

Speaker 1:

Let me just start by talking about Herzl and Eastern European Jewry. It raises the question of course, what we mean by East European Jewry. I take it that means Jews who lived within the lands of the former Polish Lithuanian commonwealth, but if we think about Herzl's own origins, they are very much more in the Habsburg Empire in Moravia, Silesia, Bohemia. His own paternal grandfather's ancestors moved in the 18th Century to an area. Today it's Serbia. It's an area that historically was between Habsburg and Turkish rule. His grandfather was from Semlin, which is now a suburb of Belgrade. So, it's certainly a traditional background, not an Eastern European one per se. But I want to begin with this discussion about the title. A Simple Son. Was it a simple son or...

Speaker 2:

Messiah.

Speaker 1:

Messiah, Simple Son. So the Simple Son idea the [inaudible 00:00:56] in the Passover Haggadah. The son who really is Judaically ignorant. This is a complicated question about Herzl. To what extent he was a Jewish ignoramus, or an [foreign language 00:01:06] as they would say in Hebrew or in Yiddish. He grew up in the Tabakgasse that is Dohany utca in Budapest and he lived in... The great synagogue was completed one year before he was born, 1859, just before he was born in 1860. Herzl story times started having gone to the synagogue with his father but the level of his knowledge of Judaism is actually something of a mystery. Herzl did go to a Jewish day school, he would call it when he was six, seven, eight, nine years old. He did learn some Hebrew but we all know, if anyone of you went to a Jewish day school, one considered many years in a Jewish day school and learn absolutely nothing and remember even less.

Speaker 1:

And his parents seemed to have sent him to the school because of his academic repetition rather than it's Judaic content. Herzl mother, Jeanette, inherited her father's strange and anti-clericalism. Although, it is true that her own uncle Samuel Bullets did immigrate to Jerusalem, most likely out of piety As a child and Samuel Herzl grandfather, Jakob, had a traditional Jewish upbringing but as an adult, Jacob Herzl's father really his approach to religion was entirely perfunctory. Sorry, Simon, was the grandfather, Jakob was Herzl father.

Speaker 1:

So, is there traditional Jewish background here? I mean, Herzl grandfather may have been influenced by Judah Alkalai who was a rabbi in his community and Judah Alkalai was a proto-Zionist deeply religious figure. But the odd thing is that Herzl grandfather visited the family in Budapest in the end of every year until he died when Herzl was 19. And yet, Herzl never refers to any of this in his writings. And Herzl documented himself quite thoroughly. Herzl wrote abundantly about himself. He kept a massive diary from 1895 until his death. He also kept an unpublished diary. The diary that we are all familiar with, was intended for publication from the start. He even wrote at the very beginning, I will publish this diary so that people will know what I have suffered. It was like Rousseau's confessions. I suffered before I even knew to think. But he also kept an unpublished youth diary, when he was in his early 20s which is filled with all kinds of interesting stuff. And Herzl wrote over 6000 autographs. Letters of Herzl have survived. 100s of Zionist essays and some 300 [foreign language 00:03:41] that is lengthy journalistic pieces. He

never refers to his grandfather at all nor does he refer to any kind of Judaic education per se. He doesn't refer to a bar mitzvah. He refers to a bar mitzvah gift but he never refers to the bar mitzvah in itself.

Speaker 1:

There are historians who spilled a great deal of ink as to whether not Herzl actually had a bar mitzvah. It seems like Budapest was suffering a cholera outbreak in May of 1873 which would have led people to shan congregating in public spaces. His father had suffered a financial reversal shortly before that time, perhaps the family didn't want to have an expensive party. But there was a family member who wrote in 1910, that Herzl did read haftarah and gave a speech in Dohany utca synagogue but Herzl never mentioned any of this. Herzl was a man who loved drama and he loved to perform and I find it hard to believe that he would never even acknowledge this [inaudible 00:04:36] performance. A chance to perform in an Adorian public.

Speaker 1:

By the way, I looked at the Torah Portion for that particular weekend, it should have been [foreign language 00:04:46] which would have been a very weird one for a son raising an anticlerical family. It's a Torah Portion that deals with leprosy, skin diseases and ritual impurity. All through it might have been inappropriate in a time of a cholera epidemic. I'm not quite sure.

Speaker 2:

It's a tough one.

Speaker 1:

It's a very hard one.

Speaker 2:

Very hard one.

Speaker 1:

And his mother would have been very unhappy with it. So, the point is that, a man who documented himself so well, appears to have learnt very little about the Jewish tradition as a boy. And Herzl himself, in a famous exchange with the chief rabbi of the Vienna Moritz Gudemann, Herzl himself said, I am too ignorant to Judaism to supply you with texts supporting my Zionist program. And when he did quote biblical verses in his diaries, he quotes it in the Latin [inaudible 00:05:34] and never from the Hebrew. He had excellent Greek and Latin. He had flawless French, good English although halting, decent Italian and very good Greek and Latin but no Hebrew to speak of. And smattering of Yiddish but just words here and there.

Speaker 1:

It's interesting that Herzl claims much later in life when he was in his early 30s, he told his first biographer, the Hebrewic writer [inaudible 00:06:01] that he had a dream when he was a young man When he was about 13. That he beheld Moses and Moses took him and said to the Messiah, the Messiah appeared in the dream and Moses said, this is the child for whom we have prayed. Now, this is very interesting that Herzl had this dream that he remembered correctly after some 25 years. Did he really use the terms like the dream says, here's the man of dreams? Did Herzl really know the Joseph

narrative, a man dreams or for this child I have prayed. Sure you all know perfectly well it comes from the account of between Hannah and the priest Eli before the birth of Hannah's son, Samuel.

Speaker 1:

So, I don't really know what is going on here. It seems like Herzl did not have any kind of traditional Jewish upbringing or knowledge to speak of but its hard to say. Memory over time fades and sharpens and reconfigures experience. And one thing I'm trying to do in the biography, which makes it a little bit different from [inaudible 00:06:58] I'm not operating under a [inaudible 00:07:02] of suspicion. I'm not assuming that everything Herzl writes in his diaries is self-fashioning or a lie. In fact, I'm not sure Herzl ever lies. He stretches the truth, he embellishes. But I'm not sure if I've ever caught him in a plain faced lie. So, I'm trying to appreciate the complexity of all humans but particularly this one.

Speaker 1:

Now, to get more to our specific subject. Did Herzl, when he began to turn into a former Jewish Nationalism, have some awareness of East European Jewry? Their plight, their physical suffering, their economic suffering. And I want to make clear that we can't talk about Herzl becoming a Zionist because Herzl did not even know the words Zionism which was neologism, Condoleon 1891. When he began to move to Jewish nationalism in 1895 he had never even heard the word or so it seems. He experienced the psychological crisis in 1895, brought up by many factors and the one factor that was not present was the Dreyfus trial. Historians have for 30 years been saying that Herzl was not turned to Zionism because of the Dreyfus trial but people ignored it and say it was the Dreyfus trial.

Speaker 1:

And that's interesting by the way. The need that people have for this earth shattering events to have turned Herzl into a Zionist. Herzl himself wrote this in 1899. That the Dreyfus trial made him into a Zionist and I'm not sure it's a lie. I think that it is a kind of a rethinking. People haven't looked at the dates exactly not when the Dreyfus trial happened but when publicity for the Dreyfus trial first hit the newspapers. It was quite a bit before the trial. My theory is that Herzl was finishing his play The New Ghetto during the 19 days. He wrote the whole play in 18 days. The second half of that period is when there was abandoned anti-semitic pre-trial publicity. I'm not entirely certain. It's possible that Herzl was influenced by the anti-semitic redirects surrounding him while he was writing his play The New Ghetto which preceded the Dreyfus trail.

Speaker 1:

And in the retrospective 1989, it's completely possible that he reordered his recollections. I'm not saying its a complete falsehood but the things that seemed to have really got Herzl crazy in 1895, had nothing to do with either east European Jewry, not programs, not anything specific in the Eastern Europe nor Dreyfus. It was events in Vienna, the election in May of that year of the Christian socials and Karl Lueger was mayor in that city. And something the people I haven't noticed, is that just as that time when Herzl experienced crisis, he was being recalled from Paris to Vienna to finish his term as Paris correspondent for the Neue Freie Presse, Central Europe's most prestigious news paper to become the newspaper's [inaudible 00:09:52] or [inaudible 00:09:53] editor.

Speaker 1:

Herzl was returning to Vienna, home of an antisemitic mayor and city council but also a terrible marriage to a wife who hid the spies. I mean the two of them recreating correspondence about his marriage, has Messiah or Simple Son Theodor Herzl and East Eur... (Completed
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been one of the actually horrifying aspect of the book project. And returning to a life that I suspect, I can't prove it, that the timing of the crisis had something to do with personal factors as well as political ones. He's was thinking before that about mass conversions of Jews to Christianity or about Jews becoming social revolutionist. The pride of Eastern European Jewry does not appear once in his diary entries of 1895 when a period of three weeks, he experienced what we must call a [inaudible 00:10:45]. He didn't sleep, he didn't eat, he wrote hundreds and hundreds of pages. And if anybody here has read the diaries for this period, he was insane. He was approaching psychosis. And he was writing in the diary that he feared that he was going insane. And he was explaining all the symptoms of a maniac and this was something that had to do with many sources. Eastern Europe was not one of them.

Speaker 1:

Only after the mania fades when now in the fall of 1895, Herzl writes in his diary, in Odesa there lived a man named Pinsker, who fought for the same course. His writings are said to be worthwhile. I shall read them if I have time. So you've never heard of Leon Pinsker, you've never heard of the Hovevei Zion. Now, [inaudible 00:11:28] was writing a book on Lilian Bloom. Lilian Bloom has told me quite emphatically that Herzl was lying. That he had [inaudible 00:11:34] Again, since we have no proof either way, I'm going on a certain [inaudible 00:11:40] that I have never found in Herzl bald-face lies. So, [inaudible 00:11:46] has sort of reworkings or embellishments.

Speaker 1:

Now, there's a strange thing though in the diary entries of June 1895, where he never mentions the plight of Eastern European Jewry. He does repeatedly refer to the rabbi of Sadigura, he refers to the [foreign language 00:12:02] or the Hasidic rabbi of Sadigura in today's Ukraine, formally in Bukovina. But when he is referring to this, he is always referring to in a triptych [foreign language 00:12:13] What he is saying and he writes this quite exclusively, is that he's fascinated by miracles and the kind of power that the miraculous can exert over the public. And that he sees the Jewish state as the future Sadigura. Herzl did not use the term miracle on the center of a divine aggravation of natural law. He used to turn miraculous in the sense of all inspiring. An artifact that will have a catalyzing affect and create awe. And that the Jewish state will become a site of secular pilgrimage. He writes about Sadigura, he says in the diary, this is like [inaudible 00:12:53] 1895.

Speaker 1:

The [foreign language 00:12:55] of Sadigura is to be brought over and installed as something about the bishop of a province which tells you something about Herzl and the way his mind works. Like in The Jewish State where he writes, in every village the spies of our synagogues will be seen from afar. You get a sense of what his cultural references are. So, Sadigura for him is not a real place. It's a symbol of a kind of a energizing power. Now, you might think, okay fine, that's June 1895, he doesn't even know what the words Zions means. Okay. What about we get to February of 1896. He actually has turned these crazy thoughts that were written down in his diary and his produced a pamphlet known as The Jewish state. It's saying, here he's going to deal in some systematic way with the plight of the Eastern European Jewry.

Speaker 1:

Herzl's Zionism though, as expressed in the [foreign language 00:13:49] although it mentions Russia, it is very clear that Russia is far from central to his analysis. I'm quoting Herzl now in The Jewish state. " In Russia, imposts are levied on Jewish villages. In Romania, a few people are put to death. In Germany,

they get a good beating occasionally. In Austria, anti-semitism exercised terrorism over all public life. In Algeria, they're traveling agitators. In Paris, the Jews are shot out of the so called, best social circles and excluded from the clubs. Shades of anti-jewish feeling are innumerable but this need not be an attempt to make out the doleful category of Jewish hardships."

Speaker 1:

He's talking about a universal problem. Jews everywhere have problems. His particular problems are social snobbery, the assault that he received in Budapest, in Vienna to a much lesser extent in Paris. He writes in *The Jewish State*, I do not intend to arouse sympathetic emotions on our behalf, that would be foolish and futile. I content myself with putting the following questions to the Jews. Listen to the question he is asking, it's not about life and death. Is it not true that in countries where we live in perceptible numbers, the position of Jewish lawyers, doctors, technicians, teachers and employees, his really meaning like the state employees, becomes more intolerable? Is not the Jewish middle class seriously threatened? Is it not true that the passions of the mob are insighted against our wealthy people? He's not talking about programs in Russia. Is it not true that our poor endure greater sufferings than any other proletariat? There's a little bit of nod perhaps in Eastern European.

Speaker 1:

So, what he's really writing about is a kind of generic antisemitism but his focuses are much more on Central Europe than on Eastern European. There are brief references to Russia in the [inaudible 00:15:43] he talks about, in the Southern Russia where Jews do farm the land, antisemitism doesn't disappear. But that's about it. It's been conventional in the literature on Herzl to present to him as a kind of a tightly wound, emotionally cold, Western Jew, trying to write for an audience that is largely East European and that kind of needs a process of emotional discipline. How controlled Western Jew and a kind of emotionally passionate [inaudible 00:16:17] Eastern Jewry. I'm not sure about this at all. It is true that Herzl when he planned the first Zionist congress, was excessively meticulous. Planning the limitation of how long anyone could sneak, the famous opening Gala on the evening opening event where everyone had to wear an evening dress. His exclusive directive, this is Herzl. "We will talk without emotion. Without anyone suspecting that we are seeking tears of pity from our enemies. We have come to terms with our situation." I don't think this has anything to do with Herzl as a Western European Jew versus Eastern European Jews. This has to do with Herzl's persona because my own biography is a very psychological one.

Speaker 1:

Herzl as a young boy even from the age of 12, 13, 14 was obsessed with the control of his emotions. He suffered a terrible loss when he was a young man. He fell in love with a girl, she rejected his love and then she died. And then his sister whom he really was in love with for the rest of his life. I mean, it's a creepy story. He had terrible losses when he was a child. And he even wrote about this exclusively in his early writings that he will affect a kind of icy cone. He will never let his emotions show. And in his non-Zionist writings, which extremely revealing his short stories, his literally pieces. The heroes are often men struggling with their emotions. Struggling to conquer their passions. The tune that Herzl uses, over and over again in his writing is icy cone. I shall display icy cone after his sister dies. After his best friend [inaudible 00:17:56] commits suicide, Herzl writes I shall maintain a laughing irony of the world, an icy cone. So this is long before he becomes a Zionist, this is not east versus west.

Speaker 1:

Then we get to the Zionist congresses and beyond. If you look at Herzl speeches at the first five Zionist congresses, the word Russia barely appears. Now, you might say, that was tactical because Herzl was concerned that the talk about Russian oppression of the Jews openly at the Zionist congresses, could have invited mistreatment of Russian Jewry who would see the Zionist project as potentially threatening for the Russian government. Perhaps, Prisker did not keep his ally Max Nodel from lambasting the Zionist government in Jeremiah terms as only Max Nodel could, time and time again. Herzl awareness of Eastern European Jewry then was very gradual. It was a gradual process. It began in late 1895 in Vienna, in Prague, he got to know Eastern European Jewish University students and then in the planning of the east of the first Zionist congress itself, he began to get to know them as individuals. He learned of the [foreign language 00:19:08]. He learned of the East European Zionist Movement and he developed a certain admiration for them.

Speaker 1:

But what's interesting is, and I've been asked this question several times and I've really looked into it. One does not find in Herzl writings the kind of romanticization or orientalizing of Eastern European Jewry. That one can encounter many central European Zionists. The Jewel [inaudible 00:19:33] for example which had many articles celebrating East European Jewish culture as authentic and traditional and so forth, has barely an echo in Herzl. It is true that one of the heroes of Herzl novel, Old New Land, published in 1902 is himself a stereotypical Eastern European Jew, David Littwak, a straddling boy who the main character in avatar Herzl, Friedrich Lowenberg saves from poverty and grows up to become a leader of the new Jewish societies community and conveniently marries character deliberately model of along the line of Herzl sister. So, it's a very weird thing that again we can get into more down the road.

Speaker 1:

I don't think that Herzl romanticized Eastern European Jews. They exasperated him but I'm not sure they exasperated him as Eastern European Jews or simply as people. For example, when Herzl went to Palestine, he only went once in 1898 for a very brief period. He didn't like it one bit. He was ill when he got to Jerusalem. He was after the sabbath and he was running a fever and he wanted to take a fiacre to his hotel but he was with [inaudible 00:20:50] and other traditional Eastern European Jew who demurred and so he kind of grumbled that he had to walk the whole way to his hotel. And Herzl wrote in his diary, how much superstition and fanaticism on every side but I will not be afraid of these fanatics. He was referring to his colleagues.

Speaker 1:

And what's really interesting is there are writing that I found from the American Jewish Press from the 1920s saying that, when Herzl got to Jerusalem on the sabbath, although he was ill, he insisted on walking the entire way to the hotel in [inaudible 00:21:21]. His own diary written in the moments was, I hate these people. I'm sick. I want to take a carriage. My own sense of Herzl is that he did not view of the world in the east west dichotomy to which the historiography has become more accustomed but much more in terms of allies and enemies. Most of his rage was directed against the simulationists Western European Jews and the big Jewish bankers who did not help him. [inaudible 00:21:48] so forth.

Speaker 1:

If you look at his considerable correspondence with David Wolffsohn who is one of his allies in the Zionist Movement. David Wolffsohn [inaudible 00:22:02] Which ones have I missed? Who became the president of the Zionist organization after Herzl died. The whole issue, east versus west never comes up

even remotely. And I was looking for it. Hundreds and hundreds of letters in between them. It's all about loyalty and command. Wolffsohn was among the very few people with whom Herzl as an adult was ever on a due level of the informal due. And I don't know if that's a sign of affection of a sign of kind of parent-child relationship because Herzl was always on his z level with Max Nordau who was his closest friend in the Zionist movement. So there's something odd going on here.

Speaker 1:

In letters with David Wolffsohn, when Herzl was in a good mood, he writes about him as absolutely devoted. He writes, I'm a leader whom others must follow. And there's a great letter he writes to Wolffsohn. Once again it has been shown why I am the leader even though amongst you there are many better men than I mainly because I do not shit in my trousers. This is the author [inaudible 00:23:05] writing to David Wolffsohn. He was dismissive of Wolffsohn of issues having to do with finance or the Jewish Colonial Trust which was the Zionist bank. There's a great line that he writes to Wolffsohn, I wrote it in German, ill translate. I don't want you to have anything to do with bank business. You can't possibly understand it and therefore I will not give you anymore freedom of movement that you currently have even if you stand on your head.

Speaker 1:

Okay, so this is kind of peremptory style and then as Herzl approaches the end of his short life, Herzl died at 44 of a congenital heart defect, Herzl accuses David Wolffsohn of betrayal and then his famous last note to Wolffsohn, don't do anything stupid while I'm dead, which is humorous but beautiful. Okay. You can say fine, here is Herzl the Viennese Jew dismissing his kind of downgraded East European colleague. Not really, Herzl letters to Joseph Cowen who was from the United Kingdom or [Zenglo 00:24:09] they're just as nasty. And the fact is that the man whom Herzl admired most was scattered across the map. Max Nordau in Paris or the Coalition Jew, Alexander Malmarek, a bacteriologist who Herzl so intensely admired. He wrote once, I love him more than any other. I wonder about that a little bit too.

Speaker 1:

Again, the east versus west dichotomy is so ingrained into the literature. I think it doesn't necessarily apply for Herzl who thought much more in instrumental terms. The Jewish question was a universal question. So when Herzl writes about the [foreign language 00:24:49] it's about a need for Jews everywhere to change. And not necessarily to become productive or to work the soil, the certain things that will become a classic part of East European Zionist ideology. He was not really that into the whole productivization transformation. It was much more about nobility and honor. That the Jews must regain their nobility and honor. If you found a Jew, he thought and embodied that he was appreciative of that Jewish person regardless of where they were from.

Speaker 1:

At one point in 1901, he writes as Eastern European Jews as "not Caliban but Prospero". Now that is not romanticization. Prospero was after all a highly cultured literate figure in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. I think this is a better sense of where Herzl stands views of the Eastern European Jewry. Herzl saw himself as above the frame, above cans of east versus west. And we see this in already 1898 when he plans to write a novel about Moses. Now, this may have had just a tad autobiographical revelation here. "A tall vital superior man with a sense of humor. The drama how he has shaken inwardly and hold himself upright by his will. He is the leader because he does not want to be. Everything gives way before him

because he has no personal desire. He does not care about the goal but only about the migration. Education through migration. The aging Moses recognizes [foreign language 00:26:23] the calf, always the same procession of slaves. He is exhausted by all of this and yet he has to lure them on with ever renewed vigor. It is the tragedy of a leader. Any leader who is himself not a misleader."

Speaker 1:

So, this is my sense of Eastern European Jewry that perhaps we've exaggerated the distinctions somewhat. Now, Eastern European Jewry in Hartselle. Eastern European Jews didn't know what to make him. On one level they were afraid. They were afraid that any kind of bold Zionist [Dahmash 00:27:00] coming from Central or Western Europe will endanger the positions of Jews in the Russian empire, which made perfect sense. So this is why when Herzl called the first Zionist congress there were voices like [foreign language 00:27:11] who wrote " the congress should never have been convened at all. Now that it has been convened, we must prevent any harm being done to our own people and to the [foreign language 00:27:23] that is the Jewish community in adman Palestine which they also did not want to see threatened by some sort of bold public plan to acquire all the Palestine. And yet the fact is that half of all of the delegates of the first Zionist congress were either from the Russian empire or the eastern portions of the dual monarchy.

Speaker 1:

And Herzl himself adapted to the new situation. He reconfigure the Zionist executive right after the first Zionist congress. So that so called East European Jews that is Galicia, Bucovina Russia and Romania, will get half of all the elected seats in the Zionist executive. So, I mentioned that Herzl himself didn't really divide Jews in his own personal thoughts between east and west. The alliances and divisions in the Zionist movement itself were not necessarily east and west. If we look at 1897 and beyond. So consider for example the Zionist program, the so called Basel program, adopted in the first Zionist congress. There was a division between those who clearly wanted Jewish statehood and those who wanted a much more subdued statement of Zionist intentions. A home guaranteed by international law that was one form that was proposed. The final form was a home guaranteed by public law which has no meaning but Herzl made it up. The term that the other Zionist wanted a [foreign language 00:28:51] but he substituted... [foreign language 00:28:54] my lawyer friends told me it doesn't make much sense. But the idea was to soft pedal the notion of demand for the Jewish Statehood.

Speaker 1:

The fact is, Herzl did not want to proclaim the desire of statehood. [inaudible 00:29:06] who was from Ukraine, was very much a maximalist. So it's not a clear east west divide. Similarly, during the great controversy in 1902, regarding Herzl's novel Alteneuland, in which he had this so furist review written by Ahad Ha'am, who dismissed the book as a kind of assimilation as fantasy locking Judaic content because it has no Hebrewic culture. It's basically a Vienna or of Berlin. As Ahad Ha'am writes, "The goal of this Jewish society are to benefit the human race. How would a negro of my land be any different from a Zionist one. I believe it is no exaggeration to say that a few superficial changes would Africanize Herzl book entirely."

Speaker 1:

The fact is, Herzl defenders could be found in East European as well as the Western Europe. [inaudible 00:30:07] defended him. [inaudible 00:30:08] defend him. Who wrote to Herzl don't pay any attention to the half asian Yeshiva types. This is a jew from kyeth. Sammy Gronemann, who is himself a German

Jew very funny, he wrote, but I had an arm if face to face with Achilles he would only see his heel. And the fact is that the controversy was more than simply an east west affair. In fact, Herzl got letters of support and Nordau got letters of support. When Nordau took Herzl side in this controversy from [foreign language 00:30:41] It came from many different places. The real problem that East European had with Herzl, was the boldness of his Zionist program which frightened them and they didn't know what to make of him because he was assimilated with Western European Jew and they admired the fact that they had come from nowhere as it was and was embracing his Jewish identity. They admired it but they also found him to be rather superficial. So for example this is [inaudible 00:31:16] March of 1896. This is very interesting.

Speaker 1:

Herzl passed most of his years without Tohar. Without any knowledge that toughed upon his people and his religion and Herzl was a European from top to toe. Entirely and completely. An educated and enlightened man but with scarcely a sign of Jewish spirit like a dry bone, like a withered limb in a body of his people. Will dried bones such as these come back to life? Shall spirit come back to them and ye shall they live. I'm trying to translate the rk Hebrew to rk English. The article then goes on to say, Herzl returned with complete penitence. His soul shall kindle hot coals. His burns with the heat of the love of his people. In the place where penitence stand even the completely righteous do not stand. This line is from [inaudible 00:32:05] shows that many times in East European writing about Herzl. What's really interesting is, there is not one mention in these writing from 1896 about the Dreyfus trial. It's all about Vienna. [inaudible 00:32:18] Its as source of evidence people haven't used to try to figure out what role Dreyfus man may not have played.

Speaker 1:

So [inaudible 00:32:26] was sympathetic and yet the article was on to say that his dreams were too grand, they're too dangerous. The state will arise slowly and in time. Nahum Sokolow, will go along to become one of Herzl greatest admirers writes in Ha-Tsefirah in 1996, Herzl was "Viennese feuilletonist who is playing at diplomacy." This is also in August just before the Zionist congress. Circle of rights. To listen to Herzl advocates, one would think that a genius had suddenly discovered that the Jewish people were still alive without knowing it and needed to be informed of that fact. Or that there is a land called Israel that might need to be rejuvenated. So this is what happened before the Zionist congress. But then the Zionist happens and this is where many Eastern European Jews I know changed their views of Herzl radically. It really had to do with Herzl charisma.

Speaker 1:

Herzl was the classic the bearing charismatic. The bearing charismatic arises in a time of chaos. Traditional authority structures have collapsed. Ever this time it's the state which no longer protects the Jews and rabbinic authority which is in Tigris. The charismatic figure rises from the outside, the Moses figure, right? Arising from the outside of traditional centers of Jewish power and claims authority to act as their agent. [foreign language 00:33:58] in Roman law was very much like the biblical judge. Herzl takes on a task which in Isaiah Berlin's wording is intercedingly incorporable and assumes a kind of authority that people admire because of its sheer audacity. And this is what one sees over and over again. When you read the recordings of Jews from Galicia, from Bucovina, throughout the Russian empire in the wake of the first Zionist congress.

Speaker 1:

Description of Herzl appearance. The biblical appearance. The beard, the complexion, the majesty of his voice, Unfortunately there were no voice recordings of Herzl and his eyes. Over and over again, people referred to his eyes. This is one quotation. Actually this was a Jew from [inaudible 00:34:47]. The eyes, large and circular, darkly tinted yet possessed of a mysterious light. Herzl eyes are of enormous express of power. In speech, he lost himself in definite distance as if he saw things that were insensible to us. And then the next moment he fixed his forceful gaze upon his interlocutor. [inaudible 00:35:10] described Herzl as "the Hebrew type at its purest with a rare charm and oriental grace with two dark eyes burning like coals." [foreign language 00:35:24] Beautiful biblical phrase.

Speaker 1:

The magnetic power of Herzl. So, Herzl projects through his voice, his face, his eyes and his height. This is a very interesting thing because over and over again Eastern European Jews referred to Herzl as tall and Herzl stood up to his full majesty. Head and shoulders above all and stature and in spirit. This is what [inaudible 00:35:54] wrote. How tall was he? He was five foot eight. However, I'm a historian, maybe that was tall at the time. Let's go look it up. There are people who have too much time on their hands, who have calculated the average height of men born in Budapest in 1860. The average height was between 5'5 and 5'6. He was taller than average. I'm 6'2, I think the average height for an American male now is 5'9, 5'10. So I'm taller than average. I'm not a giant. I'm four inches or so taller than the average. I mean, Herzl was two or three inches... He was tall-ish. And how do we know how tall he was? It's on his French Police certificate when he registered in Paris at the time that he went to work for the Neue Freie Presse but he impressed people with his majesty.

Speaker 1:

And just to get a couple of examples of how quickly change once they actually met the guy. Nahum Sokolow, was being a bit hesitant then he meets Herzl and he writes, I saw before me a man tall of stature. A man of a handsome serious and thoughtful visage. It was his ways to stare directly into the face of his conversation partner in his piercing hawk like glance in his most beautiful eyes. From the first moment there was the impression of an extraordinary personality. An element of suffering in his exterior form. His head was large and somewhat oval. So wondrously symmetrical. A blend... This is a 19th century guy so shapes of heads matter. A blend of strength and grace. He resembled the ancient Assyrian kings on the ancient tablets. The similarity strengthen immeasurably by his beautiful black beard and a hint of a smile flickered upon his lips. His hands were large and powerful.

Speaker 1:

You get the point that Herzl simply bold over people. Even Menachem Ussishkin who is a nasty person. If you've done any work in science historiography, had a huge ego and even he had to admit as crusty as he was and as skeptical as he was, he writes of Herzl but nobody writes. He will bring enormous benefit to our movement. There is no doubt that his enchanting personality will attract all the Jews of Russia and perhaps the Jews of the west as well. So Ussishkin is a little bit more distanced. He said, I'm not bold over but will be useful for everybody else. Now, I'll talk about just a few people. You might say but yeah but what about larger number of Zionists leave alone larger number of Jews.

Speaker 1:

The first Zionist congress, I admit it was a handpicked gathering of 250 odd delegates and maybe about 100 observers but half of them were Eastern European. Herzl walks in the room and its pandemonium. There were 15 minutes of applause. Women fainted. Men kissed his hand. And this was spontaneous.

Herzl tried to plan everything. Good luck trying to plan this sort of thing. [inaudible 00:38:58] was a Russian Zionist, journalist wrote, "This is no longer the elegant doctor Herzl of Vienna. It is a royal descendant of David risen from the grave." [inaudible 00:39:08] could not prevent himself from standing and shouting, [00:39:10] against his own will. [00:39:12] long live the king.

Speaker 1:

Now, this means that Herzl was very much a creation of his following because not everyone by the way was taken by Herzl. There were some non-Jews who were taken by him. He had certain followers. But the first time The New York Times ever wrote about Herzl, they had done an interview with him. And the interview says, Herzl was a kind of an interesting guy. He has a program which is interesting but not very practicable. And I noticed where they put the story in the new york times. It was in section called tales of the times. It's where you put little funny [inaudible 00:39:51]. It was right in between a story about the difficulty the king of Bulgaria was having hiring competent assassins. And the story about an unusual friendship in the central park menagerie between a rhinoceros and a cat. That's where they put Herzl. He was kind of a curiosity. There was a myth created by a Zionist historiography that the world press conference Zionist congress. I've done the work. Almost all the journalist they were Jewish journalist working for the Hebrew papers or they were for the three european wire agencies. You'll find stories about the first Zion congress in hundreds of papers. They all came from writers of [inaudible 00:40:31]

Speaker 1:

So, what are orthodox Jews though? Well, its complicated. Certainly they were great many. I'm sure the vast majority of orthodox jewish figures of rabbis detested Herzl. They detested him. This is rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveitchik in 1899. [00:40:53] May the name of evil doers rot. That's pretty clear. The Lubavitch rabbi 1904 Sholom DovBer Schneerson, they projectively have steered up on getting together on their own initiative will never lead to anything and all of their efforts and intrigues will be of no avail against God's will. That's to be expected. What's odd, is that Herzl encountered admiration from some Orthodox rabbis and not only those who were Zionist. As there were Orthodox jewish Zionist who wrote about his strength character, his nobility. It was really odd as even Isaac Breuer of the Agudat Yisrael. Anti-Zions wrote of Herzl only an assimilated Jew, only someone so removed from the Jewish tradition would have the [inaudible 00:41:41] to call upon the leaders of the world to restore the Jews. And he admired Herzl for his nobility of character, his integrity, his honesty and this time showed up over and over again.

Speaker 1:

He thought that his course was mistaken but Herzl himself was a man of great honor. And then Zionist rabbis all the more so. I mean the future Mayor Barry lawn at that the time Berlin, writes, Herzl must be seen not as a person but rather as a chapter of history. What [inaudible 00:42:10] would have called the world historical persona. So Eastern European Jews could adore him, they could hate him, they could also view him as competition and they could view him with division and then we get to the [inaudible 00:42:24] themselves. Zionist whom he [inaudible 00:42:26]. People liked Menachem Ussishkin who famously wrote, Herzl greatest efficiency will be his most useful asset. He doesn't know the first thing about Jews. Herzl came out of no where convened the Zionist congresses, ruled autocratically and incurred a great deal of pleasure from [foreign language 00:42:47]

Speaker 1:

They found him high handed, autocratic and so forth but ultimately they were jealous because he was the one who was able to appeal to the masses and the best example of this is Herzl's inferior avatar

Nathan Birnbaum. Nathan Birnbaum was sort of like Herzl had an uncharismatic sloppy cousin. He had looked a little bit like Herzl. He had a beard but nothing quite worked. If you look at a photograph, just google Nathan Birnbaum. He desperately wanted to be Herzl. He wanted a job in Vienna working in the Zion central office. Herzl gave him a job since he could not stand it any longer and sucked him after. And Birnbaum desperately wanted to be a man in charge but he simply did not have an organization ability and Herzl may have been no theorist. Herzl was not a political thinker at all. He was a fantastic organizer. He had an indefatigable work ethic and he was incredibly efficient. These are qualities that the Hovevei Zion were not known for.

Speaker 1:

So, there were reasons why they disliked him but ultimately they could not supplant him. And this is why when Herzl died, even Ussishkin, who never really liked the guy, wrote, our people as rich with heroes across the march of time. But we have only had heroes of the spirit. Great empathy, ethics or science or art. We have not had a national hero. And Lo! Herzl's light shone upon us. Since the days of Nehemiah, we have not known a hero so great in political deeds as he such that the entire nation was to sanctify his memory. He was a revered symbol in the days of our revival. He is the hero without whom no people can create for itself its collective life in a political sense. And this of course was Herzl's great contribution. Herzl was the man who was like Moses.

Speaker 1:

Ahad Ha'am wrote the famous essay called Moses in which Ahad Ha'am compared himself to Moses. Ahad Ha'am thought of himself as the man who bravely tells the truth. The lonely man who sticks to his principles and suffers consequences. I'm afraid Ahad Ha'am] was wrong. Clearly in the Zionist Movement for Eastern European Jewry or for those who were willing to accept the principles of Zionism, Herzl was the self-effacing, self-sacrificing, nationally figurative figure came to Moses. Herzl was very much then a messianic figure, not to spite being the Simple Son at that time but precisely because he was the simple son or the [inaudible 00:45:20].

Speaker 1:

And this is the Herzl of Eastern European Jewish memory as Martin Buber wrote. And I finish with this, in his obituary to Herzl. He projected something captivating which could scarcely be resisted. The people fantasized over legend about him. Bathed his actions in the half light of mystery, drew his forehead with a messianic gleam. He projected the image of a sun-like harmoniously rock phenomenal. Knowing doubted the purity of his being, the loyalty of his devotion, the integrity of his action. Herzl could not be celebrated as a Jewish figure because he was so far from Jewishness. Wrote Buber. But he was a leader. And this Buber would write in 1910, "And now I feel, as I've never felt to this day, that we are orphaned." Thank you.