

Texts Concerning Zionism: "Auto-Emancipation"

If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if not now, when?"

HILLEL
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THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

After the terror of the bloody atrocities a moment of calm followed for baiter and baited to catch their breath. Meanwhile the Jewish refugees, with the very funds collected for their immigration, are being -- "repatriated"! But the Western Jews have again learned to suffer the cry, "hep! hep!" as their brothers in the old days. The eruption of blazing indignation over the shame to which they were subjected has turned to a rain of ashes, gradually covering the glowing soil. Shut your eyes and hide your head like an ostrich -- there is to be no lasting peace unless in the fleeting intervals of relaxation you apply a remedy more thoroughgoing than those palliatives to which our hapless people have been turning for 2000 years.

Auto-Emancipation: AN APPEAL TO HIS PEOPLE

By a Russian Jew

That hoary problem, subsumed under the Jewish question, today, as ever in the past, provokes discussion. Like the squaring of the circle it remains unsolved, but unlike it, continues to be the ever-burning question of the day. That is because the problem is not one of mere theoretical interest: it renews and revives in every-day life and presses ever more urgently for solution.

This is the kernel of the problem, as we see it: *the Jews comprise a distinctive element among the nations under which they dwell, and as such can neither assimilate nor be readily digested by any nation.*

Hence the solution lies in finding a means of so readjusting this exclusive element to the family of nations, that the basis of the Jewish question will be permanently removed.

This does not mean, of course, that we must think of waiting for the age of universal harmony.

No previous civilization has been able to achieve it, nor can we see even in the remote distance, that day of the Messiah, when national barriers will no longer exist and all mankind will live in brotherhood and concord. Until then, the nations must narrow their aspirations to achieve a tolerable modus vivendi.

The world has yet long to wait for eternal peace. Meanwhile nations live side by side in a

state of relative peace, secured by treaties and international law, but based chiefly on the fundamental equality between them.

But it is different with the people of Israel. There is no such equality in the nations' dealings with the Jews. The basis is absent upon which treaties and international law may be applied: mutual respect. Only when this basis is established, when the equality of Jews with other nations becomes a fact, can the Jewish problem be considered solved.

An equality of this kind did exist in the now long forgotten past, but unfortunately, under present conditions, the prospect that will readmit the Jewish people to the status of nationhood is so remote as to seem illusory. It lacks most of the essential attributes by which a nation is recognized. It lacks that autochthonous life which is inconceivable without a common language and customs and without cohesion in space. The Jewish people has no fatherland of its own, though many motherlands; no center of focus or gravity, no government of its own, no official representation. They home everywhere, but are nowhere at home. The nations have never to deal with a Jewish nation but always with mere Jews. The Jews are not a nation because they lack a certain distinctive national character, inherent in all other nations, which is formed by common residence in a single state. It was clearly impossible for this national character to be developed in the Diaspora; the Jews seem rather to have lost all remembrance of their former home. Thanks to their ready adaptability, they have all the more easily acquired characteristics, not inborn, of the people among whom fate has thrown them. Often to please their protectors, they recommend their traditional individuality entirely. They acquired or persuaded themselves into certain cosmopolitan tendencies which could no more appeal to others than bring satisfaction to themselves.

In seeking to fuse with other peoples they deliberately renounced to some extent their own nationality. Yet nowhere did they succeed in obtaining from their fellow-citizens recognition as natives of equal status.

But the greatest impediment in the path of the Jews to an independent national existence is that they do not feel its need. Not only that, but they go so far as to deny its authenticity.

In the case of a sick man, the absence of desire for food is a very serious symptom. It is not always possible to cure him of this ominous loss of appetite. And even if his appetite is restored, it is still a question whether he will be able to digest food, even though he desire it.

The Jews are in the unhappy condition of such a patient. We must discuss this most important point with all possible precision. We must prove that the misfortunes of the Jews are due, above all, to their lack of desire for national independence; and that this desire must be awakened and maintained in time if they do not wish to be subjected forever to disgraceful existence -- in a word, we must prove that they must become a nation.

In the seemingly irrelevant circumstances, that the Jews are not regarded as an independent nation by other nations, rests in part the secret of their abnormal position and of their endless misery. Merely to belong to this people is to be indelibly stigmatized, a mark repellent to non-Jews and painful to the Jews themselves. However, this phenomenon is rooted deeply in human nature.

Among the living nations of the earth the Jews are as a nation long since dead.

With the loss of their country, the Jewish people lost their independence, and fell into a decay which is not compatible with existence as a whole vital organism. The state was crushed before the eyes of the nations. But after the Jewish people had ceased to exist as an actual state, as a political entity, they could nevertheless not submit to total annihilation -- they lived on spiritually as a nation. The world saw in this people the uncanny form of one of the dead walking among the living. The Ghostlike apparition of a living corpse, of a people without unity or organization, without land or other bonds of unity, no longer alive, and yet walking among the living -- this spectral form without precedence in history, unlike anything that preceded or followed it, could but strangely affect the imagination of the nations. And if the fear of ghosts is something inborn, and has a certain justification in the psychic life of mankind, why be surprised at the effect produced by this dead but still living nation

A fear of the Jewish ghost has passed down the generations and the centuries. First a breeder of prejudice, later in conjunction with other forces we are about to discuss, it culminated in Judeophobia.

Judeophobia, together with other symbols, superstitions and idiosyncrasies, has acquired legitimacy phobia among all the peoples of the earth with whom the Jews had intercourse. Judeophobia is a variety of demonopathy with the distinction that it is not peculiar to particular races but is common to the whole of mankind, and that this ghost is not disembodied like other ghosts but partakes of flesh and blood, must endure pain inflicted by the fearful mob who imagines itself endangered.

Judeophobia is a psychic aberration. As a psychic aberration it is hereditary, and as a disease transmitted for two thousand years it is incurable.

It is this fear of ghosts, the mother of Judeophobia, that has evoked this abstract, I might say Platonic hatred, thanks to which the whole Jewish nation is wont to be held responsible for the real or supposed misdeeds of its individual members, and to be libeled in so many ways, to be buffeted about so shamefully.

Friend and foe alike have tried to explain or to justify this hatred of the Jews by bringing all sorts of charges against them. They are said to have crucified Jesus, to have drunk the blood of Christians, to have poisoned wells, to have taken usury, to have exploited the peasant, and so on. These and a thousand and one other charges against an entire people have been proved groundless. They showed their own weakness in that they had to be trumped up wholesale in order to quiet the evil conscience of the Jew-baiters, to justify the condemnation of an entire nation, to demonstrate the necessity of burning the Jew, or rather the Jewish ghost, at the stake. He who tries to prove too much proves nothing at all. Though the Jews may justly be charged with many shortcomings, those shortcomings are, at all events, not such great vices, not such capital crimes, as to justify the condemnation of the entire people. In individual cases, indeed, these accusations are contradicted by the fact that the Jews get along fairly well with their Gentile neighbors. This is the reason that the charges preferred are usually of the most general character, made up out of whole cloth, based to a certain extent on a priori reasoning, and true at best in individual cases, but not admitting of proof

as regards the whole people

In this way have Judaism and Anti-Semitism passed for centuries through history as inseparable companions. Like the Jewish people, the real wandering Jew, Anti-Semitism, too, seems as if it would never die. He must be blind indeed who will assert that the Jews are not the chosen people, the people chosen for universal hatred. No matter how much the nations are at variance in their relations with one another, however diverse their instincts and aims, they join hands in their hatred of the Jews; on this one matter all are agreed. The extent and the manner in which this antipathy is shown depends of course upon the cultural status of each people. The antipathy as such, however, exists in all places and at all times, whether it appears in the form of deeds of violence, as envious jealousy, or under the guise of tolerance and protection. To be robbed as a Jew or to be protected as a Jew is equally humiliating, equally destructive to the self-respect of the Jews.

Having analyzed Judeophobia as an hereditary form of demonopathy, peculiar to the human race, and having represented Anti-Semitism as proceeding from an inherited aberration of the human mind, we must draw the important conclusion that we must give up contending against these hostile impulses as we must against every other inherited predisposition. This view is especially important because it should persuade us that polemics are useless and that we should abstain from it as a waste of time and energy, for against superstition even the gods contend in vain. Prejudice or instinctive ill-will is not moved by rational argument, however forceful and clear. These sinister powers must either be kept within bounds by force like every other blind natural force or simply evaded.

In human psychology, then, we find the roots of the prejudice against the Jewish nation; but there are other factors not less important which render impossible the fusion or equalization of the Jews with the other peoples to be considered.

No people, generally speaking, likes foreigners. Ethnologically, this cannot be brought as a charge against any people. Now, is the Jew subject to this general law to the same extent as the other nationalities? Not at all! The aversion which meets the foreigner in a strange land can be repaid in equal coin in his home country. The non-Jew pursues his own interest in a foreign country openly and without giving offense. It is everywhere considered natural that he should fight for these interests, alone or in conjunction with others. The foreigner has no need to be, or to seem to be, a patriot. But as for the Jew, not only is he not a native in his own home country, but he is also not a foreigner; he is, in very truth, the stranger par excellence. He is regarded as neither friend nor foe but an alien, of whom the only thing known is that he has no home.

One distrusts the foreigner but does not trust the Jew. The foreigner has a claim to hospitality, which he can repay in the same coin. The Jew can make no such return; consequently he can make no claim to hospitality. He is not a guest, much less a welcome guest. He is more like a beggar; and what beggar is welcome! He is rather a refugee; and where is the refugee to whom a refuge may not be refused?

The Jews are aliens who can have no representatives, because they have no country. Because they have none, because their home has no boundaries within which they can be entrenched,

their misery too is boundless. The general law does not apply to the Jews as true aliens, but there are everywhere laws for the Jews, and if the general law is to apply to them, a special and explicit by-law is required to confirm it. Like the Negroes, like women, and unlike all free peoples, they must be emancipated. If, unlike the Negroes, they belong to an advanced race, and if, unlike women, they can produce not only women of distinction, but also distinguished men, even men of greatness, then it is very much the worse for them.

Since the Jew is nowhere at home, nowhere regarded as a native, he remains an alien everywhere. That he himself and his ancestors as well are born in the country does not alter this fact in the least.

In the great majority of cases, he is treated as a stepchild, as a Cinderella; in the most favorable cases he is regarded as an adopted child whose rights may be questioned; never is he considered a legitimate child of the fatherland.

The German proud of his Teutonism, the Slav, the Celt, not one of them admits that the Semitic Jew is his equal by birth; and even if he be ready, as a man of culture, to admit him to all civil rights, he will never quite forget that his fellow-citizen is a Jew. The legal emancipation of the Jews is the culminating achievement of our century. But legal emancipation is not social emancipation, and with the proclamation of the former the Jews are still far from being emancipated from their exceptional social position.

The emancipation of the Jews is required as a postulate of logic, of law, and of enlightened national interest, but it can never be a spontaneous expression of human feeling. Far from owing its origin to spontaneous feeling, it is never a matter of course; and it has never yet taken root so deeply that further discussion of it becomes unnecessary. In any event, whether emancipation was undertaken from spontaneous impulse or from conscious motives, it remains a rich gift, a splendid alms, willingly or unwillingly flung to the poor, humble beggars whom no one, however, cares to shelter, because a homeless, wandering beggar wins confidence or sympathy from now. The Jew is not permitted to forget that the daily bread of civil rights must be given him.

So long as this people produces in accordance with its nature, vagrant nomads; so long as it cannot give a satisfactory account of whence it comes and whither it goes; so long as the Jews themselves prefer not to speak in Aryan society of their Semitic descent and prefer not to be reminded of it; so long as they are persecuted, tolerated, protected or emancipated, the stigma attached to this people, which forces it into an undesirable isolation from all nations, cannot be removed by any sort of legal emancipation.

This degrading dependence of the ever alien Jew upon the non-Jew is reinforced by another factor, which makes amalgamation of the Jews with the original inhabitants of a land absolutely impossible. In the great struggle for existence, civilized peoples readily submit to laws which help to transform their struggle into a peaceful competition, a noble emulation. In this respect a distinction is usually made between the native and the foreigner, the first, of course, always receiving the preference. Now, if this distinction is drawn even against the foreigner of equal birth, how harshly is it applied to the ever alien Jew! The beggar who dares to cast longing eyes upon a country not his own is in the position of a young virgin's

suitor, guarded against him by jealous relatives! And if he nevertheless prosper and succeed in plucking a flower here and there from its soil, woe to the ill-fated man! He must expect the fate of the Jews of Spain and Russia.

The Jews, moreover, do not suffer only when they meet with notable success. Wherever they are congregated in large numbers, they must, by their very preponderance, hold an advantage in competition with the non-Jewish population. Thus, in the western provinces we see the Jews squeezed together, leading a wretched existence in dreadful poverty, while charges of Jewish exploitation are continually pressed.

To sum up then, to the living the Jew is a corpse, to the native a foreigner, to the homesteader a vagrant, to the proprietary a beggar, to the poor an exploiter and a millionaire, to the patriot a man without a country, for all a hated rival.

This natural antagonism is the source of numberless misunderstandings, accusations and reproaches which both parties rightfully or wrongfully hurl at each other. Instead of realizing their own position and adopting a rational line of conduct, the Jews appeal to eternal justice, and fondly imagine that the appeal will have some effect. And whereas the non-Jew should simply plead superior strength, the historical prerogative of the strong over the weak, he seeks to justify his attitude by a mass of accusations which, on closer examination, prove to be baseless or negligible. The impartial thinker, who does not desire to judge and interpret the affairs of this world according to the principles of some Utopian Arcadia, but would merely ascertain the facts in order to draw a conclusion of practical value, will not seriously charge either of the parties with responsibility for this antagonism. To the Jews, however, he will say: "You are foolish, because you stand there non-plussed and expect of human nature something which it has never produced -- humanity. You are also contemptible, because you have no real self-estimation and no national self-respect."

National self-respect! Where can we find it! It is precisely the great misfortune of our race that we do not constitute a nation, but are merely Jews. We are a flock scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no shepherd to protect us and bring us together. At best we attain the rank of goats, which in Russia are mated with racehorses. And that is the highest reach of our ambition!

It is true that those who claim to sympathize with us have always taken good care that we should have no respite in which to recover our self-respect. As individual Jews, but not as a Jewish nation, we have carried on for centuries the hard and unequal struggle for existence. Each man singly has sequestered his genius and energy for a little oxygen and a morsel of bread, moistened with tears. We did not succumb in this desperate struggle. We waged the most glorious of all guerrilla struggles with the peoples of the earth, who with one accord wished to destroy us. But the war we have waged -- and God knows how long we shall continue to wage it -- has not been for a fatherland, but for the wretched maintenance of millions of "Jew peddlers."

The nations of the earth could not destroy us bodily, yet they were able to suppress in us every sense of national independence. So now we look on with caution fatalistic indifference when in many countries we are refused such recognition as would not lightly be denied to

Zulus. In the Diaspora we maintained our individual life, and proved our power of resistance, but we broke the common tie of national consciousness. Seeking to maintain our material existence, we were compelled very often to forget our moral dignity. We did not perceive that unworthy tactics, though forced upon us, have lowered us still more in the eyes of our opponents, that we were only the more exposed to humiliating contempt and outlawed existence, which has at length become our baleful heritage. In the great, wide world there was no place for us. We pray only for a little place somewhere to lay our weary head to rest. And as our claims diminished, our dignity vanished away.

We were the shuttle-cock which the peoples tossed in turn to one another. The cruel game was equally amusing whether we were caught or thrown, and was enjoyed all the more as our national respect became more elastic and yielding in the hands of the peoples. Under such circumstances, how could there be any question of national self-determination, of a free, active development of our national force or of our native genius ?

By the way, our enemies did not fail to make capital of this trait, though irrelevant, in order to prove our inferiority. One would think that a man of genius among them grew as blackberries on the hedges. The wretches! They mock the eagle who once soared to heaven and saw Divinity itself, because he can no longer fly after his wings are broken! Even so we have remained on the level with the great peoples of civilization. Grant us but our independence, allow us to take care of ourselves, give us but a little strip of land like that of the Serbians and Romanians, give us a chance to lead a national existence and then prate about our lacking manly virtues! Today we live under the weight of evils you have brought upon us. What we lack is not genius but self-consciousness, an appreciation of our value as men of which we were deprived by you!

When we are ill-used, robbed, plundered and dishonored, we dare not defend ourselves, and, worse still, we take it almost as a matter of course. When our face is slapped, we soothe our burning cheek with cold water; and when a bloody wound has been inflicted, we apply a bandage. When we are turned out of the house which we ourselves built, we beg humbly for mercy, and when we fail to reach the heart of our oppressor we move on in search of another exile.

When an idle spectator on the road calls out to us: "You poor Jewish devils are certainly to be pitied," we are most deeply touched; and when a Jew is said to be an honor to his people, we are foolish enough to be proud of it. We have sunk so low that we become almost jubilant when, as in the West, a small fraction of our people is put on equal footing with non-Jews. But he who must be put on a footing stands but weakly. If no notice is taken of our descent and we are treated like others born in the country, we express our gratitude by actually turning renegades. For the sake of the comfortable position we are granted, for the flesh-pots which we may enjoy in peace, we persuade ourselves, and others, that we are no longer Jews, but full-blooded citizens. Idle delusion! Though you prove yourselves patriots a thousand times, you will still be reminded at every opportunity of your Semitic descent. This fateful memento mori will not prevent you, however, from accepting the extended hospitality, until some fine morning you find yourself crossing the border and you are reminded by the mob that you are, after all, nothing but vagrants and parasites, without the protection of law.

But even humane treatment does not prove that we are welcome.

Indeed, what a pitiful figure we cut! We are not counted among the nations, neither have we a voice in their councils, even when the affairs concern us. Our fatherland -- the other man's country; our unity-dispersion; our solidarity -- the battle against us; our weapon -- humility; our defense -- flight; our individuality -- adaptability ; our future -- the next day. What a miserable role for a nation which descends from the Maccabees!

Do you wonder that a people which allowed itself for dear life's sake to be trampled upon, and has learned to love these very feet that trample upon them, should have fallen into the utmost contempt!

Our tragedy is that we can neither live nor die. We cannot die despite the blows of our enemies, and we do not wish to die by our own hand, through apostasy or self-destruction. Neither can we live; our enemies have taken care of that. We will not recommence life as a nation, live like the other peoples, thanks to those over-zealous patriots, who think it is necessary to sacrifice every claim upon independent national life to their loyalty as citizens -- which should be a matter of course. Such fanatical patriots deny their ancient national character for the sake of any other nationality, whatever it may be, of high rank or low. But they deceive no one. They do not see how glad one is to decline Jewish companionship.

Thus for eighteen centuries we have lived in disgrace, without a single earnest attempt to shake it off!

We know well the great martyrology of our people and we would be the last to place the responsibility upon our ancestors. The demands of individual self-preservation necessarily suppress in the germ every national thought, every united movement. If the non-Jewish peoples, thanks to our dispersion, deserved to strike through each of us the whole Jewish people, we had the resistance to survive as a people, but we were left too powerless to raise ourselves and carry on an active struggle in our own behalf. Under the pressure of the hostile world we have lost in the course of our long exile all self-confidence, all initiative.

Moreover, the belief in a Messiah, in the intervention of a higher power to bring about our political resurrection, and the religious assumption that we must bear patiently divine punishment, caused us to abandon every thought of our national liberation, unity and independence. Consequently, we have renounced the idea of a nationhood and did so the more readily since we were preoccupied with our immediate needs. Thus we sank lower and lower. The people without a country forgot their country. Is it not high time to perceive the disgrace of it all?

Happily, matters stand somewhat differently now. The events of the last few years in enlightened Germany, in Roumania, in Hungary, and especially in Russia, have effected what the far bloodiest persecutions of the Middle Ages could not. The national consciousness which until then had lain dormant in sterile martyrdom awoke the masses of the Russian and Roumanian Jews and took form in an irresistible movement toward Palestine. Mistaken as this movement has proved to be by its results, it was, nevertheless, a right instinct to strike out for home. The severe trials which they have endured have now provoked a reaction quite

different from the fatalistic submission to a divine condign punishment. Even the unenlightened masses of the Russian Jews have not entirely escaped the influences of the principles of modern culture. Without renouncing Judaism and their faith, they revolted against undeserved ill-treatment which could be inflicted with impunity only because the Russian Government regards the Jews as aliens. And the other European Governments -- why should they concern themselves with the citizens of a state in whose internal affairs they have no right to interfere?

Today, when our kinsmen in a small part of the earth are allowed to breathe freely and can feel more deeply for the sufferings of their brothers; today, when a number of other subject and oppressed nationalities have been allowed to regain their independence, we, too, must not sit a moment longer with folded hands; we must not consent to play forever the hopeless role of the "Wandering Jew." It is a truly hopeless one, leading to despair.

When an individual finds himself despised and rejected by society, no one wonders if he commits suicide. But where is the deadly weapon to give the coup de grace to the scattered limbs of the Jewish nation, and then who would lend his hand to it! The destruction is neither possible nor desirable. Consequently, we are bound by duty to devote all our remaining moral force to re-establishing ourselves as a living nation, so that we may ultimately assume a more fitting and dignified role among the family of the nations.

If the basis of our argument is sound, if the prejudice of mankind against us rests upon anthropological and social principles, innate and ineradicable, we must look no more to the slow progress of humanity. And we must learn to recognize that as long as we lack a home of our own, such as the other nations have, we must resign forever the noble hope of becoming the equals of our fellow-men. We must recognize that before the great idea of human brotherhood will unite all the peoples of the earth, milleniums must elapse; and that meanwhile a people which is at home everywhere and nowhere, must everywhere be regarded as alien. The time has come for a sober and dispassionate realization of our true position.

With unbiased eyes and without prejudice we must see in the mirror of the nations the tragicomic figure of our people, which with distorted countenance and maimed limbs helps to make universal history without managing properly its own little history. We must reconcile ourselves once and for all to the idea that the other nations, by reason of their inherent natural antagonism, will forever reject us. We must not shut our eyes to this natural force which works like every other elemental force; we must take it into account. We must not complain of it; on the contrary, we are in duty bound to take courage, to rise, and to see to it that we do not remain forever the Cinderella, the butt of the peoples. We are no more justified in leaving our national fortune in the hands of the other peoples than we are in making them responsible for our national misfortune. The human race, including ourselves, has hardly reached the first stage of the interminable road to perfection in human conduct, providing the goal is to be reached at all. We must, therefore, abandon the delusion that we are fulfilling by our dispersion a Providential mission, a mission in which no one believes, an honorable post which we, to speak frankly, would gladly resign, if the odious epithet "Jew" could only be blotted out of the memory of man. We must seek our honour and our salvation not in self-deceptions, but in the restoration of our national ties. Hitherto the world has not

considered us as a firm of standing, and consequently we enjoyed no genuine credit.

If other national movements which have risen before our eyes were their own justification, can it still be questioned whether the Jews have a similar right? They play a larger part in the life of the civilized nations, and they have rendered greater service to humanity; they have a greater past and history, a common, unmixed descent, an indestructible vigor, an unshakable faith, and an unexampled martyrology; the peoples have sinned against them more grievously than against any other nation. Is not that enough to make them capable and worthy of possessing a fatherland? The struggle of the Jews for national unity and independence as an established nation not only possesses the inherent justification that belongs to the struggle of every oppressed people, but it is also calculated to win the support of the people by whom we are now unwanted. This struggle must become an irresistible factor of contemporary international politics and destined for future greatness.

At the very outset we expect a great outcry. Most Jews, grown timid and skeptical, will declare the early activities to be the unconscious convulsions of a crushed organism and certainly its execution and achievement is sure to encounter the gravest of difficulties and perhaps will be possible only after superhuman efforts. But since the Jews have no other way out of their desperate position, it would be cowardly to shrink from it in the face of heavy odds. But "faint heart never won fair lady" - -and, indeed, what have we to lose! At the worst, we shall continue to be in the future what we have been in the past, what we are too cowardly to resolve that we will be no longer: eternally despised Jews. We have lately had very bitter experiences in Russia, We are both too many and too few; too many in the southwestern provinces, in which the Jews are allowed to reside, and too few in all the other provinces, where they are forbidden. If the Russian Government, and the Russian people as well, realized that an equal distribution of the Jewish population would benefit the entire country, we might have been spared all our sufferings. Unfortunately, Russia cannot and will not realize this. That is not our fault, neither is it a consequence of the low cultural state of the Russian people. We have found our bitterest opponents, indeed, in a large part of the press, which might be supposed to possess education; the unfortunate situation of the Russian Jews is due, rather, purely and simply to the operation of those general forces, a consequence of human nature which we have previously discussed. And since it is not to be our mission to reform mankind, we must see what we have to do for ourselves under the circumstances.

Such being the situation, we shall forever remain a burden to the rest of the population, parasites who can never secure their favor. The apparent fact that we can mix with nations only slightly offers a further obstacle to the establishment of amicable relations. Therefore, we must see to it that the surplus, the unassimilable residue, is removed and elsewhere provided for. The burden is ours alone. If the Jews could be equally distributed among all the peoples of the earth, perhaps there would be no Jewish question. But this is not possible. Nay, there can be no more doubt that an immigration of the Jews en masse into the most progressive countries would be declined with emphasis. We say this with a very heavy heart; but we must admit the truth. And it is necessary to know the facts if we would improve our position.

Moreover, it would be a misfortune if we were unwilling to profit by the testimony of our experience which has practical value, the most important being the constantly growing

conviction that we are nowhere at home, and that we must at last look for a home , if not a country of our own.

Another conclusion is that the sorry upshot of the Russian and Roumanian emigration is ascribable solely to the important fact that we were taken unawares; we had made no provision for the principal needs, a refuge and a systematic organization of emigration. When thousands were seeking new homes we forgot to provide for that which no villager forgets when he wants to move -- the small matter of suitable new lodgings.

If we would have a secure home, give up our endless life of wandering and rise to the dignity of a nation in our own eyes and in the eyes of the world, we must, above all, not dream of restoring ancient Judaea. We must not attach ourselves to the place where our political life was once violently interrupted and destroyed. The goal of our present endeavors must be not the "Holy Land," but a land of our own. We need nothing but a large tract of land for our poor brothers, which shall remain our property and from which no foreign power can expel us. There we shall take with us the most sacred possessions which we have saved from the ship-wreck of our former country, the God-idea and the Bible . It is these alone which have made our old fatherland the Holy Land, and not Jerusalem or the Jordan. Perhaps the Holy Land will again become ours. If so, all the better, but first of all , we must determine -- and this is the crucial point -- what country is accessible to us, and at the same time adapted to offer the Jews of all lands who must leave their homes a secure and undisputed refuge, capable of productivization. We do not overlook the enormous external and internal difficulties involved in this, which is to be the life-long endeavor of our people. But most difficult of all will be the attainment of the first and most necessary prerequisite, the national resolution; for we are, to our sorrow, a stiff-necked people. How readily could conservative opposition, of which our history has so much to tell, nip such a resolution in the bud! If it should, then woe to our entire future!

What a difference between Past and Present! In unity and in serried ranks we once accomplished an orderly departure from Egypt to escape from a shameful slavery and conquer our land. Now we wander as fugitives and exiles with the foot of the Russian mob upon our necks, death in our hearts, without a Moses for our leader, without a promise of land which we are to conquer by our own might. We are driven through all the lands of all rulers; here we are ushered out with all politeness, that we may not introduce a plague; there fortune grants that we may be provided for somewhere, somehow, that we may be free and unmolested -- to sell old clothes, make cigarettes, or become incompetent farmers. It would be a euphemism to call it emigration. Ashamed and helpless the refugees stood on the frontiers and looked out of their hollow eyes for help. They received by way of answer a few barracks and a few thousand passports! Then a few more repatriations, another thousand bitter disillusionments, and the tide of public sympathy ebbs. All is quiet again, and our beneficent brothers in the West betake themselves comfortably to repose. The surging sea of yesterday is calmed, and recedes into the old marsh with the old creeping things.

Thus, for centuries we have been revolving perplexedly in a magic circle, allowing a blind fate to rule over us. The sorrows of thousands of years have made us only a folk of "Merciful Brethren," but have not produced any rational healers of our ills. We continue on the old beaten track seeking only for the palliative of philanthropy. But we refuse to attack our

malady at the root, in order to effect a complete cure. Intelligent and rich in experience, we are as short-sighted and thoughtless as children; we have had no time to reflect and ask ourselves whether this mad race, or rather this mad rout, will ever come to an end.

In the life of nations, as in the life of individuals, there are vital moments which rarely recur, and which, according as they are utilized or not utilized, decisively affect their future. We are now passing through such a moment. The consciousness of the people is awake. The great ideas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have not passed us by without leaving a trace. We feel not only as Jews; we feel as men. As men, we, too, wish to live and be a nation as the others. And if we seriously desire that, we must first of all extricate ourselves from the old yoke, and rise manfully to our full height. We must first of all desire to help ourselves and then the help of others is sure to follow.

But the time in which we live is adapted for decisive action not merely because of our own inner experience, not merely in consequence of our newly-aroused self-consciousness. The general history of the present day seems destined to become our ally. In a few decades we have seen rising into new life nations which at an earlier time would not have dared to dream of a resurrection. The dawn is already breaking through the darkness of traditional statecraft. The governments already incline their ears -- where it cannot be avoided -- to the clamor of the awakening of self-consciousness of nationalities. It is true that those happy ones who attained their national independence were not Jews. They lived upon their own soil and spoke one language, and therein they certainly had the advantage over us.

But what if our position is more difficult? That is all the more reason why we should strain every energy to the task of ending our national misery in honorable fashion. We must set out with resolution and self-denial and God will help us. We have always been ready for sacrifice, and we have not been wanting in resolution to hold our banner firm, if not high. We sailed the surging ocean of universal history without a compass, and such a compass must be invented. Far, far off, is the haven toward which our souls are turning. We know not even whether it be East or West. But for the wanderers of 2,000 years, the way, however, distant, cannot seem too long.

But how can we find that haven without first sending out an expedition! If we are for once so happy as to know what we want, and if only we are so resolved, we must go forward with all care and foresight, step by step, without undue haste and without digression. Of course, we have not the genius of a Moses -- history does not grant such leaders repeatedly. But a clear recognition of what we need most, a recognition of the absolute necessity of a home of our own, would arouse among us a number of energetic, honorable and distinguished friends of the people who would assume leadership, and would, perhaps, be no less able than that one man to deliver us from disgrace and persecution.

But what are we to do next, how should we begin? We believe that a nucleus for this beginning already lies at hand in the existing societies. It is incumbent upon them, they are called and in duty bound, to lay the foundation of that lighthouse to which our eyes will turn. If they are to be equal to their new task, these societies must, of course, be completely transformed. They must convoke a national congress; of which they are to form the centre. If they decline that function, however, and refuse to go beyond the limits of their present

activity, they must at least depute some of their numbers as a national board, let us say a directorate, which will have to establish that unity which we now lack and without which the success of our endeavors is unthinkable. To represent our national interests this institute must comprise the leaders of our people, and it must energetically take in hand the direction of our general, national affairs. Our greatest and ablest forces -- men of finance, of science, and of affairs, statesmen and publicists -- must join hands with one accord in steering toward the common destination. They would aim chiefly and especially at creating a secure and inviolable home for the surplus of those Jews who live as proletarians in the different countries and are a burden to the native citizens.

We do not, of course, propose united emigration of the entire people. The comparatively small number of Jews in the West, who constitute a small percentage of the population, and for this reason, perhaps, are better situated and even to a certain extent naturalized, may in the future remain where they are. The wealthy may also remain even where the Jews are not willingly tolerated. But, as we have said before, there is a certain point of saturation beyond which their numbers may not increase, if the Jews are not to be exposed to the dangers of persecution as in Russia, Roumania, Morocco and elsewhere. It is this surplus which, a burden to itself and to others, conjures up the evil fate of the entire people. It is now high time to create a refuge for this surplus. We must occupy ourselves with the foundation of such a lasting refuge, not with the meaningless collection of donations for emigrants or refugees who forsake, in their consternation, an inhospitable home to perish in the abyss of a strange and unknown land.

The first task of this national institute, which we miss so much and must unconditionally call into existence, would have to find a territory adapted to our purpose, as far as possible continuous in extent and of uniform character. In this respect, two countries, lying at opposite points of the globe, which have lately vied with each other for first place and created two opposite currents of Jewish emigration, present themselves. This division caused the failure of the entire movement.

Without plan, purpose, or unity, the last emigration must be regarded as a complete failure in having disappeared without a trace, but it has taught us what we should do and not do in the future. With a total lack of vision, reasonable calculation and prudent unity, it was impossible to recognize in the chaos of wandering, famishing fugitives a hopeful movement toward a clearly marked goal. It was no emigration, but a portentous flight. For the refugees the years 1881 and 1882 were a highway covered with the wounded and dead. And even the few who were so fortunate as to reach their goal, the longed-for haven, found it no better than the dangerous road. Wherever they came people tried to get rid of them. The emigrants were soon confronted by the desperate alternative of either roaming about without shelter, help or advice in a foreign land, or of wandering back shamefully to their no less alien and loveless home-country. This emigration was for our people nothing but a new date in its martyrology. But this aimless wandering in the labyrinth of exile, to which our people have always been accustomed, does not advance them a step; they rather sink deeper in the morass of their wanderings. In the last emigration no sign of progress toward a better state of things is to be observed. Persecution, flight, dispersion, and a new exile -- just as in the good old times. The weariness of the persecutors now allows us a little respite; will we be

satisfied with it? Or will we rather use this respite to draw the proper from the accumulated experience, in order that we may escape the new blows which are sure to come!

It is to be hoped that we have not emerged from that stage in which the Jews of the Middle Ages vegetated miserably. The children of modern civilization among our people esteem their dignity no less highly than our oppressors do theirs. But we shall not be able successfully to defend this dignity until we stand upon our own feet. As soon as asylum is found for our poor people, for the refugees whom our historic and predestined fate will always create for us, we shall also rise in the estimation of the nations. Then we should not be taken by surprise by such tragic happenings as those in the last few years, happenings which are likely to be repeated in Russia and elsewhere.

If we already knew where to direct our steps, were we compelled to emigrate again, we could surely make a vast step forward. We must set vigorously to work to complete the great task of self-liberation. We must use all the resources which human intellect and human experience have devised, instead of leaving our national regeneration to blind chance. The territory to be acquired must be fertile, well-situated and sufficiently extensive to allow the settlement of several millions. The land, as national property, must be inalienable. Its selection is, of course, of the first and highest importance, and must not be left to off-hand decision or to certain preconceived sympathies of individuals, as has, alas, happened lately. This land must be uniform and continuous in extent, for it lies in the very nature of our problem that we must possess as a counterpoise to our disposition one single refuge, since a number of refuges would again be equivalent to our old dispersion. Therefore, the selection of a permanent, national land, meeting all requirements, must be made with every precaution and confided to one single body, through a committee of experts selected from our directorate. Only such a supreme tribunal will be able, after thorough and comprehensive investigation, to give an opinion and decide upon which of the two continents and upon which territory in them our final choice should fall. Only then, and not before, should the directorate, together with an associated body of capitalists, as founders of a stock company later to be organized, acquire a tract of land sufficient for the settlement, in the course of time, of several million Jews. This tract might form a small territory in North America, or a sovereign Pashalik in Asiatic Turkey recognized by the Porte and the other Powers as neutral. It would certainly be an important duty of the directorate to secure the assent of the Porte, and probably of the other European cabinets to this plan. Under the supervision of the directorate, the land purchased would have to be divided by surveyors into small parcels, which could be assigned according to the local conditions to agricultural, building, or manufacturing purposes. Every parcel laid off thus (for agricultural, house and garden, town-hall, factory, etc.) would form a lot which would be transferred to the purchaser in accordance with his wishes.

After a complete survey and the publication of detailed maps and a comprehensive description of the land, a part of the lots would be sold to Jews for an adequate payment at a price, exactly fixed in proportion to the original purchase price, perhaps a little above it. Part of the proceeds of the sale, together with the profits, would belong to the stock company, and part would flow into a fund to be administered by the directorate, for the maintenance of destitute immigrants. For the establishment of this fund the directorate could also open a

national subscription. It is definitely to be expected that our brethren everywhere would hail with joy such an appeal for subscriptions and that the most liberal donations would be made for so sacred a purpose.

Each title-deed delivered to the purchaser, with his name entered and signed by the directorate and the company, must bear the exact number of the lot upon the general map so that each purchaser would know exactly the location of the piece of ground -- field, or building lot -- which he purchases as his individual property.

Assuredly, many a Jew, who is still bound to his old home by an unenviable occupation, would gladly grasp the opportunity to throw out an anchor to windward by such a deed and to escape those sad experiences so numerous in the immediate past.

That part of the territory which would be assigned to the directorate for free distribution, against the national subscription mentioned and the expected profits, would be given to destitute but able-bodied immigrants, recommended by local committees.

Since the donations to the national subscription would not come in at once, but say in annual contributions, the colonization, also, would be carried out gradually and in a fixed order.

If the experts find in favor of Palestine or Syria, this decision would not be based on the assumption that the country could be transformed in time by labor and industry into a quite productive one. In this event the price of land would rise in proportion. But should they prefer North America, however, we must hasten. If one considers that in the last thirty-eight years the population of the United States of America has risen from seventeen millions to fifty millions, and that the increase in population for the next forty years will probably continue in the same proportion, it is evident that immediate action is necessary, if we do not desire to eliminate for all time the possibility of establishing in the New World a secure refuge for our unhappy brethren.

Every one who has the slightest judgment can see at first glance that the purchase of lands in America would, because of the swift rise of that country, not be a risky, but a lucrative enterprise.

Whether this act of national self-help on our part might turn out profitably or otherwise, however, is of little consequence as compared with the great significance which such an undertaking would have for the future of our unsettled people; for our future will remain insecure and precarious unless a radical change in our position is made. This change cannot be brought about by the civil emancipation of the Jews in this or that state, but only by the auto-emancipation of the Jewish people as a nation, the foundation of a colonial community belonging to the Jews, which is some day to become our inalienable home, our country.

There will certainly be plenty of counter-arguments. We will be charged with reckoning without our host. What land will grant us permission to settle a nation within its borders? At first glance, our building would appear from this standpoint to be a house of cards to divert children and wits. We think, however, that only thoughtless childhood could be diverted by the sight of shipwrecked voyagers who desire to build a little boat in order to leave

inhospitable shores. We even go as far as to say that we expect, strangely enough, that those inhospitable people will aid us in our departure. Our "friends" will see us leave with the same pleasure with which we turn our back upon them.

Of course, the establishment of a Jewish refuge cannot come about without the support of the governments. In order to obtain the latter and to insure the perpetual existence of a refuge, the molders of our national regeneration must proceed with caution and perseverance. What we seek is at bottom neither new nor dangerous to anyone. Instead of the many refuges which we have always been accustomed to seek, we would fain have one single refuge, the existence of which, however, would have to be politically assured.

Let "Now or never" be our watchword. Woe to our descendants, woe to the memory of our Jewish contemporaries, if we let this moment pass by!

The Jews are not a living nation; they are everywhere aliens; therefore they are despised.

The civil and political emancipation of the Jews is not sufficient to raise them in the estimation of the peoples.

The proper, the only solution, is in the creation of a Jewish nationality, of a people living upon its own soil, the auto-emancipation of the Jews; their return to the ranks of the nations by the acquisition of a Jewish homeland.

We must not persuade ourselves that humanity and enlightenment alone can cure the malady of our people.

The lack of national self-respect and self-confidence of political initiative and of unity, are the enemies of our national renaissance.

That we may not be compelled to wander from one exile to another, we must have an extensive, productive land of refuge, a center which is our own. The present moment is the most favorable for this plan.

The international Jewish question must have a national solution. Of course, our national regeneration can only proceed slowly. We must take the first step. Our descendants must follow us at a measured and not over-precipitant speed.

The national regeneration of the Jews must be initiated by a congress of Jewish notables. No sacrifice should be too great for this enterprise which will assure our people's future, everywhere endangered.

The financial execution of the undertaking does not present insurmountable difficulties.

Help yourselves, and God will help you!

Sources: Translated from the German by Dr. D. S. Blondheim, Federation of American Zionists, 1916, [Essential Texts of Zionism](#)

