

## Theodor Herzl *Uganda* Lesson Plan

### Central Historical Question: What was Herzl's seminal contribution?

#### Materials:

- The Charter PowerPoint
- *Uganda* Video
- Copies of *Documents A, B, C, D, E*

#### Plan of Instruction:

*The PowerPoint, video and supporting documents reinforce lesson content through purposeful repetition and the gradual addition of new material.*

1. Pass out Documents A, B C, D, E.
2. Mini-lecture with PowerPoint:
  - Slide: A Charter: *Herzl wants a Charter for the Jews to settle in Palestine. What's a charter? 1) A document, issued by a sovereign or state, outlining the conditions under which a corporation, colony, city, or other corporate body is organized, and defining its rights and privileges.*
  - Slide: Why a Charter?: *Herzl observes the historic pattern of Jews coming to their homeland only to be forced to leave, or taxed and persecuted out of existence. Herzl recognizes that first Jews must obtain political rights to the land. Without political rights, the pattern of removal and retreat will repeat itself.*
  - Slide: The Kaiser: *In 1898, Herzl meets with a series of German ministers and is stunned to learn that the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, is taken with the idea of Jews migrating back to Palestine and is willing to extend his protection over them. The question is whether the Ottoman Sultan will agree.*

*Herzl believes that his plan for a charter is within reach. He gives a speech in London on October 3 where he says: "Today I declare: I believe the time is not far off when the Jewish people will set itself in motion." Herzl meets with the Kaiser, first in Constantinople and again in Palestine. The first meeting goes well – both are impressed with each other, although it turns out the Kaiser's reasons for supporting the migration of Jews are largely anti-Semitic ones. Nevertheless, the Kaiser writes to his uncle: "I am convinced that the settlement of the Holy Land by the healthy and*

*industrious people of Israel will bring unparalleled prosperity and blessing to the Holy Land.”*

*But when the Kaiser proposes Herzl's idea for a chartered company in Palestine, the Turkish Sultan's disapproval is so vigorous that the Kaiser doesn't dare bring up the subject again. When the Kaiser next greets Herzl and his delegation in Palestine he is still friendly. But afterwards, when Herzl reads the official German communique on the Kaiser's trip his hopes are dashed. The Zionist delegation is relegated to the last paragraph and not even mentioned by name. It's a major blow to Herzl.*

- *Slide: Ottoman Sultan: At the Third Zionist Congress in 1899 in Basel, Herzl puts the best face possible on his meetings with the Kaiser. The fact that they took place at all Herzl considers a major success. He informs the delegates that he will approach the Ottoman Sultan directly. He says: “Our efforts are directed toward obtaining a Charter under the sovereignty of His Majesty the Sultan. It is only when we are in possession of such a Charter, which must carry with it the public recognition and the legal guarantee of our rights, that we can begin a great colonization action.”*

*Herzl is received by Sultan Abdul Hamid II on May 17, 1901. The Ottoman treasury is in dire straits. Herzl proposes to the Sultan that the Jews will help with Turkey's finances in exchange for a charter granting Jews rights to acquire land in Palestine. The first conversation lasts two hours. The long drawn out negotiations continue on and off over a year. When the Sultan won't budge from his offer to settle Jews in other parts of the Turkish Empire, but not in Palestine, Herzl finally decides to break off negotiations, at least for the time being.*

- *Slide: El Arish: Herzl decides to try another route. A possibility emerges of settling Jews in El Arish in the Sinai. In April 1903, Herzl meets with Joseph Chamberlain, Britain's colonial secretary, to gain support for his efforts to obtain Egypt's permission for Jewish settlement. Chamberlain's reaction is favorable. Herzl convinces the British to support sending a commission to investigate the conditions and prospects of settling in and around El Arish.*
- *Slide: Joseph Chamberlain: In April, 1903, Herzl again meets with Joseph Chamberlain. Chamberlain has returned from a trip to Africa. “On my travels,” said Chamberlain. “I saw a country for you: Uganda. On the coast it is hot, but in the interior the climate is excellent for Europeans. You can plant cotton and sugar. I thought to myself: that's just the country for Dr. Herzl. But he must have Palestine and will move only in its vicinity.” Herzl replied: “Yes, I must. The base must be in or near Palestine. Later we can*

*also settle Uganda. For we have enormous masses ready to migrate. But we have to build on a national foundation, that is why we must have the political attraction of El Arish.”*

- *Slide: Uganda: In May, Herzl gets the bad news – the negotiations for El Arish have concluded unfavorably. He begins to think seriously about Chamberlain’s East African offer. The British are prepared to offer the territory. Herzl explains to Max Nordau, one of the first to help him in his Zionist efforts, his willingness to consider the offer. Herzl explains that he does not intend to give up on the Land of Israel. But he must show the Sultan that the Zionists are willing to consider other areas. Most important, he feels something must be done to help Eastern Jews mired in poverty and suffering persecution. A place must be found in the short term, especially after the April, 1903 pogrom in Kishinev. “Seven million outlawed human beings who have again begun to tremble! They dare not arm, they are not defended, they feel themselves surrendered up – and to what a rabble!” Max Nordau, although he objects to pursuing the Uganda offer, knowing the resistance that will rise up against it, will coin the term *Nachtsyl*, or *Night Shelter*, to help defend Herzl’s plan.*
- *Slide: Von Plehve: In August, Herzl makes a second controversial decision. He travels to Russia to meet the Czar’s Minister of Interior von Plehve, the man responsible for the Kishinev pogrom. Herzl sees a meeting of interests between anti-Semites and Zionists. Anti-Semites want Jews out. Zionists offer Jews a place to go. Von Plehve agrees to support the Zionist movement, provided it means an emigration of Jews from Russia. Even though Herzl succeeds in winning von Plehve’s support, he is bitterly condemned by those who say no Jewish leader should meet with a man responsible for pogroms.*
- *Slide: Sixth Zionist Congress: It is in this emotional environment that Herzl puts forward the British proposal of Uganda as a possible area for settlement at the Sixth Zionist Congress in August 1903. The area is actually not in Uganda but in modern day Kenya. In his opening speech, Herzl says: “Zion this is certainly not, and can never become. ... It is, and must remain, an emergency measure which is intended to come to the rescue ... and prevent the loss of these detached fragments of our people.” At first there is applause at the British offer but hour by hour opposition grows. Remarkably, the Russian representatives, including some from Kishinev, which just suffered a pogrom, and who are most in need of a refuge, are the ones most set against any land outside of Palestine. Herzl wins the vote to send an exploratory mission to East Africa. But over 170 delegates leave the Congress in protest. When Herzl hears they are sitting in the corridor weeping, he goes to console them.*

*He assures them that the Basle Program will not be violated. Herzl has underestimated the historical ties between the people of Israel and their land.*

- Slide: Split in the Movement: *After Herzl's death, the Uganda episode will cause a split in the movement with some Zionists breaking off to form the Jewish Territorial Organization. It will be led by Israel Zangwill, one of Herzl's early supporters. The Jewish Territorial Organization will scour the world looking for places for Jews to settle. It will not succeed, in a way proving that only the Land of Israel will do. Most of its members will return to the Zionist fold with the issuance of the Balfour Declaration in 1917.*
- Slide: Herzl's death: *The Sixth Zionist Congress is Herzl's last. He dies the next year at the age of 44. In his will he says: "I wish to be buried in the vault beside my father, and to lie there till the Jewish people shall take my remains to Israel." In 1949, Herzl's remains are moved from Vienna to Jerusalem. He is buried on Mount Herzl.*
- Slide: Herzl's contribution: *Herzl was not the first to advance the idea of a return to Zion in the modern era. What set him apart was his recognition that Jews must first obtain political rights to succeed. Early Zionists resisted Herzl's notion. They believed they could "infiltrate" quietly without arousing opposition. But Herzl prevailed and set the Zionist movement on a political course to obtain its goals.*

### 3. Play video: Uganda

Introduce inquiry question: What was Herzl's seminal contribution?

### 4. Whole class discussion:

- Why did Herzl want a Charter?
- In the period covered in this lesson, if you could name one thing about Herzl's actions that made the most impression on you, what would it be?
- Do you think Herzl made the right decision to meet with von Plehve?
- Were the delegates at the Sixth Zionist Congress who opposed Herzl right or wrong?
- Should Herzl have considered the Uganda offer in the first place?

### 5. Hand out Review Questions (may be used as end of class Quiz).

**Document A: Theodor Herzl (August 25, 1896)**

The Turks have a knife at their throats, financially speaking. ...

Our group wishes to place at His Majesty's disposal a graduated loan of 20 million pounds sterling. This loan is to be funded on the annual tribute which the autonomous Jewish settlers in Palestine have to pay to His Majesty. ...

In return, His Majesty should graciously make the following concessions:

The immigration of the Jews into Palestine which is not only to be completely unrestricted but to be encouraged in every way by the imperial Turkish government. The immigrant Jews are to be given autonomy, guaranteed under international law, in the constitution, government and administration of justice in the territory assigned to them. (Palestine as a vassal state.)

In the Constantinople negotiations it will have to be determined in detail in what form the sovereign protection of His Majesty the Sultan will be exercised in Jewish Palestine and how the preservation of law and order is to be managed by the Jews themselves through security forces of their own.

The agreement could take the following form: His Majesty issues a most gracious invitation to the Jews to return to the land of their fathers: this invitation will have the force of law and will be made known to the powers in advance.

Source: *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl, Vol. II, Edited by Raphael Patai, Herzl Press & Thomas Yoseloff, 1960, p. 457-458.*

**Document B: “Opening Address at the First Zionist Congress”, Theodor Herzl (August 29, 1897)**

The confidence of the government with which we wish to negotiate about a large-scale settlement of Jewish masses may be gained by plain language and upright dealing. The advantages which an entire people can offer in return are so considerable that the negotiations will be serious from the very beginning. It would be idle to say a great deal at this time about the legal form which the agreement will finally take. There is only one principle to which we must steadfastly adhere: the agreement can be based only on right and not on toleration. By this time we have enough experience with toleration and with the status of *Schutzjude* which could be revoked at any time.

Consequently our movement will be embarked on a sensible course of action only if it strives for guarantees under public law. Previous settlement projects have achieved all that they could accomplish, given their nature. They have confirmed the much-disputed fitness of the Jews for agricultural work; they furnished this proof *zum ewigen Gedachinis* [for all time], as the legal phrase goes. But such settlements are not, and in their present form cannot be, the solution of the Jewish Question. Also, let us frankly admit that they have not met with significant response. Why not? Because the Jews know how to count; in fact, it has been asserted that they calculate too well. If, then, we assume that there are nine million Jews and that it would be possible to settle ten thousand people in Palestine every year, it would take nine hundred years to solve the Jewish Question. This seems impractical.

On the other hand, you know that the figure of ten thousand settlers a year is nothing short of fantastic – under the present circumstances. In the face of such an influx the Turkish government would immediately revive the old restrictions on immigration – and that would suit us fine. For anyone who believes that the Jews can steal into the land of their fathers, as it were, is deceiving either himself or others. Nowhere is the appearance of Jews reported as quickly as it is in the historic homeland of Jewish people – simply because it is the historic homeland. And it would not even be to our interest to go there prematurely.

***Vocabulary***

Schutzjude: “Protected Jew.” Term used in Germany during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to denote Jews who were tolerated and who enjoyed special privileges because of their value to various rulers.

*Source: Zionist Writings, Essays and Addresses: Theodor Herzl, Vol. 1, Herzl Press, New York, 1973, p. 132-138.*

**Document C: “Opening Address at the Third Zionist Congress”, Theodor Herzl (August 15, 1899)**

One important event which our opponents, as usual, either suppressed or reported in a distorted form was the audience granted to the Zionist deputation by His Majesty the German Kaiser in Jerusalem. The fact alone that the gifted Kaiser should have bestowed his attention upon our national idea would suffice to give us some confidence. Insignificant movements are not noticed from such heights. But it was not merely a matter of taking cognizance of our movement. The people who were received were not just some Jewish deputation, the members of some “practical” settlement society, but the delegates of the Zionist Actions Committee. The principles and aims of our movement were known in advance and, on a day which will be remembered by all of Jewry, His Majesty the German Kaiser assured us of his sympathetic interest. ...

Naturally, it is very important for us to emphasize and demonstrate our honorable character, particularly in our relations with the Turkish government. We shall not take any step which might even remotely arouse justified suspicion in the sovereign owner of Palestine. We will and can offer the greatest benefits to the Ottoman Empire, and hence we can act quite openly. Someone who steals into a place usually has no intention of bringing something with him. This was the easily understandable reasoning which gave rise to the restrictions on immigration that are now in force in Palestine. We did not evoke these restrictions; as everyone knows, they antedate the movement that is represented here. But even though we cannot be accused of having caused the ban on immigrations, we still want to state clearly our attitude toward it.

What? They wanted to settle people in a country without having publicly stated the entire plan in advance?

If a man approaches a place stealthily, under cover of darkness, he should not be surprised if he is met by cries of “Halt! Who goes there?” And all the worse for him if he cannot give a good, clear answer. What is more, this is hardly a situation in which any answer will sound anything but suspicious. Therefore we will do things

differently. We state our intentions in broad daylight which, thank God, we have no need to fear; we want to secure approval before we undertake something which would otherwise be the riskiest of all experiments. For it is not just a matter of getting people there, but of getting them to stay – and in complete security.

Unfortunately there are many among our brethren who could not be worse off than they are and who therefore will accept anything. But it would not take much sagacity, effort and money merely to shift the patient from one side to another. Let us rather try to cure him. This is such a great goal, and it is so reasonable and sensible that no one will search for ulterior motives therein. Why, then, should we not come right out and say so? In this way our entire plan will be comprehensible all at once. There will be no further mistrust. We are entering upon negotiations which sooner or later will lead to results – provided that we proceed with unity and keep our forces together.

*Source: Zionist Writings, Essays and Addresses: Theodor Herzl, Vol. 2, 1898-1904, Herzl Press, New York, 1973, p. 103-105.*

**Document D: “Theodor Herzl”, Alex Bein (1934)**

There the first reaction of the majority of the delegates to Herzl’s speech was one of profound emotion. A storm of applause swept through the hall. “It could not have been greater,” wrote one reporter, “if Herzl, instead of submitting a proposal which obviously thrust the Basle Program into the background, had announced to the Congress: ‘Palestine is ours, the masses can set out.’” Shemarya Levin, who, as one of the secretaries of the Congress, could survey the scene from the platform, saw on the faces of the delegates “amazement, admiration – but not a sign of protest ... The first effect of the magnanimity of the British offer was, to eclipse all other considerations.” The strategy of surprise, which Herzl liked only too well, had begun with a victory.

It was only in the sessions of the separate federations, and particularly that of the Russian, the strongest at the Congress, that critical reconsideration and opposition emerged, to find more and more powerful expression from hour to hour in the debates on the floor of the Congress itself.

In the carefully formulated opening speech which followed on the political report, Herzl had emphasized, at the very outset, that the East Africa project was in no wise intended as a substitute for Palestine. Palestine remained the unchangeable goal, and this had been made abundantly clear in his negotiations with the British government and all its agents. It was nevertheless his opinion that a method could be found of making use of this offer: “The offer has been extended to us in a way which cannot but contribute to the improvement of the condition of the Jewish people, without our relinquishing any of the great principles on which our movement is founded...

“Zion this certainly is not, and can never become. It is only a colonizational auxiliary or help – but, be it noted, on a national and state foundation. This will not give the sign to our masses to set themselves everywhere in motion. It is, and must remain, an emergency measure which is intended to come to the rescue of our helpless philanthropic enterprises and prevent the loss of these detached fragments of our people.” ...

Max Nordau, who was at bottom opposed to the plan even now, but who had been impressed by Herzl's plea for an objective attitude toward the British offer, and was, moreover, reluctant to abandon Herzl in this difficult moment, delivered an ambitious oration in support of Herzl's arguments; he coined, for the prospective colony in East Africa, the not altogether fortunate phrase *Nachtsyl* – a night shelter for the hundreds of thousands of Jews who were being thrust out of their homes and to whom Palestine could not yet be offered. ...

Curiously enough it was from the Russian representatives, among whom were the Zionists of Kishineff, who showed themselves unalterably opposed to permitting the Zionist Organization even to negotiate for any other immigration center than Palestine. It signified a departure from the line laid down at the first Zionist Congress, a break with the Basle Program. The problem of meeting the pressure of Jewish need was not the business of Zionism, whose task it was to concentrate on the achievement of its ultimate objective even if it could not, in the interim, be of any assistance to the suffering Jewish masses. Every compromise, every deviation from the road which led straight to Palestine, seemed to the protagonists of the viewpoint to be a surrender of fundamental principle. The debate became converted into a question of principle: Palestine or Uganda.

*Source: Theodor Herzl: A Biography, Alex Bein, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1941 (First Published 1934), p. 455-457.*

**Document E: “*The Founding Fathers of Zionism*”,  
*Benzion Netanyahu (1937)***

Herzl’s unique greatness was not in teaching that the only solution to the Jewish question was a Jewish state, but rather in teaching *how to put this idea into practice*, and in explaining *the only way* in which it was possible to put it into practice. Herzl himself knew well that herein lay his entire innovation: “Because all the leaders who sought to lead you know where Zion is.” So why have you not been able to come to Zion? “Because it is not possible to arrive at the goal in a straight line.” Since one needs to choose a concrete path, and every such path involves obstacles and delays, and since all the previously chosen paths were quickly blocked, “this is a very complicated question.” “The problem is that of the path,” Herzl said, clearly defining the crux of the matter. Therefore we can say that Herzl’s teaching which, as we have noted, was his alone, was *the teaching of the way to make Zionism a reality*. ...

During these years, Herzl’s idea stood in sharp contrast to the method advocated by those who shared, for the most part, his analysis of the state of world Jewry, but never understood the mode of operation he espoused or the means by which he sought to realize their shared ambitions. ... They wanted to follow the simple laws or arithmetic, believing this was the only practical way to achieve their desired goal. ... they needed only to bring to Palestine one Jew after another and to purchase acre after acre. They never imagined that in traveling this direct path, they were bound to run into brick walls. They never paid attention to the fact that they would encounter a government in Palestine whose opposition to the Zionist plan – an opposition they clearly felt from time to time – might take a form that would eliminate any possibility of their continued activity. ...

Then Herzl arose and boldly declared: No more gradual immigration! No more infiltration! For he considered the notion that the Jews could become the majority in the country through the gradual arrival of settlers, to be childish and absurd. ...

He also explained his thinking by way of a parable of someone trying to build a house of stone. “They are dragging stone after stone to the

building site and assume that as a result a house will be erected. Never!" – Herzl claimed without any reservation – "The house will never be built in that way!" For there are countervailing forces whose resistance is as certain as the laws of gravity. "It's a folly to construct a building without a plan and folly for us to construct a house without being assured the land on which it is built. For without that, the owner of the land will come one day and raze the building or evict us from the house which we constructed for ourselves." ...

The right of settlement could be obtained only from the government. ... "Without the assured right of sovereignty" – he declared – "all this migration is a waste of effort." ....

The great revolution which Herzl brought to the Jewish question and to its solution was, therefore, this: A settlement does not achieve its objective unless it is first provided with a legal right to achieve this objective, or in other words, unless the settlement is preceded by a right of settlement. This right of settlement would have no concrete value unless it was secured by external political guarantees and an internal military force. In short, a state cannot be established on the basis of gradual infiltration. On the contrary, in order for gradual infiltration or any other infiltration to be possible, it is first necessary to establish the state.

*Source: The Founding Fathers of Zionism, Benzion Netanyahu, Balfour Books and Gefen Publishing, 2012. p. 67-105.*

**Guiding Questions**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

1. What was Herzl's attitude to the 'infiltration' method of earlier Zionists?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did Herzl want from the Turkish Sultan and why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why was Herzl open to considering Britain's Uganda offer?

In the space below, using information from the documents and the film, answer the question: *What was Herzl's seminal contribution?*