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# Mental enslavement

The Hebrews in Egypt during Moses's time, and the Jews in Europe during Herzl's time, failed to envision the path to freedom

**T**he Hebrews in Egypt seemed to think they had only two options: serve Egypt or die in the desert. They did not listen to Moses, "due to impatience of spirit and cruel bondage." We get a clarification of what this meant when they later tell Moses: "This is what we told you in Egypt, saying Let us alone, and we will serve Egypt. For it is better for us to serve Egypt than to die in the desert."

This became a mantra for the pro-return camp during 40 years in the desert: Do not have hallucinations – there are only two options. This is accompanied with cynicism: "Are there no graves in Egypt?" they ask Moses. The inability to recognize that there is a third alternative, freedom, is a symptom of enslavement: The failure to dream.

In the exodus from Europe, a similar pattern occurred. On February 14, 1896, Herzl published *The Jewish State*, telling the Jews that a path was paved for their return home to freedom.

Herzl, operating in a secular environment, post-prophecy, could certainly not say as Moses did: "The God of our fathers sent me to you" – he would have been ridiculed.

That was left to others. Upon reading Herzl's newly published book, Max Nordau, a world-renowned writer and philosopher of the time, made a clear determination: The book is a revelation! Nordau, who referred to Herzl as a prophet, was not alone.

Vienna's chief rabbi, Rabbi Moritz Gudemann, who told Herzl early on "you remind me of Moses," had his personal doubts about Zionism, but stressed to Herzl: "Remain as you are. Perhaps you are the one called by God."

And yet, just like in Moses's case, the enslaved Jews of Western Europe, impatient of spirit, failed to dream.

Some Jews asked Herzl if his book was meant to be a satire, while others ask if he had gone mad. One influential Jewish-owned newspaper, *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, wrote: "Zionism is madness born of despera-



(Picture: Strawberry Fields, New York City; Jeremy Beck/Unsplash)

tion. Enough with such hallucinations." The humor section of that newspaper played out Herzl's plans and showed the Maccabees running away in fear.

Indeed, the only two alternatives, according to the skeptics, were enslavement in antisemitic Europe or "death in the deserts of Palestine."

(Coincidentally, *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* was founded by Theodor Hertzka. In *The Jewish State*, Herzl contrasted Hertzka's utopia of a make-believe country called Freiland with his practical vision for a Jewish state. Hertzka was no longer the publisher of *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* at that time.)

### Remedy to an enslaved mindset – transformation!

The only way for the Hebrews of Egypt and the Jews of Europe to internalize that there was a third alternative – that of freedom – was through a grand transformation of Judaism.

That was Moses's big task. But this could not have been done overnight or through a three-day field trip of worship. Moses recognized that the Hebrews were only one of three stakeholders needed for the successful fulfillment of the transformation. The others were the Egyptians and the world's nations.

The Egyptians needed to go through the process to recognize the reign of the God of the Hebrews (the 10 plagues), and the world needed the parting of the sea to be in awe. Mostly, the Hebrews needed a process. Thus the 40 years in the desert, which Herzl referred to as "education through migration."

The grand transformation of Judaism was Herzl's big task, too. He, too, recognized that the stakeholders need time to recognize a transformation of such magnitude. Europeans, after centuries of anti-Jewish indoctrination, cannot just change in one day (or one century?). And the world needs something akin to the parting of the sea, to be in awe. That, according to Herzl, would be the innovations and ingenuity that would come out of the Jewish state. The Jewish state would be the necessity of the world, he predicted.

Mostly, the Jews needed to go through a prolonged process in order to internalize their new freedoms. And that is what Herzl was set to do when he launched Zionism in Basel in 1897: "We are laying the foundation for a building that will one day be a safe haven for the Jewish nation," he proclaimed. That "one day" did not occur in 1948, nor in Israel's first 70 years.

It takes time for transformations of such magnitude to settle, and there were insurmountable hurdles. Those hurdles are now removed, and the transformation that Herzl seeded is now ripe for recognition: Zionism is the return to Judaism. ■

*The writer is author of Judaism 3.0 – Judaism's transformation to Zionism, now available on Amazon and at Pomeranz Bookseller in Jerusalem, ahead of the official March 7 launch. For details: [Judaism-Zionism.com](http://Judaism-Zionism.com)*

## 'De-Mosesizing' of Judaism 1.0, and the 'Re-Herzling' of Judaism 3.0

Two phases of Judaism each began in one man's consciousness.

Judaism 1.0 started fully with Moses. God's initial revelation was only to him. Moses then brought the message to the people.

Similarly, Judaism 3.0 started with Herzl. Through a bizarre process that Herzl describes in his diaries, the ideas of Zionism came to him. He then brought the message to the people.

Just as in Moses's case, this was not simply about migration from Egypt/Europe to Canaan/Palestine; this was about the transformation of Judaism.

But the two adopted different strategies. The

process of de-Mosesizing Judaism was gradual.

Moses accepted Jethro's advice to enact a system of judges. God later instructed Moses to transfer priestly responsibilities to Aaron, and later to give executive powers to a council of 70 elders. (As discussed in a previous article, it is possible that not de-Mosesizing early-on contributed to the events of the Golden Calf.)

Herzl, on the other hand, tried to de-Herzelize Zionism from the get-go. He hoped to disengage from the cause once his book *The Jewish State* was published. He wanted to "delegate up" to the Rothschilds, but they refused, and hence Herzl took his message to the Jewish masses. In the Zionist Congress, he tried

to downplay his ubiquitous involvement, and in the Zionist newspaper *Die Welt*, he wrote articles under various pen names, giving the appearance of a movement that was bigger than just one person.

Today, while there certainly is a full recognition of the transformation that Moses seeded back then – for example, through the holiday of Passover – there has not yet been a recognition of the transformation that Herzl seeded, and hence there is a need to "re-Herzelize" Zionism, to delve into his teachings with rigor and depth as we do with those of Moses.

Indeed, we are only in the early days of Zionism – of Judaism 3.0.