**Theodor Herzl and the progress of Israel as an independent state**

Theodor Herzl was born in 1860 in Budapest, Austria-Hungary. He lived there until he moved to Vienna with his family in 1878. There, he studied as a law student at the University of Vienna. He finished with a degree in law, but focused more on journalism and playwriting as a career choice. He worked for a newspaper in Vienna by the name of *Allgemeine Zeitung* for ten year. In 1892, he became the Parisian correspondent for the Viennan newspaper Neue Freie Presse. His time in France opened his eyes to the anit-Semitism that was present in France at the time. With that, he started his political career to try and solve the anti-Semitic issue.

In 1896, Herzl published a pamphlet titled “The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question”. The pamphlet both informed on the anti-Semitic issue and proposed an idea of solving it. Herzl discussed the history of persecution that the Jewish people have faced all throughout world history. His experience led him to believe that there is no way for the Jewish people to merge or assimilate with other cultures in this world. He wrote, “In countries where we have lived for centuries we are still cried as strangers, and often by those whose ancestors were not yet domiciled in the land where Hews had already had experience of suffering”. Herzl goes on to discuss the fact that “might precedes right”, meaning that those who will to have dominance over others with get it over the fact that everyone has the right to the same treatment.

The Jewish Question that Herzl asks is about how can Jews live freely. More specifically, he asks how the Jewish community can live with equal treatment and without restriction. His answer was quite simple. In order to avoid the troubles that have arisen through history because of assimilation, he proposed to avoid assimilation all together. Therefore, the best course of action is to create a sovereign Jewish state in which Jews can govern themselves. In Herzl’s words, “Let the sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy the rightful requirements of a nation; the rest we shall manage for ourselves”. A sovereign Jewish state would allow Jews who live there to be free from persecution by non-Jews.

With that, he goes on to discuss the plan of action. His proposal is well thought out, considering of the typical problems that may arise, and quelling of many concerns most people would have with the proposal. He states, “The plan, simple in design, but complicated in execution…”. Herzl’s model has two organizations help migrate Jews from their home countries to the Jewish State: The Society of Jews and the Jewish Company. The Jewish Company was to liquidate the Jewish businesses in the old countries and organize the trade and commerce in the new Jewish State. The Society of Jews was to organize the political parts of the transition, in government for the new state and in communication with the old countries.

In his Zionist Novel, *Altneuland* ( Old New Land, 1902), Herzl pictured the future Jewish state as a socialist utopia. He envisioned a new society that was to rise in the Land of Israel on a cooperative basis utilizing science and technology in the development of the Land. He included detailed ideas about how he saw the future state’s political structure, immigration, fundraising, diplomatic relations, social laws and relations between religion and the state. In *Altneuland*, the Jewish state was foreseen as a pluralist, advanced society, a “light unto the nations.” This book had a great impact on the Jews of the time and became of the Zionist vision in the Land of Israel.

Herzl's ideas were met with enthusiasm by the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe, although Jewish leaders were less ardent. Herzl appealed to wealthy Jews such as Baron Hirsch and Barron Rothschild to join the national Zionist movement, but in vain. He then appealed to the people, and the result was the convening of the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland, on August 29­31, 1897.

The Congress was the first interterritorial gathering of Jews on a national and secular basis. Here the delegates adopted the Basle Program, the program of the Zionist movement, and declared, “Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law.” At the Congress the World Zionist Organization was established as the political arm of the Jewish people, and Herzl was elected its first president.

Herzl convened six Zionist Congresses between 1897 and 1902. It was here that the tools for Zionist activism were forged: Otzar Hityashvut Hayehudim, the Jewish National Fund and the movement’s newspaper Die Welt.

After the First Zionist Congress, the movement met yearly at an international Zionist Congress. In 1936, the center of the Zionist movement was transferred to Jerusalem.

Herzl saw the need for encouragement by the great powers of the aims of the Jewish people in the Land. Thus, he traveled to the Land of Israel and [Istanbul](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Turkeytoc.html) in 1898 to meet with Kaiser Wilhelm II of [Germany](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Germanytoc.html) and the Sultan of the [Ottoman Empire](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/islamtoc.html). The meeting with Wilhelm was a failure - the monarch dismissed Herzl’s political entreaties with snide anti-Semitic remarks. When these efforts proved fruitless, he turned to [Great Britain](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Englandtoc.html), and met with Joseph Chamberlain, the British colonial secretary and others. The only concrete offer he received from the British was the proposal of a Jewish autonomous region in east Africa, in Uganda.

In 1899, in an essay entitled “The Family Affliction” written for The American Hebrew, Herzl wrote, “Anyone who wants to work in behalf of the Jews needs - to use a popular phrase - a strong stomach.”

The 1903 Kishinev pogrom and the difficult state of Russian Jewry, witnessed firsthand by Herzl during a visit to Russia, had a profound effect on him. He requested that the Russian government assist the Zionist Movement to transfer Jews from Russia to Eretz Yisrael.

At the Sixth Zionist Congress (1903), Herzl proposed the British [Uganda Program](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/Uganda.html) as a temporary refuge for Jews in Russia in immediate danger. While Herzl made it clear that this program would not affect the ultimate aim of Zionism, a Jewish entity in the Land of Israel, the proposal aroused a storm at the Congress and nearly led to a split in the Zionist movement. The [Uganda Program](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/Uganda.html) was finally rejected by the Zionist movement at the [Seventh Zionist Congress](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/firstcong.html) in 1905.

Herzl died in [Vienna](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Vienna.html) in 1904, of pneumonia and a weak heart overworked by his incessant efforts on behalf of Zionism. By then the movement had found its place on the world political map. In 1949, Herzl’s remains were brought to Israel and reinterred on [Mount Herzl](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vie/Jerusalem4.html#Herzl) in Jerusalem.

Herzl’s books [*Der Judenstaat* (“The Jewish State”)](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/herzlex.html) and *Altneuland* (“Old New Land”), his plays and articles have been published frequently and translated into many languages. His name has been commemorated in the Herzl Forests at Ben Shemen and Hulda, the world's first Hebrew gymnasium — “Herzliya” — which was established in [Tel Aviv](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vie/Telaviv.html), the town of [Herzliya](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vie/Herzliya.html) in the Sharon and neighborhoods and streets in many Israeli towns and cities.

Herzl coined the phrase “If you will, it is no fairytale,” which became the motto of the Zionist movement. Although at the time no one could have imagined it, Zionism led, only fifty years later, to the establishment of the independent State of Israel.