

Fünftes Buch.  
Jerusalem

Erstes Capitel

Einst waren Friedrich und Kingcoant bei Nacht und vom Westen <sup>her</sup> nach Jerusalem gekommen, jetzt kamen sie bei Tage und vom Osten. Einst hatten sie eine schweremühte volle Stadt des Verfalls auf diesen Hügeln liegen gesehen, jetzt sahen sie da eine Stadt ~~des~~ verjüngter Regsamkeit und Pracht. Einst war Jerusalem todt, jetzt war es auf-  
erstanden.

Sie waren von Jerich ~~hergefahren~~ <sup>hergefahren</sup> und standen auf dem Ölberge, auf dem alten windervollen Berge, von wo der Blick so weit in die Kunde ~~des~~ hinaus strömen kann. ~~Das alte Jerusalem~~ <sup>Nach</sup> war es die heilige Landschaft der Menschheit, nach ragten die Wahrzeichen, die der Glaube vieler Zeiten und vieler Völker aufgerichtet hatte, aber ein Neues, mächtiges, Fremdiges war hinzugekommen: das Leben! Jerusalem war ein gewaltiger Körper geworden ~~der~~ <sup>und</sup> athmete Leben. ~~Die alten Häuser~~ <sup>Die alten Häuser</sup> und athmete Leben. ~~Die alten Häuser~~ <sup>Die alten Häuser</sup> abtast zwischen den schwindigen Häusern hatte sich,

# OLD NEW LAND

Translated from German by  
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with a new introduction by  
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## PREFACE

A variety of motives pushed Herzl to write *Old-New Land*. Utopians novels were a popular genre in the late nineteenth century, and Herzl hoped to gain converts to Zionism. But in addition, pouring his thoughts and feelings into a novel was creative relief for Herzl the balked playwright, convinced he had given up a prominent career in German letters by devoting himself to the Jewish cause. Finally, the novel was an affair between Herzl and his conscience, a refuge of utter honesty from the compromises of day-to-day Zionist politics.

In the nineteenth century, images of the ideal society conveyed through novels had spurred influential political movements. Etienne Cabet's *Voyage en Icarie* (1840) had led to a well-organized political movement among French artisans. As the century advanced, the appeal of the utopian novel only increased. Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872) was followed by Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* (1888), the Austrian Theodor Hertzka's *Freeland: A Social Image of the Future* (*Freiland: Ein soziales Zukunftsbild*) (1890) and William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890). *Freeland* went through ten editions in five years and gave rise to Freeland associations in Germany and Austria which sought to purchase land in Africa to realize the ideal society. Herzl wished for not equal but greater success.<sup>1</sup>

Still, Herzl's choice of the genre needs more explanation, for he had previously considered the utopian novel an inappropriate literary expression for a statesman and man of action. When

he first read Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, Herzl had scoffed at it as an "ideal fancy"<sup>2</sup> The Utopian genre functioned best as a critique of society; the more it distanced itself from the real world, the "more amusing" it was. But for Herzl Zionism was not an "ingenious fantasy," that is to say "a novel." He concluded in 1895 that a report on "The Condition of the Jews," would best evoke the immediacy and realism that suited his political goals.<sup>3</sup> Later, when writing *Old-New Land* Herzl saw his novel no differently. In a draft of a letter to Lord Rothschild accompanying a copy of the book, Herzl put his misgivings starkly: "I realize all the dangers it holds for me, namely that they will once more revile me for being a 'dreamer of dreams.' [in English in the original] But I had to chose this entertaining form because I want it to be read."<sup>4</sup>

However, his foray into ideal fantasy offered Herzl something more than a wide readership. Behind the protective shield of the fictional form, less binding than speeches and resolutions, or at least easier to disclaim or qualify, Herzl expressed his own vision of Zionism in its purest, most uncompromising form. The novel was something removed from the sphere of day-to-day political tactics, a creative personal catharsis amidst his political difficulties. On June 3, 1900, Herzl wrote in his diary: "Shall we hear a categorical no from Yilduz [the Sultan's palace]? If this came, I would resume work on my novel *Altneuland*. For then our plan will be only for the future and a novel." On March 4, 1901 he linked *Old-New land* to his political reversals and faltering time-table. "I am now industriously working on *Altneuland*. My hopes for practical success have now disintegrated. My life in no novel now. So the novel is my life."<sup>5</sup>

Anticipated political failure was bitter, but also liberating. Reacting to the prospect, Herzl abandoned the constraints of

day-to-day Zionist coalition politics and recklessly set out on an intransigent assertion of his own vision of Zionism. If his political hopes were in disarray, at least he would retain the integrity of his convictions. In the end Herzl payed a price for his challenge, for the publication of *Old-New Land* unleashed a bitter debate in the Zionist press. The debate was launched by Ahad Ha-Am's critique of *Old-New Land* in *Ha-Shilo'ah* in December, 1902, and soon engaged prominent Zionists in bitter controversy. The vehement tone of the debate threatened to rupture the alliance between East European and Western Jewry and destroy the universality of the Zionist movement. All sides retreated from the brink, but the publication of *Old-New Land* ended up strengthening the hand of Herzl's Zionist opposition.<sup>6</sup>

## II

To understand why Herzl's novel provoked such opposition, its ideological tendency must be understood. In composing a utopian novel, Herzl was engaged in nationalist mobilization through myth-making. Nineteenth century utopias were based on the premise that for the first time in human history science, technology and industry would enable humanity to fully master its natural and social environment. These utopias were powerful political instruments, promising to end once and for all age-old oppression and injustice, and to gratify age-old longings for satisfying labor and self-fulfillment.

*Old-New Land* was not a blueprint for the settlement of Palestine. With its free farmers and agricultural co-operatives, *Old-New Land* bears a superficial resemblance to the schemes of Franz Oppenheimer, an influential German-Jewish economist whom Herzl brought into the Zionist movement in 1901. In his proposals for Jewish settlement, spelled

kind. We no longer have customers for it. No one comes here who wants good cigars—there are only sailors who ask for chewing tobacco and cheap cigarettes.”

“How is that possible?” asked Kingscourt. “Where are all the tourists on their way to India and Australia and China?”

“Oh, there have been none here for many years. They now travel by the other route.”

“Another route?” cried Friedrich. “What other route? Not the Cape of Good Hope?”

The dealer was annoyed. “You choose to laugh at me, sir. Every child knows that people no longer travel to Asia via the Suez Canal!”

Kingscourt and Friedrich looked at each other in amazement. “Of course, every child knows it,” shouted Kingscourt, “but you must not think us ignorant if we’ve not heard of this damned new canal!”

“Just get out, will you!” The Greek pounded furiously on his counter. “First you tease me about expensive cigars, and then you make these stupid jokes. Get out!”

Kingscourt wanted to reach across the counter to whack the Greek over the head. But Friedrich drew the old hot-spur away. “Kingscourt, big things that we don’t know about have happened while we’ve been away.”

“I believe so myself, Devil take me! Well, we must find out about it at once!”

Returning to the harbor, they learned from the captain of a German trading vessel that traffic between Europe and Asia had taken a new route—via Palestine.

“What?” asked Friedrich. “Are there harbors and railways in Palestine?”

“Are there harbors and railways in Palestine?” The

captain laughed heartily. “Where do you come from, sir? Have you never seen a newspaper or a time table?”

“I shouldn’t say never, but several years have passed . . . We know Palestine as a forsaken country.”

“A forsaken country . . . good! If you choose to call it that, I don’t mind. Only I must say you’re spoiled.”

“Listen to me, captain,” cried Kingscourt. “We’d like to offer you some good wine. . . . We’re a pair of damned ignorant wretches. We’ve thought of nothing but our own pleasure for twenty years. Now, then, what’s happened to that old Palestine?”

“You could get to Palestine in less time than it would take to tell you about it. Why not make a slight detour if you’ve a couple of days to spare? If you wish to leave your yacht, you’ll find fast boats to all the European and American ports at Haifa and Jaffa.”

“No, we don’t leave our yacht. But we could make the detour, Fritze. What do you say? Do you want to take another look at the land of your blessed ancestors?”

“Palestine attracts me as little as Europe. It’s all one to me.”

They headed for Haifa. The coast of Palestine rose on the horizon on a spring morning following one of the mild, soft nights common in the eastern Mediterranean. They stood together on the bridge of the yacht, and stared steadily through their telescopes for ten whole minutes, looking always in the same direction.

“I could swear that that was the Bay of Acco over there,” remarked Friedrich.

“I could also swear to the contrary,” asserted Kingscourt. “I still have a picture of that Bay in my mind’s eye. It was empty and deserted twenty years ago. Still, that’s the Carmel on our right, and to our left is the town of Acco.”

"How changed it all is!" cried Friedrich. "There's been a miracle here."

As they approached the harbor they made out the details with the help of their excellent lenses.

Great ships, such as were already known at the end of the nineteenth century, lay anchored in the roadstead between Acco and the foot of the Carmel. Behind this fleet they discerned the noble curve of the Bay. At its northern end, the gray fortress walls, heavy cupolas and slender minarets of Acco were outlined in their beautiful ancient Oriental architecture against the morning skies. Nothing had changed much in that skyline. To the south, however, below the ancient, much-tried city of Haifa on the curve of the shore, splendid things had grown up. Thousands of white villas gleamed out of luxuriant green gardens. All the way from Acco to Mount Carmel stretched what seemed to be one great park.<sup>1</sup> The mountain itself, also, was crowned with beautiful structures. Since they were approaching from the south, the promontory at first obscured their full view of the city and the harbor. When, at last, the landscape was revealed to them in its entirety, Kingscourt's "Devils!" became legion.

A magnificent city had been built beside the sapphire-blue Mediterranean. The magnificent stone dams showed the harbor<sup>2</sup> for what it was: the safest and most convenient port in the eastern Mediterranean. Craft of every shape and size, flying the flags of all the nations, lay sheltered there.

<sup>1</sup> Beautiful residential suburbs on the summit and slopes of Mount Carmel verify Herzl's forecast of "one great park." The lower town has been developed as an important commercial center.

<sup>2</sup> Built by the British Mandatory Administration in 1934 and enlarged by the State of Israel, Haifa is the country's main port and also one of the great ports of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Kingscourt and Friedrich were spellbound. Their twenty-year-old map showed no such port, and here it was as if conjured up by magic. Evidently the world had not stood still in their absence.

They left the yacht and entered a landing boat, in which they were rowed through the swarming ships to the quay. They exchanged impressions in abrupt, broken phrases.

The boat drew in at the stone steps of the dam. As they came up the steps, they noticed a young man who was about to go down to an electric launch that waited for him. He, in turn, catching sight of them, stopped short and stared at Friedrich with wide-open eyes. He seemed thunderstruck.

The old man noticed his behavior and growled, "What does this fellow want? Hasn't he ever seen two civilized people before?"

"That can hardly be the case," smiled Friedrich. "The people on this quay seem more civilized than we do. It's more likely that we look old-fashioned to him. Just look up at that cosmopolitan traffic in the streets. And all the well-dressed people! Seems to me our clothes are a bit out of date."

They instructed their boatman to wait for them at the landing place, and ascended more stone steps leading up to the high-lying street where they had seen the traffic from the water's edge. They thought no more of the stranger who had stared at them so fixedly. However, he followed them and tried to overhear what language they were speaking. Soon he had caught up with them; and the next instant he strode a step in front of them and faced about.

"Sir!" stormed Kingscourt. "What is it you want with us?"