl, Autobiographical Sketch, London Jewish Chronicle, 1898

Herzl and me

In our generation, as in Herzl's, the Zionist idea has had a profound effect on the lives of many. But in this period of the intifada (Palestinian uprising), the relationship between the Jewish people and the Jewish state has also become more complex. Many see an attack on Israel as an attack on themselves, and feel more strongly than ever that Jews every-where share a common destiny. Others are troubled by what they understand of Israel's policies, and suggest its actions are in some measure responsible for Arab terrorism and even the rise in anti-Semitism. In Israel, many feel they are bearing an unfair share of the burden of assuring Jewish survival, and are intensifying their call for *aliyah*. A century after Herzl's death, the attitude of the Jewish people to the Zionist cause remains an issue to be dealt with.

What does the existence of the State of Israel mean to you, on the most personal level?

For you and those you know, is Israel today a source of inspiration or discomfort?

How do you define Zionism today? Whatever your definition, do you consider yourself a Zionist? How do you relate to the element of the Zionist platform calling for aliyah?

The creation of
an organizational
infrastructure for the
Zionist movement

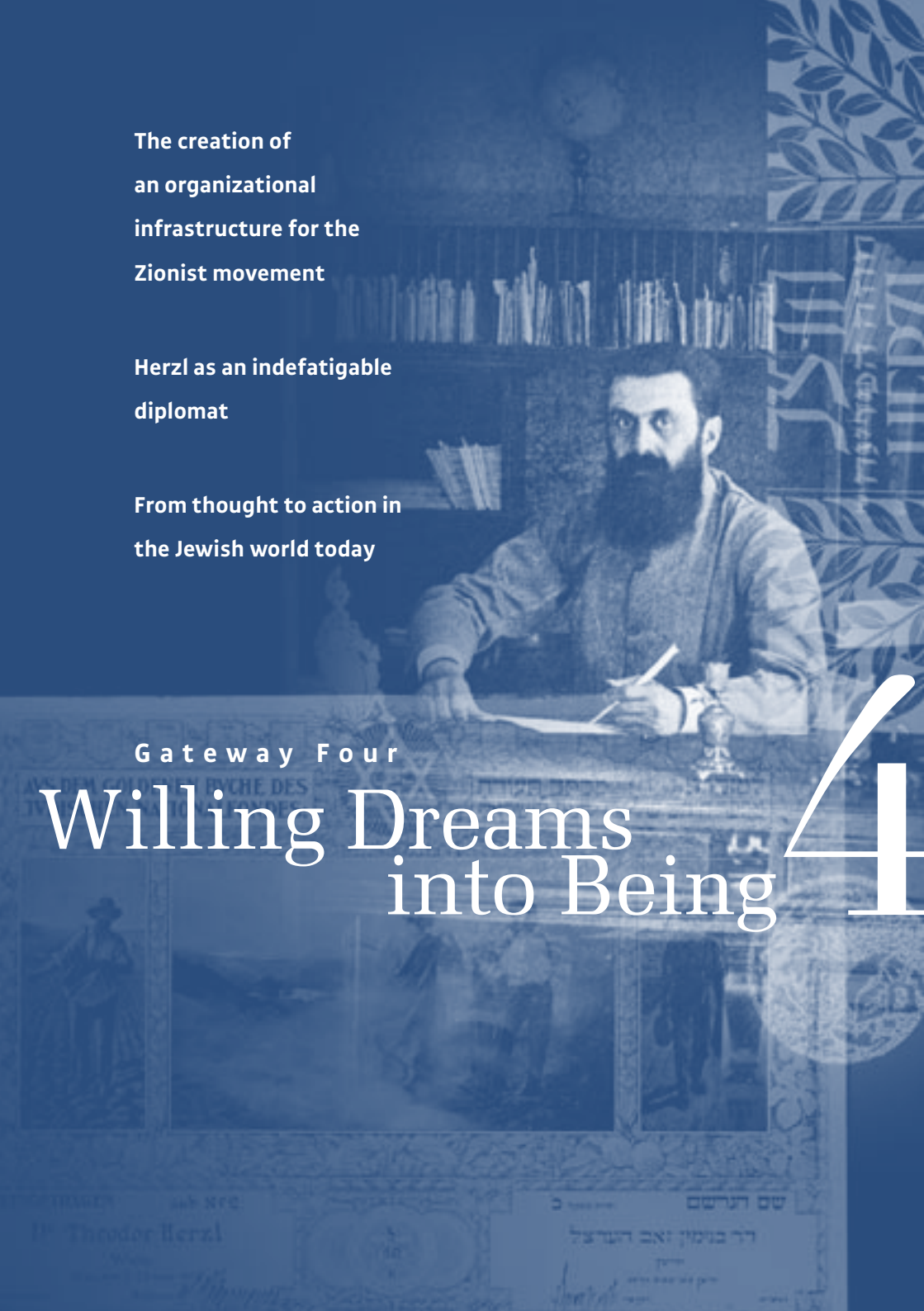
Herzl as an indefatigable
diplomat

From thought to action in
the Jewish world today

Gateway Four

Willing Dreams into Being

4



Historical background

In August 1897, Theodor Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland, which brought into being the World Zionist Organization, the authoritative embodiment of the Zionist movement since its inception. Herzl understood the significance of the event. Less than a week after the congress ended, he wrote in his diary, "In Basle I founded the Jewish state. If I were to say this out loud today, people would laugh. But perhaps in another five years, certainly in another 50, everyone will recognize it." Within a few years, he would set up a whole host of institutions that would take abstract ideas and turn them into reality.

Also to further his goals, Herzl embarked on several years of frenzied diplomatic activity. Unlike the *Hovevei Zion*, who believed that the Zionist ideal could be achieved only through large-scale settlement of the land, Herzl argued that first it was necessary to receive an internationally recognized Charter granting the Jewish people sovereignty over a parcel of territory – preferably in Palestine, but not necessarily so. His ability to meet with world leaders was remarkable and his efforts were tireless, but they were also fruitless in practical terms, at least until the time of his death.

In his own words...

We must found an Arbor Society for afforesting the land. Every Jew provides for one or more trees. Ten million trees!

- Herzl, Diary, 23 August 1896



One of the extraordinary characteristics of Herzl was his ability to make the jump from thought to action. Most great thinkers are essentially just that – thinkers. The greatest visionaries have usually tried to inspire others with their ideas and let them take the runner's baton and pass it on into the realm of practical politics. Herzl was different. He progressed from idea to realization as if it were one act. Herzl understood that if an idea was to lead people forward, it needed to be translated into concrete terms. The idea of an Arbor Society - which he conceived of even before convening the first Zionist Congress! - would be translated within a few years into the solid institutional substance of the Keren Kayemet Lelsrael (the Jewish National Fund). Established as the arm of the Zionist movement charged with land purchase and development, with special responsibilities for reclamation and afforestation, the K.K.L. (J.N.F.) planted over 20,000,000 trees in the 50 years it took the state to come into being – twice the mind-boggling number that Herzl had fantasized about in 1896. This is a magnificent example of Herzl as a practical visionary. Others are apparent in the sources below.

Willing Dreams into Being

Herzl was a practical visionary, and his writings constitute a virtual architectural blueprint for the building of the Jewish state. Even those who opposed him were in awe of his ability to translate designs into deeds.

From the pen of...

Had a long talk with the electrical engineer (Johann) Kremenezky. He is a good Zionist with modern ideas. Great chemical industries could be established on the shores of the highly saliferous Dead Sea. The streams feeding it would be diverted and used for drinking purposes. They would be replaced by a canal from the Mediterranean, part of which would have to pierce the hills through a tunnel (a tourist spectacle). The difference between the levels of the two seas (waterfall) could be utilized for driving machines. Many thousands of horsepower.

- Herzl, Diary, 23 August 1896

The present State of Israel owes its origin to Theodor Herzl – at least in the sense that he was the catalyst who precipitated the modern forces that brought it to birth. Since Moses, no single man, no Washington or Bismarck, has been to equal degree the father of a country ...Thus he became, in Zangwill's phrase, "the first Jewish statesman since the destruction of Jerusalem." He represented and presented... the cause of the Jewish people as a whole – a people with a common past and the aspiration towards a common future. He put Zionism, the program of this indivisible people, on the map; and, in creating the Zionist Organization, he gave the Jewish people an address.

- Marvin Lowenthal, from his introduction to *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl*

The actual, living Herzl said and did much that was open to question; and those who did not willfully blind themselves were bound sometimes to oppose him most strenuously... But the ideal figure of Herzl, which is being created before our eyes... - what a splendid vision it will be, and how potent its influence... to awaken it to a sense of national self-respect, and to whet its desire for a real national life! The first fruits of that influence are already visible, before the month of mourning is over. And, of course, imagination has not yet finished its work... As time goes on, and the ideal picture of the national hero attains its perfect form, he will perhaps become for our day what the old national heroes were for our ancestors in days gone by; the people will make him the embodiment of its own national ideal, in all its radiance and purity, and will derive from him strength and courage to struggle onward indefatigably along the hard road of history.

- Ahad Ha'Am, reflecting on Herzl immediately after his passing

Biographical sketch

The following excerpt from Herzl's diary provides an intimate glimpse into just one of the numerous audiences that he was able to arrange with major world figures of his time:

Yesterday I was with the Pope... He received me standing and held out his hand, which I did not kiss... I believe this spoiled my chances with him, for everyone who visits him kneels and at least kisses his hand. This hand kiss had worried me a great deal and I was glad when it was out of the way...

I briefly laid my request before him. But annoyed perhaps by my refusal to kiss his hand, he answered in a stern categorical manner: "We are unable to favor this movement. We cannot prevent the Jews from going to Jerusalem – but we could never sanction it. The ground of Jerusalem, if it were not always sacred, has been sanctified by the life of Jesus Christ... The Jews have not recognized our Lord, therefore, we cannot recognize the Jewish people!"

Herzl and me

Herzl was a master at engineering thought into action, and looking around at the Jewish world today it is interesting to consider how he might have advised us in dealing with the profound challenges facing the Jewish people today. Attacked from without and divided within, we also have to deal with the phenomenon of so many Jews basically opting out of belonging altogether. Or perhaps Herzl would tell us to be heartened by the countless who are working to strengthen the Jewish collective in the face of those phenomena threatening it. Even so, it would be naïve to understand our history of survival as a guarantee of continued existence.

What do you consider to be the Jewish question threatening the Jewish community today?

Do present-day circumstances require the establishment of new organizations, projects, or institutions in the Jewish world? In your local Jewish community?

In what ways are you connected to the Jewish collective today, and what are you prepared to do to assure its future?

If you are not associated with your local Zionist Federation, seek it out, and join it in furthering the work of the World Zionist Organization founded by Herzl a century ago.

Herzl's sacrifice for the
Zionist cause

Herzl's vision of the
Jewish state

The challenge of
fashioning Israel as an
exemplary society

Gateway Five Reality Check



Historical background

On July 3, 1904 (20 Tammuz), Theodor Herzl died at the age of 44 of a combination of a weak heart and pneumonia. Clearly he had paid a great personal price for his total commitment to the Zionist cause. He had completely given up the life to which he had aspired as a man of letters, in exchange for the constant stress of public life. Yet there is little doubt that his premature death was hastened by the deep anguish he felt over the accusations of many within the Zionist movement that he had abandoned one of its fundamental tenets by advocating the Uganda plan. (Herzl's proposal that the Zionist movement focus its efforts on obtaining a charter to settle Uganda rather than Palestine created such a furious rift within the organization that he had to withdraw it, despite his deep personal conviction that it would have best served the vital interests of the Jewish people.) Even before this episode, however, his diaries reflect that he often felt abandoned by his followers and taken advantage of by opportunists, in taking upon himself what he described as an essentially thankless task that was costing him a fortune, damaging his health, and producing very little in tangible results.

But if on a personal level Herzl's life was fraught with frustration, from a historical perspective it must be judged a brilliant success. Since Israel was founded in 1948, Herzl has been revered as the visionary without whom it might never have come into being.

In his own words...

I once called Zionism a never-ending ideal, and I truly believe that even after we possess our land, the Land of Israel, Zionism will not cease to be an ideal. For Zionism as I understand it includes not only the yearning for a plot of promised land legally acquired for our weary people, but also the yearning for ethical and spiritual fulfillment.



- Herzl, *Tikvatuenu*, 1904

The creation of a Jewish state was never Herzl's sole concern, regardless of where it would be established. He was always concerned as well with its character. Nowhere is this better expressed than in *Altneuland* (Old-New Land), which he wrote in 1902. If not a great novel in literary terms, it is nevertheless an extraordinary work in terms of the vision it presents of what the Jewish state might look like twenty years after its founding.

The society Herzl portrays is thoroughly modern, technologically advanced, and socially progressive, replete with an extensive network of railways, electrical power plants, modern industry, a comprehensive system of water collection and irrigation, sophisticated city planning, a progressive

Reality Check

penal system, universal suffrage, tolerance of the stranger, free education through university, and superior medical facilities. Furthermore, the economy is thriving, the desert has bloomed, anti-Semitism has vanished altogether, and the indigenous Arabs have not only welcomed the Jews with open arms, but also fully integrated into this New Society. The book provides fascinating background against which to consider all that the Zionist movement has already achieved, and all that remains to be done. As Herzl himself concluded in the epilogue to the novel, “But if you do not wish it, all this that I have related to you is and will remain a fable.” It is only a matter of will. “Dreams are not so different from Deeds as some may think,” he continues. “All the Deeds of men are only Dreams at first.”

From the pen of...

A territorial solution to the Jewish question was never Herzl’s sole objective. These excerpts from *Altneuland* give expression to but a few of his aspirations for what the Jewish state he envisioned might evolve into.

All that you have cultivated will be worthless and your fields will again be barren, unless you also cultivate freedom of thought and expression, generosity of spirit, and love for humanity. These are the things you must cherish and nurture.

All the buildings [in the Old City of Jerusalem] were devoted to religious and benevolent purposes – hospices for pilgrims of all denominations. Moslem, Jewish, and Christian welfare institutions, hospitals, clinics stood side by side. In the middle of a great square was the splendid Peace Palace, where international congresses of peace-lovers and scientists were held, for Jerusalem was now a home for all the best strivings of the human spirit: for Faith, Love, Knowledge.

We neither reward nor punish our children for their fathers’ business transactions. Each generation is given a new start. Therefore, all our educational institutions are free from the elementary schools to the Zion University. All the pupils must wear the same kind of simple clothing... We think it unethical to single out children according to their parents’ wealth or social rank. That would be bad for all of them. The children from the well-to-do families would become lazy and arrogant, the others embittered.

The needy sick only have to apply to the public charities. No one is turned away... We should be ashamed to send a patient from one hospital to the other as used to be done in the old days. If one hospital is full, an ambulance in its courtyard will at once take an applicant to another where beds are available.

Biographical sketch

Meetings with Theodor Herzl were always festive occasions for me, whether I saw him at some social function or visited him at home or in his office. His powerful, noble personality, the forcefulness of his ideas always affected me strangely and profoundly. He was always surrounded by an aura of gentle melancholy. Never did I see him laugh heartily. Concern over his lofty purpose determined his life more and more; the decision he had formed possessed his heart to an ever-increasing degree.

He once told me, as he gazed out the window of his office upon the cold, bare walls opposite: "My dearest wish is to finish the task I have set myself and to return to my study, my dreams, my books – to my own work."

This joy, this return to himself was denied him. He fell in the battle into which he had gone voluntarily, for idealistic reasons, as a conciliator and a constructive force – he died before he had reached his goal. A modern Moses, he was permitted to see the land of his dreams only from a distance.

- Maria Stona, a staff member of Herzl's Viennese newspaper, reminiscing on her experiences with him

Herzl and me

Would Herzl recognize contemporary Israel as the fruit of his labors, or is it so foreign to his vision that he would be unable to orientate himself within it?

Probably the answer is a little of both. Israel today is certainly not the utopia Herzl envisioned, yet an amazing number of social innovations he foresaw have been vital in shaping Israel as it is: universal suffrage, socialized medicine, cooperative agricultural villages, a rich and diverse cultural life incorporating influences from around the world, free and compulsory education, and a highly developed economy with cutting-edge achievements in science, technology, agriculture and medicine. But the State of Israel is also plagued by many problems that Herzl did not foresee, or which he believed would disappear.

*Each generation must embrace Herzl's legacy anew, and continue the struggle to create of the Jewish state all that it might be. **If you so will it, it need not remain a dream.** What is your role going to be in the process?*

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