

visitor's guide

expanded  
version

an exhibition

celebrating the

visionary of the

Jewish state on the

100<sup>th</sup> 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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**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 Binyamin Ze'ev 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 Theodor Herzl; it's also about you.*

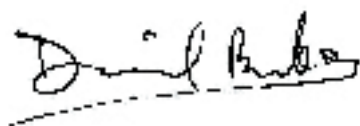
While a century has passed since Herzl's death, many of the matters which occupied him continue to be germane today.

Antisemitism 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 fashioning Israel as the exemplary society Herzl envisioned remains a work-in-progress.

As you wander among the panels and peruse these texts, we hope that you will allow these concerns to become your own, and that you will give 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  
Jerusalem Day 2004 יום ירושלים תשס"ד



## How many people really change the flow of history?

Many influence the times in which they live, but after their death things tend to continue on their course essentially as they had before. Comparatively few have a lasting impact on the world. Theodor Herzl was one who did.

A hundred years after his death in 1904, we can say with confidence that Herzl changed the course of Jewish history. He did not do it alone, and without the confluence of other factors it may well be that the changes he set in motion would not have had their full effect. But it seems safe to say that without him Jewish life in the early twenty first century would look very different than indeed it does.

Herzl was not the first Zionist, but it was he more than any other individual who put Zionism on the agenda of the Jewish people and propelled it to the centre of the international stage. When he embraced the Zionist cause in the mid 1890's, it was a minor factor in Jewish life, unknown to the world. When he died only nine years later, he left behind him a movement that would carry the idea forward until its realization in Jewish statehood in 1948 – and beyond.

Today, of course, we tend to take Israel's existence for granted, and it is natural for us that it has become the focus of Jewish life throughout the world. But this situation could hardly have been imagined a century ago. In fact, until the 1940's, Zionism was not a mainstream movement in Jewish life. At its inception, it was considered by many to be inconsequential, and represented only a marginal response to the situation of the Jews in the modern world. From this perspective, Herzl's diagnosis of the Jewish question, and his prescription for solving the Jewish problem, are all the more remarkable.

Long before the devastating events of the Holocaust, Herzl had understood the fragile nature of Jewish existence in the Diaspora, not just in the lands of Eastern Europe, where this was evident to all, but also in the countries of Central Europe where Jewish life appeared to be far more stable. It was precisely in those societies where the Jews had obtained equal rights and recognition that Herzl saw the Jewish position as becoming increasingly vulnerable in a world that was fast unraveling and rapidly changing. He was one among very few who believed that a Jewish state was the only solution to the Jewish tragedy which was beginning to emerge. Many vigorously disagreed with him at the time, but history has sadly judged him right.

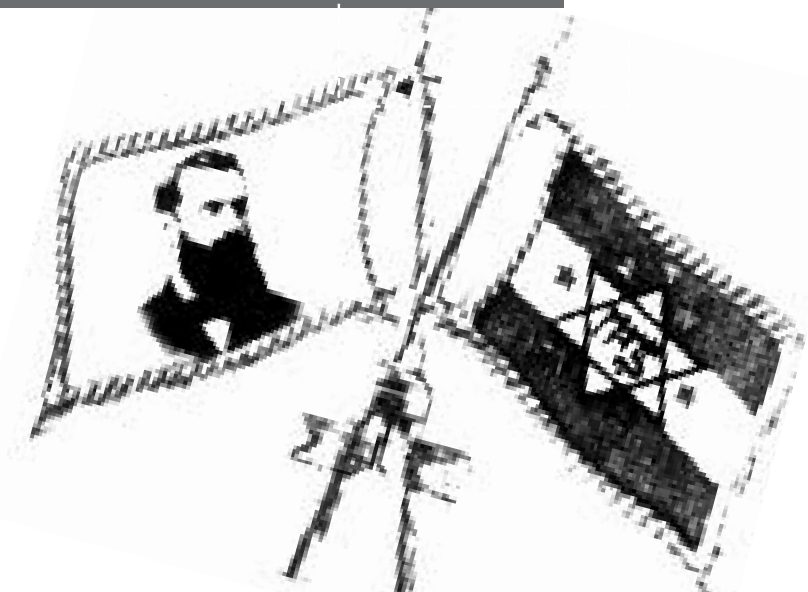
Herzl: thinker, dreamer and doer who changed the world in which all of us live. But few know very much about him, or exactly what he did, or how he did it, or what questions he asked, or what challenges he put before us that demand a response today as much as ever. The time has come to change that. Welcome to the world of Herzl.

Welcome to  
**Herzl: Up Close and Personal.**



Together with the panels, we offer you this set of complementary pages. They are meant to accompany you as you go through the exhibit, and provide a good deal of background, as well as numerous supplementary sources intended to stimulate you to wrestle with the same questions Herzl did - against the backdrop of today's realities. They are arranged as follows:

1	<b>Growing Up Herzl</b> the social milieu of Theodor's formative years	8-11
2	<b>Transitions and Transformations</b> the germination of the Zionist idea	12-15
3	<b>Blueprints for Utopia</b> understanding Herzl's vision	16-19
4	<b>Willing Dreams into Being</b> organisational infrastructure and diplomatic fervor	20-23
5	<b>Reality Check</b> from "The Jewish State" to the State of Israel... and beyond	24-27
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- ⊙ *The first page introducing each gateway offers a general historical background to the theme being addressed, elucidating and connecting the various pictures and quotations that appear on the corresponding panels. These introductory remarks do not go into detail regarding each individual element of the display, but they do provide a context for their integration.*
- ⊙ *A collection of sources that extend and deepen the gateway's theme follows each introduction, spread over four pages. The central text in each has been culled from Herzl's writings and speeches, and appears in a highlighted box. It is followed immediately by our own elaboration of its significance. Additional quotes from Herzl himself, as well as a biographical sketch, and reflections of others complement each of these texts.*
- ⊙ *The final page dealing with each gateway concludes with some thoughts and questions concerning the relevance of the subject today. These appear in a box under the heading, Herzl and Me*
- ⊙ *To gain the most from this guide, we suggest you read the appropriate introductory page as you approach each new gateway, and then search the following pages for insights into the visuals and texts displayed.*

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 social milieu of Theodor's formative years

**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 centre 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, Budapest Jewry had inaugurated the enormous and very beautiful Dohany synagogue, a huge cathedral like structure, which still stands today, the second largest synagogue in the entire world. It was the Temple of liberal Budapest Jewry and it was deliberately modeled on the ancient Temple of Jerusalem. The message was clear. We are at home in this society. This is a place where we belong and we, as Jews are here to stay. In those halcyon days, the promise seemed true. Although the Jews of Budapest only gained full emancipation and equality in 1867, when Herzl was seven years old, for the almost fifty thousand Jews of Budapest, their integration into society had been proceeding apace for many years. Their grandparents might have been traditional Jews, living apart from the non-Jewish society from which they felt quite alienated, but for the Jews of Budapest in the mid 19th century, like the Jews in other large cities in Western and Central Europe, those days seemed to have passed for ever. They were free. They were part of their host society and they had every reason to feel grateful to the enlightened empire that was accepting them in a way that Jews had never been accepted before in the Diaspora.

Herzl was part of all this. His father was a prosperous merchant and the young Theodor had the education that every upwardly mobile Jewish child could expect to receive. His elementary school was Jewish but at age 10 he entered the main education system and received the schooling necessary for a young middle to upper middle class child in a great European centre of culture. Things were good for the family and for Theodor but the family took a very harsh blow when their eldest daughter, Pauline, died of typhus. Reeling from the shock, the family decided to relocate to an even greater centre of European culture, Vienna, and it was there that Herzl enrolled for the university and studied the law, in which he would gain his doctorate in 1884.

Herzl's family home was modern and Jewish. He celebrated his bar mitzvah in the great synagogue next to his home and he had the rudiments of a Jewish education. Herzl was not ashamed of being Jewish and he would never deny his Judaism but his identity as a European intellectual of the late nineteenth century would be centred on other things. With German, the language of enlightened central Europe as his language, Herzl saw his way forward as a literary figure on the European scene. Theodor Herzl, man of the milieu into which he was born, and into which he fit quite comfortably. A Jew and a gentleman. A man of his time and of his world.

Decoration for a Tabernacle, Russia 1902. Lent by Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem



**W**e bring here two excerpts from the novel *"Altneuland"* that Herzl published in 1902. Both relate scenes from the society of Viennese Jewry at the time. They reflect the social milieu during the period when the book was written, still untouched by the nascent Zionist movement. This was the world in which Herzl passed from youth to manhood.

Several young men stood around the billiard table, making bold strokes with their long poles. They were in the same boat as himself [Friedrich, the disillusioned Jewish protagonist of the novel], but for all that they were not too unhappy – these budding physicians, newly baked jurists, freshly graduated engineers. They had just completed their professional studies and now they had nothing to do. Most of them were Jews. When they were not too engrossed in cards or billiards, they complained how hard it was to make one's way "these days"...

They were really only a kind of superior working class, victims of a viewpoint that had dominated middle-class Jewry twenty or thirty years before. The sons must not be what the fathers had been. They were to be freed from the hardships of trade and commerce. And so the younger generations entered the liberal professions en masse. The result was an unfortunate surplus of trained men who could find no work, but were at the same time spoiled for a modest way of life. They could not, like their Christian colleagues, slip into public [government] posts... Those who had some means gradually used them up or else continued to live on the paternal purse. Others were on the lookout for eligible [marriage partners], facing the delicious prospect of servitude to wealthy fathers in law...

**A**t a dinner party attended by wealthy Jews in Vienna, attention was diverted from the humorists when an elderly gentleman sitting next to Mrs. Loeffler remarked in a slightly raised voice 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, "Moritz! 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, on my honour." Samuel Weinberger, father of the bridegroom, broke into the conversation. "Being a rabbi, Doctor, you see things rather black"...

Dr. Weiss, a simple rabbi from a provincial town in Moravia, 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 range. The ladies giggled, the gentlemen roared and neighed...

"I'll be ambassador [of the new Jewish state] at Vienna", shouted Gruen.

The laughter broke out again. "I too!", "I too!"...

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

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 centre 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. This reminiscence of his childhood is taken from the only autobiographical piece that Herzl is known to have written.

Theodor Herzl is a remarkable figure, among other reasons because he had both the ability and the will to reinvent himself in mid-life and to place himself on a totally different path than on which he had initially embarked. A talented, witty but not very deep writer transformed himself into a profound and courageous thinker and statesman. A career propelled by thoughts of self-advancement was supplanted by a mission rooted in thoughts of duty to the Jewish people.

The sources brought here reveal aspects of the background from which he came, a background that he needed to transcend in order to remake himself into the image of the second "national" Herzl.

The quote above succinctly captures this transformation. In a tongue-in-cheek tone, Herzl refers to the two contrasting parts of his life. From someone who was punished for his failure to know clearly the details of the classic Jewish story of the Exodus, he was eventually to internalize "only too well" the meaning of the lesson, as he attempted to organize the basis for a new Exodus that would redeem the Jews from the modern oppression of antisemitism and bring them to the promised land of Israel. For good reason he was pictured as a modern-day Moses. But in order to become that, he had to overcome the limitations of his background and 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 witheringly satirized in the first chapter of his 1902 novel *Altneuland* (Old-New Land), excerpts from which appear on this page.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The life of a student in Vienna in the closing decades of the nineteenth century was rather [difficult] owing to racial and nationalist conflicts which often erupted into violent scenes... 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 in their hearing that they considered a reflection upon their honour. Such an affront could be avenged only by a duel, and duels were fought mostly with swords. Members of the Albia were therefore expected to devote a good part of their time to fencing at least two hours each per day...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 students' union Allemania, and both retired with gashed cheeks, which a surgeon in readiness promptly stitched. 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, with the inevitable result that there was an increasing discussion of the Jewish question. The effect of this 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... [Finally, after a particularly vicious antisemitic speech made by a member of Albia and not condemned by the leaders of the society], 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", a word that he observed was unknown when he joined, and he therefore asked for his "honourable discharge". The reply that he received rebuked him for showing a lack of respect in his letter and informed him that his request for an "honourable discharge" could not be granted, but that he had been expelled. A few days later, however, the committee had second thoughts and agreed to accept his resignation. Thereupon, Herzl returned the coloured [cap and ribbons] of membership and his drinking mug. He had had enough of the students' fraternities and joined no other.

Israel Cohen, "Theodor Herzl"

## REFLECTIONS

*Many believe that Herzl grew up in an assimilated Jewish home, ignorant of Judaism. Marvin Lowenthal, a historian of Herzl, refutes this myth.*

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. At eight his father enrolled him as a member of the *Chevre Kadishah* [the burial society, a very prestigious Jewish institution]; and at thirteen he was confirmed in accordance with the time-honored usage, learning enough Hebrew, even if by rote, to read the appropriate 'portion' of the Torah and recite the blessings. 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"



*Theodor Herzl*

**C**haim Weizmann was a younger contemporary of Herzl. Initially his protege, he would eventually become one of his most vocal critics – but he always held him in the highest esteem. In later years, Weizmann would come to lead the Zionist movement, eventually becoming the first president of the State of Israel.

I first saw Herzl at the second Congress, in Basel, in the summer of 1898, and though he was impressive, I cannot pretend that I was swept off my feet. There was a great genuineness about him, and a touch of pathos. It seemed to me almost from the beginning that he was undertaking a task of tremendous magnitude without adequate preparation. He had great gifts and he had connections. But these did not suffice. As I learned to know him better at succeeding Congresses, my respect for him was confirmed and deepened. As a personality he was both powerful and naive...

But now that I have come to know and understand the Viennese milieu in which he grew up - so remote from all the troubles and vicissitudes of our life - and especially when I compare him with other Jewish Viennese intellectuals, of his time or a little later, I am amazed at Herzl's greatness, at the profundity of his intuition, which enabled him to understand as much of our world as he did. He was the first - without a rival - among the Western leaders, but even he could not break the mold of his life. Within the limitations of that mold, and with his magnificent gifts and his complete devotion, he rendered incalculable service to the cause. He remains the classical figure in Zionism.



**A**Max Nordau was Herzl's principal lieutenant in the latter's years of leadership of the Zionist movement. In this piece, from a year after Herzl's death, Nordau assesses his late comrade.

On July 3rd last year Theodor Herzl closed his eyes forever... At thirty-five years of age quite unknown to the Jewish people, nine years later he had become its pride and its hope. That he was able to attain this place in Jewish thought and feeling is one of the wonders of his wonderful life. He had waded far in the waters of assimilation, even through the deep parts that almost completely immersed him. In the sunniest years of his life he was completely taken up with interests that showed not a spark of Judaism. He devoted himself wholly to artistic labors. He untiringly dedicated all his energies to literary work. He had no other ambition than that of conquering the stage and establishing himself in the conquered sphere. Nothing drew him in the direction of his real life-work. Nothing attracted his mind to deal with Jewish questions till the day came when the situation of the Jewish people made him powerfully conscious of his own Judaism...

No one, not even himself, had an inkling of the qualities that he brought to his new task. Herzl really grew with his greater purposes; he grew so mightily that his acquaintances and colleagues could no longer gauge him by the accustomed standard, because he had outgrown their limited measure. The vivacious conversationalist, the genial raconteur, the witty and playful comedy-writer, was changed in a night into a statesman of wide vision who boldly and resolutely strode along an almost impassable route towards a lofty goal.

## HERZL AND ME

Issues of Jewish identity are high on the agenda of the Jewish people today. Israel Cohen's sketch reveals that Herzl was never a person who ignored his Jewishness. Nevertheless, we know that it figured differently in importance to him at various stages in his life. To start with, it was a relatively marginal aspect of who he was. While never denied, his Jewishness was secondary to many other concerns on his personal agenda. Eventually, it began to grow in importance until it displaced all the other items on that agenda and became the preoccupation of his life.

While demographers are busy counting Jews, perhaps the really important issue today is not how many there are, but rather the place that being Jewish figures on the personal priority list of each.

- ⊙ Where does being Jewish figure in your own sense of identity?
- ⊙ What have been the formative Jewish experiences in your own life?
- ⊙ Where do you stand on the line between the first Herzl and the second?
- ⊙ What does being a member of the Jewish people mean to you?
- ⊙ What responsibilities does that membership carry? What burdens?
- ⊙ Is your own life an expression of Jewish pride? Would you engage, as did Herzl, in a modern-day "duel" to protect Jewish honour?

## The germination of the Zionist idea

### Historical background

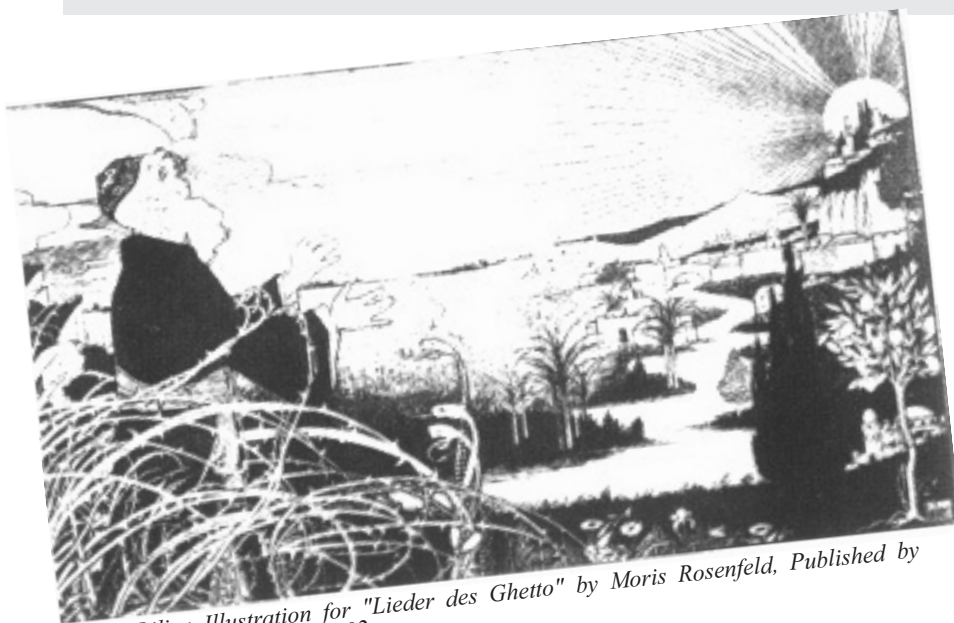
It was as a student in Vienna that something began to change for Herzl. He began to encounter antisemitism, which had not disappeared in spite of the emancipation. On the contrary, the beginnings of the integration of the Jews into general society had caused unease among many gentiles, and outright opposition among others. From the 1880's we begin to see a resurgence of physical violence against the Jews, whose situation was becoming increasingly vulnerable. The famous Kishinev pogrom of Easter 1903 (in which some fifty Jews were murdered, hundreds seriously injured, and thousands lost their homes) would become a symbol of the frailty and susceptibility of Jewish life in a newly vicious world.

Herzl first encountered this new virulent form of antisemitism personally as a student in Vienna (as elaborated on in the preceding gateway.) Until then, it had been easy for him to accept the easy duality of his identity as a European Jew without question. But from this point on, the problem would begin to prey on his mind.

However, it was not antisemitism alone that concerned Herzl. He understood that these new and dangerous trends were not emerging in a vacuum. He believed that there was a context that nourished them. He saw that the old Europe was beginning to fall apart. The liberal states of western and central Europe, which had provided a safe haven for the Jews for most of the nineteenth century, were about to disappear - to be replaced, he felt, by a far more threatening reality. He sensed real danger for the Jews of Europe.

In the mid to late 1880's, Herzl abandoned the law and devoted himself to a career as a playwright and a journalist, writing light witty social pieces for a number of newspapers. In 1891, he took up an appointment as the Paris correspondent of the great liberal Viennese newspaper the *Neue Freie Presse*. As a journalist, Herzl encountered the rising reactionary nationalist and antisemitic opinion in France and he wrote about the rising wave in a number of his articles for the paper.

Increasingly gripped by the Jewish question, he began to ponder different ways of responding to it. The Jewish problem, he would conclude, was deeper than he had at first optimistically assumed. It would not simply vanish with time. 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 selling secrets to the Germans, brought Herzl to the realization that a more radical solution for the Jewish problem would have to be found. Even after proof that Dreyfus was innocent had surfaced, the prosecution continued apace, and the defendant was found guilty, stripped of his rank, and sent off to prison - to the accompaniment of the cries of the masses, "Death to the Jews!" Herzl concluded that his people would never be accepted by European society, that the new European nationalism was too exclusionary. The Jewish question, he determined, required a national and political solution, and thus was born Herzl's Zionist vision.



E.M. Lilien Illustration for "Lieder des Ghetto" by Moris Rosenfeld, Published by Marquardt & Co. Berlin, 1902

Here is the opening section of the largely autobiographical story, "The Menorah", which Herzl wrote in 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. For he was an artist. His

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...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, because external enemies consolidate it. It will not be destroyed; this is shown during two thousand years of appalling suffering.

Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*, 1896.

This was Herzl's classic work, in which he first systematically recorded all the major elements of his thinking on the subject of the Jewish question and Zionism. This quote introduces us to one of his key determinations: that the genuine integration of the Jew into the surrounding society is impossible.

Herzl's transformation into a Zionist was caused by antisemitism. It was a phenomenon of which he had long been aware, and which, as we saw in the previous gateway, he had personally confronted in his student days. It formed a conscious part of the background of his life ever since, but he long sought solutions to the problem in a variety of ways before adopting a nationalist position. In the biographical piece appearing on these pages, for example, he describes an idea that he had had before becoming a Zionist, proposing the mass-conversion of the younger generation of Viennese Jews to Catholicism. Some of his plays also had dealt issues connected with antisemitism, but he tried to live his life in spite of it, hoping and believing that, while problematic, it would not prevent the advancement of the Jews within society. Liberalism, he was convinced, would triumph and the Jews would be admitted and fully integrated into the societies where they lived.

What eventually transformed Herzl into a Zionist was the emergence of a consciousness that the attempt to assimilate into general society could never work. The Jews would not be accepted however much they might try. This was powerfully evidenced for Herzl by the Dreyfus trial, which he witnessed as a journalist. Not only was this innocent Jewish officer in the French army found guilty of fabricated charges of espionage, but the French masses responded to the affair by clamoring for "death to the Jews."

The evolution of this realization is reflected in a transparently autobiographical story that Herzl wrote in 1897, *The Menorah*, from which we bring an excerpt above. It also parallels part of Max Nordau's speech at the First Zionist Congress in 1897, and reflects their radical belief that their previously held convictions had been totally wrong. A similar theme of transformation appears in Herzl's diary, as he records the initial impact of his ideas on Rabbi Gudemann, the Chief Rabbi of Vienna. All of these sources talk about the experience of radical antisemitism on some astute European Jews, and provide some insight into the reality that Zionism was a well-considered response to a genuine problem with which serious Jewish thinkers have had to struggle over the years. Herzl was not alone in his analysis of the situation.

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 of his Judaism, and now he did something he could not perhaps have done in the old days – he began to love his Judaism with an intense fervour. Although in his own eyes he could not, at first, clearly justify this new yearning, it became so powerful at length that it crystallized from vague emotions into a definite idea which he must express. It was the conviction that there was only one solution for this moral misery – the return to Judaism.

Rabbi Dr. Moritz Gudemann was a rabbi and scholar who became Chief Rabbi of the Viennese community in 1890. Initially he was captivated by Herzl's personality and ideas. With time, however, his enthusiasm waned, and he eventually even began attacking Herzl's views, causing him great disappointment.

After luncheon I brought the manuscript of my "address to the Rothschilds" from the hotel, and began reading it to them in the empty dining room at Jochsberger's ... The effect was considerable. I saw it in Gudemann's shining eyes.

Gudemann, the "anti-Zionist" was already won over. He said: "If you are right, what I have hitherto believed falls to pieces. And yet I am wishing that you are right. Up till now I have believed that we are not a nation – but more than a nation. I believed that we have the historic mission of being the exponents of universalism among the nations and therefore were more than a people identified with a specific land."...

Gudemann further said: "I am altogether overwhelmed. I feel like someone who has been summoned to hear about something, and when he arrives there is placed before him not a piece of information but two magnificent horses." The simile pleased me greatly, for it made me realize the plastic force of my idea.

Herzl's Diary, 18 August 1895

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

*This story appears in the opening pages of Herzl's adult diary. It represents a fantastic idea of how to solve the Jewish problem that Herzl had entertained a couple of years prior to his move towards Zionism.*

About two years ago I wanted to solve the Jewish question, at least in Austria, with the help of the Catholic Church. I wished to arrange for an audience with the Pope ...and say to him: Help us against the antisemites and I will lead a great movement for the free and honorable conversion of Jews to Christianity.

Free and honorable, inasmuch as the leaders of this movement – myself in particular – would remain Jews, and, as Jews, would urge a conversion to the majority faith. In broad daylight, on twelve o'clock on a Sunday, the exchange of faith would take place in St. Stephen's Cathedral, with solemn parade and the peal of bells. Not with shame, as sorry individuals have hitherto gone over, but with a proud gesture. And because the Jewish leaders would remain behind, conducting the people only to the threshold of the church and themselves staying outside, it would elevate the whole performance to a display of utter sincerity.

We, the steadfast leaders, would have constituted the final generation. We would have remained within the faith of our fathers. But we would have made Christians of our children before they reached the age of independent decision – after which conversion looks like an act of cowardice or calculation. As is my custom, I had thought out the plan to the finest detail. I saw myself in negotiation with the Archbishop of Vienna, I stood, in imagination, before the Pope – who regretted beyond words that I didn't become Christian too – and sent the slogan of race-merger flying across the world.

## REFLECTIONS

*Max Nordau, Herzl's great lieutenant within the Zionist movement, made the following comments in his speech to the first Zionist Congress in 1897. It is interesting to compare these comments with Herzl's story, "The Menorah", the beginning of which appears on these pages.*

Then came the Emancipation. The law assured the Jews that they were citizens of their country in every respect. In the honeymoon period of the Emancipation, under the influence of the new legal equality, 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. Their instinct of self-preservation adapted itself immediately and completely to the new circumstances. This instinct had formerly been directed toward maintaining the most clear-cut apartness; now it sought the closest association with and imitation of the gentiles. 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, twenty years ago, after a slumber of thirty to sixty years, antisemitism once more sprang out of the innermost depths of the nations of Western Europe. It revealed to a mortified Jew, who thought antisemitism was gone forever, the true picture of his situation. He was still allowed to vote for members of Parliament, but he saw himself excluded, with varying degrees of politeness, from the clubs and gatherings of his Christian fellow countrymen. He was allowed to go wherever he pleased, but everywhere he encountered the sign: "No Jews admitted."

Such is the contemporary situation of the emancipated Jew in Western Europe. He has abandoned his specifically Jewish character, yet the nations do not accept him as part of their national communities. He flees from his Jewish fellow, because antisemitism has taught him, too, to be contemptuous of them, but his gentile compatriots repulse him as he attempts to associate with them. He has lost his home in the ghetto yet the land of his birth is denied to him as his home.



Leon Pinsker was a Zionist who presented an analysis of the Jewish problem similar to that of Herzl's - 15 years prior to the appearance of "The Jewish State." Herzl later claimed that had he known of Pinsker's work, he never would have published his own.

Among the living nations of the earth the Jews occupy the position of a nation long since dead. With the loss of their fatherland, the Jews lost their independence and fell into a state of decay which is incompatible with the existence of a whole and vital organism. The state was crushed by the Roman conquerors and vanished from the world's view. But after the Jewish people had yielded up its existence as an actual state, as a political entity, it could nevertheless not submit to total destruction – it did not cease to exist as a spiritual nation. Thus, the world saw in this people the frightening form of one of the dead walking among the living. This ghost-like apparition of a people without unity or organization, without land or other bond of union, no longer alive, and yet moving about among the living – this eerie form scarcely paralleled in history, unlike anything that preceded or followed it, could not fail to make a strange and peculiar impression upon the imagination of the nations. And if the fear of ghosts is something inborn, and has a certain justification in the psychic life of humanity, is it any wonder that it asserted itself powerfully at the sight of this dead and yet living nation? Fear of the Jewish ghost has been handed down and strengthened for generations and centuries.

Leon Pinsker, "Auto Emancipation", 1881



HERZL  
AND  
ME

The phenomenon of antisemitism has erupted at different times above the surface of modern Jewish history. There are those who believe that below the facade of acceptance, it is a constant factor that Jews must recognize will never disappear, though they might advocate different strategies for dealing with it. Others have been more optimistic, believing that it is something 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 of antisemitism, that the establishment of a Jewish homeland would result in its abrupt disappearance. The last few years clearly demonstrate that in this respect Herzl was wrong.

- ⊙ What is your explanation for the persistent phenomenon of antisemitism?
- ⊙ Was Herzl hopelessly naive and optimistic in his analysis and prediction? Or is it still too early to judge?
- ⊙ Do you believe that antisemitism might eventually disappear? If so, under what circumstances? If not, what do you believe to be its underlying cause? In either case, what is the appropriate Jewish response to the phenomenon today – on both the personal and communal level, in your community, and around the world?

## Understanding Herzl's vision

### Historical background

In a frenzy of activity in mid 1895, Herzl did two major things. Firstly, he started to initiate meetings with influential Jews to whom he wanted to explain the new ideas that were giving him no rest. At the same time, he began to commit his ideas to writing, initially as notes for the meetings. Weeks of drafting and redrafting his ideas coupled with his disappointment at his failure to convince many of those to whom he tried to explain them, led to the decision to publish his thinking. He would go above the heads of the established Jewish leaders and appeal to a wider public. This decision led him to publish in early 1896, his major programmatic work *Der Judenstaat*, *The Jewish State*.

In this pamphlet, he explained his ideas. A radical solution was needed: the Jews must have a state of their own. Only a Jewish state would change the status of Jews throughout the world – both those who would be drawn there and those who would remain in the Diaspora, bolstered by their connection with a sovereign Jewish entity. Herzl was above all a rational man. His solution appealed to reason, both on the part of Jews and on the part of the host nations, which he believed would jump at the chance to get rid of their "Jewish problem". Interestingly, initially he was not convinced that the Jewish state must be in the historic land of Israel but he was quickly converted to the understanding that there was no other option. No other place would have the desired impact on the Jews themselves.

Herzl was not the first Zionist. Many of his ideas had been put forward some fifteen years earlier by an Eastern European Jew, Leon Pinsker, reacting with many other Russian Jews to the impact of the pogroms of 1881. A fledgling Zionist movement, the Lovers of Zion, began at the time, and many thousands of Jews had emigrated to Palestine in the intervening years – a phenomenon virtually unknown to Herzl.

Herzl had many critics. Chief among them would be the intense Jewish intellectual Asher Ginzberg, known by the pen name Ahad Ha'am. He was withering in his criticism of Herzl, who, he believed, lacked an understanding and appreciation for Jewish culture. Herzl, he claimed, was concerned with Jews but not with Judaism. Herzl envisioned a central European culture for the Jews of the new country he promoted. For Ahad Ha'am, a secular Jew, the new society culture needed to be based on the deepest intellectual and cultural resources of the Jewish people. His critique

was bolstered by the other major work that Herzl would publish in 1902, *Altneuland*, a futuristic novel of the new Jewish state, two decades forth. That novel depicted a thriving Jewish state in Palestine – the old-new land – developing remarkably well and accepted by all, organized according to the highest principles and way of life that Europe could suggest.

Others shared the same views as Ahad Ha'am and provided a strong opposition to Herzl within the Zionist movement. Nevertheless they saw him as a leader who could take them where they could never go without him. The man who seemed to be able to talk to kings and emperors on equal terms was not a leader that they were capable of replacing, whatever the depth of their criticism of his positions on Jewish life and culture.

But if Herzl was criticized by some of the Jewish intellectual elite, he was embraced by the Jewish masses in a manner more for a prophet than a statesman. Indeed many saw him as a

appropriate

modern-day Moses. To them, the age-old Messianic dream was about to be realized by this most unlikely of candidates, this worldly Viennese Jew, a man of European culture, the man who put Zionism and the idea of a Jewish state on the international agenda.



*David Ben Gurion, that greatest of all Zionist leaders, was opposed to Herzl from many points of view, but he knew to respect the extraordinary achievement of the man.*

Until Herzl the Jewish people had been no more than an object of history, a plaything in the hands of strangers and political forces who used it for good or for ill. Herzl transformed a pulverized people born on the currents

of history by chance winds, favorable or adverse, into a people who acted out its national will and established itself as an autonomous factor on the international scene. Herzl was the founding father of the revival of Jewish politics. He set the political goal of the people in a simple, clear, and challenging phrase, "The Jewish State", and created the instruments, the means, and the power as well, which were required for attaining the goal. Herzl realized that, despite its dispersion and rootlessness, the Jewish people is a power, provided that it can and will organise its capacities and make use of them. The ability and will to do this were the gifts which Herzl himself endowed the people.

*David Ben Gurion*

During these days I have more than once been afraid I was losing my mind. This is how tempestuously the trains of thought have raced through my soul. A lifetime will not suffice to carry it all out. But I shall leave behind a spiritual legacy. To whom? To all men.... I believe that for me life has ended and world history has begun.

Theodor Herzl, Diary entry, June 16, 1895

Penned during a turbulent period in Herzl's life, as he was shaping his Zionist vision and attempting to disseminate his ideas among the richer and more influential dignitaries of the Jewish community.

Nowhere is the personal transformation in Herzl's life more apparent than in the years 1895 – 1897. These were the days when the Zionist idea completely took hold of him, and everything else fell other concerns that had previously been so central began to recede into the background. Such would the situation remain until his death in 1904.

The effect was electrifying. It is as if a strong personality had somehow come into contact with a powerful and overwhelming force that dragged him into a completely new orbit of life. A glance into his diaries (which he only started to keep at this point), and an analysis of the descriptions of those who knew him in these years leaves no room for doubt that Herzl had experienced the equivalent of a religious vision. Nothing would ever be the same for him again. The power of the idea was all encompassing, and filled his life with a meaning and purpose that had been lacking before.

The reactions of those exposed to his ideas basically divide up into two kinds. There are those whom he managed to enthrall with his vision and enthusiasm. Many of them went through a similar transforming experience that would affect their lives forever. But there was also opposite reaction to Herzl's idea: one of disapproval, of cynicism, of dismissive worldliness. Many – Western Jews in particular – felt threatened by the suggestion that emancipation and integration had failed. They were even more deeply affronted by the 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 sick and deluded vision threatened to upset the foundation of their lives. Herzl was immensely disappointed by these reactions and felt that they were treasonous to the Jewish people whose best needs would be served by his Zionist doctrine.

*His self-confidence notwithstanding, Herzl knew very well that the realization of his ideas would require the surmounting of numerous obstacles, not the least of which was the opposition of many nay-sayers among the Jews themselves. The following quotes, taken from a variety of sources, reveal both the depth of his conviction and the awareness of the hurdles he had to overcome.*

Of course the practical people, the over-wise, will come and ask what is to be gained by all this. We know these people. We remember all the stones they hurled in our path, all the annoyances they wished to cause us and succeeded in causing us. It is these same people who are never done with asking what we have accomplished, how far we have progressed, when we shall finally reach our goal. If they had helped us with all their strength instead of hampering us with all their strength, they could not question us more eagerly ... We build on and on. I am convinced that all those Jews who stand aside today with a malicious smile and with their hands in their trousers' pockets, will also want to dwell in our beautiful house.

*Address to the fourth Zionist Congress*

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

*Diary, June 15, 1895*

*But one thing I regard as certain, and place beyond the reach of all doubt: the movement will endure. I do not know when I shall die, but Zionism will never die. Since those days in Basle, the Jewish people have a national representation once again; as a result the Jewish State will once more rise in its own country...*

*"Autobiographical Sketch", London Jewish Chronicle, 1898*

*Thus everything I resolve shall come to pass, even if at another time and in another way; and the goal itself will assuredly be reached, although I myself shall scarcely live to see it.*

*Diary, July 19, 1896*

The following is extracted from "The Jewish State," Herzl's classic exposition of his ideas, published in 1896.

The idea which I have developed in this pamphlet is an age-old one: the restoration of the Jewish state. The world resounds with outcries against the Jews, and this is what has awakened the dormant idea. I wish it to be clearly understood from the outset that I am inventing nothing... neither the historic condition of the Jews nor the means to improve it. In fact, every man will see for himself that the materials for the structure I am designing not only exist, but are within easy reach. If, therefore, this attempt to solve the Jewish Question is to be designated by a single phrase, let it be said to be the result of an inescapable conclusion rather than of a flighty imagination ...

The entire plan is in its essence perfectly simple, as it must be if it is to be comprehensible to all. 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 ourselves... Prayers will be offered up for the success of our work not only in temples but in churches as well, for it will bring relief from an old burden, from which all have suffered. But first we must bring enlightenment to men's minds. The idea must make its way into the most distant, miserable hamlets where our people dwell. Then they will awaken from their gloomy brooding, their lives will take on a new significance. Every man need only think of himself, and the movement will assume vast proportions.

And what glory awaits those who fight unselfishly for the cause! That is why I believe that a wondrous generation for 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.

## 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. My one recreation was on the evenings when I could go to hear Wagner's music, and particularly *Tannhauser*, an opera which I go to hear as often as it is produced. And only on those evenings when there was no opera did I have my doubts as to the truth of my ideas ...

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.

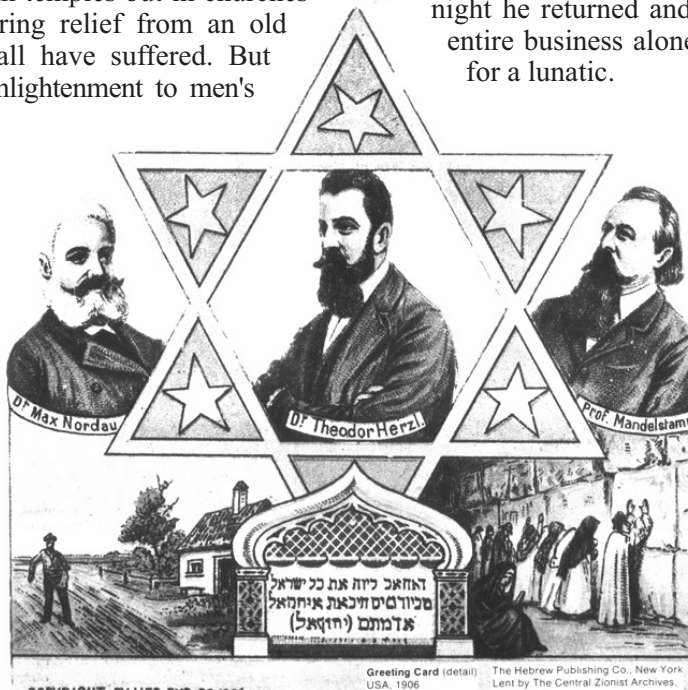
"Autobiographical Sketch", London Jewish Chronicle, 1898

## REFLECTIONS

The author Stefan Zweig was in high school in Vienna when Herzl's pamphlet, "The Jewish State", appeared. Here he recounts its effect on the Jewish community of Vienna.

I was still in the Gymnasium when this short pamphlet [The Jewish State]... 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?



Greeting Card (detail) The Hebrew Publishing Co., New York  
USA, 1906 Lent by The Central Zionist Archives.

The letter from which this excerpt was taken was published by the Association of German Rabbis in an attempt to oppose and ultimately cancel the planned first Zionist Congress which was originally scheduled for Munich. In the short run, at least, they succeeded. The Congress was moved to Basle, Switzerland.

The Association of Rabbis in Germany regards it as proper to make the following explanations:  
1. The efforts of so-called Zionists to found a Jewish national state in Palestine contradict

the messianic promises of Judaism as contained in Holy Writ and in later religious sources. 2. Judaism obligates its adherents to serve with all devotion the Fatherland to which they belong, and to further its national interests with all their heart and with all their strength ... Religion and patriotism both lay upon us the duty of asking all who are concerned with the welfare of Judaism

to stay away from the above mentioned Zionist endeavors and most particularly from the Congress which is still being planned, despite all the warnings against it.



## HERZL AND ME

In our generation, too, Israel and Zionism has had a transformational effect on the lives of many Jews. The period after the Six Day War in 1967 saw countless Jews around the world standing tall and proud as the triumph of the Jewish state seemed to reflect on them as well. Innumerable Jews have also been changed forever after visiting the Jewish state. Some have come and settled in Israel; others continue to be inspired from afar.

The last years of the *intifada* (Palestinian uprising), however, have generated a more complex reaction within the Jewish world. Many Jews have felt that an attack upon Israel is also an attack upon them and feel a renewed connection with the Jews in Israel, with whom they believe they share a common destiny. Others are troubled by what they understand of Israel's policies, and have distanced themselves from the Jewish state, feeling that its actions are in some measure responsible for Arab terrorism, and also cast them in a poor light. Clearly the relationship of the Jewish people to the Zionist cause remains an issue that Jews around the world continue to deal with, a hundred years after Herzl's death.

- ⊙ What do Zionism and the State of Israel mean to you, on the most personal level?
- ⊙ Is the Zionist idea an essential part of who you are? Would your life in any way be different if there were no Israel?
- ⊙ For you personally, is the existence of a Jewish state a source of inspiration or a source of embarrassment?
- ⊙ What does it mean to be a Zionist today? Does it mean something different now than it did in Herzl's time? At the creation of the State? During the Six Day War?
- ⊙ Whatever your definition of the word Zionist, do you consider yourself to be one?

## Organizational infrastructure and diplomatic fervor

**Historical background** If Herzl had been merely another thinker, he would be no more than a historical footnote, and not a particularly distinguished one. Little in his thought was original. Much of it had been foreshadowed by earlier thinkers such as Pinsker. What set him apart and gave him his extraordinary significance was his ability to translate his theories into practice and to place them on the Jewish – and the international – agenda.

His appeal to the masses over the heads of the established Jewish leadership did not end with the publication of *The Jewish State* in 1896. In 1897, he convened the first Zionist Congress, which established the World Zionist Organization, the authoritative embodiment of the Zionist movement since its inception.

Within a few years, the movement would set up a whole host of institutions that would take abstract ideas and turn them into reality. These would include the Jewish Colonial Trust (the Zionist movement's first bank) in 1898, and the *Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael* (the Jewish National Fund) in 1901. The latter has been a particularly important vehicle for the implementation of the Zionist agenda, initially through its purchase of lands and its leading role in their reclamation and afforestation, and later through its vital contributions in the areas of conservation, water resource development, and education. In addition, *Die Welt*, the newspaper founded privately by Herzl in 1897 as a vehicle for promoting his ideas, was taken over as the official organ of the Zionist movement at the fifth Zionist Congress in 1903. It was an important instrument for spreading the Zionist idea and was edited over the years by a group of outstanding intellectuals.

Already the first Zionist Congress had an enormous affect on Jews all over Europe but by no means did they all embrace Herzl's ideas. In fact, there were many who vehemently opposed them. Even among his fellow Zionists there were those who strongly differed with his approach. The *Hovevei Zion*, for instance, believed the Zionist ideal could be achieved only through large-scale settlement of the land, while 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.

To this end, and ignoring the opposition, Herzl embarked on several years of frenzied diplomatic activity. 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.

Post Card from the 50th anniversary of the 1st Zionist Congress in Basle



The following excerpts from Herzl's diaries provide an intimate glimpse into just a few of the numerous audiences that Herzl was able to arrange with major world figures of his time:

General impression: Edmond [de Rothschild] is a decent, good-natured, faint-hearted man who utterly fails to understand the matter and who would like to call it off as a coward tries to call off an imperative surgical operation. I believe he is now disgusted that he ever began with Palestine. And the fate of millions hangs on such men!

★ ★

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!"

★ ★

The [German] Kaiser left a deep and strong impression on me. Afterwards I tried to render it into a comparison, and hit upon the following: I felt as though I had entered a magic forest where the fabulous unicorn is said to dwell. Suddenly there stood before me a splendid woodland animal, with a single horn on its head. Its looks, however, surprised me less than the fact that it existed. I had previously imagined the appearance, but not the actual breath and life of this creature. And my astonishment grew when the creature began to speak in a kindly human voice and said: "I am the fabled unicorn."

★ ★

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 salty 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 horse-power.

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

Theodor Herzl, Diary entry, August 23, 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 the 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 LeIsrael* (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.

Never for a moment did I abandon the Basle Program [and its call for a Jewish homeland in Eretz Israel]. At one difficult moment when I thought all hope was lost... I indeed wanted to suggest to you what I believed the circumstances required... But aware of how this disturbed you so, I now want to say to you, in the language of our forebears, a statement of age-old comfort – that at this moment, is also a personal commitment, "Le-shana ha-ba-ah, b'Yerushalayim" – "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand lose its cunning."

Address to the sixth Zionist Congress

Ahad Ha'am, a contemporary of Herzl and his greatest critic during the early years of the Zionist movement, was also well aware of the charismatic power of his ideological adversary.

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; and even to complain of some of the methods which he adopted. But the ideal figure of Herzl, which is being created before our eyes in the popular mind – what a splendid vision it will be, and how potent its influence to cleanse that very mind of the taint of *galuth* (exile), 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. The creation is not yet perfected. 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.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

*The following is drawn from a reminiscence by Maria Stona, a colleague of Herzl's on the staff of his Viennese newspaper.*

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 experience is that of one who has been sitting quietly and happily at his desk when suddenly, startled by a din in the street, he looks out his window and sees a group of men engaged in violent dispute. He leaves his room and goes down to these people in order to restore peace. But they take him away with them, and do not let him return to his own work. He must help them. 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.

## REFLECTIONS

*Maurice Samuel, the Jewish writer and Zionist publicist, has recorded the following insightful comments about Herzl's consummate political skills, and the impact of his efforts.*

And what a powerful record of the indefatigable energy, the unshatterable hopefulness, the infinite ingenuity which went into the career of the diplomat, taken up at a moment's notice by Herzl. He cannot see anybody without asking himself instinctively; "Can I use him? Can he introduce me to somebody who can introduce me to somebody who can introduce me to the somebody?"

Would Herzl ever have achieved anything direct with these tortuous negotiations? It is easily permissible to doubt it. It seems quite certain that the Turks did not take him seriously; they took nobody seriously because their Levantine levity made that impossible. Others were fascinated by him, but it is doubtful whether they ever saw enough of a quid pro quo in his plans. Herzl might have gone on for twenty years, offering, retracting, arranging, rearranging. And nothing would have come of it in that direction.

But meanwhile he was of course building, largely without intent, elsewhere. The mere fact of negotiation was itself the starting point for other, indirect, achievements. The breath of a larger world suddenly passed – fresh, invigorating – across the tiny-minded Zionist world of the time...

*Marvin Lowenthal, Jewish historian, makes the following comment in his introduction to the edition of Herzl's diaries that he edited.*



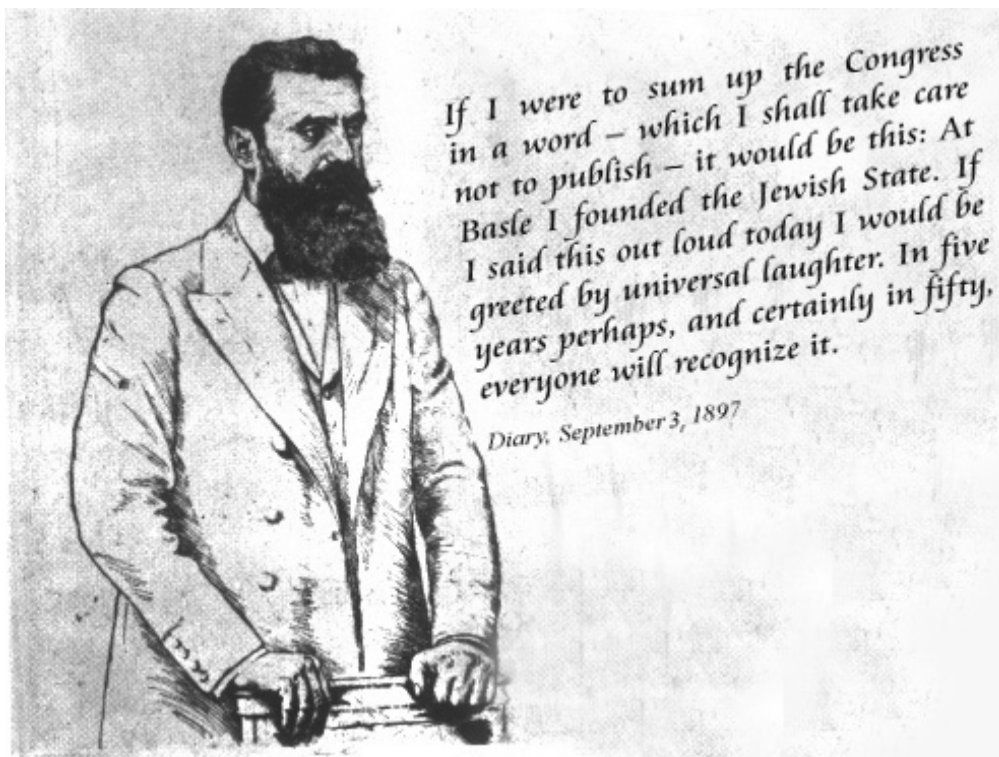
The present State of Israel owes its origin to Theodor Herzl – at least in the sense that he was the catalyst who precipitated the modern forces that brought it to birth. Since Moses, no single man, no Washington or Bismarck, has been to equal degree the father of a country ... Thus he became, in Zangwill's phrase, "the first Jewish statesman since the destruction of Jerusalem." He represented and presented not the cause of the Russian Jews, Galician Jews, or any other segment of Jewry, but 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.

Certificate - issued by The Jewish National Fund

It was scarcely necessary to wait for the appreciation and judgment of history. Herzl knew that the Jewish people adored him; he felt that "if he should die soon" the whole Jewish people would mourn. But adoration was not of importance to him. He wanted action. He could not be moved by manifestations of enthusiasm which did not yield practical results. While his inventive mind flashed with ideas which he hastened to materialize, his supporters, as it appeared to him, watched him with not much more than affectionate curiosity. He explored every possibility, and availed himself of every opportunity to advance his cause...

"There are dreamers," he writes to Cecil Rhodes, "who glance across great gulfs of time; but they are apt to lack practical sense. Then again there are practical men, like the trust magnates of America, but they lack political vision." From the exponent of a Jewish State in some indefinite

land he develops into a Lover of Zion. He has definite plans, well-defined ideas, a complete program. He has clear views on how to realize the program. As a humanitarian he wants to change modern conditions of life. As a moralist he has the highest ethical standards. *Jacob Hodess, Zionist publicist, commenting on the publication of Herzl's diaries*



## HERZL AND ME

One thing that Herzl understood was the need to turn caring into doing. As we look around the Jewish world today, it becomes apparent that the importance of activism has rarely been greater. These are years deeply problematic for the Jewish people, attacked from without and divided within. Most worrisome of all, perhaps, is the fact that so many Jews have basically opted out of belonging to their people. Apathy in the face of objective crisis is a dangerous phenomenon. At the same time, we can be heartened by the countless who work to strengthen the Jewish collective in the face of those phenomena that threaten it. But it would be naive to understand our history of survival as a guarantee of our continued existence.

- ⊙ What is your take on the issues challenging Jewish continuity today? Do you believe the forces of national activism will overcome the forces of national apathy?
- ⊙ 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 yet associated with your local Zionist Federation, seek it out, and discover how it is furthering the work of the World Zionist Organization founded by Theodor Herzl more than 100 years ago.

## From "The Jewish State" to the State of Israel – and beyond

**Historical background** On July 3, 1904 (20 *Tammuz*), Theodor Herzl died of a combination of a weak heart and pneumonia. He was buried next to his father's grave in Vienna, but willed that the Jewish people re-inter his body in the land of Israel. In August 1949, a year after the establishment of the Jewish state, he was brought to burial on the mountain in Jerusalem bearing his name.

Herzl paid a great personal price for his involvement in the Zionist movement. He completely gave up the life to which he had so aspired, that of a European playwright and man of letters, in exchange for the constant stress of public life, and 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.\* Even before this episode, however, his diaries reflect that he often felt abandoned by his followers and taken advantage of by opportunists, in what he described as essentially a thankless task that was costing him a great deal, damaging his health, and producing precious little in tangible results. Herzl's family paid a terrible price for his efforts as well, and it has been suggested that the heartbreaking stories of his children, all three of whom died tragically after living lives plagued by illness and mental instability, were in some measure the result of their father's preoccupation with the Zionist cause.

But if on a personal level Herzl's life was fraught with frustration, from a historical perspective it must be judged a brilliant success. Although at the time of his death the Zionist movement had achieved little in concrete terms, ultimately his efforts would impact the lives of millions. When the State of Israel was founded in 1948, Herzl was revered, quite correctly, as the father figure without whom it would never have come into existence.

The years since its establishment have not been easy ones for the Jewish State. Forced to cope with an unremittingly hostile outside world, with neighbours fervently opposed to the very existence of any Jewish enclave in an Arab Middle East, and with the need to absorb millions of immigrants, many of whom had had no experience with modernity and who were desperately poor, Israel has not had an easy path to walk. For these and many other reasons, Israel is not *Altneuland* - the utopian New Society Herzl envisioned in his 1902 novel. Yet its achievements are unquestionable and unparalleled. Israel has increased its Jewish population by thousands of percent in the years since Herzl's death, successfully melding millions of immigrants from more than 120 countries into a stable and vibrant democracy, the only one in the Middle East. Its advances in such fields as technology, land reclamation, medicine, and agriculture have earned it worldwide admiration. And the list goes on and on. The very real problems cannot and should not be ignored, but for every fault one can point to in Israel, there is also an estimable triumph. Of course there is still much to be done, and Herzl would be the first to recognize that. But what essentially began in the mind and was then committed to paper, is now a concrete reality that is here to stay. With Herzl as their inspiration, the Jewish people willed his dream into being, changing the course of Jewish history forever. The achievement is extraordinary.

*\* Herzl's proposal that for practical reasons 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 and pressing interests of the Jewish people.*



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* (Our Hope). March 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 his novel, *Altneuland*, 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 "New Society" might look like twenty years after its founding. Like almost all utopian novels it suffers from a certain flatness of plot and character, but it does offer a fascinating glimpse into Herzl's dream of what an exemplary Jewish homeland could develop into in Eretz Israel.

The outline of the novel is simple. It opens in 1902. Friedrich, a young Jew from Vienna (and Herzl's alter-ego) is disgusted by what he perceives of as the shallowness of civilized life throughout turn-of-the-century Europe, and discouraged by his observation that the opportunities for genuine fulfillment are limited, particularly for the Jews. At the age of 23, he leaves Europe for the private island of an older companion, Kingscourt, and the two are completely cut off from the rest of civilization. Twenty years later they make a trip to Palestine. Everything they experience on the next 250 pages or so is Herzl's imagination run wild, his fantasy of what the Jewish people would achieve two decades after obtaining the right to return to their homeland.

The society Friedrich and Kingscourt encounter is thoroughly modern, technologically advanced, and socially progressive, replete with an extensive network of railways, electrical power plants, modern cement factories, a comprehensive system of water collection and irrigation, sophisticated city planning, a progressive 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, antisemitism 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.

The following excerpts from "Altneuland" give expression to but a few of Herzl's aspirations for what the Jewish state he envisioned might evolve into.

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.

★ ★

The "Old-New-Land" had been fructified into a garden and a home for people who had once been poor, weak, hopeless, and homeless.

"I feel myself crushed by all this greatness," sighed Friedrich, when at least he could speak."

"Not we," responded David earnestly. "We have not been crushed by the greatness of these forces – it has lifted us up!"

★ ★

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.

★ ★

[Miriam] has duties and performs them, because she also has rights. In our New Society the women have equal rights with the men... They have active and passive suffrage as a matter of course. They worked faithfully beside us during the reconstruction period. Their enthusiasm lent wings to the men's courage. It would have been the blackest ingratitude if we had relegated them to the servants' hall or to a harem.

★ ★

...she is at the head of the greatest eye clinic in the world. May I bring these gentlemen to your clinic, Doctor, when we come to Jerusalem? Large numbers of people, gentlemen, have had their eyesight saved or restored there... People come from all over Northern Africa and Asia. The blessings bestowed by our medical institutions have won us more friends in Palestine and the neighboring countries than all our industrial and technical progress.

★ ★

Toleration can and must always rest on reciprocity. Only when the Jews, forming the majority in Palestine, showed themselves tolerant, were they shown more toleration in all other countries.

★ ★

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.

★ ★

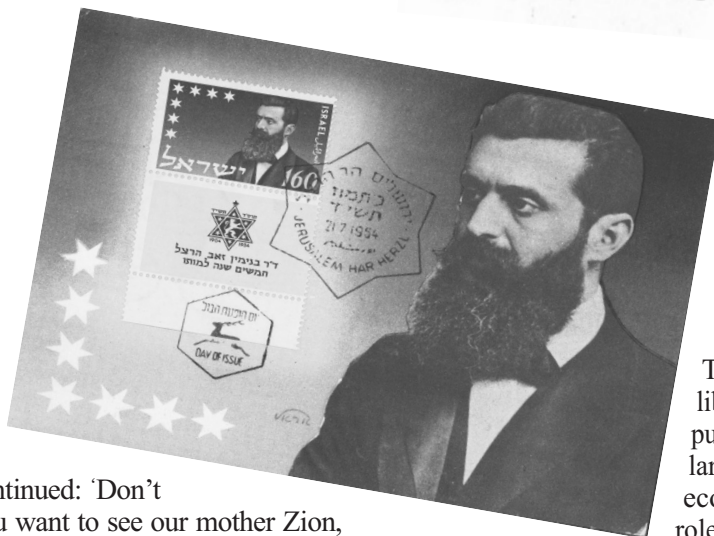
The needy sick only have to apply to the public charities. No one is turned away... We should be ashamed to send a patient from one hospital to the other as used to be done in the old days. If one hospital is full, an ambulance in its courtyard will at once take an applicant to another where beds are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

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The following story comes from the memoirs of Zvi Maslianski, a Zionist activist, who relates an anecdote that he heard from Herzl's successor as head of the Zionist movement, David Wolffsohn. The latter told Maslianski of the occasion on which he accompanied Herzl to Palestine in 1898.

"When our ship left Port Said, bound for Jaffa," began Wolffsohn, "it was evening. All of us knew that we should land in Palestine the following morning. And all of us, myself included, retired to our cabins for the night. Only Herzl did not think of resting, but remained on deck".

"I was sound asleep – for it was already long past midnight – when I heard some one calling: 'David! Are you sleeping, my friend?' I felt a hand pass gently over my face as the voice



continued: 'Don't you want to see our mother Zion, David? Get up – the light of morning is already shining on the towers of Jaffa! We can already see their gleaming!' "

"Rising from my bed, I was amazed to see Herzl attired as for an audience with an emperor. His face glowing, his eyes shining, he exclaimed; 'Come, David, get dressed! Let us go see our beloved motherland!' "

"I dressed and we went up on deck, whence we could see the pointed minarets of Jaffa beckoning to us. We fell into each other's arms, and tears rose to our eyes as we whispered softly; 'Our country! Our mother Zion!' "

Z.H. Maslianski

## REFLECTIONS

What Herzl depicted [in *Old-New Land*] was not a practical scheme of settlement but a futuristic utopia created de novo, with no links to the past. The real advantage of settling in Palestine, Herzl insisted, was that it was so "primitive and neglected." As a result, Jews could start afresh, without being encumbered either by inherited institutions, pre-industrial social classes, or an obsolete technological infrastructure... Palestine was a blank slate on which human will and ingenuity could write what it wished. Palestine answered to a futuristic vision...

Herzl depicted a fully developed, advanced industrial society... When Friedrich, the novel's protagonist, and his friend, the Prussian ex-cavalry officer, Kingscourt, enter Haifa [in an imagined 1923... Palestine has become a major entrepot, a hub of international trade. Automobiles rush by on the wide streets. A network of elevated electric trains ring the city...

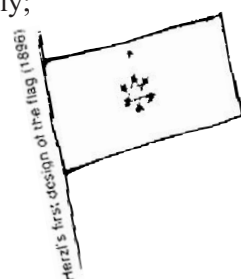
In a breathtaking imaginative leap, Herzl depicted Palestine as far more advanced than Europe... The Dead Sea Canal, stretching from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea, feeds a series of electric power stations and pours limitless gallons of water into the desert, sustaining its rich agricultural yields...

The Jewish state was to be a model of modern liberty and economic justice. As such it was to be purged of historical anachronisms... In an age of large-scale agricultural production, the peasant was economically obsolete..... By the same token the role of the rabbis was

to be restricted, subordinated to the state's policy of religious pluralism. Rabbis were to have "no privileged voice in the state." They were to stir national enthusiasm and teach patriotism, beyond that

their influence would be restricted.

Jacques Kornberg, from his preface to the 1997 edition of "Old New Land"



In *Old-New Land* there is neither war nor preparation for war... There is no tinge of imperialistic desire throughout the borders of the land. Toleration for the stranger goes to such lengths that the Jewish coloring of the Utopia seems at times to fade out altogether! Its form of economic organization makes impossible the grinding of the faces of the poor, and from every other paragraph tacitly speaks the keen desire that all mankind may profit by the lessons the Jews have learned through their own travail without demanding impossible things from human nature.

*Old-New Land*... rewards the reader with an insight into the workings of a great soul that found martyrdom when it tried to redeem its people, without ever knowing that the martyrdom achieved its purpose. And the study of the reality of Eretz Yisrael today in the light of his vision must stir wonder, if not awe. As we ponder, let us not forget that but for that vision, much of what has come to pass in Palestine would never have known its beginnings.

Lotta Levensohn from the introduction to her translation of "*Altneuland*", 1929



Decoration for Independence Day Israel 1971. Published by the "Paintings Centre", Tel-Aviv. Designed by Arien Moskowitz



Playing teffet for Learning Hebrew Eretz-Israel 1904.  
Designed and illustrated by Miriam Rier-Zedek, published  
by Bar ey, Tel-Aviv

## HERZL AND ME

What would Herzl say about the modern State of Israel? Would he recognize it as the fruit of his labors, or is the Jewish state that has come into being 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 described in *Altneuland* in 1902, yet an amazing number of social innovations he foresaw then have been vital in shaping Israel as it is: universal suffrage for women, 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 that benefit not only Israel's citizens but also the citizens of the world. But the State of Israel is also plagued by many problems, external and internal, that Herzl did not foresee, or which he believed would disappear. In *Altneuland*, for example, the New Society had no army because the Jewish state had been wholeheartedly welcomed into the region by the neighboring Arab states, and antisemitism had disappeared from the face of the earth forever!

- Each generation must embrace Herzl's legacy anew, and continue the struggle to create of the Jewish state all that it might be. What is your role going to be in the process?

NOTES:

## NOTES:



# Herzl: Up Close and Personal

## In Pursuit of the Zionist Vision

*a traveling exhibition celebrating the visionary of the Jewish state*

*giving life to the man and the ideals which motivated him*

*and conveying Zionism as the rich and compelling ideology it continues to be today*

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# Herzl:

## Up Close and Personal

in pursuit of the Zionist vision

a traveling exhibition celebrating the visionary of the Jewish state, giving life to the man and the ideals which motivated him, and conveying Zionism as the rich and compelling ideology it continues to be today



Department for Zionist Activities  
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