

## WHAT IS HERZLISM TODAY?

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Is there such a thing as Herzlism today? Is it needed? It has been accepted that with the establishment of the State of Israel, the thing that had been 'lost' was restored. Moreover, precisely because of this it is permissible or even obligatory to regard Herzl from close to, even from too close, really intimately, and to follow him into his bedroom. As long as his vision was a dream, he had to be a dream too, surrounded by a visionary, hallucinatory halo, so that we would follow his dream and educate others by its light. But because the dream has been fulfilled, let us inspect the human being without the halo and the legendary, romantic glamor, like a leader of our time, when everyone and everything is stripped to the bare bones.

My generation, which was born after Herzl's death but still lives in these days when the dream has died, or at least an attempt is being made to kill it, grew up on love of Herzl. We loved him because of his picture, which gazed down at us from the walls of innumerable houses, halls, good Zionist postcards and greeting cards, because of the stories we were told and, afterwards, because of the diaries we read. I repeat, we read Herzl's diaries rather than his political writings. We simply loved him, and anyone who was alive on the day his remains were brought to Israel and interred on Mount Herzl will remember it as one of the most beautiful in his life, for the beauty of the individual, the dream and the mountain looking out over all of Jerusalem on which he was buried. Everything was so pure, and I do not think there has been a more beautiful day in the history of the State of Israel, neither the day on which the State was declared, nor the day on which Jerusalem was liberated, and certainly not the night of the United Nations' resolution, when the entire yishuv danced and the night was an extremely ugly one. On no account do I see Herzl dancing with the nation on that night, even though he was a Herzlist and wanted to establish the State according to 'open, public law'... No, the day of his victory was not his finest hour, but when he was brought to the independent State of Israel, and the Air Force and Navy saluted him, and the nation passed before his coffin in majestic silence, that was the nobility he deserved. That was one of the few moments when we felt joyfully what Jewish statehood really was.

As for this statehood, the Herzlist State of Israel, is it really the realization of the 'dream' as we wanted it, as he wanted it? Many people, if not everyone, contort their faces into a bitter or cynical smile at the mention of this State and its perversions. Is that how Herzl saw it? Or is it possible to answer the question with the banal, trivial reply: no dream is ever fulfilled completely, beauty and perfection exist only in dreams, etc. These simple phrases may be true but they offer no consolation, because despite the fact that everyone knows this truth, as long as man, not beast, is made in the image of God, he continues to weave dreams and desire beauty, aspiring towards realization while aware of the disillusion always embodied in it.

First and foremost and most terrible of all, that external driving force which pushed Herzl to his 'dream' was not the internal, aesthetic force which will be discussed below, but simply the situation of the Jewish people in Europe, the cry of the crowd outside the court in Paris where Dreyfus was sentenced one hundred years after the French revolution: 'Death to *the Jews!*,' not to Dreyfus, to the Jews. I do not know if any attention has been paid to the fact that Herzl took very little interest in Dreyfus as an individual. He probably realized, along with many other good and honest men, that the accusation was a libel, even though it was not certain at the outset that Dreyfus was not

a spy. After all, were not the Rosenbergs of our time spies? Why is it impossible? It was not, however, Dreyfus' fate which concerned Herzl but the situation of the Jews a hundred years after the Revolution: 'Death to the Jews!'

That has to be prevented. *Not the cry, the death.* Various kinds of liberals tried to prevent the cry. Herzl wanted simply to prevent the death of the Jews in Europe, for if this was the case in Paris, what could be expected in Kishinev? It was Kishinev which led Herzl to examine the possibility of Uganda, because it was the danger to Jewish life that brought him to oppose Ussishkin's kind of Zionism. 'If you bring ten thousand Jews each year to Palestine,' he wrote to Ussishkin, 'and that is the maximum 'practically' possible, we will need *nine hundred years* in order to bring over the Jews of Europe.' He knew that we did not have nine hundred years in Europe, and that was why he was so shocked when he heard the Russian minister, Felbe, say: 'I always used to say to the Czar Alexander: If only it were possible to drown *six million Jews* in the sea it would be a good thing, but as it is not feasible...'

This smouldered inside Herzl, and that is why he used the phrase 'the exodus from Egypt,' rather than 'the return to Zion' as in the days of Ezra and Nehemia. We should remember this when talking about fulfilling the dream which Herzl wove, the Jewish State, for by this, and primarily by this, that fulfillment is damaged. The 'fulfillment' for which the dream was created missed the main point: it did not save the Jews of Europe for whom Herzl's heart burned and broke.

It is very simple, very terrible and very true. So kindly keep all your sophisticated psychological and sociological explanations to yourselves. We didn't see the wood for the trees, we didn't see the point for the persuasion, and the point was to save millions from annihilation. He did not, of course, see gas-ovens, but he saw destruction and wanted more than anything else to save his people. Consequently, on the last pages of his diary he writes of one of his last political meetings, with the Austrian foreign minister, Golohovsky, who told him that if he spoke of thousands of Jews he would not arouse much interest, but if he were to refer to tens of thousands, the seven hundred thousand Jews of Galicia, for example, ah, that would be a different matter.

Most of the State of Israel's internal and external problems are due to the failure of Zionism, as Ben Zion Dinur, in his book, *The Holocaust and its Lessons*, admits with accusatory power, to achieve the objective. For the objective was: *to prevent the Holocaust.* And *consequently the absence of fulfillment* receives greater significance than the sin against those who perished, because it operates even today, inside the State, namely, the non-fulfillment endures, persists and acts within the fulfillment, as if it were both curse and *punishment*. Every failure bears the deep-rooted seed of its revenge, even if it appears to have been corrected. This is especially so if the failure is no chance occurrence but an internal, or even *integral*, blemish within the Jewish nation. Thus the failure of the Yom Kippur War continues to take political revenge, despite the military victory. And in the same way, Hitler's war against the Jewish people has not ended, despite the defeat he and his nation suffered.

And there is no need to say that only a historical, political and moral charlatan would claim that it was impossible to achieve this objective of prevention and rescue, that 'everything that could have been done was done,' that 'had it been possible, we would have done more,' and 'the Jews did not want to immigrate to Palestine,' etc. etc. These

claims justify events retroactively by *a posteriori* explanations and historical determinism, and were mocked so adeptly by Sholem Aleichem as the 'philosophy' of 'if things were like that, this means that they had to be like that, for had it been possible for things to be otherwise, they would undoubtedly have been otherwise.'

In other words, *Zionism* is responsible for this failure, not 'Agudat Yisrael' on the right, nor the 'Bund' on the left, nor even Jewish opportunism in the middle. None of these bore the responsibility because they did not recognize the basic premise, the Zionist diagnosis of the fate of the diaspora. The responsibility belongs to those who were aware of the diagnosis and did not always act accordingly, as they should have, being aware of it. At any rate, they did not operate on the right scale, with the appropriate, crushing urgency. The anomaly that Herzl, a nineteenth-century liberal, the product of a genuinely classical liberal education, a man of literary aestheticism and creative harmony, was the man who was kindled by the fire of Zionist fulfillment — albeit within the framework of legalistic thought — though it was revolutionary in its content and realization. This was embodied in the exodus from Egypt, namely, the transfer of millions, within a few years, in an orderly but large-scale fashion. Most of the people who actually fulfilled Zionism, however, were 'revolutionary' in their characters and views, some of them even Marxists, all of them impoverished, rejecting form and ceremony, consciously and deliberately casting off their ties, fiery orators as well as *individual* fulfillers by their very nature. Most of them were opponents of revolutionary, mass Zionism, favoring selective immigration, supporting Chaim Weizmann's evolutionary Zionism, and opposing rebellion against the British Mandate, even when it clearly stifled 'immigration,' (a concept which it is doubtful whether Herzl would have regarded as the fulfillment of a modern exodus).

Nordau and Jabotinsky, accepting Herzl's Zionist diagnosis, despite the fact that they were still bound up with their spiritual and liberal nineteenth-century education, tried to save and revive the Herzlist trend of fulfillment epitomized in mass rescue. This ranged from Nordau's plan, delineated in 1920, to Jabotinsky's struggle for evacuation in the 'thirties, but both were rejected by the pact between Weizmannism, the Zionist Labour Party and the Socialists. Zionist realization continued to take an evolutionary course, 'dunam after dunam,' in order to achieve a revolutionary aim in a period of the collapse on all sides of the classical regimes, of the social and political structures which had produced Herzl and which he respected. The realm of realization was the Middle East, which was devoid of any legalist or European basis, where none of the concepts and ideas which the Zionists brought with them were absorbed by the local population (the British did not even attempt to speak to them in these terms, and only the naive Zionists did this, deluding themselves and reacting with surprise when they encountered hatred and 'misunderstanding'...).

The Jewish nation in Europe was torn between Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, while the barbarously nationalistic Arab leadership adhered to Hitler with its right hand and to Stalin with its left. That is the triangle into which the Jewish nation had stumbled. Zionism functioned within it, and this Jewish nation is the (one-sided) ally of slow, evolutionary England. It has time, it has space, it has territory to which it can retreat, it has imperialist considerations, albeit mistaken ones. But whereas Gentiles may err we may not, and we are being drawn after this ally, arguing mildly with

it, bargaining like merchants, but out of all proportion to the true situation of the Jewish nation, which is perched on the edge of the abyss. This abyss was foreseen by Herzl on the basis of *one* Dreyfus and *dozens* of victims at Kishinev.

That is the decisive fact which has to be remembered with pain and understood with far-reaching, *realistic* considerations when speaking of the State of Israel as the *fulfillment* of Herzl's dream. As regards this urgent, open *motivation*, the State was not an objective by any means, and certainly not an 'ultimate objective.' It was a better, finer but primarily more efficient means of achieving the end: rescuing the Jewish people. That was the meaning of *political* as opposed to *practical* Zionism, and certainly as opposed to that absurd 'spiritual' Zionism of Ahad-Ha'am, the evil spirit of Weizmann and pseudo-Zionist education during the years of 'fulfillment.' Not only do we have time, plenty of time, for evolutionary fulfillment, but more than that, there is no need whatsoever to transfer millions, not even over a thousand years. There is no threat to the survival of the Jews in the progressive world.

Let us not forget the central place of this 'philosopher,' Ahad-Ha'am, in Zionism and the Yishuv. He provided the 'overview,' the 'idealistic,' pseudo-spiritual, pseudo-moral, pseudo-Jewish, pseudo-Zionist superstructure for the Zionist 'enterprise' which was gradually taking shape. Even Marxist 'Hashomer Hatzair' loved and honored Ahad-Ha'am, the symbol of idleness and anarchism, just as it admired Buber's mysticism. That was the kind of 'Judaism' it was prepared to tolerate. It involved self-fulfillment which was personal to the point of sacrifice, the collective coordination of work, beauty, practical undertakings for building up the country and the creation of an economic Jewish entity (not without continual subsidy). All this is correct, in addition to ideological, deluxe entertainments at the edge of the abyss yawning in front of millions of Jews, burning enthusiasm for revolutions soaked in terror and blood, from Moscow to Barcelona, but 'the purity of arms,' pacifism and evolutionism are basic principles in the fulfillment of Zionism.

That was the great Jewish tragedy. This was not a theoretical question, not a principle favoring revolution, opposing selectivity or mass transfer and advocating pacifism or war, not 'militarism,' heaven forbid. It was simply a function of needs and the times. Herzl burned with feverish impatience, not because that was his nature, on the contrary, it went against his Viennese character, but because that was the need of the Jewish nation; and because Zionism did not operate accordingly, six million of the people for whom Herzl was impatient were destroyed. Herzl's clock was the correct one. The clocks of Weizmann and his various allies in the Zionist movement were slow, and so it was too late for millions of our people in Europe.

As stated above, Herzl's Zionism of the exodus from Egypt was not fulfilled, being replaced by the 'return to Zion' from Babylon (Balfour — Cyrus, Weizmann — Nehemia, Ahad-Ha'am — Ezra). 'Whoever scorns small beginnings, is scorned himself,' is the Bialik-like expression in the anthem of the Histadrut. All these were factors in the delay in saving European Jewry from destruction. It has been said that the absence of those six million Jews (who would have doubled in numbers by today, not to mention their high quality) is the reason for the *State of Israel's political crisis*, for there is no doubt that most of those Jews were Zionist-Jewish potential, and we would today be approaching a mighty population of ten million, constituting an undisputed fact. Then,

and only then, would it have been possible to speak of the fulfillment of Herzlism, in accordance with basic motivation.

This is not all. The problem is a very real one, it is not only a matter of the past.

For Herzlist problematics still exist. Despite the lessons the Herzlist spirit seems to have been forgotten not only by the State of Israel, which has lost its sense of responsibility for the fate of the Jewish nation, but also by Zionism.

The situation of the Jewish people in the various diasporas has not altered substantially since Herzl's day. On the contrary, because of the German example it has become more acute. No anti-Semitic ruler will say today, as Felbe did, 'If only it were possible,' etc. Today they know, *it is possible*. The sociological position of the Jews in the diaspora is just as it was in the past, and surprisingly (the 'surprise' being only on the surface, in fact there is no surprise, there is a certain regularity here) there is no difference in this between Communist Russia and capitalist U.S.A.: the middle class is superseded by entrepreneurs and academics, and Gentile society is penetrated while maintaining an unseen but definite border. In both countries equality is proclaimed, whether totalitarian or pluralist, but the 'elders of Zion' have been replaced by 'Zionism' and 'Israel.'

One 'Dreyfus' was enough for Herzl. Six million appear not to have been enough for modern world Jewry, even for that section called 'Zionist,' to draw unequivocal conclusions.

And if anyone dares to mention the idea of bringing the millions of diaspora Jewry to Israel today, as both their and Israel's need, he will be maligned with mockery and castigated with 'facts': 'They don't want to immigrate'; There is 'emigration'; There are 'drop-outs,' etc. As if in Herzl's day the nation was ready for mass immigration, as if Herzl did not write in his diary that he was convinced that there would be a repetition of what happened in the wilderness in Moses' time, that people would clamor to return to the fleshpots of Egypt. That romantic dreamer and visionary knew the nation inside-out, he had no illusions and did not believe that overnight, as the result of one pogrom, it would become Zionist. Zionism was created for Jews who were not necessarily Zionist. That is the pioneering spirit, the sense of mission (Herzl was not a convinced democrat, he believed in the leadership of authority, not dictatorship, in aristocracy, or at least 'guided' democracy). He saw the failure of 'Hovevei Zion' (The Lovers of Zion) and millions immigrating to America, he heard defeatist, minimalist voices mocking *within* his Zionist camp, yet nevertheless he did not despair, merely seeking the appropriate tools, and even fabricating 'some' of them.

The great failure of Zionism today is the loss of the Herzlist awareness of the continued need to fulfill Zionism as he saw it: once again and despite everything, the exodus from Egypt. There was an element of this only when the State was established, but the de-Zionization of *the State of Israel* began immediately (and this does not refer to the alarming symptoms of the return to the precious Hovevei Zion in the sphere of settlement throughout the Land of Israel, when the Government of Israel, namely, the national tool which formed the basis of Herzl's vision, establishes settlements as we did in the days of Turkish rule, under various disguises).

The Zionist banner has not been raised by either the congress known as 'Zionist,' although it has long been a kind of world Jewish congress of empty bureaucracy, or by

the Government of Israel (on the pretext that the state must not intervene). This refers both to the failure to protest the disregard of the Jewish situation in the various diasporas and to the absence of any demand or action aimed at *immediately evacuating* those diasporas which are again on the edge of the abyss, between destruction and desolation. (Stalin was on the verge of doing just this in 1950.) The ideology of coexistence between diaspora and State is an imposition on both Zionism and the State. And there is no need to mention the fact that *Revisionism* has also passed away, even though in the 'thirties it was in the vanguard of the movement and constituted the Herzlist approach (political negotiations for evacuation while cooperating with 'allies,' and plans which were near realization and would have been fulfilled had not war broken out). There is no *Revisionism* today. 'Herut' swallowed its remains, and all that is left now is a liberal-national party, a kind of *General Zionists 3*, to talk in terms of the past (the first squinted towards the left, at any rate they were doves, the second were slightly to their right). In brief, there is a Herzlist *situation* in the diaspora, a wonderful Herzlist *tool*, the Jewish State, and only Herzlism itself is missing.

And now we will proceed to the second test of what is called Herzlist Zionism, the aesthetic-utopian test.

The idea of the State is not utopian. Utopia does not posit any place, while Zionism means the opposite, a very concrete, necessary, conditional place. We should not forget that the famous expression, 'If you will it, it is no dream,' is not taken from the book *The Jewish State*, which deals primarily with the plan for the exodus from Egypt and is a plan of rescue based on diagnosing the catastrophe, but from the book *Altneuland* (Old New Land), which is a novel of the imagination.

*The Jewish State* reflects the feverish, burning Herzl, the man who was consumed with fear on hearing the cry, 'Death to the Jews!' There is no aestheticization or harmonization in *The Jewish State*, though they exist in 'Old New Land,' where the author and utopist was involved. *That* was a dream, with beautiful state, harmony, fertility, productivity, social justice and spiritual grace, in other words, *almost everything which the State of Israel lacks*. And if the failure of Zionism can still be evaded and blamed on the Gentiles or on Hitler, who is to blame for the failure to implement *Altneuland*? Don't we want it? And if we do, why is it still a dream?

Even in his conception of 'the exodus from Egypt,' which was revolutionary and vulgar by nature, Herzl was bound by his nature and by the character of his times to legalistic thinking, still adhering faithfully to international law. Let us not forget personal aspects: in his youth he had thought of engineering as a profession, about immense engineering projects. For example, he had thought of undertaking something similar to the Suez Canal, had looked with dreaming eyes at the atlas and found that the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans ought to be linked, maybe when he grew up he would dig the ... Panama Canal. Instead he studied law and also dabbled in theater. The points shared by all these spheres are organizational control, and planned, well-staged and *beautiful* execution. Thus, even the exodus from Egypt was no matter for spontaneity, it too had to be organized and directed. This meant that although the deed itself was revolutionary, its organization and planning would influence the creation of a *beautiful* State, a utopia, as expressed in 'Old New Land.' That is undoubtedly desirable, but whereas the rescue of the Jewish nation was (and still is) a necessity, the issue of a

'beautiful State' is not, nor is it a matter of life and death. Because of defects in the State, society is condemned, ways are sought of correcting it, of changing the government and perhaps the form of government (congenital faults of character are difficult to change). But Zionism and its path must be condemned for the delay in establishing the State, in implementing not the *dream* of *Altneuland* but the *practical* necessity of *The Jewish State*, which was a matter of life and death, of at least six million lives. And let us not forget, crises, scandals, wars — at home and abroad — befall all countries, but only the existence of the State of Israel, the national existence of the Jewish people, is questioned in theory and in practice, both abroad and at home. If there are scandals in Persia no one declares: 'They don't deserve a State,' 'the State has no future.' But when this occurs in the State of Israel these things are said, even by Jews and even by Israelis. This means that two thousand years of exile have worked to paralyze the sense of nationhood. Or should we not delve deeper and ask whether the diaspora was perhaps caused by the absence of this sense? Even if this were so we should not yield to it, but then the struggle and the analysis should be deeper and more rooted; that is apparently what Herzl meant when he wrote in his diary that he could expect all the troubles which afflicted Moses, meaning that anti-statehood existed already then and has been inherited. And this, too, and perhaps primarily this, is the task of Zionism.

This is the fundamental difference between the vision of *The Jewish State* itself and the utopia of *Altneuland*, a beautiful State.

The very idea of establishing a State as a national need, even as a world need, as Herzl adds, is a final, defined, clear and unequivocal idea, at any rate in Herzlist Zionism it was clear and unequivocal, until various kinds of liquidators came along and clouded the issue beyond all recognition, in what amounted to a diaspora reflex. This refers to the Emancipation movement, large sections of which were motivated by the desire for national suicide, and which, for lack of any alternative infiltrated into Zionism, where it began, and still continues, (the entire 'Peace Now' movement) to realize this 'idea' of national destruction *through* the State known as Israel. A State, a national framework and national life in all spheres, whether political, security, economic or cultural, of the Jewish people in its historic homeland, can be expanded, or — to a certain point — restricted, it may be possible to aspire towards including within this independent Jewish territory all the Jews, most of the Jews, etc., but the aim is finite. The ideal of a 'beautiful State' is however, like most ideals, and like the best of them, *infinite*, an eternal aspiration which must not be relinquished, even if it is not a biological need.

Moreover, had it been possible to fulfill what Herzl regarded as a vital necessity, and this has been proved six million times, in the planned, organized way that Herzl dreamed of, it would undoubtedly have been possible to create a more beautiful State. But it was not possible, and this is not the place to analyze why this was so, whether for such objective reasons as world catastrophes (two world wars, two revolutions, on both the right and the left), for in times of catastrophe plans are not well organized, or perhaps for such subjective reasons as bad leadership or an absence of national talent (but why, for heaven's sake, did the Jewish nation give the Gentiles vast national power?). The fact is that what happened to our father, Jacob, who waited for his love, Rachel, and found Leah beside him in the morning, could not have happened to us. But did he send Leah away for that reason, as one hears people saying among us, that

because the State is not beautiful, is so ugly, we will leave, depart, give up? After all is said and done, what was wrong with Leah? Did she not present Jacob with six sons? And this State of Israel, has it not, despite bad leadership, despite the absence of common sense, despite the wars, despite the digressions at home (on the right, religion after the style of Neturei Karta and, by contrast, on the left, communists of various kinds and disguises), and despite the temporary relaxation in the diaspora, the gold of the American exile, has not this State grown to three and a half million Jews, has it not absorbed more than five times the number of Jews as were here thirty years ago? What country could have coped with growth of five times its original size within thirty years? And has not one of the wonders of the world, the Israeli army, been established here?

Is it far from our dream? Socialist Zionists dreamed of an egalitarian nation of workers, the 'Mizrahi' dreamed of a Jewish State based on religious law, and everyone dreamed of a State without drunkenness and crime, like Jewish life in the diaspora. All that has not come to pass. It is no coincidence that today people are nostalgic about the past, yearning for the revival of religion as a reaction to the pollution of everyday life. There was once an argument within Zionism: should we favor normalization or not? The opponents of 'normalization' claimed: we Jews have a deeper and higher culture, were we not intended for a better life than the Gentiles with their drunks, fornicators and murderers? Today, against the background of our life, even 'normalization' seems an ideal, for we have taken the worst elements from the other nations, not the best, and who mentions an ideal State any more? If we could only be a normal State.

To understand does not mean to forgive, contrary to the proverb. It is possible to understand or to explain, *a posteriori*, *why*, because of difficult times, mass immigration, continual wars as well as inexperience and the dulling of organizational talents, daily life in Israel is unpleasant. And at the present stage it is better even to divert our attention from the Herzlist utopia, from the chosen people. At *this* stage it is better to aspire towards normalization to begin with. Micha Joseph Berdicevski, Ahad-Ha'am's great and forgotten rival, said: "Should we be a holy nation? Yes, but first we have to be a nation, the adjective comes later."

Only with regard to one element should the State of Israel's abnormality be preserved, and in this we come back to the basic Herzlist stratum: just as the liberation movement which Herzl created was not the normal liberation movement of a nation living in its own land and shaking off a foreign yoke, the State of Israel is not a State as regards its prime objective at present. A normal state is a function of territory and the inhabitants of that territory: the maximal happiness of the majority of inhabitants. The State of Israel is the only country in the world which was established and exists not for its inhabitants but for the ten million Jews throughout the world who do not yet live there but will one day, whether willingly or not.

That is the entire Herzlist Zionist doctrine to this very day. In other words, if Zionism was a state in the making, the State today is Zionism in the making, a national tool for fulfilling Zionism. Everything, laws, regime, economy and education, must be subordinated to that aim. A lot depends on external circumstances, perhaps even on another world catastrophe. The main point is, however, that as Herzlist Zionists in the State of Israel we must control this sacred, essential means in order to fulfill the dream to the utmost. This is both possible and necessary.