

Selections from:

Theodor Herzl

A BIOGRAPHY
based on the work of
Alex Bein

....At about the age of twelve he read in a German book about the Messiah-King whom many Jews still awaited and who would come riding, like the poorest of the poor on an ass. The history of the Exodus and the legend of the liberation by the King-Messiah ran together in the boy's mind, inspiring in him the theme of a wonderful story which he sought in vain to put into literary form.

A little while thereafter Herzl had the following dream: "The King-Messiah came, a glorious and majestic old man, took me in his arms, and swept off with me on the [24]wings of the wind. On one of the iridescent clouds we encountered the figure of Moses. The features were those familiar to me out of my childhood in the statue by Michelangelo. The Messiah called to Moses: It is for this child that I have prayed. But to me he said: Go, declare to the Jews that I shall come soon and perform great wonders and great deeds for my people and for the whole world."

....By now Herzl was no longer content with a simple acceptance of the facts; he was looking for the deeper significance of the universal enmity directed against the Jews. For the world it is a lightning conductor. But so far it was only a flash of insight which ended in nothing more than a literary paradox. However, from now on it gave him no peace.

At the turn of the year 1892-93 there came a sharp clarification in his ideas. He had followed closely the evasive debates in the Austrian Reichstag—debates which forever dodged the reality by turning the question into one [31]of religion. "It is no longer—and it has not been for a long time—a theological matter. It has nothing whatsoever to do with religion and conscience," declared Herzl. "What is more, everyone knows it. The Jewish question is neither nationalistic nor religious. It is a social question...."

“....All humiliated peoples have Jewish characteristics, and as soon as the pressure is removed they react like liberated men....”

....Clearer and clearer becomes the picture which he has of himself and of his task in the history of his people. "I picked up once again the torn thread of the tradition of our people. I lead it into the Promised Land."

"The Promised Land, where we can have hooked noses, black or red beards, and bow legs, without being despised for it; where we can live at last as free men on our own soil, and where we can die peacefully in our own fatherland. There we can expect the award of honor for great deeds, so that the offensive cry of 'Jew!' may become an honorable appellation, like German, Englishman, Frenchman—in brief, like all civilized peoples; so that we may be able to form our state to educate our people for the tasks which at present still lie beyond our vision. For surely God would not have kept us alive so long if there were not assigned [40]to us a specific role in the history of mankind." He adds: "The

Jewish state is a world need." He draws the logical consequence for himself: "I believe that for me life has ended and world history begun...."

"...Through the Rev. Hechler, a chaplain of the British Embassy in Vienna, who believed in the Jewish return to the Holy Land, Herzl was introduced to the Grand Duke of Baden, a Christian of great piety and influence in political circles...."

"...On August 29, 1897, the First Zionist Congress was assembled, not in Munich but in Basle, Switzerland. The majority of the delegates to the First Zionist Congress, drawn to Basle from all parts of the world, saw Herzl for the first time. The total number of delegates at the first session was 197.

The first act of the Congress was the adoption of a resolution of thanks to the Sultan of Turkey. Then Herzl rose and walked over to the pulpit. It was no longer the elegant Dr. Herzl of Vienna, it was no longer the easy-going literary man, the critic, the feuilletonist. As one reporter said: "It was a scion of the House of David, risen from among the dead, clothed in legend and fantasy and beauty." The first words uttered by Herzl were: "We are here to lay the foundation stone of the house which is to shelter the Jewish nation." "We Zionists," he stressed, "seek for the solution of the Jewish question, not an international society, but an [52]international discussion.... We have nothing to do with conspiracy, secret intervention or indirect methods. We wish to place the question under the control of free public opinion...."

"...Herzl clung to the idea which had come to him when he was thinking of the Jewish State as a pamphlet, that it might be better for him to write a novel. The impulse to write such a novel became irresistible after his visit to [55]Palestine. It was to be called "Altneuland." He began to write it in 1899. It was completed in April 1902, and published six months later. It is remarkable that he could write such a novel while engaged in varied political activities in Constantinople, in London and in Berlin; and while he had to deal with the many troublesome internal Zionist problems.

"Altneuland" was a novel with a purpose. It described the Palestine of the near future as it would develop through the Zionist Movement. It had the weaknesses of every propaganda novel. The entire work has something of the state about it and proceeds in the form of scenes rather than by way of narrative. Each type has a specific outlook. Most of the characters are portraits of living personalities. It was his purpose to memorialize his friends and his opponents.

"Altneuland" tells of a Jew who visits Palestine in 1898 and then comes again in 1923 when he finds the Promised Land developed under Jewish influence. Its territory lies East and West of the Jordan. The dead land of 1898 is now thoroughly alive. Its real creators were the irrigation engineers. Technology had given a new form to labor, a new social and economic system had been created which is described as "mutualistic," a huge cooperative, a mediate form between individualism and collectivism. Haifa had become a world city. Around the Holy City of Jerusalem, modern suburbs had arisen, shaded boulevards and parks, institutes of learning, places of amusement, markets—"a world city in the spirit of the twentieth century." In this new land, the Arabs live side by side in friendship with the Jews...."

"...In his will Herzl asked that his body be buried next to his father, "to remain there until the Jewish people will carry my remains to Palestine." When the Russians entered Vienna in 1945 the remains of Herzl were still there."

**[Again He said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them,
O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD” (Ezekiel 37:4).]**

Selections from:

The Jewish State
by
Theodor Herzl

“The idea which I have developed in this pamphlet is a very old one: it is the restoration of the Jewish State.

The world resounds with outcries against the Jews, and these outcries have awakened the slumbering idea.

I wish it to be clearly understood from the outset that no portion of my argument is based on a new discovery. I have discovered neither the historic condition of the Jews nor the means to improve it. In fact, every man will see for himself that the materials of the structure I am designing are not only in existence, but actually already in hand. If, therefore, this attempt to solve the Jewish Question is to be designated by a single word, let it be said to be the result of an inescapable conclusion rather than that of a flighty imagination....”

“...Everything depends on our propelling force. And what is that force? The misery of the Jews.

Who would venture to deny its existence? We shall discuss it fully in the chapter on the causes of Anti-Semitism.

Everybody is familiar with the phenomenon of steam-power, generated by boiling water, which lifts the kettle-lid. Such tea-kettle phenomena are the attempts of Zionist and kindred associations to check Anti-Semitism.

I believe that this power, if rightly employed, is powerful enough to propel a large engine and to move passengers and goods: the engine having whatever form men may choose to give it.

I am absolutely convinced that I am right, though I doubt whether I shall live to see myself proved to be so. Those who are the first to inaugurate this movement will scarcely live to see its glorious close. But the inauguration [71] of it is enough to give them a feeling of pride and the joy of spiritual freedom....”

“...I believe that I understand Anti-Semitism, which is really a highly complex movement. I consider it from a Jewish standpoint, yet without fear or hatred. I believe that I can see what elements there are in it of vulgar sport, of common trade jealousy, of inherited prejudice, of religious intolerance, and also of pretended self-defence. I think the Jewish [76] question is no more a social than a religious one, notwithstanding that it sometimes takes these and other forms. It is a national question, which can only be solved by making it a political world-question to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world in council.

We are a people—one people....”

“...Because I have drawn this conclusion with complete indifference to everything but the quest of truth, I shall probably be contradicted and opposed by Jews who are in easy circumstances. Insofar as private interests alone are held by their anxious or timid possessors to be in danger, they can safely be ignored, for the concerns of the poor and oppressed are of greater importance than theirs. But I wish from the outset to prevent any misconception from arising, particularly the mistaken notion that my project, if realized, would in the least degree injure property now held by Jews. I shall therefore explain everything connected with rights of property very fully. Whereas, if my plan never becomes anything more than a piece of literature, things will merely remain as they are. It might more

reasonably be objected that I am giving a handle to Anti-Semitism when I say we are a people—one people; that I am hindering the assimilation of Jews where it is about to be consummated, and endangering it where it is an accomplished fact, insofar as it is possible for a solitary writer to hinder or endanger anything....”

“...No human being is wealthy or powerful enough to transplant a nation from one habitation to another. An idea alone can achieve that and this idea of a State may have the requisite power to do so. The Jews have dreamt this kingly dream all through the long nights of their history. "Next year in Jerusalem" is our old phrase. It is now a question of showing that the dream can be converted into a living reality....”

“...I shall now put the Question in the briefest possible form: Are we to "get out" now and where to? Or, may we yet remain? And, how long?...”

["O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! (Luke 13:34)]

“...I referred previously to our "assimilation". I do not for a moment wish to imply that I desire such an end. Our national character is too historically famous, and, in spite of every degradation, too fine to make its annihilation desirable. We might perhaps be able to merge ourselves entirely into surrounding races, if these were to leave us in peace for a period of two generations. But they will not [92]leave us in peace. For a little period they manage to tolerate us, and then their hostility breaks out again and again. The world is provoked somehow by our prosperity, because it has for many centuries been accustomed to consider us as the most contemptible among the poverty-stricken. In its ignorance and narrowness of heart, it fails to observe that prosperity weakens our Judaism and extinguishes our peculiarities. It is only pressure that forces us back to the parent stem; it is only hatred encompassing us that makes us strangers once more.

Thus, whether we like it or not, we are now, and shall henceforth remain, a historic group with unmistakable characteristics common to us all.

We are one people—our enemies have made us one without our consent, as repeatedly happens in history. Distress binds us together, and, thus united, we suddenly discover our strength. Yes, we are strong enough to form a State, and, indeed, a model State. We possess all human and material resources necessary for the purpose....”

[“...and they took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods (Judges 3:6).]

“...Shall we choose Palestine or Argentine? We shall take what is given us, and what is selected by Jewish public opinion. The Society will determine both these points.

Argentine is one of the most fertile countries in the world, extends over a vast area, has a sparse population and a mild climate. The Argentine Republic would derive considerable profit from the cession of a portion of its territory to us. The present infiltration of Jews has [96]certainly produced

some discontent, and it would be necessary to enlighten the Republic on the intrinsic difference of our new movement.

Palestine is our ever-memorable historic home. The very name of Palestine would attract our people with a force of marvellous potency. If His Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine, we could in return undertake to regulate the whole finances of Turkey. We should there form a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism. We should as a neutral State remain in contact with all Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence. The sanctuaries of Christendom would be safeguarded by assigning to them an extra-territorial status such as is well-known to the law of nations. We should form a guard of honor about these sanctuaries, answering for the fulfilment of this duty with our existence. This guard of honor would be the great symbol of the solution of the Jewish Question after eighteen centuries of Jewish suffering....”

“...The land which the Society of Jews will have secured by international law must, of course, be privately acquired....”

“...It might be suggested that our want of a common current language would present difficulties. *We cannot converse with one another in Hebrew. Who amongst us has a sufficient acquaintance with Hebrew to ask for a railway ticket in that language? Such a thing cannot be done.* [146] Yet the difficulty is very easily circumvented. Every man can preserve the language in which his thoughts are at home. Switzerland affords a conclusive proof of the possibility of a federation of tongues. We shall remain in the new country what we now are here, and we shall never cease to cherish with sadness the memory of the native land out of which we have been driven.

We shall give up using those miserable stunted jargons, those Ghetto languages [**Yiddish**] which we still employ, for these were the stealthy tongues of prisoners. Our national teachers will give due attention to this matter; and the language which proves itself to be of greatest utility for general intercourse will be adopted without compulsion as our national tongue. Our community of race is peculiar and unique, for we are bound together only by the faith of our fathers....”

[Hebrew was nearly extinct as a spoken language by Late Antiquity, but it continued to be used as a literary language and as the liturgical language of Judaism, evolving various dialects of literary Medieval Hebrew, until its revival as a spoken language in the late 19th century. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language)]

“...Shall we end by having a theocracy? No, indeed. Faith unites us, knowledge gives us freedom. We shall therefore prevent any theocratic tendencies from coming to the fore on the part of our priesthood. We shall keep our priests within the confines of their temples in the same way as we shall keep our professional army within the confines of their barracks. Army and priesthood shall receive honors high as their valuable functions deserve. But they must not interfere in the administration of the State which confers distinction upon them, else they will conjure up difficulties without and within.

Every man will be as free and undisturbed in his faith or his disbelief as he is in his nationality. And if it should occur that men of other creeds and different nationalities come to live amongst us, we should accord them honorable protection and equality before the law. We have learnt [147] toleration in Europe. This is not sarcastically said; for the Anti-Semitism of today could only in a very few places be taken for old religious intolerance. It is for the most part a movement among civilized nations by which they try to chase away the spectres of their own past....”

“...The Jewish State is conceived as a neutral one. It will therefore require only a professional army, equipped, of course, with every requisite of modern warfare, to preserve order internally and externally....

“...We have no flag, and we need one. If we desire to lead many men, we must raise a symbol above their heads.

I would suggest a white flag, with seven golden stars. The white field symbolizes our pure new life; the stars are the seven golden hours of our working-day. For we shall march into the Promised Land carrying the badge of honor....”

“...But the Jews, once settled in their own State, would probably have no more enemies. As for those who remain behind, since prosperity enfeebles and causes them to [154]diminish, they would soon disappear altogether. I think the Jews will always have sufficient enemies, such as every nation has. But once fixed in their own land, it will no longer be possible for them to scatter all over the world. The diaspora cannot be reborn, unless the civilization of the whole earth should collapse; and such a consummation could be feared by none but foolish men. Our present civilization possesses weapons powerful enough for its self-defence....”

See <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/25282/25282-h/25282-h.htm> for the full text.