

Freud, Herzl, and Netanyahu Discuss the Jewish Question  
( an a.i.-generated play) -- Submitted by Robert L. Lippman

ChatGPT said Here's a playful yet thought-provoking imagined conversation between Theodor Herzl, Sigmund Freud, and Benjamin Netanyahu—each representing different historical eras and perspectives—attempting to "solve the Jewish Question".

Setting: A study filled with books, old maps, and cigars. Herzl sits regally in a chair, his thick beard stroked in contemplation. Freud, ever the analyst, puffs on his cigar, amused yet serious. Netanyahu, arms crossed, listens intently, aware that he is facing the ghosts of history.

Herzl: Gentlemen, I called you here because the Jewish Question persists. I proposed a Jewish homeland as the solution, and behold, the State of Israel exists! Yet the question has not faded—persecution, antisemitism, conflict...what went wrong?

FREUD: Ah, my dear Herzl, you assume that a homeland alone could resolve the neurosis of an entire people. The Jewish condition is more than geography—it is psychological, woven into the very fabric of identity. Our history of exile has shaped our unconscious. Even with a state, Jews remain divided between assimilation and separation between security and fear. Trauma does not disappear with land; it lingers in the mind.

Netanyahu: with all due respect, Freud, this is not about psychology—it is about survival. Herzl's dream was noble, but he underestimated the hostility around us. The Jewish Question did not vanish because our enemies did not vanish. Antisemitism simply adapted, from religious hatred to racial hatred to modern anti-Zionism. And now, we are not just fighting for identity—we are fighting for our lives.

Herzl: But I envisioned a state that would be embraced by the world, a model of civilization! I thought that by proving ourselves as contributors to progress, as partners to humanity, we would be accepted. Surely, reason should have prevailed by now?

Freud: Reason? You of all people should know, Herzl, that human beings are not rational creatures. They are driven by fears, desires, and projections. The Jewish people have long served as the 'other'—the scapegoat. A homeland does not erase the role we have played in the European and Arab unconscious. In their minds, Jews must either be subjugated or expelled, but never fully integrated. Your state, I'm afraid, has merely given form to these hostilities rather than dissolved them.

Netanyahu: So what do you propose, Freud? That we lie down on a couch and discuss our childhood fears while our

enemies sharpen their knives? We are past theories. We live in reality—rockets, terror, global delegitimization. We must be strong. The world respects strength, not neurosis.

Freud: Ah, but therein lies the dilemma! The stronger you become, the more you confirm the fears projected upon you. A powerful Israel is seen as an oppressor, a weak Israel as a victim. No matter what, the Jewish Question remains unresolved because it was never really about the Jews—it was about those who need the Jew as a symbol of their own inner conflicts.

Herzl: Then what is left? If a homeland does not solve it, if psychology cannot cure it, and if strength invites resentment—what is the answer?

Freud: Perhaps there is no "solution." Perhaps the Jewish Question is eternal, because it is bound to the essence of human civilization itself—the tension between universality and particularity, between exile and belonging.

Netanyahu: That may be true, but I do not have the luxury of pondering eternity. I must defend a nation today. Israel cannot afford to be an experiment in human philosophy—it must be a reality, defended at all costs.

Herzl: Yet if we become only a fortress, only warriors, then do we not lose what

makes the Jewish people special? The dream was not just to survive, but to thrive as a beacon of progress and enlightenment!

Freud: And that is the paradox, my dear Herzl. The Jews are destined to live in contradiction—both needing safety and yearning for acceptance, both fearing destruction and seeking to repair the world. It is no wonder that Jewish anxiety is so profound!

Netanyahu: Enough philosophy. We cannot afford to be a people of contradiction. We must be a people of action.

Freud: Ah, but acting without understanding one's own fears is the quickest way to repeat history...

Herzl: So what do we do?

Freud (smiling, puffing his cigar): We do what Jews have always done. We survive, we argue, and we write about it.

Netanyahu: And we fight.

Herzl: And we dream.

The three men sit in silence, gazing at the modern Jewish state outside the window—its strength, its contradiction, and its unresolved questions.

□ □ □ □

CURTAIN