

ZIONIST PAMPHLETS.

Second Series.

Edited by H. Sacher, Leon Simon
and S. Landman.

No. 1.

Pinsker and Political Zionism

by

Achad ha-Am.

(Translated by Leon Simon.)

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ZIONIST PAMPHLETS.

(SECOND SERIES.)

The object of this series of Pamphlets is to place before English readers, in a convenient and inexpensive form, some of the most notable essays of the greatest of living Hebrew writers—Achad ha-Am (Asher Ginzberg). The Essays chosen for reproduction are the following (the date in brackets is that of the first publication of the Hebrew original) :—

1. Pinsker and Political Zionism (1902).
2. The Supremacy of Reason (1904).
3. Slavery in Freedom (1891).
4. The Transvaluation of Values (1898).
5. The Spiritual Revival (1902).
6. Moses (1904).

The translation is the work of Mr. Leon Simon, and the last four Essays are reprinted, by kind permission of the Jewish Publication Society of America, from "Selected Essays by Ahad Ha'am" (1912).

December, 1916.

Prefatory Note.

DR. LEO PINSKER, a Jewish physician of Odessa (son of the distinguished Hebrew scholar and author, Simchah Pinsker) published in 1882 a pamphlet entitled *Auto-Emancipation*, in which he advocated the creation of an autonomous Jewish settlement. The pamphlet was addressed primarily to the powerful Jewish organisations of the West, in the hope that they would take the lead in the work of national redemption; but the appeal fell on deaf ears, and Pinsker's great project remained unrealised. The time was not ripe for a national movement on a large scale, nor was Pinsker suited by character and temperament to be the creator of a world-wide organisation. He was more the thinker than the man of action. None the less, he found a means of giving practical expression to his interest in the national problem of Jewry. The *Chovevé Zion* ("Lovers of Zion"), who had an ambitious nationalist programme, but whose practical efforts were limited by circumstances to the establishment and support of a few Jewish colonists in Palestine, invited him to become their leader, and he accepted the position, realising that this small colonising activity fell very far short of the great national work of which he had dreamt, but recognising at the same time that it had the national idea behind it, and was in the nature of a first step. He remained at the head of the *Chovevé Zion*, and worked hard and loyally in their cause, till his death, which took place on the 21st of December, 1891.

Pinsker is one of the outstanding figures in the history of Zionism, and deserves to be much more widely known than he is at present. His pamphlet presents the case—or rather one of the cases—for Jewish nationalism with unequalled conciseness, vigour and conviction. His practical work has begun to

bear fruit in the more recent developments of the Jewish settlement in Palestine, of which he helped to lay the foundations. For both reasons he deserves the gratitude and the attention of those who care for the Zionist idea and its practical realisation.

The Hebrew Essay (called *Ha-Torah v'ha-Avodah*) which is here translated was written by Achad ha-Am at the time of the tenth anniversary of Pinsker's death, and published in the Hebrew monthly *Hashiloach* in January, 1902. It appears in the second volume of his collected works (*Al Parashath D'rachim*). It is now presented to English readers for the first time in commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Pinsker's death, which falls on the 21st of December, 1916. Those who read it with attention will learn much about the ideas and points of view of three prominent figures in Zionism—Pinsker, Herzl, and Achad ha-Am himself.

This Essay was written in the heyday of "political" Zionism, at a time when the air was full of sensational rumours, and hopes of an early and brilliant achievement ran high. Its criticisms are, of course, directed against the official Zionism of 1901, not against that of 1916, which has a very different attitude to Palestinian colonisation and to the Jewish problem generally.

One or two footnotes added by the translator are enclosed in square brackets. A couple of footnotes have been omitted in translation.

L. S.

4, *King's Bench Walk*,
Temple, E.C.,
December, 1916:

Pinsker and Political Zionism.

(To the memory of Dr. Pinsker, on the tenth anniversary
of his death.)

THE 21st of December last (1901) was the tenth anniversary of the death of Dr. Leo Pinsker.

A decade is a long time in our days, when everything keeps changing with extraordinary rapidity; when events come pell-mell, pushing and jostling one another, with a new sensation every day; when men rise and fall one after the other, famous to-day and forgotten to-morrow, rising to the top in an hour, and going under in the next; when the tumult of to-day is so loud that men have no time to pause and look calmly back on yesterday.

Pinsker is one of those men of yesterday, whom the men of to-day have already had time to forget. He died ten years ago, and in these ten years things have changed, and we with them. New birds have come and brought new songs. They pipe in a loud and strident chorus, in the din of which who shall remember the forlorn lay of a lonely songster whom earth knows no more?

In his day Pinsker was head of the *Chovevé Zion*, and he worked hard for Palestinian colonisation. But in the interval *Chibbath Zion* itself has given place to Zionism. Petty colonisation, the result of the "infiltration" policy, which absorbed the time and energy of Pinsker and the *Chovevé Zion* of yesterday, is to-day a source of merriment even for the merest tiro in Zionism. Everybody knows that Herzl has enlarged the narrow horizon of his predecessors by basing the Zionist ideal on a

broader foundation—on politics and diplomacy, on the Bank and the Charter.

Twenty years ago Pinsker wrote a small pamphlet of thirty-six pages, called *Auto-Emancipation*. In its day this pamphlet made a certain stir and evoked some response. But who pays attention now to a little pamphlet that dates from before the new dispensation? Have we not now the *Judenstaat*, and Reports of four Congresses, full of debates and speeches, as well as a heap of pamphlets and leaflets in every language, explaining and expounding Zionism in every aspect and every detail?

Yes—Pinsker was a great man in his day; he was one of the “precursors” of Zionism—so much even the new Zionists admit. And when they have occasion to recount the history of the Zionist idea to non-Zionists, they begin, in the most approved scientific manner, with the “embryonic” period. Here they commend in one breath all the worthy men who came before the birth of Zionism and prepared the way for it, not forgetting Pinsker and other leaders of the *Chovevé Zion* who were contemporary with him. But all this is for them simply by way of introduction to the main theme, which enters with the year 1896—the year when Herzl revealed himself in his pamphlet *Der Judenstaat*. Here they draw a line, as who should say, “Thus far the embryonic period of Zionism, the period of its preparation for birth. Now behold Zionism itself in all its glory and magnificence.”

How is it, then, that many people have now suddenly remembered that Pinsker died ten years ago, on the 21st of December; and that in so many places there have been prayers recited for the peace of his soul, and memorial addresses delivered in his honour, on this sad anniversary? Truth to tell, it is only because the work of the “petty colonisation” movement still maintains its existence, and there is still a Society which works for the support of the colonies. For that reason, and for that reason alone—because he stood at the head of those who worked for the Palestinian Colonies, and afterwards of the Society formed for their support—Pinsker is remembered by his colleagues, the original *Chovevé Zion* of his own country, whose privilege it was to know him personally and to work with him. It is they who have made the anniversary a matter of public interest. If not for this, the new Zionists, whose calendar begins

with the birth of political Zionism, would not have remembered the man who, fifteen years before Herzl, worked out the whole theory of political Zionism from beginning to end, with a logical thoroughness and an elevation of style unequalled by any subsequent work.

How indeed should these new Zionists remember him, seeing that they know nothing at all of Pinsker as the author of the theory of political Zionism? And whence should they know of him, if their leaders have never yet told them, explicitly or by implication, in print or on the platform, in Zionist Congresses or outside them, who was the true author of that theory, the real if unacknowledged fountain from which all those who came after him have drunk?¹ Pinsker's pamphlet in the original German is already out of print and rare. While a stream of new pamphlets, mostly poor and tasteless *rechauffés*, is daily poured forth and spread among the people with the assistance of the Zionist organisation and with the concurrence of its leaders, for propaganda purposes, this pamphlet of Pinsker's, which is uniquely capable of attracting intelligent Jews in every country to the Zionist idea, has not been honoured with a new edition to this day;² and many of the new Zionists, especially in the West, have never seen it, nor even heard of its value.³ All that they hear is that there were Zionists even before Herzl, but they were poor, simple-minded dreamers, who—incapable of comprehending a great political idea—thought to solve the Jewish problem by founding a few colonies in Palestine and supporting them with halfpence; and as for Pinsker—well, he was the leader of these poor visionaries.⁴

¹ We hear now that Herzl commended Pinsker and his pamphlet—for the first time—at one of the sittings of the Fifth Congress. That Congress met at Basle some weeks after the *Chovevé Zion* in Russia had given prominence to Pinsker's name on the anniversary of his death. This is evidence that the President of the Zionist Congress still sometimes pays attention to the public opinion of Russian Jewry. But, of course, this does not affect what is said above.

² [A second edition was published about a year after the appearance of this Essay.]

³ Here is an incident which illustrates the extent to which the contents of Pinsker's pamphlet have been forgotten, even in Russia. A short time ago, some of the Jewish periodicals in Russia published a letter of Pinsker's dating from 1883, which was found among the papers of the Odessa Committee. The letter contains only a few headings of the ideas which are explained in detail in his pamphlet. But the periodicals were surprised, and found it necessary to remark that it appeared *from this letter* that so long as twenty years ago Pinsker had "foreseen, as it were," the Zionist movement of our day.

⁴ In Austria the *Chovevé Zion* used to call themselves "Zionists" long before Herzl's time. I believe that Dr. Birnbaum invented the name in his journal *Selbst-Emanzipation*. Herzl mentions the "Zionists" a few times in his brochure, and satirically represents them as trying to raise a heavy load by the steam of a tea-kettle (*Judenstaat*, p. 4).

I doubt whether the time has yet come to restore to Pinsker the place of honour in the Zionist movement that belongs to him of right. We are in the thick of the tumult and the shouting, and as yet there is no room for a true and unbiassed judgment. That must be left for later history, for the time when "the tumult and the shouting dies," and the influence of personality and fleeting circumstance gives place to a national *motif* more general in scope and more permanent in character. But as the memory of Pinsker is now in the public mind—be it but for a moment—we may not improperly take advantage of the opportunity to recall the message which Pinsker brought to his people, but for which he has not yet received the credit.

That message is, as I have said, the message of *political* Zionism. Pinsker was the first to lay down a clear theoretical basis for political Zionism. He was also the first to work out—though only in outline—a definite practical programme for the realisation of the idea. It is this programme, or the fundamental points in it, that the new Zionists have laid hold on; it is because of this programme that they call themselves "political," denoting thereby, as they believe, the original feature which distinguishes them from their predecessors. Pinsker compressed all his teaching, theoretical and practical as well, into his one small pamphlet, which is characterised by conciseness of style and absence of systematic arrangement. His outraged feelings were too strong for the cold processes of thought, and did not allow him to arrange his ideas systematically. Pinsker did not write a scientific treatise; he uttered a loud, bitter, heart-felt cry, fraught with indignation and grief at our external and internal degradation. For that reason he must be studied with close attention before one can put together the scattered fragments of ideas—some repeated time and again with a wealth of poetic eloquence, others no more than briefly hinted at by the way—and discover the full import of his teaching.

This is what I propose here to attempt. But first of all I must point out—what might not be self-evident to all my readers—that my object is only to explain Pinsker's teaching in its relation to present-day political Zionism. I am not here giving a statement of my own views on political Zionism in general. What I had to say on that subject has been said in various essays, which will be familiar to many of my readers; and these previous

utterances absolve me, I think, from the necessity of commenting here on every point with which I am not in agreement. In this essay I take for granted the fundamental standpoint of political Zionism, which was Pinsker's standpoint also, though, as we shall soon see, he gave it a peculiar turn, making it approximate more to that Zionist ideal which is nowadays called "spiritual Zionism."

Pinsker, like all subsequent political Zionists, arrived at the idea of Zionism not through the problem of Judaism—through the necessity of seeking for a new foundation for our national existence and unity, in place of the old foundation, which is crumbling away—but through the problem of Jewry—through a definite conviction that even emancipation and general progress will not improve the degraded and insecure position of the Jews among the nations, and that anti-Semitism will never cease so long as we have not a national home of our own. But it is worth while to examine particularly the way in which he arrived at this conviction of the eternity of the feud between Israel and the nations, because it is a different way from that of the later Zionists, and it is this difference that gives a peculiar colouring to Pinsker's message.

Pinsker finds three principal causes which lead to our being hated and despised more than any other human beings; and for each of the three there is no remedy except a separate Jewish State.

The first cause is a national one, and its roots lie deep in human psychology. We cannot know whether that great day will ever arrive when all mankind will live in brotherhood and concord, and national barriers will no longer exist; but even at the best, thousands of years must elapse before that Messianic age. Meanwhile nations live side by side in a state of *relative* peace, which is based chiefly on the fundamental equality between them. Each nation, that is, recognises and admits the national existence of the other nations, and even those which are at enmity or even at war with one another are forced to recognise each other as equals, standing on the same plane of nationhood, and therefore entertain each for the other a certain feeling of respect, without distinction between large nation and small, strong and weak. But it is different with the people of Israel. This people is not counted among the nations, because since it was exiled from its land it

has lacked the essential attributes of nationality, by which one nation is distinguished from another—has lacked “that original national life which is inconceivable without community of language and customs and without local contiguity.” It is because we lack these attributes that the other nations do not regard us as on the same plane with themselves, as a nation equal to them in integral value. True, we have not ceased even in the lands of our exile to be *spiritually* a distinct nation; but this spiritual nationality, so far from giving us the status of a nation in the eyes of the other nations, is the very cause of their hatred for us as a people. Men are always terrified by a disembodied spirit, a soul wandering about with no physical covering; and terror breeds hatred. This is a form of psychic disease which we are powerless to cure. In all ages men have feared all kinds of ghosts which their imaginations have seen; and Israel appears to them as a ghost—but a ghost which they see with their very eyes, not merely in fancy. Thus the hatred of the nations for Jewish nationality is a psychic disease of the kind known as “demonopathy”; and having been transmitted from generation to generation for some two thousand years, it has by now become so deep-rooted that it can no longer be eradicated. The primary object of this hatred is not Jews as individuals, but Judaism—by which is meant that abstract nationality, that bodiless ghost, which wanders about among the real nations like something apart and different, and arouses their latent faculty of demonophobia. Hence we see on the one hand that individual Gentiles live in peace and amity with their Jewish acquaintances, while retaining their deep-seated animosity against Jews as a people, and on the other hand that, throughout all the periodical changes of national tendencies and international relations, all nations remain at all times the same in their hatred of the Jews, just as they remain always the same in their hatred of the other kinds of ghosts in whose existence they believe.¹

What, then, must we do to escape from this national hatred?

Assimilate with the nations? If real assimilation be meant—the assimilation that reaches to the very soul and ends in annihilation—that is a kind of death which does not come of itself, and we do not wish to bring it on by our own efforts.² But the

¹ *Autoemancipation*, pp. 1-7 [7-11 in the second edition, 1903].

² *ib.* p. 15 [17].

surface assimilation which is the panacea advocated by a certain section of Jews can only make matters worse for us. Pinsker himself does not draw this conclusion in so many words; but it is a necessary consequence of the idea just mentioned. For, seeing that the source of anti-Semitism lies in our lack of a concrete national existence, which would compel the other nations to recognise in us a nation equal to themselves in status, it follows plainly that the more we assimilate—the more we imitate our surroundings and whittle away our national distinctiveness—the less concrete and the more spiritual will our national existence become; and the more, therefore, will the ghost-fear which begets anti-Semitism grow in intensity.

There remains, then, but one means of destroying anti-Semitism. We must become again a real nation, possessed of all those essential attributes of nationality by virtue of which one nation is the equal of another. These attributes are those mentioned above—a common land, a common language and common customs. It is the combination of these that makes “an original national life.”¹

The second cause of our degradation is political in character. “Generally speaking,” says Pinsker, “we do not find any nation over-fond of the stranger. This is a fact which has its foundation in ethnology, and no nation can be blamed for it.” Now since the Jew is everywhere regarded as a stranger by the native population, we should have no right to grumble if our hosts in the various countries treated us like other strangers who settle permanently among them. But in fact we find that people everywhere dislike Jews much more than other strangers. Why is this? For the same reason—replies Pinsker—for which men behave in different ways to a well-to-do guest and to a penniless beggar. The first comes as an equal; he too has a house in which

¹ Pinsker died before the days of what is now called “spiritual nationalism,” the view which denies the need for a distinct national territory, believing it possible that sooner or later we shall obtain equal rights in the lands of our dispersion *as a nation*: that is, shall be allowed to carry on our distinctive *national* life in these lands, just as we have already obtained equal rights, *as citizens*, in many countries: that is, have been allowed to take part in social and political life like the other inhabitants. But Pinsker lays the foundation for this view, by demanding—for the first time—*national* equality, and substituting the formula of spiritual nationalism: “the same rights for the Jewish *nation* as for the other *nations*” (“die Gleichstellung der jüdischen Nation mit den anderen Nationen”—*Autoemancipation*, p. 7 [11]) for the older formula of the protagonists of emancipation: “the same rights for Jews as for the other citizens.” It is, however, fundamental to Pinsker’s view that national equality is unattainable so long as we lack the concrete attributes of nationality. A nation which is a nation only in the spiritual sense is a monstrosity which the other nations cannot possibly regard as their compeer; it follows that they cannot recognise its title to demand the same rights as those enjoyed by the real nations.

he gives hospitality—no matter whether we ourselves or others enjoy it—and therefore we recognise it as our duty to give him a welcome, even if we are not altogether delighted with his company; while he on his side is conscious that he has a right to demand such treatment as the conventions of polite society dictate, just as in his own house he extends that treatment to others. Not so the homeless mendicant. He on his side is free from the obligations of hospitality, since he has no opportunity of fulfilling them. Hence his request for our hospitality is a request for pure charity. It is not the appeal of an equal to the principle of equality of rights and duties; it is the appeal to compassion of one weaker and humbler than ourselves, who can receive but cannot give. Hence, even if we are so compassionate as to welcome the poor man and treat him with affection and respect, like one of ourselves, the equality is only one of external appearance. In our heart of hearts we feel, and he feels too, that we are doing him a kindness, that we are treating him well out of our goodness of heart, and doing something that we might have forborne doing if not for our charitable and benevolent disposition. This feeling alone suffices to create a wide gulf between us, and to lower his worth in our estimation and his own.

Which picture represents Israel among the nations? Not that of the well-to-do guest; for Israel has no place of his own where he can fulfil the obligations of hospitality towards other nations. Israel is like the mendicant who goes from door to door, asking others to give him what he does not give to others. And therefore the other nations do not regard the Jew as their equal, and do not recognise any duty to show him that decent behaviour which they practise towards all the other foreigners who live among them. If, then, they are kind enough to make room for him, it is only by an act of charity, which degrades the recipient. When their generosity goes to the furthest extreme, they give the poor visitor the greatest boon that they can give—that of equal rights. But the mere fact that the grant of equal rights is an act of generosity, and not a duty based on the real equality of the two parties, robs the boon of its moral value, and makes it merely a piece of legislative machinery. The giver can never forget that he is the giver, nor the receiver that he is the receiver. For this reason Jewish emancipation in all countries has been and must always remain political only, not

social. The Jew enjoys equal rights as a citizen, but not equality as a man, as one who takes his part in the intimate life of society. The non-Jew and the Jew alike are conscious of this fact, and so, despite his equal rights, the Jew remains an inferior even in his own estimation, and in non-Jewish society he endeavours to hide his Judaism, and is grateful to non-Jews when they do not remind him of his origin, but behave as though it were a matter of indifference to them.

The conclusion is that the Jews can never attain to true social equality in Gentile countries unless they cease to be always recipients and rise to the rank of respectable visitors, who can give to others what they ask for themselves. In other words, the Jews must once more possess themselves of a native land of their own, where they will be masters and hosts. Then their place in the estimation of other nations will improve automatically, and wherever they set foot they will be regarded as equals by the natives, who will consider themselves in duty bound to treat the Jews with the same respect which they show to other strangers who come to stay among them.¹

Besides the two causes explained above, there is a third cause, economic in character, which gives a practical turn to Gentile hatred of the Jew, and brings it into actual operation in the form of physical restriction and persecution.

In the life of civilised nations the struggle for existence assumes the form of peaceful competition. In this sphere every State distinguishes to a certain extent between the native and the stranger, and gives the native preference where there is not room for both. This discrimination is practised even against the honoured stranger, whom the native regards as his equal; and it stands to sense that there will be a vastly greater amount of discrimination against the poor vagrant, whose existence in the State is tolerated only out of kindness and charity. If you have a large house, with room enough and to spare for your family and for respectable visitors, you do not begrudge the beggar his corner, but let him live with you as long as he likes. But when the family grows and the house begins to feel cramped, you will at once look askance at the beggar-guests, whom you are under no obligation to respect or to feed. And if you see that they

¹ *ib.* pp. 7-10 [11-13].

do not squeeze up and make room for you, but, on the contrary, endeavour to get more elbow-room for themselves, regardless of the fact that they are crowding you, then you will resent the impudence with which they forget their place, and in the heat of anger you will turn them out neck and crop, or at least drive them back into their own corner, make it as small as possible and confine them rigidly to it for the future. But the respectable guests will still be treated with deference, and though you may secretly dislike them for occupying valuable room, you will not permit yourself to overstep the limits of politeness and to turn them out into the street, save in exceptional cases where they themselves overstep the mark and your patience gives out.

Thus, we find that even where the number of Jews is small, they bring down on themselves the resentment and hatred of their neighbours because of their success in the struggle for existence, and the advantage which their ability and pertinacity gain for them over their competitors in the various walks of life; and where the Jewish settlement is considerable, anti-Semitism finds its food—even without any success on the Jewish side—in the mere fact of their existence: for their existence is bound, poor and cramped though it be, to lead to competition which their neighbours will feel. In either case the native population does not consider itself obliged to restrain its feelings and behave with perfect politeness to a miserable nation which is allowed to live among the other nations only on sufferance, and is so ungrateful as to jostle its benefactors without shame.¹

This cause also, then, cannot be removed except through the removal of the other causes mentioned before. We must build a house for ourselves, and then, even in foreign countries, we shall have the position of respected guests, and our competition with the native population will not arouse their resentment and jealousy more than the competition of other strangers. But the economic cause differs from the other causes. Our national and political degradation is a moral fact, and requires only a moral remedy—that we stand higher in the estimation of the world as a nation with a concrete life of its own and with a land in which it can extend to others that hospitality which it receives elsewhere. But in order to remove the economic cause we must of necessity

¹ *ib.* pp. 10-11 [13-14].

diminish the competition between Jew and non-Jew in places where that competition is excessive. For even the respected guest has economic freedom only within certain limits. If he oversteps these limits, and his competition presses too hard on the native, the native is forced to protect himself, either by legislative restriction of the foreigner's rights, or sometimes even by force. It follows that if we succeed in establishing a separate State for our people, the two first causes of anti-Semitism will be removed, even if the State is very small, and even if most of the Jews remain where they are, and only a very small minority goes to settle in our State. For the mere fact of the existence of a Jewish State, where Jews would be masters, and their national life would develop on lines of its own in accordance with their spirit—this fact alone would suffice to remove from us the brand of inferiority, and to raise us in the world's estimation to the level of a nation equal in worth to the other nations, sharing

primary aim is to improve the hard lot of the Jews *as individuals*. They regard such improvement in exile as out of the question, since Jews are regarded as strangers in every country, and the competition of the stranger exposes him to the resentment of the native population. Hence they demand that the Jews shall establish a separate State for themselves, where they will not be strangers and their competition will not be a crime.¹ But this idea can be justified only if the State is able to improve the lot of all the Jews or most of them; that is, if all or most of the Jews can leave foreign countries and settle in their State. Unless this condition is fulfilled, the amelioration will be only partial; it will affect only that fortunate minority which succeeds in establishing itself in the Jewish State. The majority will remain as badly off as before—hated and persecuted foreigners in strange lands. Where, then, is the promised annihilation of the Jewish problem through the establishment of the State?

But with Pinsker it is different. The loss which he mourns is primarily the loss of Jewish national dignity. He weeps for a *nation* which is not regarded and respected by the other nations as an equal, and whose individual members are treated everywhere not merely as foreigners, but as beggars in receipt of charity. With him the question of national dignity comes first of all. Of the three causes to which he traces the ill-feeling between Jews and Gentiles, the first one, which lies in the degraded position of the Jews as a nation—a point not mentioned by the new Zionists—is the most important in his own view, and occupies most of his attention. Next to it stands the political cause; and this cause also, unlike the new Zionists, he regards from the point of view of the problem of national dignity. He is not much troubled by the fact that we are treated as aliens in every country: that fact, no doubt, harms us as individuals, but in itself it does not imply any contempt or inferiority. The root of the trouble is that we are not treated as aliens in the ordinary political sense, but are regarded as wandering mendicants, as inferior beings, who are not entitled to demand respect and consideration as of right. So with the third cause, the economic one. Its sting lies for Pinsker chiefly in the fact that here also we Jews are differentiated from other aliens—that in consequence of the low

¹ *Judenstaat*, pp. 24-26.

esteem in which we are held our competition causes more resentment than that of other aliens. Pinsker, therefore, has more right than the new Zionists to regard the establishment of a Jewish State as the absolute solution of the Jewish problem—that is, of the problem of the *dignity* of the Jewish nation and of its members, who, even if most of them remain scattered among the nations, and even if they continue to be hated and persecuted in various countries because of their economic competition, will at any rate no longer be exposed to the contempt of their neighbours, and to the taunt that they are not a nation but a pack of beggars wandering about in a world which is not theirs, and existing only on sufferance.

On the other hand, Pinsker raises another question, which does not trouble the new Zionists very much: the question of the national consciousness.

If we assume, as Herzl does in his pamphlet, that the Jewish State will contain all the Jews, and will offer to every individual Jew the possibility of living comfortably among his people, then we need not be much concerned about the anterior development of the national consciousness as an incentive to the establishment of the State. We have ready to hand another and a stronger incentive in the natural desire of every individual to improve his position.¹ But if from the outset we accept the fact that even a Jewish State will not absolutely solve the Jewish problem on its economic side, and that the chief purpose for which we need a State is a moral one—to gain for our own nation the respect of other nations, and to create a healthy body for our national spirit—then we are bound to face the question whether the national consciousness is so strong among us, and the honour of our nation so dear to us, that this motive alone, unalloyed by any consideration of individual advantage, will be sufficient to spur us on to so vast and difficult a task.

Now Pinsker, candid here as always, does not conceal from us that, as things are, the national consciousness among us is not nearly strong enough for our purpose. "Our greatest misfortune is that we do not form a nation: we are merely Jews." The *galuth* life has compelled every Jew to put all his strength into his

¹ The question, "What will induce the Jews to found their State and to settle in it?" is answered by Herzl quite simply: "We can trust the anti-Semites to see to that." (*Judenstaat*, p. 59.)

individual struggle for existence; and in that struggle we have been compelled to use any kind of weapon that came to hand, without enquiring too closely whether it was consistent with our national dignity. Thus, as time went on, both our sense of nationality and our sense of dignity became dulled; and at last we ceased to feel the need of restoring our dignity, national or individual.¹ We left it to the Deity to perform that ideal task by bringing us the Messiah at the proper time, and buried ourselves in affairs more necessary for our immediate physical survival.² Even in modern times, when the breeze of modern culture has blown on us and begun to awaken our dormant sense of dignity, we try to find satisfaction in a strange delusion of our own invention—that the people of Israel has a “mission,” for the sake of which it must remain scattered among the nations: “a mission in which nobody believes, a privilege of which, candidly, we should be glad to be rid, if at that price we could wipe out the name of ‘Jew’ as a title of shame.”³ This loss of self-respect on the one side aggravates the contempt in which we are held, and on the other side is itself the greatest stumbling-block on our path of progress. For what, except a strong national consciousness, can induce our people to bend all its energies to the task of restoring its national dignity, and to fight unceasingly and unwearyingly against all the obstacles with which it is confronted? That those obstacles are many and serious—this again Pinsker does not conceal from us. At the best, several generations must elapse before we can attain our end, “perhaps only after labour too great for human strength.” Only, as we recognise that this is the one road to our national salvation, we must not turn back faint-heartedly because of the danger or for lack of confidence in the success of our efforts.⁴ But such language is intelligible only to a thoroughly awakened national consciousness, which can intensify the desire to attain the end in proportion to the heaviness of the task, can flame up for one instant in the heart of the whole people, and produce a

¹ *Autoemancipation*, p. 12 [15].

² *ib.* p. 16 [18].

³ *Ib.* p. 19 [20]. As the sequel shows, Pinsker's criticism is aimed only at those who make the “mission” the moral end of our dispersion. They think that we can fulfil our mission only if we are thoroughly scattered; whereas the fact is precisely the reverse. “So far the world does not regard us as a genuine firm, and allows us little credit.” If, therefore, we really wish to benefit the world by fulfilling a mission, we must first of all establish our national position, so as to enhance our credit with the rest of the world.

⁴ *ib.* p. 20 [21].

“national resolution,” a sacred and unbending resolve to take up the work of revival and to carry it on, generation after generation, till its completion. And “where,” asks Pinsker, bitterly, “where shall we find this national consciousness?”

Pinsker found no satisfactory answer to this question. He made this national consciousness a categorical imperative, a *conditio sine qua non*; but he did not show how it was to be supplied. For this reason the whole of the practical scheme which follows gives one the impression of being formulated conditionally—subject, that is, to the emergence among our people, no matter by what means, of a national consciousness strong enough to enable them to carry out the idea in practice.

Pinsker’s practical scheme, as I said above, is only an outline. But its general lines are very similar to those laid down by Herzl in the pamphlet which is the basis of present-day Zionist policy.

As we cannot hope for another leader like Moses—“history does not vouchsafe such leaders to the same people repeatedly”—the leadership of the movement for national rebirth must be taken by a group of distinguished Jews, men of strong will and generous character, who “by their union will, perhaps, succeed in freeing us from reproach and persecution, no less than did the one great leader.”¹ Herzl uses very similar language about this collective *negotiorum gestor*,² and he and Pinsker alike look for its members among the upper-class Jews; but Herzl has his eye especially on the Jews of England, while Pinsker looks generally to the great organisations already in existence.³ Herzl calls this governing body “the Society of Jews”; Pinsker calls it “the Directorium.” Herzl pictures the formation of the Society of Jews in a very simple manner. The best of the English Jews, having approved the project, come together without any preliminaries, and form a “Society of Jews.” Herzl sees no need to call a National Assembly first: the general consent which is necessary to give the Society proper standing with the Governments will come afterwards spontaneously.⁴ But Pinsker wanted the various organisations to call “a *National Congress*, of which they them-

¹ *ib.* p. 28 [25].

² *Judenstaat*, p. 70.

³ He means, apparently, the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* and its sister organisations in England and Austria. The Jewish Colonisation Association had not yet come into existence.

⁴ Herzl shows, in his pamphlet, no great liking for large meetings, even for propaganda purposes. “There is no need”—so writes the founder of the Zionist Congress—“to summon special meetings with a lot of palaver.” (*ib.* p. 57.)

selves would be the nucleus." Only in the event of their refusing to do this does he suggest that they should at least constitute a special "national institution" called a "Directorium," which should unite all forces in the national work. The principal and immediate object of this institution would be "to create a safe and independent home of refuge for that superfluity of poor Jews which exists as a proletariat in various countries, and is disliked by the native population."¹ All other Jews, not merely in the West, "where they are already naturalised up to a certain point," but also "in those places where they are not readily tolerated," can remain where they are. Unlike Herzl, Pinsker does not think it possible that all the Jews will leave their homes and go to their own State; nor is this necessary for his real object, as I have pointed out above. Economic pressure is under present conditions causing the "superfluity" to emigrate year by year from every country where there is a superfluity; and thousands of Jews leave their homes because they can no longer maintain themselves. At present these emigrants escape one trouble to fall into another. They wander from country to country, and find no proper resting-place; and the large sums of money expended by various organisations on the migration of Jews and their settlement in new homes produce no real benefit, because the new home also is only a temporary lodging. When the number of Jews in the new country reaches the "saturation-point," the journey will have to be resumed; the Jews must move on to yet other countries. But if we can prepare, while there is yet time, a single secure home of refuge instead of the many insecure ones, the superfluity will gradually find its way thither, and its inhabitants will increase from year to year, till at last it becomes the centre of our national life, though the bulk of the people will remain, as hitherto, scattered in strange lands.

The first act of the "Directorium" would be to send an expedition of experts to investigate and find the territory best suited to our purpose from every point of view. When he wrote his pamphlet Pinsker did not yet regard our historic land as the only possible home of refuge; on the contrary, he feared that our ingrained love for Palestine might give us a bias and induce us to choose that country without paying regard to its political,

¹ *Autoem.* p. 27 [25-26]. Elsewhere (p. 34 [30]) Pinsker insists that the home of refuge must be secured by *political* means ("politisch gesichert.")

economic and other conditions, which perhaps might be unfavourable. For this reason he warns us emphatically not to be guided by sentiment in this matter, but to leave the question of territory to a commission of experts, who will solve it after a thorough and detailed investigation. But on the whole he thinks that the desired territory will be found either in America or in Turkey.¹ In the latter alternative we will form a special "Pashalik," the independence of which will be guaranteed by Turkey and the other Great Powers. "It will be one of the principal functions of the Directorium," writes Pinsker, for all the world like an orthodox adherent of "diplomatic" Zionism to-day, "to win for this project the sympathy of the Porte and the other European Governments."²

"And then, but not till then," he warns us once again, the Directorium will enter on its work of buying land and organising colonisation. In this work it will need the assistance of "a group of capitalists," who will form "a joint-stock company"—exactly as in Herzl's scheme, where side by side with the Society of Jews there is established the Jewish Company, a company of capitalists, to direct the material affairs of the settlement.

Pinsker next proceeds to describe in outline the progress of the new settlement—how the land will be parcelled out in small plots, some to be sold to men with capital, and some to be occupied by men of no means with the assistance of a *National Fund* established to that end; and so forth. But for our present purpose we need follow him no further. What has been said above will suffice to make it plain to all who wish to see that it was Pinsker who worked out the whole theory of political Zionism, and that his successors, so far from adding anything essential to his scheme, actually took away in large measure its ideal basis, and thus so seriously impaired its moral value that they had to have recourse to various promises which they could neither fulfil nor repudiate. This will become abundantly clear to anybody who will compare the two pamphlets, Pinsker's and Herzl's.

Pinsker, as we have seen, puts the emphasis on the moral aspect, Herzl on the material. Hence Pinsker wishes to found only a national centre, Herzl promises a complete "ingathering

¹ Herzl also, in his pamphlet, does not decide on a territory; but he also looks to America and Turkey, and suggests the Argentine or Palestine (*Judenstaat* p. 29).

² *Autoem.* p. 30 [28].

of the exiles"; Pinsker finds the motive power in a strong national consciousness, and Herzl in the desire for individual betterment. For this reason Pinsker does not find it necessary to minimise the difficulties: on the contrary, he repeats many times, with emphasis, that only at the cost of infinite sacrifice will the goal perhaps—mark that "perhaps"!—be reached. Similarly, he recognises that it is not work for one generation alone. "We have to take only the first step; our successors must follow in our footsteps, with measured tread and without undue haste."¹ Not so Herzl. He is bound to make light of the difficulties, because otherwise he would have to face the question: "If we are looking for betterment as individuals, how can we waste so much energy on a task that will take generations to accomplish, and may not be accomplished at all, when we have so many pressing needs which can be more or less met if we devote that energy to them?" Hence Herzl is never tired of promising that it will be very easy to carry out his project in a short time, if only we want it. "Let us but begin, and anti-Semitism will at once die down in every country: for this will be our treaty of peace with it. Once let the Jewish Company be established, and the news of it will spread in one day to the ends of the earth, and our position will immediately begin to improve. . . . Thus the work will proceed, rapidly yet without convulsion."² The same difference is evident in the general scheme of the two pamphlets. Pinsker devotes most of his pamphlet to showing how low we have sunk as a nation, and how badly we need a State of our own to save our dignity. Only at the end does he explain briefly how he pictures to himself the practical realisation of his idea. This is because from his point of view the essential thing is that we resolve that our dignity absolutely demands this course of action, cost what it may. We have no need to spend much thought at the outset on the question whether we shall succeed, or how and when we shall succeed, because, if we suppose that the task is beyond our strength, we must none the less take it up, in order to wipe out our reproach. The question of dignity brooks no calculation. But Herzl deals very briefly with fundamental

¹ *ib.* p. 35 [31].

² "Billig und doch ohne Erschütterung." (*Judenstaat*, p. 85.) In one place Herzl says that the emigration of the whole people from the various countries to its own State will take "some decades" (p. 27), but does not say how many. Elsewhere he is more definite the emigration will last "perhaps twenty years or perhaps more." (p. 79.)

principles and reasons, because, from his materialistic point of view, there is really no need to enlarge on them. Can anybody doubt that the position of the Jews in exile is very bad, and that it would be better for them and for their neighbours if they went and established a separate State for themselves? Even our "assimilationists" would certainly agree for the most part, if they only knew with absolute certainty from the start that the project could be carried out without too much trouble, "rapidly yet without convulsion." The root question is, then, whether the goal can in fact be reached under such comfortable conditions. For this reason Herzl gives most of his attention to this question, and explains his practical scheme in minute detail, with the object of showing that it demands no great sacrifices, whether material or spiritual, and that everything from A to Z will be achieved with ease, rapidity and universal satisfaction. All the emigration to the Jewish State, up to the time when the whole people is gathered there, he describes almost as though it were a holiday excursion. And in the State itself everybody lives in comfort and prosperity. Nobody will need to forgo even the minor habits of his ordinary life; and the immigrant will not even have to miss his friends and relations, because the Jews will leave the different countries in "local groups," and will be settled in their own land on that basis, so that each man can attach himself to the group which is closest to him geographically and spiritually. The working-classes, on whose strength the State will be built up, will work only seven hours a day, and even the Jewish Company, which is to direct the whole work with its capital, will not incur any financial risk, because its investments will be sound and will produce an exceptionally good return.¹

If, further, we take into account the wide difference between the two pamphlets in style, we may say that Herzl's pamphlet has the air of being a translation of Pinsker's from the language of the ancient Prophets into that of modern journalism.

Yet the name of Pinsker, as the originator of the political Zionist theory, is almost forgotten. He is mentioned as a rule only in connection with the work of "petty colonisation" in

¹ It is worth pointing out that Pinsker, too, hints that the company of capitalists, which is to co-operate with his Directorium, may expect a good profit. But as soon as he has mentioned this expectation he adds: "Whether, however, this act of national redemption will be more or less good business or not—that question is not of great moment in comparison with the importance of the undertaking for the future of our people." (pp. 32-33 [30]).

Palestine, as though his horizon had been bounded by his activity in that sphere. Ordinary men, for whom the real is the visible, remember only things that are done: and the thing that Pinsker did—that to which he devoted all his subsequent work—has really no direct relation to the message which he began by enunciating.

I have shown elsewhere how it was that Pinsker came to take part in the work of the *Chovevé Zion*, despite the political character of his theory. He understood perfectly well that their work was very far removed from the great project of which he dreamt; but he understood also that without a "national resolution," proceeding from a strong national consciousness, and without unity and an organisation embracing the whole people, it would be impossible to carry out his great idea. The consent of the Powers, the favour of the Sublime Porte, even a Charter signed and sealed—all this cannot help us in the least, so long as we are not a single people, strong by virtue of our unity and our indomitable will, penetrated through and through with a sense of our present national degradation, and prepared to sacrifice our all for a nobler future. Hence, when Pinsker saw that national indifference was the rule in every section of the people; when he saw how faint an echo his pamphlet raised in the hearts of the ruling classes, whom he confidently expected to be the first to rally to his banner; and when he saw a small group of men with insignificant means, or none, putting forth every possible effort to carry out a national project, small and poor though it was in comparison with his own ideal—Pinsker could not help lending a hand to those who were engaged in this work, seeing in them the nucleus of an organisation, and the small beginning of the "national resolution." For Pinsker the work done in Palestine was not the beginning of the practical realisation of his programme, but only the beginning of the preparatory stage—the beginning of the revival of the national consciousness, and of the union of the people under the banner of a common ideal. He hoped by means of national action on a small scale to arrive ultimately at that national resolution on the part of the whole people for which he looked in his pamphlet; and then the real work would begin.

It is abundantly clear that this is exactly the course which the new Zionists too are taking to-day, though as yet, it would appear, unconsciously. How great, for instance, is the gulf between

the Jewish Company of Herzl's vision—possessing a capital of fifty millions sterling, and undertaking not only to plant the settlers in the Jewish State, but also to sell the property and transact the business of all the Jews in the Diaspora—and the small Bank, with its quarter-of-a-million, which has now been opened, after infinite labour, to carry on some simple and unimportant business operations in Palestine and Russia! Or again, is there any sort of relationship between the Society of Jews which Herzl describes in his pamphlet—a Society which is to stand at the head of the whole people and manage all its national affairs, as Moses did—and the Actions Committee which now stands at the head of the Zionist Organisation? And how shall we be brought to the Jewish State—that free State guaranteed by all the Powers—by such minor concessions as it is possible to obtain now, according to the Zionist leaders, at Yildiz Kiosk for a certain price? The plain truth is that all this work, which the new Zionists regard as “political” work *par excellence*, has as little to do with the theory of political Zionism as had the petty colonisation work which Pinsker took up. In the one case, as in the other, the whole value of the work lies in its effect on the people, which it educates gradually in the direction of unity, organisation, national resolution. In other words, we are still, as we were in Pinsker's day, at the first stage, the preliminary stage of preparatory work.

It must be admitted, however, that in the practical sphere—even confining that to preparatory work and propaganda—Pinsker did little, and did not achieve in his ten years of work half as much as the leader of the new Zionism has achieved in five years. Pinsker was purely a theorist: he worked out the theory of Zionism better and more fully than his successor, but, like all theorists, he was of little use when it came to practical work. Men of his type, simple-souled and pure-minded to a degree, innocent of the tricks and wiles of diplomacy, knowing nothing but the naked truth—such men cannot find the way to popular favour. Their words are too sincere, their actions too straightforward. Those only can attract the mob and bend it to their will who can descend to its level, pander to its tastes, and pipe to it in a hundred tunes, choosing the right one at the right moment. Pinsker had none of these arts. If, for example, he had gone to Yildiz Kiosk to negotiate for the colonisation of Palestine, and had been told there: “If you have two million pounds you may

have so-and-so; otherwise—nothing”—what would he have done? Without a doubt he would have replied at once: “We have not such a large sum of money, and have at present no prospect of getting it.” Then he would have returned home empty-handed, and the public at large would have known nothing of his going or of his returning; or, if it had been impossible to keep the matter quiet, everybody would have known that “certain steps had been taken” at Yildiz, but had come to nothing. This, of course, would have made a bad impression, and have helped in some degree to weaken the energy of his few supporters. But we all still remember how the Zionist leaders behaved on a similar occasion last year. Leadership on these lines cannot satisfy those who have a liking for the plain truth; but from a pragmatic point of view it undoubtedly has the advantage. First of all, people heard only the glad news (it “spread in one day to the ends of the earth”) that the Sultan had given the Zionist leaders a favourable reception and made them certain promises, but that the details could not yet be published. This news aroused widespread attention: friends and foes alike waited breathlessly for the curtain to be drawn. Then, after the news had become public property and enlivened the hopes of the Zionists, the leaders made the further announcement that the great promises had been made conditionally, and could not be fulfilled unless they had two million pounds. Everybody who knew the true state of things understood at once—and certainly the leaders understood it, even while they were having audience of the Sultan—that this condition could not be met, so that the promises were mere empty words. And yet the first impression was not altogether effaced, and it served to strengthen in many people the belief that something great could be done if only all sections of the people were ready to put all their strength into it—the kind of belief which is calculated to intensify the energy of the workers, and to spur them on to put forth greater efforts.

In a word: theory and practice are two departments which no doubt depend on each other, but each one needs special abilities and different qualities of mind, which can with difficulty be combined in one man. We must therefore honour every man according to his value in his own department. If I might borrow an illustration from religion, I should say that Pinsker was the

originator of the gospel of political Zionism, and Herzl its apostle; Pinsker brought the new dispensation, and Herzl gave it currency. But it is usual for the apostle to recognise the originator and to acknowledge his greatness: as he spreads the gospel, so he publishes abroad and sanctifies the name of him who brought it. Had the Zionist apostle followed this custom, Pinsker would now have had a world-wide reputation, and would have been venerated by all whose watchword is Zion. But Herzl would not be satisfied with the practical mission which was in reality his *métier*. He must needs "originate" the gospel itself over again—in an inferior form, it is true—so that it should be all his. Thus the odd result has come about that the further the gospel spreads, the more completely is its true originator forgotten.

But it is not for Pinsker's reputation that I am concerned. In his lifetime he was so far from the desire for notoriety and ascendancy, that I have no doubt that if he were alive to-day, he would rejoice whole-heartedly at the wide vogue given to his idea, and not a shade of displeasure would pass over his face because of the injustice done to himself personally. My only regret is that Pinsker's wonderful pamphlet has sunk with him, and the Zionist gospel itself has become more superficial and more materialistic.¹ Zionism is a faith, and like every other faith, it needs one authoritative "Bible," to be conned by the true believers, to be their fountain-head of spiritual influence. At present Zionism has no "Bible." Great as is Herzl's influence with the new Zionists, his pamphlet could not attain that high dignity. But its general spirit pervades all the other brochures and speeches on which Zionists live, and from which they derive their faith; and that spirit, as we have seen, is not calculated to raise the masses above material interests, and render them capable of making great sacrifices for a higher national ideal. Pinsker's pamphlet is the only one that is worthy to take the first place in the literature of Zionism, and to be revered by the party as the *fons et origo* of all its views and policies. If this pamphlet were disseminated among Zionists, and made familiar to them, it would undoubtedly help to educate them in its spirit—a spirit

¹ Even in his lifetime Pinsker was not understood, and his pamphlet was not appreciated at its full value. Smolenskin, in his critique, saw nothing in the pamphlet beyond the superficial *Chibbath Zion* which had then a wide vogue in Hebrew literature, and could find nothing to say in its praise except that it was written in German—a language in which "such ideas . . . have never been expressed before."

of pure idealism, which sets more store by the dignity of the whole people than by the advantage of the individual, never flinches in the face of danger, is never impatient, and demands no certainty of success. Then the leaders would not have to be always looking for some means of keeping the fervour up to the required temperature, nor to entangle themselves in exaggerated promises and self-contradictions, which only the blindness of enthusiasm can fail for a moment to detect.

Enthusiasm, however, is a flame which spreads rapidly but does not last. It is only the slow-burning fire, with its steady flame, that can create the enormous strength required for such a national task in many successive generations. For this reason, I believe that there will yet come a day when all the external show and parade will no longer satisfy those who thirst for a national ideal; and in that day many will once more remember Pinsker and his pure and lofty message—a message of work without limit and sacrifice without reward, for no other object than to restore the dignity of our people, and to enhance our value for humanity.