DREAM, VISION, and LONGING

A Comparative Study of Jacob, Isaiah, and Theodor Herzl

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Preface

"Dreams are not so different than Deeds as some may think," wrote Theodor Herzl. "All the Deeds of men are only Dreams at first. And in the end, their Deeds dissolve into Dreams." A year ago, I conceived of the idea to embark on a thesis project based on dreams in Jewish text and Jewish history. Indeed, at the beginning of my research, the structure and direction of the project seemed "dreamlike," i.e. elusive and unpredictable. It is certainly exciting to stand back from my completed thesis, and witness how what was once an intuition, an inkling, has become both a tangible and an intellectual reality.

The thesis was born out of my fascination with dreams and visions in the realm of Jewish consciousness. As I pondered the various manifestations of dreams and visions, I identified three figures that held a special affinity for me: the Biblical Jacob, the prophet Isaiah, and the Zionist dreamer Theodor Herzl. It was readily apparent how these individuals and their dreams/visions differed, yet I was curious to explore what the connecting links were between them. To my knowledge, no comparative study has been undertaken with these three figure of Jewish history in mind, specifically inquiring about their unique type of dream and/or vision.

The goal of the thesis, apart from satisfaction of intellectual curiosity, was to provide fodder for an original musical composition that I will be writing and presenting at my Masters recital on April 12, 2000. The composition will be in three movements. The first movement will be a setting of Jacob's wrestling with the angel, interpreted as a dream. The second movement will be an inquiry into Theodor Herzl's writings, using

narration and musical subtext. And the third movement will be a personal vision of an aspect of the Jewish future. Although the musical composition does not precisely follow the written material of the thesis, the research for the latter had provided insight and inspiration for the former.

The thesis is divided into three chapters, with an introduction and a conclusion. Chapter One is an exploration of Jacob's dream of the angels ascending and descending in *Parashat Vayeitze*. Chapter Two examines two of Isaiah's prophetic visions: a)chapter 6: 1-13 and b) chapter 2: 1-5. The final chapter is an analysis of Theodor Herzl's dream of creating a modern Jewish nation. It draws mostly on primary source materials, including *The Diaries*, *Der Judenstaat*, and *Altneuland.* In addition to primary sources, I consulted various scholarly writings on Jacob, Isaiah, and Herzl (see Bibliography).

The project has enabled me to travel great distances both on an academic / intellectual level and in terms of my own relationship to Judaism and Jewish history. I have come to understand dreams and visions as enormously powerful forces in the literature that tells the stories of our people. This thesis has definitely expanded my sense of what it means to be human, to be a musician, and to be a Jew. I am grateful for having had this opportunity.

Acknowledgements

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And finally, I am so grateful for the guidance of my thesis advisor, Dr. Carole Balin. I chose an unconventional topic that combined my love of Judaism with my passion for composition, and Dr. Balin took the risk with me, believed in me, and supported me through the entire process.

Introduction

To live as a Jew in an imperfect world is to live with longing. Our Bible, our Talmud, our Midrash, our prayer liturgy, and indeed our history –ancient and modern – forever remind us that there is a deep discrepancy between the way the world is and the way the world might be. This has been true since the very first stirrings of humanity and continues to resonate with veracity in our own time. Adam and Eve, the first of God's human creatures, awaken to life in a Garden of Paradise, but this taste of the idyllic is short lived and must be relinquished for a life defined by expulsion and loss of innocence. Generations later, the Patriarchs emerge with the revolutionary idea of the one invisible God. Their theophanies unfold among dominant cultures that cling tenaciously to idol worship and polytheism. Still later, the Israelites in Egypt desperately yearn for liberation amidst a bitter slavery that lasts over four hundred years. Centuries after the death of Moses, the prophets cry out and demand a world of justice and compassion as they witness the evil, corruption, and violence about them.

Jewish longing for a world that might be does not cease with the ancient texts of our people. After the Dispersion that follows the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., the desire to return to the national homeland becomes indelibly carved into the collective Jewish consciousness. Facing East and praying for the rebuilding of Jerusalem assumed particular poignancy during the persecutions and massacres that punctuated medieval and modern history. The Kabbalists and Hasids responded to their shattered worlds with fervent prayer and song, hoping both to transcend their suffering and return the world to its previous state of wholeness. And the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the rise of two other movements that deemed oppression intolerable. The Zionists recognized the

recognized the failure of the Enlightenment to bring a lasting sense of security to the modern Jew. The Jewish Socialists believed that the workers, the lifeblood of the industrial complex, needed to unite and radically transform society.

There is indeed a thread that runs through Jewish life and history –an awareness of the discrepancy between the way the world is in its present state and the possibilities to transcend and transform that state. This sense of unfulfilled promise, of unrealized potential is a recurring theme that resonates deeply within Jewish consciousness. I will argue that it is the dreamers and visionaries of our people who most compellingly call to light this disharmony in our lives and in our world. Once their dream or vision is articulated, a swelling of consciousness takes place, making it impossible to return completely to the original state of living unaware. It is as if beams of light enter a dark room, offering a glimpse of new colors and warmth, illuminating the room in ways never perceived before. The moment of illumination will inevitably fade but the experience lingers in the memory of those observing. And what follows is longing.

Above, I speak of dreams and visions together, not because they are interchangeable but because they share so much in common and in some cases overlap in definition. For the purpose of this thesis, I will define dream in two ways: first, as the images seen during the phenomenon of sleep and second, as those images specifically conjured up by the active imagination (i.e. during waking life). Vision is a term that I associate with prophets and prophecy and often it is a premonition of future events. Sometimes the visions of a prophet come to him during sleep, and the text indicates that this is the case. But more often, the prophet articulates a vision without specifying its medium of transmission. It is understood that however the vision may have appeared to

the prophet, it is God communicating through a chosen individual, whose role is to convey the divine message to the people. What is common to dreams and visions is that the dreamer or the visionary is temporarily, in the realm of their psyche, transported to a reality beyond the present one. We may speak of Jewish dreams and visions without implying that such phenomena are exclusive to Jews. Of course, all the world religions and many cultures, such as Native Americans, incorporate dream and vision into their theologies and /or mythologies. What makes a dream or vision specifically Jewish is the expression of essentially Jewish ideals or aspirations contained within its message.

In this essay, I will explore Jacob's dream at Beth-El, two of Isaiah's prophetic visions (chapters 6:1-13 and 2: 1-5), and Herzl's dream of building a modern Jewish nation. I will argue that all are examples of Jewish dreamers/ visionaries who grasp a reality beyond their present one and leave behind a longing to fulfill the vision. How are these visionaries alike and how do they differ ? What is the language they employ to describe their visions? How do the socio-historical circumstances in which they live contribute to the development of their dreams/visions? An exploration of these and other questions will help us understand a powerful force that dwells within the collective Jewish psyche.

I. Jacob's Dream at Beth-El

In the beginning of *Parashat Vayeitzei* (Chapter 28: 10-22), Jacob flees his home and journeys toward Haran. At his mother's urging he had deceived his brother and father in order to receive the latter's deathbed blessing. A betrayed and enraged Esau vows revenge, and Jacob must escape lest he be killed. Along the journey, Jacob stops for the night, falls asleep with a rock beneath his head and dreams the dream that has assumed mythic proportions in Jewish tradition. The details are well known:

> [Jacob] had a dream; a stairway was set on the ground and its top reached the sky, and angels of God were going up and down on it. And the Lord was standing beside him and He said, " I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac: the ground on which you are lying I will assign to you and your offspring. Your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your descendants. Remember, I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. (Genesis 28:12-15)

Before exploring the specific details of Jacob's dream and how they have been interpreted through the ages, it is important to first understand the visions of sleep dreams in their appropriate Biblical context. In his work, *Studies in Jewish Dream Interpretation,* Harris Monford observes:

> In the Pentateuch, a work containing many regulations about many things, there are no rules, regulations, or laws about dreams. In all of Hebrew scripture there are only narratives about dreams of some individuals because of their importance in the context of historical events.[1]

Whereas later in Jewish history, particularly in the Talmudic and medieval periods, a

plethora of commentary on dream interpretation arises, Genesis does not provide a method or distinctive approach to understanding dreams. The most useful starting point I have found is Benno Jacob's commentary on dreams that occur in the Book of Genesis.[2] He divides the Genesis dreams into two categories: the first category being dreams in which God speaks directly to human beings and the second, in which God communicates through pictorial images and symbols. The first obvious conclusion we draw from Benno Jacob's distinction is that dreams in the Bible, whether the content was blatant or more symbolic, were understood as a form of Divine message.[3] Nehama Leibowitz, one of the great Bible commentators of the twentieth century, aptly points out that Jacob's dream contains both forms: the angels ascending and descending the ladder is recounted first, followed by God speaking directly to Jacob, voicing His promise to stand by the patriarch and make of his descendants a blessed nation that will inherit the land.[4] The dream perceived as direct communication from God was beyond dispute (to the Talmudic and Midrashic commentators) while the angels on the ladder proved to be a baffling symbol that required interpretation. Many of the Midrashic commentaries linked the ladder to a prophetic vision that revealed future events to occur among the nation of Israel. R.Eleazar Hakapar saw the ladder as a symbol of the Temple. Where the text reads,"The

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[1] Harris Monford, *Studies in Jewish Dream Interpretation*, p.4.
[2] Benno Jacob is a German Jewish commentator, student of Heinrich Graetz who used modern scholarship to support a traditional viewpoint.
[3] Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in B'reshit*,, p.298.
[4] Ibid.

top of it reached heaven," he equated the image with the sacrifices "whose savor [would rise] heavenward." And the angels represented "the priests ascending and descending the rampart leading to the altar."[5] Another Midrashic reading imagined the ladder as an augur of the revelation at Sinai. Jacob is given this glimpse into the future but with admonition based on word play: "If your descendants observe this Law they will be in the *ascend*ant; otherwise they will *decline*."[6]

The most famous Midrash on Jacob's dream vision comes from Midrash Tanchuma:

> These are the princes of the heathen nations which God showed Jacob our father. The Prince of Babylon ascended seventy steps and descended, Media fifty-two and descended, Greece, one hundred steps and descended, Edom ascended and no one knows how many! In that hour, Jacob was afraid and said: 'Peradventure, this one has no descent?' Said the Holy One blessed be He to him: 'Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob . . . neither be dismayed, O Israel.' Even If thou seest him, so to speak, ascend, and sit by Me, thence will I bring him down! As it is stated (Obadiah 1,4): 'Though thou Exalt thyself as the eagle, and thou set thy nest among the stars Thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." [7]

This midrash provides Jacob with insight into the rise and fall of nations in the scheme of history. Though the Jewish people will wander in their exile amid nations that seem far mightier than they, in the end there will be a reckoning and this flaunted greatness will crumble. And even though it is difficult to imagine the invincible Rome (symbolized by Edom) facing decline, this too shall come to pass, as the Holy One assures.

The Bible's articulation of God's promise to Jacob, together with the Midrashic interpretations that expound upon the angels and the ladder, point to prophecies for the

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[5] Menachem Kasher (ed.), et al., *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, p.73.
[6] Ibid., p.73.
[7] Ibid.,74.

future, specifically regarding the nation of Israel. It is essential to conceptualize this future oriented/prophetic reading of the *Vayeitzei* dream -- essential because the biblical Weltanschauung nourished such a rendering of the text. Once Jacob hears and sees God (phenomena which the Torah text leaves to our imagination) and envisions the prophecy of his nation and descendants, the patriarch is profoundly moved.

> Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely God is present in this place, and I did not know it!" Shaken, he said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven." (Genesis 28: 16-17)

We may interpret Jacob's words to mean that he actually saw the gate of heaven in his dream or accept contemporary commentator Menachem Kasher's reading that suddenly Jacob was aware that God is in every place.

> [The dream's] message to Jacob is its message to all man in all ages –that the earth is full of the glory of God, that He is not far off in His heavenly abode and heedless of what men do on earth. Every spot on earth may be for man "the gate to heaven."[8]

What is significant is that Jacob is filled with an insight that creates a new consciousness. Jacob then proceeds to build an altar to the Holy One and makes a conditional vow that was problematic for the commentators.

> "If God remains with me, if He protects me on this journey that I am making, and gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and if I return safe to my father's house –the Lord shall be my God. And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar shall be God's abode; and of all that You give me, I will set aside a tithe." (Genesis: 20-22)

The Rambam could not accept that our forefather Jacob would doubt the faithfulness of God's promise. The Rambam is convinced that the doubt issues from Jacob himself

[8] Ibid., p.73.

regarding his own ability to resist temptation. [9]

I prefer to read the passage with more literally. Jacob awakens from a dream in which he has a revelation of God and God's plan for the future, but once he finds himself back on the mundane plane of existence, he poses the very human question- was the vision truly divine and did it actually take place? It is this moment of discrepancy that is so internally unsettling for Jacob. He awakens from a prophetic experience in which he sees how he and his descendants are destined for greatness, yet this contradicts his immediate reality. What does he see upon waking ? -- a young man alone, fearing for his life, hardly certain about anything. How can his present reality be so distant from the vision in the dream? How could he, the insecure, still immature Jacob, be worthy of being the progenitor of a blessed nation? Jacob, for the moment, will continue on his way as Jacob, following on the path that his life leads him, wondering to himself about his powerful, perhaps bizarre religious encounter. Yet the seed has been planted and the longing has begun to grow. Despite the disparity between present reality and the vision in the dream, fulfillment of the latter is so compelling that Jacob will not be able to dismiss it easily from his consciousness. He will carry the discrepancy inside him and it will both frustrate and inspire him as he seeks to define who he is and where he stands in the divine scheme of existence.

Our analysis of Biblical and Midrashic interpretations of the *Vayeitzei* dream has demonstrated their reliance on varying perspectives, which are all based on divine communication. While their understanding may present the most obvious approach to initiating the interpretation of Jacob's dream, it is far from the only one.

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[9] Nehama Leibowitz, p.309.

The genius of one Viennese Jew has forever influenced the way we perceive and interpret sleep dreams. A century ago, Sigmund Freud revolutionized dream interpretation and modern psychology itself by introducing the notion of an unconscious world that inhabits the psyche of each individual. For Freud, there are two fundamental forces that are at play – the unconscious wish and the censor of the wish. The wish is often comprised of non-rational impulses or sexual desires that elude the consciousness of the individual because they violate moral and ethical codes of behavior. The impulses express themselves in dreams almost always in a disguised, symbolic form. Freud postulates that if the impulses were too blatant they would be so disturbing as to awaken the dreamer. Because there is an inherent internal mechanism to preserve sleep, an essential human function, dreams need to be coded in a special language that expresses the impulse but in an inconspicuous manner. Thus, Freud distinguishes between the latent and manifest contents of a dream. The latent content is the raw emotion and impulses that lurk in the unconscious mind of the dreamer, while the manifest content is the way the dream scene appears with all of its symbolic language. Freud terms the transfiguration of the latent content into manifest content as the "dream work," the employment of techniques such as *condensation* (the combination of seemingly unrelated events or emotions from the past and present) and *displacement* (the placement of an insignificant detail at the forefront of the dream scene and significant core details in the background). The "dream work" serves the crucial function of protecting the dreamer from too much painful truth at one time.

How do Freud's theories of dream formation relate to Jacob's dream? It is certainly possible to analyze the dream in terms of Freudian wish fulfillment. In Israel J.

Gerber's work, *Immortal Rebels: Freedom for the Individual in the Bible*, the author asserts that one of the primary themes of the early Biblical stories was the revolt against primogeniture. Gerber writes: "Primogeniture repressed the instinctual growth of individuals and promoted rebellion, which manifested itself in dreams." [10] Jacob was the second child, born clutching the heel of his brother Esau, entering into a world that did not bestow status and inheritance rights on meritocracy, but rather on the random occurrence of birth order. A societal institution that lacked a logical and just foundation inevitably would cause deceit, resentment, and upheaval as it indeed played itself out in Jacob's family. Gerber subsequently interprets the dream in the light of wish fulfillment in a convincing manner:

> Jacob's dream at Beth-El, with the ladder reaching from earth until heaven with angels running up and down on it is in the same category as Joseph's, regarding subconscious striving and wish fulfillment. The antecedents are quite clear. Having been rejected by his father, manipulated by his mother in a conspiracy to obtain the blessing, though it rightfully belonged to him as a consequence of the sale of the birthright, and forced to flee from home, Jacob longed only for a serene and peaceful future. The wish was expressed through the symbolism of the dream. Jacob yearned to attain recognition that the birthright was properly his – to free himself of the limitation of having left the womb after Esau.[11]

In all probability, Jacob was not conscious of all the resentments and internal conflicts that caused unrest in his psyche. Living in a society where primogeniture was an unquestioned aspect of the social contract meant that the challenge of the status quo would most likely be relegated to the unconscious. If we follow Gerber's approach,

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[10] Gerber, p.200.
[11] Ibid., p.211.

which is in keeping with Freudian theory, we note that the latent content of the dream (i.e. Jacob's indignation towards his family and his society) is not explicitly expressed, for this would issue a host of painful emotions quite difficult to integrate. In the manifest content of the dream, there is no Esau and no emotions of anger. We discover in its place the fulfillment of a wish -- not only the desire to achieve personal greatness but that the society itself provides the opportunity for a second child to rise to his potential.

Whether we analyze the dream from a theocentric perspective as in the above analysis or in terms of Freudian wish fulfillment, the effect on Jacob, the dreamer, is similar. After having seen what is possible, he is left with a palpable sense of longing. Gerber draws upon the ideas of brilliant psychologists A. Adler and Erich Fromm as he comments on the aftermath of the dream:

> When [Jacob] dreamed of becoming the patriarch of a model family, and of God's assurance that he no longer needed to fear Esau. . . Jacob expressed his anticipation of the future, his self-assertion, his unconscious preparation to cope with life's tensions. . . . On the other hand, while he gained a measure of confidence, it was mingled with fear. The angels were "coming down." While his dream expressed his aspiration to become a life-force promoting the idealism of his father, it was not free of the feeling of failure. He feared that life would pass him by and he would remain a nonentity. Expressing his strivings and his reasoned morality, his dream revealed the worst and the best in him.[12]

Jacob acknowledges two possibilities: either to rise to the apogee of self-realization or to remain mired in a state of mediocrity. The two possibilities vie for dominion within him and persist until the dramatic unfolding of the conflict at the river Jabbok. There Jacob wrestles with his manhood, the suffering from his past, his sense of worthiness, and his destiny. In the end, Jacob is triumphant and what began as a vision, as a mere possibility finds realization. He is able to confront his brother Esau, the nemesis that has haunted

[12] Ibid., 211-212.

him for far too long. And more importantly, he finds the fortitude to live the life of a man with the destiny bestowed upon him by his father, his grandfather, and his God.

There is a third possible reading of Jacob's dream and that falls within the arena of Biblical criticism. In his acclaimed work, *Understanding Genesis*, Nahum Sarna imparts to the reader the socio-hiostrical context of the vision at Beth-El. Sarna maintains that the dream imagery itself is unmistakably borrowed from Mesopotamian culture.

> The stairway that Jacob saw connecting heaven and earth recalls the picture of the Ziqqurat with its external ramp linking each stage of the tower to the other. The note that "its top reached the sky" (28:12) and the identification of the site of the dream as the "gateway to heaven" (28:17), is reminiscent of the stereotyped phraseology used in connection with Babylonian temple-towers.[13]

Yet the Genesis version exhibits fundamental differences. First of all, the *sulam mutzav artza* is not a avenue of direct travel between the earthly and heavenly realms, as was the raison d'etre of the ziqqurat in Babylonian culture. A decisive rift exists between the domain of the divine being and the abode of humankind. Sarna elaborates on other distinctions: In Near Eastern culture, it was the prevailing belief that holy places and sanctuaries were constructed by the gods, and mostly during the initial creation of the world. Furthermore, the sanctuaries arose mythically as a consequence of events in the lives of the gods. This is of course in contrast to *Vayeitzei*, where Jacob, a mortal, performs the act of construction himself in response to a human-divine theophany. In addition, Jacob's use of a stone pillar to sanctify and remember the divine encounter Directly challenges the usage of stones in the Near Eastern religious cult. Stones them-

[13] Nahum Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, p.193.

selves were believed to be sacred worship objects because of *numens* (spirits) dwelling within.[14] Jacob utilizes the stone in the performance of an *act* of holiness, but the holiness does not inhere within the inanimate object itself.

Most outstanding is the complete disregard for the previous holiness of the site of *Bethel.* Sarna states that the site of Jacob's theophany, *Beth El*, actually had pre-Israelite origins. *El* was one of the Semitic deities and the acknowledged ruler of the Canaanite pantheon. Bethel (literally house of the god *El)* first referred to the area that housed the temple of the deity. Later it became the name of the area surrounding the temple . Further developments led to the god itself being named *Bethel.*[15] Thus, when Jacob builds an altar and names the site of his divine encounter, Beth-El, (in Jacob's mind the house of the One invisible God), he reclaims the name from its Semitic deity origins. Equally significant is the use of the Tetragrammaton *YHWH* in Jacob's exclamation when he awakens from his dream : " Surely *YHWH* was in this place and I did not know it!" Sarna observes: "All this serves but one purpose –to dissociate, absolutely and unmistakably, the pagan cult of *Bethel* from the sanctity the place held in Israelite consciousness." [16]

Therefore, Jacob's dream vision is fashioned from mythic materials appropriated from the neighboring Semitic culture but cast in a new light and reclaimed in a way that can be harmonized with monotheistic principles. The vision is in actuality a *re*-vision.

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[14] Ibid., p.194.
[15] Ibid., p.192-193.
[16] Ibid., p.194.

The biblical author(s) noticed the profound discrepancy between pagan worship and the radical idea of the Holy *One*. The act of recasting and reclaiming the story of Jacob's vision is itself an expression of an embrace and a longing for the monotheistic ideal despite the pervasiveness of pagan worship in the surrounding cultures.

In his essay, *The Forgotten Language*, Erich Fromm writes:

> Is it surprising that in a state of sleep, when we are alone with ourselves without being bothered by the noise and nonsense that surround us in the daytime, we are better able to feel and to think our most valuable feelings and thoughts ?[17]

Jacob's state of sleep and his accompanying vision gain him access to his essence, to the most profound yearnings of his soul. Whether it be interpreted as words and images of divine communication, insight into his unconscious conflicts, or revelation of the radical truth of monotheism, Jacob's dream vision underscores the reality that the individual, the Jewish people, and the world itself all strive for wholeness. The dream's role is to stir awareness and create a longing for that wholeness. It becomes the necessary prelude to any transformation.

[17] Erich Fromm, *The Forgotten Language*, p.33.

II. The Prophetic Visions of Isaiah

From the eighth century B.C.E. until the post-exilic period (after the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem), prophecy flourished in ancient Israel. During this so-called era of the Classical prophets, chosen visionaries lifted their voices to communicate God's message to the people. Swedish Scholar J. Lindbloom writes: "Nothing is more characteristic of the classical prophets in Israel, nothing is more central in their life and work than their privilege of receiving revelations from Yahweh."[1] Much has been written about the terms *vision* and *visionary* and their application to the prophetic experience. Widespread misunderstanding exists about the transmission of God's word to the prophet. Often there is the assumption that the inspired words always come to the prophet either in dreams or in extra-sensory states such as the ecstatic trance. Lindbloom debunks this myth when he asserts the following:

> The word *vision* suggests something that is literally shown and seen, whereas the content of a revelation may be apprehended by hearing, or may consist simply in thoughts and ideas which come into the mind of the inspired person. In the prophetic literature no definitive dividing-line is drawn between visions, auditions, and inspired ideas in general. Everything which came to a prophet in the inspired state may be called *vision*. But to the modern reader the more general world revelation is indubitably less misleading than the word *vision* with its specific association with sight.[2]

Thus, whatever the nature of the revelation, be it visual, auditory, or merely inspired thoughts, prophets carry with them an essential "consciousness of being mouthpieces of Yahweh and nothing else. They are nothing but channels for the stream of revelation.

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[1] J. Lindbloom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, p.108.
[2] Ibid.

What they have to bring forth is not their own words (they would have been worthless), but only the precious divine word which has been put in their mouth."[3]

The rich body of literature left behind by the prophets takes many forms as Lindbloom delineates:

> The contents of the revelations vary widely. We find among them sermons and admonitory addresses, announcements of doom and punishment, lyric poems, prayers, hymns, parables, dialogues, monologues, short oracles, didactic sentences, predictions, messages, letters, etc. Neither the prophets themselves nor their contemporaries regarded these as ordinary literary productions, but as inspired in a supernatural way.[4]

Yet despite the variety of form, common themes are found throughout the prophetic writings. First and foremost, it is incumbent upon the prophet to speak out against social injustices. Isaiah, for instance, is outraged that a pedantic observance of rituals takes precedence over concern for human suffering.[5] In Isaiah 1, God speaks through the prophet, exhorting the people to turn from their hypocrisy:

> Hear the word of the Lord. . . "What need have I of all your sacrifices?" says the Lord. "I am sated with burnt offerings of rams, and suet of fatlings, and blood of bulls; And I have no delight in lambs and he-goats. . . . Bringing oblations is futile, incense is offensive to Me. New moon and sabbath, proclaiming of solemnities, assemblies with iniquity I cannot abide. . . Your hands are stained with crime-- Wash yourselves clean; put your evil doings away from My sight. Cease to do evil; learn to do good. Devote yourselves to justice; Aid the wronged. Uphold the rights of the orphan; defend the cause of the widow. (Isaiah I:10-17)

The prophet also assails the rampant materialism in ancient Israel. Biblical scholar John F.A. Sawyer expatiates on this subject:

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[3] Ibid., p.114.
[4] Ibid., p.122.
[5] John F.A. Sawyer, *Prophecy and the Biblical Prophets*, p.43.

> There are many attacks on the idle rich: property owners who join "house to house" (Isa.5:8; Mic.2:2), squeezing out peasants; men who live lives of drunkenness (Isa.5:11-12. . . Joel 1-5), and self indulgence at the expense of the poor (Amos 6:1-8); and women who demand all the fine clothes and jewelry that money can buy. Another form of materialism attacked by the prophets, especially Isaiah, is trusting "in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong (31:1):
>
> Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses. . .
> The Egyptians are men and not God; and their horses are flesh, not spirit. (31:1,3; cf. 30:7)[6]

As the prophet expresses God's indignation at man's sins, so does he warn of divine retribution for iniquity. Following the passage of Isaiah I:10-17, cited above, the terms for *t'shuva* (return) --for reward and punishment-- are made abundantly clear:

> "Come let us reach an understanding," says the Lord. "Be your sins like crimson, they can turn snow-white; Be they red as dyed wool, they can become like fleece" If then, you agree and give heed, you will eat the good things of the earth; but if you refuse and disobey, you will be devoured [by] the sword. For it was the Lord who spoke. (Isaiah I:18-20)

Thus, during the time of the Classical prophets, both natural disasters and historical defeats by surrounding nations were understood as God acting out his wrath against a depraved Israel. The following passage from Isaiah is an excellent illustration of this:

> Ha! Assyria, rod of My anger, in whose hand, as a staff, is My fury! I send him against an ungodly nation, I charge him against a people that provokes Me, to take its spoil and to seize its booty and to make it a thing trampled like the mire of the streets. (Isaiah 10:5-6)

[6] Ibid., p.45.

Possessing insight into God's terrifying power and awesome nature is another important theme that recurs among the prophets. Isaiah's vision in chapter 6 is one of the most oft- quoted passages of his writings. Many Biblical scholars argue that chronologically, this represents the beginning of Isaiah's revelations, and that this first vision corroborated his chosen status as one of God's messengers. In the vision, which took place "in the year that King Uzziah died," Isaiah recounts:

> . . .my Lord seated on a high and lofty throne; and the skirts Of His robe filled the Temple. Seraphs stood in attendance of Him. Each of them had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his legs, and with two he would fly. And one would call to the other, "Holy, holy, holy! The Lord of Hosts! His presence fills all the earth."
>
> The doorposts would shake at the sound of the one called, and the House kept filling with smoke. I cried, "Woe is me; I am lost! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips; Yet my own eyes have beheld the King Lord of Hosts. (Isaiah 6: 2-5)

In this part of the vision, Isaiah experiences the contradiction of being privileged to witness the Holy One, while feeling unworthy of being in the divine presence. Having "unclean lips" and living among people of the same description could be interpreted in various ways. One possibility is to understand it as a reference to *lashon ha-ra*, the sin of defaming or slanderous speech. In *the Jewish Publication Society Tanakh*, the phrase is interpreted as "speaking impiety." Or it could be Isaiah's use of metaphor to declare his own individual sinfulness, together with an indictment of the nation's transgressions. However the phrase is to be understood, Isaiah is nonetheless deemed one of the elect, chosen by God to be His servant. The next verses demonstrate that God expiates Isaiah's guilt and sets upon him the task of chastising the nation for their wrongdoing.

> Then one of the seraphs flew over to me with a

> live coal, which he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. He touched it to my lips and declared, "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt shall be purged away."
>
> Then I heard the voice of my Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" And I said, "Here I am; send me." And He said, "Go, say to that people: 'Hear, indeed, but do not understand; see, indeed, but do not grasp.' Dull that people's mind, stop its ears, and seal its eyes -- lest seeing with its eyes and hearing with its ears, it also grasp with its mind, and repents and saves itself." (Isaiah 6: 6-10)

In the final part of the vision, Isaiah cries out to the Holy One, asking "How long, my Lord?" Here the prophet wonders both how long he must preach to the masses and, more importantly, how long will it be before there will be true repentance. The reply reveals the vengeful God who acts in history, described above:

> "Till towns lie waste without inhabitants and houses without people, and the ground lies waste and desolate—For the Lord will banish the population—and deserted sites are many in the midst of the land. But while a tenth part yet remains in it, it shall repent. It shall be ravaged like the terebinth and the oak, of which stumps are left even when they are felled: its stump shall be a holy seed." (Isaiah 6: 11-13)

Lindbloom maintains that "the task of Isaiah was to execute the divine judgment on his people by hardening their heart." He further explains:

> In the Old Testament to harden the heart means to render unresponsive to the divine word. In such a state of mind men stand under judgment and become subject to the divine punishment. The hardening of the heart in this sense is of course a consequence of men's religious and moral conduct. Men who continuously close their hearts to the divine word ultimately become incapable of response.[7]

[7] Lindbloom, p.187.

Both Lindbloom and renowned rabbi/scholar Abraham Joshua Heschel find the notion quite problematic. Heschel wrestles with the dilemma:

> The mandate Isaiah receives is fraught with an appalling contradiction. He is told to be a prophet in order to thwart and to defeat the essential purpose of being a prophet. . . . Did he not question his own faculties of seeing, hearing, and understanding when perceiving such a message? What gave him certainty that it was God's voice speaking to him? It is generally assumed that the mission of a prophet is to open the people's hearts to enhance their understanding, and to bring about rather than to prevent their turning to God.[8]

The only way Heschel can reconcile the contradiction is by applying the punishment to the sins of the Northern Kingdom, which at the time of Isaiah's prophecy was wracked by political, social, and moral chaos. After the death of Jereboam II in 745 B.C.E., violent coup d'etats, civil war, and "an upsurge in irreligious and licentious behavior" contributed to a society that seemed beyond redemption.[9]

Lindbloom resolves the issue from another angle. He argues that while Isaiah may have heeded the word of God and not challenged the divine will to harden the hearts of transgressors, it was not the entirety of the prophetic message. Lindbloom adds:

> Two positive elements are prominent in his teaching: he never ceased to exhort his people to repentance, and he was assured that a remnant would be saved from doom and turn to Yahweh. . . The conclusion of the vision is indeed paradoxical. The devastation will be total, but a living remainder will spring into existence as by a divine miracle; this remainder will be a holy people, i.e., will stand in the right relationship of trust in and obedience to Yahweh.[10]

[8] A.J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, pp.89-90.
[9] Moshe Pearlman, *In the Footsteps of the Prophets*, p.115.
[10] Lindbloom, pp.187-188.

If we attempt to summarize the key elements of Isaiah's vision (chapter 6), we discover that it contains many of the components that typify the prophetic writings of the Classical period: a prophet who is divinely chosen and then assumes the obligation of transmitting God's word; a God filled with righteous anger upon witnessing the sins of His people; references to political and social upheaval; some glimmer of ultimate hope and/or salvation. To this list, I would add a crucial element that underlies and fuels the vision itself—a yearning for a world that is more sacred, more pure, and more just than the world in its present state. Not only does yearning (i.e. of God and of the prophet) give rise to the vision, but yearning is a consequence as well in the ears of the listeners. If we look for a moment beyond the terror of the predictions of destruction and devastation, we see that the prophet's role is to stir the consciousness of the people, to compel them to see the profound dissonance of their society; that the fallen state of the world is at odds with God's design. The "stump [that] shall be a holy seed" is the embodiment of the compelling desire to return the world to both holiness and wholeness.

Heschel writes that amid Isaiah's dire predictions, he offers two hopes to the people. The first, as alluded to above,

> is immediate, partial, historical: "A remnant will return!" The other is distant, final, eschatological: the transformation of the world at the end of days.[11]

The particularistic message of a "remnant of Israel" evolves into the universal prophecy of the "end of days" (or sometimes referred to as the "Day of the Lord"), with Zion at its fulcrum. Heschel elucidates this idea:

> Isaiah knew that disaster was bound to come, but also that a remnant would survive, that Zion would endure, and through Israel and out of Zion redemption for all nations would flow. . . Over and above all the threats

[11] Heschel, p.94.

> and denunciations uttered by Isaiah rises the more powerful certainty of God's lasting, indestructible attachment to His people and to Zion. His disengagement from Israel is inconceivable. . . Anger passes; His attachment will never pass . . .
> The covenant is not only with the people, but also with the land, with Jerusalem, with Zion. All hopes and visions of things to come are connected with these places.[12]

The vision par excellence of the "end of days" is Isaiah's most celebrated prophecy found in chapter 2: 1-5:

> The word that Isaiah son of Amoz prophesized concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In the days to come, the Mount of the Lord's House shall stand firm above the mountains and tower above the hills; And all the nations shall gaze on it with joy.
> And the many peoples shall go and say:
> "Come let us go up to the mount of the Lord to the House of Jacob; That He may instruct us in His ways, and that we may walk in His paths. For instruction shall come forth from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Thus He will judge among the nations and arbitrate for the many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks:
> Nation shall not take up sword against nation;
> Neither shall they learn war anymore.

The precise historical date of this prophecy cannot be proven. We can only make educated guesses based on allusions in the text itself. John Sawyer contextualizes the preceding chapter of the Book of Isaiah (chapter one) within the era of the Assyrian invasion of Judah in 701 BCE. He cites verses 7-9 as persuasive evidence of King Sennacherib's assault:

> Your country lies desolate, your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence aliens devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by aleins; And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. If the Lord of Hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah.

[12] Heschel, pp.95-96.

The Assyrian invasion leaves the citizens of Judah and Jerusalem (under Hezekiah's leadership) in a state of panic and despair. The alliance with Egypt fails to provide a bulwark against the enemy, and defeat seems imminent. Miraculously, a plague spreads through the Assyrian camp (after Isaiah prophesizes against their armies) and they are forced to retreat. Sawyer underscores how close Jerusalem was to total annihilation:

> The terror that gripped the citizens of Jerusalem during that crisis can be felt in various other poems from that period. So can the relief which followed Sennacherib's departure. In the first place, Jerusalem survived; only just, but she survived.[13]

Though it is convincing to interpret Isaiah 2:1-5 as a response to the Assyrian attack in 701, in the end it is unnecessary to pinpoint an exact moment in historical time, as wars raged throughout the duration of Isaiah's tenure as prophet. Twenty years prior to Sennacherib, there was the Assyrian invasion of the Northern Kingdom (722/721 BCE).[14] That land also suffered internecine strife after the death of Jereboam II (mentioned above). And forever living with insecurity, Assyrian invasion constantly loomed as a possibility. The point being that Isaiah knew how horrific war could be when he prophesized, "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." The metaphor of transforming weapons of destruction into pruning hooks and plowshares is an intersection of divine inspiration and poetic genius. Isaiah's vision, which is engraved onto the United Nations building, still resonates with truth and evokes a longing for a world at peace.

"What is the issue that haunts the prophet's soul?" asks Heschel. He replies

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[13] Saywer, p.59.
[14] Chaim Stern, *Hafatarah Commentary*, p. xxxv.

with the same inner turmoil that pains the prophet:

> It is not a question, but a bitter exclamation: How marvelous is the world that God has created! And how horrible is the world that man has made! The essence of blasphemy is confusion, and in the eyes of the prophet confusion is raging in the world.[15]

Heschel's observation is incisive and goes to the heart of the dynamic between vision and longing. When God created the world and entrusted humankind with its stewardship, the Holy One hoped that the world would be imbued with righteousness, compassion, and holiness. Instead, humans have time and time again demonstrated their capacity for sinfulness and destruction. Equipping the prophet with a vision communicated from the divine realm, God provides a glimpse into the original purity with which He designed the world. Among mortal men, it is the prophet who sees most clearly the painful discrepancy between the divine ideal and the human reality. And it is he, the chosen one, who feels most acutely the urgency and the longing to return the world to one that reflects the holiness of its Creator.

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[15] Heschel, p.74.

III. Theodor Herzl –The Zionist Dream

Theodor Herzl, the principal founder of modern Zionism, was also captivated by dreams and visions of another sort. Unlike Jacob, his patriarchal forebear, Herzl's primary visions did not come to him by night (as in the *Vayeitzei* dream). Nor did the Zionist leader understand his "dream" implicitly as prophetic revelation, as was the case with Isaiah. Herzl's dream of a modern Jewish nation derived from his active imagination combined with his understanding of socio-political realities, which then flowed to his pen and paper. The literary manifestations of his dream-- his diaries, the treatise entitled *Der Judenstaat* and the futuristic novel *Altneuland* -- all reveal a man of complex, conflicting identities searching for a solution to the most compelling question facing the Jews of his time: How could the modern Jew reconcile his emancipated state with a persistent and insidious anti-Semitism?

The first place we find documented evidence of Herzl's dream is in his diary entry cited as "Begun in Paris around Pentecost 1895"

> I have been pounding away for some time at a work of tremendous magnitude. I don't know even now if I will be able to carry it through. It bears the aspects of *a mighty dream*. For days and weeks it has saturated me to the limits of my consciousness; it goes with me everywhere, hovers behind my ordinary talk, peers at me over the shoulders of my funny little journalistic work, overwhelms and intoxicates me. (emphasis mine)[1]

In the early stages of intellectual inspiration, Herzl is cautious not to launch impetuously into any plan of action. In fact he scrutinizes himself, pondering whether this rush of ideas is merely the beginning of an interesting novel:

> What will come of it is still too early to say. However, I have had experience enough to tell me that even as

[1] Theodor Herzl, *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl* (ed. Marvin Lowenthal, 1956), p.3.

> a dream it is remarkable and should be written down—if not as a memorial for mankind, then for my own pleasure perhaps as something between these two possibilities –that is, as something for literature. If no action comes out of this romancing, a Romance at least will come out of this activity. Title: *The Promised Land.*[2]

While the first diary entry shows Herzl's self perception wavering between two identities; romance writer and leader of a political movement, the potency of his ideas catapults him into the latter category. He writes in his diary:

> But what are the experiences of a journalist compared with the matter which now absorbs me? What dreams, thoughts, correspondence, meetings, activities I shall have to encompass—what disappointments if I fail, what grim struggles if I succeed! They must be seized and committed to paper.
>
> Stanley interested the world with his little travel book: *How I Found Livingstone.* Indeed, while he was traversing the Dark Continent the world was enthralled- the entire civilized world. Yet such undertakings are petty when compared with mine –compared I mean and must still say, with my dream.[3]

In the above passages, Herzl chooses language that repeatedly incorporates the concept of *dream.* In fact, in the context of the diaries, *dream* connotes an imagined reality that transcends the present one. Whereas Jacob and Isaiah understand the source of their visions to be the power of God, Herzl clings to a modern psychological interpretation.

> I am still puzzled how the idea of writing a novel turned into drafting a practical program, although the change occurred in the past few weeks. It took place in the Unconscious.[4]

This is not to say, however, that Herzl denies the existence of God. Significantly, at the end of his novel, *Altneuland,* as the leaders of the future Zionist state debate what forces

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[2] Ibid, p.3.
[3] Ibid, p.4.

created the nation, the rabbi is the last one to speak and exclaims the privileged last word, "God!" [5] This suggests that Herzl believed in a supreme being somehow at work in the grand scheme of imagining and building a modern Jewish state. But for the Zionist dreamer, God remains an essentially private matter. His Weltanschauung is much more secular in nature and the vision of a Jewish nation is bolstered not by the language of theology, but by history, economics, and political science.

In the two predominant works that express Herzl's dream in the strongest terms, *Der Judenstaat* and *Altneuland*, Herzl strives to pose a convincing argument to his readers. His chief technique is the juxtaposition of present with future, reality with possibility. A thriving Jewish homeland in a future world where Jew-hatred has become obsolete stands in sharp contrast to a fin-de-siecle Europe haunted by the specter of anti-Semitism. Throughout the two works, Herzl invites his readers to imagine what he himself can already envision. Repeatedly and deliberately, he prevails upon the emotions of his audience, first describing in detail the deplorable situation of anti-Semitism (which, of course, they would identify with) and then vividly illustrating the solution.

In the first words of the Preamble to *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl tersely asserts the dilemma of the Jews, and then adds an immediate solution to the problem:

> The concept with which I am dealing in this paper is very old. It is the establishment of the Jews' State. The world resounds with clamor against the Jews, and that arouses this concept out of its sleep.[6]

Already in several places in the Preamble, we can observe how Herzl sets up a discrepancy between the present and the realized future and, consequently, a longing for the latter emerges.

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[4] Ibid, p.12.
[5] Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland,* p.295.

> I am convinced to the very depths of my being that I am right; I do not know whether I shall be proved correct during my lifetime. The first men who start it will probably not see its glorious culmination. But even just by starting it, a great pride, an inner freedom and joy will enter their lives.
>
> So I say clearly and firmly: I believe it is possible to bring the idea to reality, even though I do not pretend to have found it in its final form. The world needs the Jews's State; consequently it will come about.
>
> Is what I say not yet appropriate for the present time? Am I ahead of my time? Are the sufferings of the Jews not yet great enough? We shall see. [7]

In methodical fashion, Herzl constructs a rational argument for his cause, beginning with a depiction of the *present* socio-political situation. Specifically, the introductory material (the introduction and the first section of the main body or *General Part*) expounds upon the current crisis of anti-Semitism in post-Emancipation Western Europe. The fundamental theme of the following excerpt is the futility of the Jew's attempt at assimilation:

> We have tried everywhere in all honesty to assimilate into the communities around us, while preserving the faith of our fathers. We are not allowed to. We are faithful and often over-enthusiastic patriots –in vain. We make the same sacrifices in life and limb as our countrymen – in vain. We do our utmost to further the reputation of our home countries in the fields of arts and science –in vain. We toil to increase the health of our lands with our commerce and trade—in vain. In our home where we have been living for centuries, we are decried as foreign, often by those whose forebears were already being persecuted. It is the majority which decides who is an alien in the land. . . Given the present state of the world, might will have precedence over right in the foreseeable future. . . If only they left us in peace . . . But I believe that they will not leave us in peace. [8]

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[6] Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat* (ed. By Henk Overberg, 1997), p.123.
[7] Ibid, pp.124-126.
[8] Ibid., pp.129-130.

He moves from a general depiction of the status quo to one that is more explicit, citing, with journalistic fervor, various examples of oppression directed against the Jews:

> Day by day the attacks on Jews increase in the parliaments, at meetings, in the press, on the pulpit, in the street; when they travel, they are denied entry into hotels or places of amusement. The character of these persecutions varies, depending on country or social circle. In Russia they plunder Jewish villages, in Rumania they beat a few people to death, in Germany Jews are on the receiving end of a good thrashing now and again, in Austria public life is terrorized by anti-Semites, in Algeria there are preachers roaming the countryside extolling hatred, in Paris high society closes ranks and shuts itself off against Jews. The variety is endless. [9]

It is well known that Herzl experienced the effects of anti-Semitism first hand. The most famous incident, is, of course, the injustice of the Dreyfus Affair. Working as the Paris correspondent for the Viennese newspaper the *Neue Freie Presse* in 1895, Herzl witnessed the trial and the public humiliation ceremony of the wrongly accused Captain Alfred Dreyfus. Forever etched in his memory were the cries of the hostile Parisian mob, "Death to the Jews!" Later in 1899 Herzl would glance in retrospect at the events leading to his development as Zionist leader. Indeed the Dreyfus case proved to be deeply influential:

> But the Dreyfus case contains more than a miscarriage of justice: it contains the wish of the vast majority in France to damn one Jew and through him all Jews. "Death to the Jews!" the crowd yelled when they ripped the Captain's stripes from his uniform. And since that time "Down with the Jews" has become a battle cry. Where? In France! In republican, modern France, one hundred years after the Declaration of the Rights of Man. . . . The people, at least a very large part of it, no longer wants rights for the Jews. The edict of the great Revolution is revoked. [10]

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[9] Ibid., p.139.
[10] Theodor Herzl, "Zionismus" in *Besammelte Zionistisch Werke*, Vol.1, p.380.

Herzl also witnessed the rise of anti-Jewish politics in Austria. Historian Carl Schorske in his seminal work, *Fin de Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, argues that the Liberalism under the aegis of Emperor Franz Joseph held out great promise for the Jews in the 1860's and 1870's. In that era of Enlightenment, it seemed only a matter of time before the Jews in Austria-Hungary would achieve full political *and* social equality. The promise, however, proved to be short lived with the rise of new anti-liberal mass movements that incorporated anti-Semitism into their platforms. The politician with the most virulent tone was Georg von Schoenerer, who championed German nationalism and the cause of the forgotten peasant and artisan. He wrote in 1881 in a manifesto of his nationalist association, the *Verein der deutschen Volkspartei*:

> We want to give lively expression to the feeling of solidarity of the German nation in Austria not only in contending with Slavdom, but also in a struggle against the exploitation of the noblest forces of the people [Schorske presumes this to mean the peasant and the artisan] to the advantage of a few. [11]

At the heart of this exploitation lurked the "sucking vampire" Jew. Schorske explains that

> the Jewish peddler was the lower-class analogue to the Jewish department-store owner: both threatened the traditional shopkeeper; both attracted the hostility as well as the custom of the small consumer. [12]

Other deplorable actions tied to Schoenerer include his campaign to restrict Jewish immigration during the Russian pogroms and his break-in (with other ruffians) at the offices of the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*. By physically assaulting employees of this "Jewish rag," Schoenerer acted out his thirst for revenge against Semitic oppressors. For this act of violence, he was briefly imprisoned and suspended from his political career for five

[11] Carl Schorske. *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna*, p.127.
[12] Ibid., p.128.

years; soon he disappeared from the scene of Viennese politics altogether.[13] Though not mentioned in the diaries, Herzl was undoubtedly aware of Schoenerer's fierce Jew-hatred and more importantly, the mass appeal that followed him.

Another Austrian politician *is* mentioned in the diaries, a man who rose to greater prominence, eventually being elected as mayor of Vienna. The entry on September 20, 1895 speaks of the city council elections and of Dr. Karl Lueger:

> In Vienna, the City Council elections were held on the day before Erev Rosh Hashanah. The anti-Semites won all the vacancies. The mood among the Jews reflects despair. The Christians are in an inflammatory state. . . Toward evening I went to the Landstrasse district. A silent tense crowd before the polling station. Suddenly Dr. Lueger appeared in the square. Wild cheering women waving white kerchiefs from the windows. The police held the people back. A man next to me said with loving fervor, but softly: "That is our leader."
>
> More than all the declamation and abuse, these few words told me how deeply anti-Semitism is rooted in the heart of the people. [14]

Lueger became the leader of the Christian Socialist Party in approximately 1889. He rallied behind the banner of Catholicism, trying to unite disparate groups that had been disaffected by the laissez faire policies of the liberals. Among the constituents attracted to the party were aristocrats, workers, artisans, as well as fervent young priests, Catholic intellectuals and businessmen. In fact, many of Schoenerer's supporters embraced Lueger after the former made his exit from active political life. Schorske writes: "Having secured the support of the Schoenerer forces by professions of anti-Semitism, he was able, thanks to Schoenerer's imprisonment, to lead most of his Vienna artisan following

[13] Ibid., pp.129-131.
[14] Herzl, *Diaries*, p.69.

into the Christian Social fold."[15] The party affirmed a resolution to boycott Jewish merchants and seize Jewish property. On this matter, Lueger asserted, "We will not rest with merely breaking down their pride, but we will push the Jews out of our life."[16]

When Lueger was elected to the mayoralty of Vienna in 1895, Franz Joseph refused to ratify the candidate, being wary of such an anti-liberal, destabilizing force. But two years later, public opinion was so powerful that the Emperor relented, allowing Lueger to claim official victory. The new anti-liberal and anti-Semitic mayor was a symbol for the dashing of Jewish hope for full equality and peace of mind.[17]

It is clear when examining Herzl's writings within the larger context of late nineteenth century European history that his anxieties about anti-Semitism were not over-exaggerated. Indeed, it was a harsh reality that every Jew of his time confronted and Herzl's discussion of events such as the Dreyfus Affair or the rise of anti-Semitism in Austria immediately resonated with readers, exposing raw nerves and underlying fears. In the beginning of the General Part of *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl ruminates on the causes and effects of anti-Semitism. Scoffing at those cockeyed optimists who have faith in "working patiently to draw out what is good in people,"[18] he insists that the prevailing sentiments against the Jews are too historically and viscerally entrenched to be gradually withered away. Moreover, Herzl rejects assimilation as a solution because, in his opinion, it is impossible to fundamentally alter gentile opinion if the status quo persists. He writes:

> But perhaps we could merge without a trace into the peoples around us if we were left in

[15] Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna*, p.143.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Herzl, *Diaries*, p.466.
[17] Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna*, pp.144-145.
[18] Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*, p.145.

> peace for a couple of generations. They will not leave us in peace. After short spells of tolerance the hostility against us awakens anew. There seems to be something in our prosperity that irritates people, because the world has been accustomed to seeing us as the most despised poor.[19]

Neither does Herzl feel that assimilation is a desirable option, revealing his own sense of pride in his heritage. As he put it:

> I have mentioned our assimilation. I do not say for a moment that I want it. Our national character is historically too famous and despite all humiliation, too proud to wish for its demise.[20]

He also offers a socio-economic explanation, namely "the overproduction of a middle range intelligentsia, which cannot flow on into appropriate jobs and cannot rise socially."[21]

This is a recurring theme in *Altneuland* as well. Herzl observes too many Jews in the professions-lawyers, professors, doctors- who are in such overabundance that they create strain on the economy. The Jews themselves cannot find employment and the non-Jews resent the resulting competition. A consequence of this situation is the allure of radical socialism to many unemployed, despondent young Jews. Two opposing forces occur at once. Some Jews are becoming extremely financially successful, while others "are being pushed down and turned into proletarian revolutionaries: we are the under-officers of all the revolutionary parties while at the same time our frightening economic power keeps growing."[22] Both manifestations of the current economic situation have a

[19] Ibid., p.145.
[20] Ibid., p.145.
[21] Ibid., p.144.
[22] Ibid.

boomerang effect; in either scenario the result is a deep resentment directed against the Jews.

In addition to describing the crisis of anti-Semitism to his readers, Herzl offers his commentary on what he terms in bold heading, "Attempts at solutions up until the present time." In this section, our author severely critiques both the previous Jewish colonization efforts and the "back to the land" movement. In his words:

> The artificial means employed thus far to overcome the distress of the Jews have been either too small in scale, like the attempts at colonization; or wrongly conceived, like the attempts to turn Jews into farmers in their present home countries.[23]

First, Herzl laments the failure of the colonizing projects, alluding to the philanthropic works of Baron de Hirsch and Baron Edmond Rothschild in both Argentina and Palestine. For Herzl, shipping a pathetic group of poor Jews across the world may have been motivated by charitable intentions, but ultimately it does more harm than good. One reason for his dismay is that inevitably "anti-Semitism has been transplanted to new regions." [24] The second more important reason for his condemnation is that an ill organized endeavor resulting in failure "casts doubt on the quality of Jewish human resources."[25] In other words, a Jewish sponsored fiasco can only serve to corroborate the original suspicions of an anti-Semite, namely that the Jews can only thrive when they live parasitically off Christians. Failure also has the pernicious effect of destroying Jewish self-esteem.

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[23] Ibid., p.141.
[24] Ibid., p.143
[25] Ibid., p.144.

As he guides his readers through each step of his argument, Herzl takes great pains to assure his audience that the treatise is firmly grounded in reality. He maintains in the beginning of the Preamble: "At every stage of my argument, it should be kept clearly in mind that I am not making anything up."[26] But more important, the solution, nay the *dream* of building a Jewish national homeland, is also conceived realistically, with reachable goals in mind. Herzl asserts:

> I am making up neither the situation of the Jews, which has developed historically, nor the means of overcoming it. The material components of the building, which I am designing, are available in real life; they can be seized with both hands; everyone can convince himself of this. If this attempt to solve the issue of the Jews is to be characterized in one word, then it should not be called a "fantasy," at most it may be called a "project." [27]

Herzl further emphasizes the realizability of the dream when he declares,". . . I must defend my plan against the charge of being utopian."[28] To illustrate his point, he compares *Der Judenstaat* to the utopian novel, *Freiland* ("*Freeland*"), written by his contemporary Theodor Hertzka. In *Frieland*, private ownership of land is abolished and made accessible to voluntary associations for development.[29]Of the novel, Herzl writes: ". . . this is a talented piece of fantasy, as far from real life as the Equator-Mountain, where this dreamland is situated."[30]

Herzl is well aware that his treatise will be met with a fair share of skeptics, let alone those who will completely reject it as an outlandish pipedream. Thus, he builds his argument, cognizant of this inevitable criticism as he invites "Jewish readers [to] follow

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[26] Ibid., p.123.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., p.239.
[30] Ibid., p.124.

[him] patiently to the end." He expects that

> many readers will think of objections in a different order that I tackle them. If, however, your reservations have been intelligently dealt with, then you should commit yourself to the cause.[31]

The introductory material is crucial in proving to his readers that the conceiver of these ideas is well versed in history as well as the contemporary political scene; that he possesses a penetrating insight into the phenomena of anti-Semitism and assimilation; that he has assessed previous plans regarding the problem of the Jews in Europe and has emerged with *the* singular workable approach. Once Herzl feels he has accomplished his task of introducing the dilemma and solution for the Jews in a realistic and compelling manner, he is prepared to move forward and describe in detail the plan for building a Jewish nation.

The Dream Translated into a Tangible Reality

As Herzl unfolds his plan, his underlying objective is to remove the dreamlike aura from his dream, to prove to the reader, to the extent possible, that his vision is not mere theory or an exercise in utopian musing. Under the heading "The Plan" in the *General Part*, he begins with a simple statement:

> In its basic form the whole plan is infinitely simple: it just has to be if it is to be understood by everyone. . . . We should be given sovereignty over a piece of the earth's surface sufficient for the legitimate needs of our people. We will look after everything else. [32]

[31] Ibid., p.137.
[32] Ibid., p.146.

According to Herzl, the first matter to look after is the establishment of two organizations: the Society of Jews and the Jewish Company. The former will function as the ruling body of the new state and the latter will serve as its economic engine. In this section of the treatise, Herzl begins his projected narration of the settlement of the Jewish nation and the development of its infrastructure:

> . . . the departure of the Jews should not be seen as a sudden phenomenon. It will occur gradually and will take decades. First the poorest Jews will go and make the land arable. In accordance with a previously developed concept they will build the streets, bridges and railways, they will construct the telegraph system, they will regulate the rivers and build homes for themselves. Their work will lead to business, business will bring markets, markets will entice new immigrants to come. Everyone will come of their own free will, and bear their own costs and risks. . . . Our most lowly classes will be followed gradually by the next in line. Those who are really desperate go first. They will be guided by our middle-range intelligentsia, which we over-produce and which is persecuted everywhere. [33]

Understanding the crucial role of international diplomacy in the Zionist scheme, Herzl soon shifts his focus to the relationship between the Jews and the Great Powers.

> If the Great Powers are prepared to grant the Jews as a people sovereignty over a neutral land, then the Society will enter into negotiations about the land that is to be selected. . . . If the relevant governments of our day support this concept, then the Society of Jews, under the protection of the European Powers, will negotiate with them. We can offer the present government enormous advantages: we can take over a part of the national debt, we can build roads which, in any case, we need ourselves, as well as many other things. [34]

(In actuality, Herzl did relentlessly pursue an arrangement with the Sultan of Turkey to grant sovereignty over a portion of Palestine in exchange for significant financial

[33] Ibid., pp.146-147.

remuneration. The Sultan did lend his ear to Herzl's scheme and appeared to be courting the Zionist leader, but in the end it came to naught. Concomitantly, Herzl was not able to raise the necessary funds from wealthy Jewish entrepreneurs.)

As Herzl envisions the homeland, he weighs the two geographical possibilities of Palestine and Argentina. At this point in his political evolution, he was equally open to both options. He acknowledges that "Palestine is our unforgettable historical home. This very name would already be an enormously powerful rallying cry for our people."[35] Yet Argentina, he argues, "is one of the wealthiest countries in the world in terms of natural resources, enormous in size, sparsely populated, and with a moderate climate."[36] After the first Zionist Congress in Basel (1897) and with added momentum each year thereafter, a beloved attachment to Palestine ensued and became inextricably linked to the future Jewish nation.

It is in the chapters comprising the main body of the treatise-- "The Jewish Company," "Local Branches," and "The Society of the Jews and the Jews State" -- that Herzl describes in detail his plans for the economy and infrastructure for the Jews' State. The Jewish Company will function on the model of "the large colonization companies" and will be concerned first with transferring assets (from the countries of dispersion to the homeland) and purchasing land. The Company will facilitate the transfer of Jewish businesses to Christian proprietors, a cornerstone of the plan.

> In all cases the objective of the Company will be to facilitate the transfer of full ownership to these Christian managers. It will gradually introduce Christian officials and independent agents (lawyers, etc) into its ranks; these must on no account be stigmatized as merely servile to the Jews. As free controlling agents

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., p.148.
[36] Ibid.

> with Christian associations they are in a position to guarantee that everything is above board, that transactions are effected reasonably and in good faith, and that there is no intention to break down the general standard of living.[37]

Well aware that the notion of a large scale Jewish emigration would arouse fear of an economic crisis, Herzl is careful to allay those anxieties:

> But the state, . . . stands to lose a class of taxpayers which may be numerically small, but which is financially most valuable. It is necessary to offer it compensation for this. When we allow Christian citizens to advance into the positions which we have vacated, thus enabling a uniquely peaceful advance of the masses to prosperity, we indirectly transfer the fruit of our Jewish perspicacity and our Jewish diligence – our businesses –to the state. [38]

Herzl's projection of the purchase of land and of the building of homes reveals a great deal about his social ideology. Wary of being portrayed as a socialist, he affirms capitalism and need for wealth, not only to support the state, but also to serve as motivation for the lower classes. The existence of various socio-economic factors is a given that he does not question, evidenced by the distinction he makes between "housing for laborers" and "other categories of homes." The former will be built economically and thus will be characterized by a "uniform look" but "these single houses with their little gardens will everywhere be incorporated into a beautiful overall concept."[39] Unskilled laborers will be required to build their own homes, but with the incentive of ownership after a three year period ("if they give evidence of good behavior"). Further evidence demonstrating Herzl's concern for the lower class's quality of life is apparent in the following:

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[37] Ibid., p.152.
[38] Ibid., p.164.

> Light will stream into our friendly, healthy schools, complete with all modern teaching materials. There will be technical continuation schools enabling simple workers to acquire high-level technical skills and acquainting them with machine technology. There will be amusement centers for the people, directed by the Society of Jews to promote public morality.[40]

He devotes equal attention to wealthier immigrants, encouraging, for instance, the introduction of luxury into the new country:

> We need luxury for a number of reasons, especially for artistic activity, for industrial development, and, at a later stage , as a means of breaking up large accumulations of capital. [41]

His hope is that the same material pleasures available in Europe-- from the most stylish Parisian fashions and the grandest homes, to the latest operas-- will be transplanted to the homeland. There amidst the safety of one's brethren, the pleasures of the world can be enjoyed without paranoid concern about gentile opinion. Herzl happily declares:

> Yes, those wealthy Jews, who at the present time have to anxiously hide their treasures, and who are ill at ease whey they give their parties behind drawn curtains, will be able to enjoy life freely over there.[42]

Clearly, Herzl does not advocate the classless society (a la socialism or Marxism) that enlisted the political passions of so many of his fellow Jews. In his eyes, that would be a foolishly naïve aspiration that could only terminate in failure. He embraces enterprise but mitigated with a voice of enlightenment and compassion. "The normal working day is the seven-hour day!" Herzl exclaims. According to his scheme, the work day amounts to

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[39] Ibid,. p.155.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., p.161.
[42] Ibid.

fourteen hours but ought to be divided into shifts that harmonize with the body's rhythms and other human/social needs.

> A healthy man is capable of giving a great deal of concentrated labor in three and a half hours. After a break of three and a half hours, which he devotes to his rest, his family, or his further education, he is quite refreshed. Such laborers can work miracles.[43]

To safeguard the institution of the seven-hour day, Herzl suggests that "recalcitrant industrialists" who attempt to utilize "non-Jewish slave laborers" will be boycotted and will face a series of unpleasant business obstacles.

Enterprise and a fierce work ethic will drive the economic engine of the Jews' State. Impoverished workers will receive assistance in the form of work opportunities, as opposed to a dole. Beggars will not be tolerated. Furthermore, "whoever is not willing to work of his own free will shall be put into a common work shop."[44] Even the elderly will be expected to contribute to the society:

> In an infirmary the aged person slowly dies of shame and disease. He is really buried prematurely. . . . Those unable to do physical work should get lighter duties. . . We will seek the moral blessing of appropriate work for all ages, for all stages of life.[45]

Having described the creation of an economy, an infrastructure, and a labor ethos for the new nation, the treatise then moves to the process of emigration itself. Is it possible to imagine a mass transfer of world Jewry to the new land without eruption of utter chaos? Herzl answers with a resounding "Yes," again articulating his vision in, what he considers to be, pragmatic terms. Ideally, the emigration should take place in

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[43] Ibid., p. 157.
[44] Ibid., p.179.

groups of families and friends who, in turn, will belong to designated local groups. (Herzl states that this is not obligatory and Jews are quite free to travel independently. Travelling in such groups, he argues, would ease a harsh transition.) To every group there is a spiritual leader (i.e. rabbi) who will both guide the members and act as a force of cohesion. They will also utilize their position in the Jewish community to galvanize support to the cause.

> The rabbis will be the first to understand what we are about; they will be the first to be enthusiastic about the project and will inspire the others from the pulpits. There will be no need to call special meetings with all their idle talk. It will all be incorporated into religious services. . . . The rabbis will regularly receive information bulletins of the Society and the Company, and will broadcast and explain them to their congregation.[46]

The rabbi's leadership role will be essential as he works in tandem with a "small committee of trusted elders" who will "consult and decide on practical matters and local needs." During the process of dividing and allocating tracts of land, local groups will have access to city plans and maps.

> Our people will be aware from the start where they are going, in which towns and houses they will live. I have already mentioned building plans and easy-to-understand drawings which will be distributed among the local groups.[47]

The scheme of initial settlement is constructed upon the notion of a centralized bureaucracy with room for local autonomy. "Only under these conditions," writes Herzl, "can the transplant be effected without pain." [48]

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[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., pp177-178.
[47] Ibid., p. 179.
[48] Ibid.

In the last section of the treatise's main body, titled *The Society of the Jews and The Jews' State*, we learn of Herzl's viewpoint on government. He is deeply inspired by the ancient Roman concept of the *gestor*-a wise ruler whose mission is to ensure the well-being of the people of his state. The need for a gestor rests on the assumption that the people are incapable of ruling themselves effectively and thus submit to the wisdom and responsibility of such a leader. Herzl reformulates the ancient idea of gestor and applies it to the Jewish nation. Instead of one lone ruler, there will be a select group of sagacious, devoted men who have the best interests of the Jews' State in mind and heart.

In Herzl's imagination, the Society of Jews will function as the gestor and will be comprised of the "brave circle of English Jews," committed Zionists with whom he established rapport in London. Basing the temporary governing body in London appealed to Herzl because England represented stability and a land basically untainted by anti-Semitism (in Herzl's mind; of course this was not the case) The Society will be responsible for both "scientific and political tasks" including:

> the scientific exploration of the new country
> and its natural resources, the common overall
> plan of emigration and settlement, the preparatory
> work for the legislature and administration. . .[49]

In his discussions on government, Herzl reveals that he is not a universal suffragist, when he declares, ". . . the peoples of today are not suited to unlimited democracy" and " . . . the masses are even worse than the parliaments in following every fad, in supporting every person making the most noise."[50] (These commentaries were no doubt influenced by Herzl's witnessing of the anti-Semitic mobs in Paris and in Vienna.) He cites the aristocratic republic of "old Venice " (presumably during the

[49] Ibid., p. 191.
[50] Ibid. p. 194.

Renaissance) as a suitable model to emulate, but refashioned with a modicum of enlightenment. Herzl does not elaborate in great detail here but the essence of his polity is one "conducted from the top," exhibiting a distrust of the masses, but one not exclusive to a social class. In his mind, it is conceivable for an extraordinary individual from a lower social class to rise to a position of important leadership (i.e. the hero David in *Altneuland* who is a poor child beggar at the beginning of the novel and at the end is the president of the Jewish state), provided that he possesses the knowledge and devotion that would merit such a distinction. This proviso is the only element approaching democratic values. Yet the crucial component of democracy- allowance for dissent- is blatantly rejected by Herzl.

> However, should there be pockets of opposition, then the Society will break them. It cannot allow itself to be disturbed in its work by narrow-minded or malevolent individuals.[51]

While the tone seems autocratic, Herzl did not understand it as oppressive. He clings to an optimism that with the right leader/s who will guide the people and who will demonstrate their undying devotion to the state, the people will submit to their rulership . This of course was a myopic view of political life. By the end of the nineteenth century, the masses throughout Europe were agitating for their say in government and policy. This could not be denied, yet Herzl held onto his illusion.

He continues to flesh out his vision with brief remarks on various accoutrements that will define the character of the state. Regarding language, Herzl sees no compelling reason to strive for Hebrew as a common language. ("Who among us knows enough Hebrew to ask for a train ticket in this language? This is not possible" –p.196). Given the

[51] Ibid., p.195.

multiplicity of national identities that comprise the Jewish people, Switzerland represents the linguistic ideal. Herzl is vague on a common language for commerce and official communication, expressing the confidence that in time a language will emerge that will "serve best the needs of general social intercourse."

On the theme of religion and the state, spiritual leaders will be respected but under no circumstances will a Jewish theocracy be permitted. This would contradict the state's commitment to freedom of religious practice and of religion itself. The following excerpt is proof of Herzl's ideal of society that embraces all peoples:

> Everybody is as free and unfettered in practicing his belief or unbelief as he is in his nationality. And should it come to pass that persons of other faiths or nationalities live among us, then we will accord them honorable protection and equality before the law.[52]

The laws of the new nation should be "modern, the best from everywhere " and compiled under the guidance of a college of jurists. An army will be necessary to "ensure external and internal order," but essentially the homeland will be classified as a neutral state. Finally, there will be a need for a national flag:

> I am thinking of a white flag with seven gold stars. The white field symbolizes the new, pure life; the stars are the seven golden hours of our working day. Because Jews will enter the land under the sign of labor.[53]

Above, I have quoted copiously from *Der Judenstaat* in order to illustrate the breadth of Herzl's conceptual design. With the hindsight of history, we can observe where the plan is flawed, or ridiculously optimistic; for example, the harmony between

[52] Ibid., pp.196-197.
[53] Ibid., pp.198-199.

the disparate social classes or the submission of the majority to the leadership of a supposedly wise ruler. In addition, Herzl could not foresee Hebrew as a cultural unifier and source of national pride. Most significantly, there is no treatment of the indigenous Arab populations and their reaction to the Zionist venture. The consequences of this oversight, in bloodshed and terrorism that still convulse the region, were beyond Herzl's imagination. Herzl himself writing in 1896 admits that his treatise is far from perfect and certainly does not represent the last word. In the conclusion, he writes:

> So much has been unexplained, so many limitations, harmful superficialities, and useless repetitions can still be found in this paper, which I have pondered long and deeply, and have revised often.[54]

He even invites the reader to "participate in this work and improve it with his perspicacity; it does not just belong to any one individual."[55] Though Herzl realizes his scheme is incomplete, his objective is to prove that enough substance and potential exists to lay a successful foundation for a nation.

From Treatise to Novel: *Altneuland*

Herzl's novel *Altneuland* is a dramatized form of the ideas expressed in *Der Judenstaat. Altneuland* is yet another attempt by Herzl to bring his dream to life, to share his imaginings with his readers, aiming again to convince them that the dream need not be so far from fruition. I would argue that the novel published in 1902 (six years after *Der Judenstaat),* represented for Herzl a more advanced stage in the evolution of his dream to reality. In his treatise, the visions of the future state are articulated passionately,

[54] Ibid., p.203.

remain academically abstract. In Herzl's mind, the creation of fictitious characters who live out the Zionist drama, with their arguments, adventures, and even moments of suspense, would stir the reader to a higher level of imagination. Fiction itself is predicated on the notion that readers temporarily suspend their disbelief, and while their eyes are engaged with the written word, there is the illusion that they are encountering reality. Having years of experience as a writer and journalist, Herzl draws upon the power of fiction's illusion to bring his readers yet closer to seeing what he sees.

The method of argument in *Altneuland* mirrors the approach used in the treatise. Herzl creates characters and a socio-political setting blatantly resonant to contemporary European Jews. Deliberately devoting the first chapter to identifiable situations and sentiments grounds the novel in the recognizable present, a necessary precondition to embarking on a journey of the imagination into the future.

The central character is a young lawyer, Dr. Friedrich Loewenberg, introduced in Book One titled, "An Educated, Desperate Man." Friedrich is one of many young Jews in his generation, who consciously strove to break away from trade and commerce, the stereotypical "Jewish" vocations of their parents. Recalling Herzl's analysis in the treatise, described above, Friedrich appears in the novel as part of a surplus Jewish professional class that is unable to secure employment. Living off his parents and spending his days in a café in Vienna, the protagonist gloomily contemplates a future that will never be realized.

Early in the novel, Friedrich is invited to the home of the Loeffler family, upper middle class cloth merchants who surround themselves with peers like themselves --well off, materialistic, and generally obnoxious. Friedrich is conflicted on many levels. First,

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[55] Ibid.

he is in love with the beautiful Ernestine Loeffler, whose betrothal is announced to a wealthier, more successful man. Even more difficult is his feeling of dependence upon the good graces of Mr. Weinberger, a potential employer whom he loathes.

At the dinner party the light bourgeois chatter suddenly turns serious in tone when Dr. Weiss (a rabbi) calls attention to the unsettling anti-Semitism growing around them.

> 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. [56]

Dr. Weiss mentions to the guests about a new movement called Zionism "whose 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." The reaction to the rabbi is unmitigated laughter:

> [Dr. Weiss] 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 every gamut. The ladies giggled, the gentlemen roared and neighed.[57]

Only Friedrich listens with seriousness and respect, "indignant at the brutal and unseemly merriment at the old man's expense."

Leaving the Loeffler home in low spirits, he wanders towards his one comfort in life, the Café Birkenreis. As he exits, he speaks to a father and his son David, poor Jews who barely have enough to eat. Eager to confirm with his own eyes the poverty of fellow Jews , he follows them home and hears their sorrowful stories. Originally from Galicia,

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[56] Herzl, *Altneuland*, p.14.
[57] Ibid., p.15.

they had immigrated to Vienna (like so many Jews of the middle to late nineteenth century) in search of a better life. Instead, they found only a perpetuation of their misery. Friedrich does what he can to help –a bit of money and a reprimand to the superintendent to refrain from harassing this poor Jewish family.

Meanwhile, Friedrich replies to a cryptic advertisement that appears in a local Vienna newspaper: "Wanted, an educated desperate young man willing to make a last experiment with his life. Apply to N.O. Body, this office." He meets the fabulously wealthy and eccentric Baron Kingscourt, a self-described misanthrope who suffers from acute disillusionment with humanity, forever failing to live up to its moral and creative potential. His wish is to find a travel partner who will share the rest of his days with him on a remote island far from civilization. Friedrich agrees and is immediately compensated with the hefty sum of five thousands guldens, which he inconspicuously leaves to the poor Galician family.

The two men begin their voyage and as they approach the vicinity of Palestine, they agree to stop to have a curious look land. Their reactions reflect Herzl's own impressions when he himself visited Palestine. Friedrich and Kingscourt note the filth of Jaffa, the desolate landscape, yet Jerusalem in the moonlight is terribly moving. As the two men discuss the state of the land, Friedrich is pessimistic about its development while Kingscourt envisions wonderful possibilities.

> "If this is our land," remarked Friedrich sadly, "it has declined like our people."
>
> "Yes, its pretty bad," agreed Kingscourt. "But much could be done here with afforestation, if half a million young giant cedars were planted—they shoot up like asparagus. This country needs nothing but water and shade to have a very great future.
>
> "And who is to bring water and shade here?"

"The Jews!" [58]

During their brief stay, they visit the colony at Rehobot, where they meet idealistic Jewish pioneers, and observe "well-cultivated fields, stately vineyards, and luxuriant orange groves" - the Zionist enterprise in its infancy. As the two travelers prepare to leave Palestine and retire to their island, again it is Kingscourt who remarks on the potential of a Jewish homeland, not only for the Jews but for all of humankind.

> "With the ideas, knowledge, and facilities that humanity possesses on this 31st day of December, 1902, it could save itself. . . . Everything needful for the making of a better world exists already. And do you know, man, who could show the way? You! You Jews! Just because you're so badly off. You've nothing to lose. You could make the experimental land for humanity. Over yonder, where we were, you could create a new commonwealth. On that ancient soil, Old-New-Land!" [59]

Friedrich doesn't hear all of Kingscourt's words because he suddenly falls asleep and slips off into a dream—Herzl's intentional literary device. Book One ends wistfully: "And dreaming, [Friedrich] sailed through the Red Sea to meet the future." It is Herzl's clever way of showing how sleep dreams are similar to dreams of the imagination. Both have the capability to transport the dreamer to another reality.

As we observed in the introductory material of *Der Judenstaat,* in the introductory chapter of the novel (Book One), Herzl again accomplishes his objective of delineating the contemporary situation of European Jewry. Through various character and scenario portrayals, he describes the necessary elements that reflect the socio-political realities of his time: the hopelessness of the young Jewish middle class,

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[58] Ibid., pp. 42-43.
[59] Ibid., p.50.

Semitism, a class of wealthy Jews that remains socially insecure despite it affluence, Jewish poverty (particularly the "Eastern" Jews), and finally, the beginnings of Zionist ideology with actual settlement in Palestine.

Just as Herzl was satisfied in his treatise to proceed with the exposition of his plan once he had acknowledged the present, so, too, the novel. Book Two begins over twenty years later, as its title attests: "Haifa, 1923." Friedrich and Kingscourt have been living on their secluded island for the entire time, and decide to see "what's become of the vile world." They stop at Port Said on the Suez Canal and the cigar merchant reveals to them that ships traveling between Asia and Europe now consider their preferred route through Palestine. Their curiosity piqued, they sail toward Haifa, unaware of the awesome surprises awaiting them:

> "How changed it all is!" cried Friedrich. "There's been a miracle here." . . . To the south. . . below the much tried city of Haifa on the curve of the shore, splendid things had grown up. Thousands of white villas gleamed out of luxuriant green gardens. All the way from Acco to Mount Carmel stretched what seemed to be one great park. . . . A magnificent city had been built beside the sapphire blue Mediterranean. The magnificent stone dams showed the harbor for what it was: the safest and most convenient port in the eastern Mediterranean. Craft of every shape and size, flying the flags of all the nations, lay sheltered there. [60]

Friedrich's expression of wonder at Haifa's state-of-the-art port is immediately followed by another unexpected occurrence-- meeting David, the poor Jewish boy from Galicia, once again. Twenty-one years later, he indeed has changed into a picture of pride and strength. No longer the wretched lad mired in poverty in Vienna, he now stands before Friedrich as "a tall, vigorous man of thirty, whose sunburnt face was framed in a short black beard." David is eager to show the two gentlemen the "Place of the Nations," a

center of international commerce in Haifa. Friedrich and Kingscourt are again tremendously impressed by the colorful, cosmopolitan scene before their eyes:

> The name ["The Place of the Nations"] was apt not only because the buildings were devoted to international commerce, but because the "Place of the Nations" was thronged with people from all parts of the world. Brilliant Oriental robes mingled with the sober costumes of the Occident, but the latter predominated. There were many Chinese, Persians, and Arabs in the streets, but the city itself seemed thoroughly European. One might easily imagine himself in some Italian port. [61]

The acme of modernity and efficiency is equally striking to the newcomers:

> The brilliant blue of sky and sea was reminiscent of the Riviera, but the buildings were much cleaner and more modern. The traffic, though lively, was far less noisy. The quiet was due partly to the dignified behavior of the Orientals, but also to the absence of draught animals from the streets. There was no hoofbeat of horses, no crackling of whips, no rumbling of wheels. The pavements were as smooth as the footways. Automobiles sped noiselessly by on rubber tires, with only occasional toots of warning. An overhead rumbling [of an electric elevated train] caused the travelers to glance upward.[62]

The above description captures Herzl's desire to create a truly advanced society, appropriating the latest technology. It was also Herzl's desire to transport European culture and luxury to the Jews' State. This wish is fulfilled in the following description of David's home:

> "Have Mrs. Littwak and Miss Miriam meet me downstairs in the drawing room, please," said David to one of the servants. The man hurried up the carpeted stairway of the great hall. The second servant opened the door of the drawing room for them. They entered

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[60] Ibid., p.58.
[61] Ibid., p.61.
[62] Ibid., pp.61-62.

> a high-vaulted room containing magnificent works of art. Rose-colored silk covered the walls. The furniture was of the delicate English style. From the ceiling hung a shimmering electric chandelier of crystal and gold. Plate glass panes let in full daylight through a French door and four windows. The room overlooked a flower-covered parterre with a marble parapet, behind which one caught glimpses of the sapphire-blue sea.[63]

During an elegant lunch, David reveals to his guests that he has become an enormously successful shipbuilder, but that does not mean that he has retreated into a life of egotistical avarice. "Here the individual is neither ground between the millstones of capitalism, nor decapitated by socialistic leveling," explains David. This moment is Herzl's enlightened capitalism expressing itself. David elaborates below on the workings of his shipbuilding enterprise, which is run as a co-operative.

> My employees have a co-operative society which, with my approval and encouragement, is becoming more and more independent of me. At first they had only a consumers' co-operative society, but later they expanded it to include a savings fund. You must remember that our workingmen, as members of the New Society, are automatically insured against accidents, illness, old age, and death. . .
> I have voluntarily made over a share of the firm's profits to the savings fund of my employees. I did not do this out of magnanimity, but for selfish reasons. By this method of profit-sharing, I not only ensured their continued devotion to the firm, but created for myself a favorable opportunity to retire.[64]

That evening, David invites his guests to choose from the abundance of cultural activities in Haifa. Hailing from fin-de-siecle Vienna, where concert halls and theaters assumed the status of temples of worship, Herzl hoped for the presence of the finest

[63] Ibid., p.71.
[64] Ibid., p.91.

European performance companies in the cities of the new nation. But he also wanted to integrate high art forms with Jewish themes, as is shown in the following passage:

> The ladies were already in evening dress. "These gentlemen," said Sarah, "will probably not care to go to plays which they can see as well in London or Berlin or Paris, though, as it happens, there are excellent French and Italian companies in Haifa just now. I should think they would find the Jewish plays more interesting.
>
> "Are there Jewish plays?" queried Friedrich in surprise.
>
> "Haven't you already heard," teased Kingscourt, "that the theater is completely judaized?"
>
> Sarah glanced at the paper. "At the national Theater tonight there is a biblical drama called 'Moses.' "
>
> "A noble theme," remarked David.
>
> "But too serious. There's 'Sabbatai Zvi' at the opera. And at some of the popular theaters there are Yiddish farces. They are amusing but not in very good taste. I should recommend the opera.[65]

As the cultural aspects of Jewish Palestine unfold to the readers, it would be natural for them to question what was the real impetus behind the force of emigration in this futuristic setting. Herzl speaks through David on this matter, who provides "historical" background. David tells of the accelerating pace of social and economic oppression, necessitating massive Jewish emigration to the New Society.

> Jewish merchants were boycotted, Jewish workingmen were starved out, Jewish professional men proscribed . . . Jew-hatred employed its newest as well as its oldest devices. The blood myth was revived; and at the same time, the Jews were accused of poisoning the press, as in the Middle Ages they had been accused

[65] Ibid., p.95.

> of poisoning the wells. As workingmen, the Jews were hated by their Christian fellows for undercutting the wage standards. As businessmen, they were dubbed profiteers. Whether Jews were rich or poor or middle-class, they were hated just the same. . . . They were humiliated everywhere in civil life. It became clear that, in the circumstances, they must either become the deadly enemies of a society that was so unjust to them, or seek out a refuge for themselves. The latter course was taken, and here we are. We have saved ourselves.[66]

In Book Three, titled "The Prosperous Land," Friedrich and Kingscourt accompany David and two other friends as they travel by automobile toward Tiberias. The chapter is an illustration of how the once defunct desert land has been brought to verdant life. The problem of water was solved by harnessing hydroelectric power form "the brooks of the Hermon, the Lebanon, or from the Dead Sea Canal." Agriculture has exploded as an industry, creating demand for Jewish produce all over Europe. Tree nurseries yielded successful afforestation; the large-scale planting of various flower species flowers brought glorious color to the barren land and gave rise to a thriving perfume industry.

Stopping at a railway crossing, David takes the opportunity to boast how the country possesses the most modern and most civilized rail system. Powered by electricity and free from pollution, the cars offer the maximum in comfort and safety. It was indeed a feat of brilliant engineering to build a railway that transverses the entire country, stretching "from Mount Lebanon to the Dead Sea, and from the Mediterranean to the Hauran, " and merges with the major rail lines of Asia Minor and Africa. Constantly thinking macro-economically, the infrastructure designers connected the railroad tracks to key points of industry such as grain elevators and harbors. Moreover,

[66] Ibid., pp.66-67.

the fares are low enough to accommodate even the poorest citizens. Consequently, labor shortages are averted because of the accessibility of transportation.

The raison d'etre of the section dealing with the visit to Neudorf (a small agricultural village) is to show that the Jews' State is not a utopia, that indeed some discord does exist. When Friedrich and company arrive at the village, a public debate takes place, in which two sides argue about the privileges of the very first settlers versus those who emigrated later. An architect and dear friend of David, Mr. Steineck takes the floor to condemn the divisive tactics of a Dr. Geyer, an opportunistic rabbi who is attempting to pit citizen against citizen. Among Geyer's supporters are many of the members of Neudorf whose political campaign (for delegate to the congress) emphasizes distinctions between Jews who came earlier and those who arrived later. He also has stirred up resentment towards the non-Jews in the society. Steineck urges his audience to remember that originally Dr. Geyer was fiercely anti-Zionist before he himself was forced, like all Jews, to emigrate. Undoubtedly, Herzl's creation of the Dr. Geyer character is poetic revenge against those rabbis who refused to support Zionist ideology, employing arguments similar to the ones articulated above in this passage. In July, 1897, Herzl wrote an article about the "Protest Rabbi," referring to them with scathing metaphor:

> These are the people who, themselves sitting in a safe boat, use their oars to batter the heads of those drowning men who seek to clamber up over the sides of their boat. . . So that they may no longer be confused with the good Rabbis, we will call those synagogue employees who protest against the deliverance of their people, the "Protest Rabbis."[67]

[67]Theodor Herzl, "Protestrabbiner" in *Gesammelte Zionistisch Werke*, Vol. 1, p. 169.

Steineck resolutely rejects Dr. Geyer's xenophobia and affirms the commitment to accepting *all* people into the nation, not only Jews.

> ". . . Therefore, an anti-alien slogan is proclaimed. A non-Jew must not be accepted by the New Society. The fewer get a place near the platter, the larger the portion of each. Perhaps you believe that that is to your immediate advantage. But it is not. If you adopt that stupid, narrow-minded policy, the land will go to wrack and ruin. We stand and fall by the principle that whoever has given two years' service to the New Society as prescribed by our rules, and has conducted himself properly, is eligible to membership no matter what his race or creed.[68]

And when David steps up to the podium he admonishes the Neudorf villagers with the following statement:

> Today Neudorf is a garden –an immense splendid garden, where life is good. But all your cultivation is worthless and your fields will revert to barrenness unless you foster liberal ideas, magnanimity, and a love of mankind.[69]

As a result of the speech, David wins the hearts of the villagers and Dr. Geyer loses their votes. The underlying message of the debate in Neudorf is that the new Jewish nation is not immune to small-mindedness and intolerance, but the voice of enlightenment and inclusion is stronger and more persuasive.

A society that embraces all faiths living together in harmony is further symbolized by the guests at David's Passover seder in Book Four. Among David's friends who participate in the ritual are a Muslim, a Russian priest, a Franciscan monk, and an English (presumably Anglican) clergyman. After the festive meal and reading of the *Hagaddah*, Joe Levy, the nation's Director of the Department of Industry tells the story of the remarkable founding of the New Society, relating events that echo many of Herzl's ideas

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[68] Herzl, *Altneuland* p.139.
[69] Ibid., p.153.

in *Der Judenstaat*. The novel ends melodramatically with David's election as president, the news delivered to his mother as she takes her last breath.

In the brief epilogue, Herzl stirs the readers out of the novel's illusory world and brings them back to turn-of-the century Europe. "But, if you do not wish it, all this that I have related to you is and will remain a fable, " he exhorts. Herzl closes with the theme that underscores all his writings on Zionism, the notion that dream and realization are only separated by human will that ultimately leads to action. The closing words eloquently and lyrically express this idea:

> Dreams are not so different from Deeds as some may think. All the Deeds of men are only Dreams at first, and in the end, their Deeds dissolve into Dreams.[70]

Nearly one hundred years after Herzl's death, it is tempting to juxtapose the existing modern state of Israel with Der *Judenstaat* and *Altneuland.* True it is, as mentioned above, that many of Herzl's plans either failed to materialize or contained grave omissions. Yet it is equally remarkable that much of what he envisioned actually did come to pass. We could cite Israel's reclaimed and flourishing landscape, its burgeoning high-tech industry, music and art of world class standard, ultramodern infrastructure, — as but a few examples, not to mention the existence of the nation against all odds. A debate about Herzl's vision vis a vis the State of Israel today could continue ad infinitum. What *is* undeniable is that this acculturated Jew from Vienna stood at the vanguard of a movement that caused a shift in consciousness of world Jewry as it struggled with anti-Semitism. Once Herzl dared to share his dream of a modern Jewish nation, waves of longing were unleashed among his brethren. Because of his courage and his imagination, the Jewish people would be forever changed.

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[70] Ibid., p.295.

Conclusion

In the Jewish collective consciousness, there exists a deep awareness of the chasm between reality and possibility. It is no coincidence that a people whose very origins were rooted in iconoclasm would give rise to literature and historical figures that would challenge religious, social, and political establishments. And it is no accident that dreams and visions would be the means for this people to express many of its highest ideals and most profound yearnings. Dreams and visions, by definition, transcend concrete reality and allow the dreamer or visionary a temporary glimpse into a world beyond this one. After envisioning what is possible, an inevitable longing to fulfill the vision arises.

I have argued in this thesis that the patriarch Jacob, the prophet Isaiah, and Theodor Herzl all had dreams or visions that transported them to a new consciousness. Each of these figures had a remarkably different understanding of God and what it means to be of the House of Israel. Yet each demonstrated what has been a driving force in Jewish literature and history since the beginnings of *Am Yisrael* – an unwillingness to accept the world in its present, unredeemed state. Their dreams and visions were an expression of their defiance.

When Jacob awoke from his dream, when Isaiah emerged from one of his visions, when Herzl paused from writing a chapter in *Der Judenstaat* or *Altneuland* --- none of these men were the same. The longing to bridge reality and possibility would not let them rest.

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