



# Theodor Herzl

Have you ever heard of me? I didn't live all that long ago. Actually, I was born with the name of Benjamin Ze'ev Herzl, but everyone knew me as Theodor. I was born in Budapest, Hungary on May 2, 1860. When I was 18 we moved to Vienna and I studied law and journalism there.

I was very important in the Zionist movement – do you know what that is? Zionists are people who believe in there being a homeland for the Jewish people. I wasn't always so interested in Zionism. But in the late 1800s, I heard about the Dreyfus Affair where a French Army captain was accused of spying for Germany. It wasn't true at all. Captain Dreyfus was Jewish and many people believed that he was convicted and thrown in jail because of this. There was a lot of anti-semitism at this time – that's discrimination against people just because they are Jewish. So this unfair practice really got me to realize that the Jews needed a safe homeland and that's what I spent my life working toward.

I began to travel all over Europe to promote this cause. Many people weren't too happy with me because they were prejudiced against Jews. I really didn't have many supporters at first. But eventually I was able to found *Die Welt of Vienna*, and I planned the first Zionist Congress. I was elected president of that organization and held that until I died in 1904.

Many world leaders had met with me while I passionately pursued my cause. I met the German emperor a few times, as well as the Ottoman emperor. I attended the Hague Peace Conference, an international peace conference where many countries got together to try to work out common rules about war and peace. I even got to meet the Sultan of Turkey.

In 1902–3 I was invited to testify before the British Royal Commission on Alien Immigration. There I got to meet very important people in the British government, including Joseph Chamberlain who was the secretary of state to the colonies (land holdings that the British controlled). We tried to work out a deal where Jews could be moved to the Sinai peninsula, but in the end, that plan didn't work.

Sadly, I died of heart failure at the age of 44. I never got to see the establishment of the state of Israel, but I know that all of my hard work and passion helped to start a fire under other Zionists and that my work helped lead to the establishment of the state of Israel – a homeland for Jews. Before I died I asked to be buried in Israel, and in 1949, my remains were moved from Vienna where I died to Israel. I am home at last.

I wish that Israel was a peaceful place – it makes me so sad to see how much violence there is. I never dreamed that the Arab people would be so opposed to my plans.

If you go to Israel, you have to visit Herzalia, a city in Israel which was named in my memory. And if you work to help create a peaceful Israel, I'll know that my efforts will have been worthwhile. L'hitraot!