‘This Was A Man’ - Remarks on Walter Zander

Speech delivered by Michael Zander, brother of Benjamin, at the Annual dinner of the Friends of the Hebrew University, Glasgow Branch, 8th May, 1994

I am very grateful to the Glasgow Friends of the Hebrew University for inviting me to speak at this year’s annual dinner. It is an honor to be the speaker on such an occasion. I am doubly grateful to have been asked to speak about my late father, Walter Zander. I have never previously spoken about him in public and this opportunity to do so has caused me to think about him, and to re-read many of his writings –to my considerable benefit.

It is also a pleasure that I should make these remarks in Glasgow. He had a special affection for the Glasgow Group of the Friends.

He was Secretary of the Friends for twenty-seven years, retiring in 1970, which is twenty-four years ago. There are many here tonight who did not know him.

The Glasgow Friends will have seen him principally as an occasional guest speaker talking, naturally enough, about the affairs of the Hebrew University. I want to talk about him this evening from a wider perspective–as an unusual human being, as the person who perhaps more than anyone created the British Friends of the Hebrew University and, especially, as a writer who over a period of four decades said things worthy of recall.

Adapting Primo Levi, I entitle these remarks, in memoriam: ‘This Was a Man’.

First, may I sketch some biographical details:

He was born in Erfurt in Germany in 1898, the elder of two children. His father was a prominent local lawyer; his mother was a gifted amateur painter and sculptor. He went to the local classical grammar school (gymnasium) where he was a brilliant pupil. One result of his schooldays, on which he drew for the rest of his life, was an enviable mastery by heart of German classical literature–both poetry and drama. He always seemed to be furnished with an appropriate quotation from Goethe or Schiller or one of the other great German masters–and always with his own poetic English translation.

He was also a musician. By his teens he was accomplished both as a pianist and as a viola player. He combined studies at the Conservatory with his school work. Music played a major part throughout his life.

In a very different sphere, he also became a proficient tennis player.

In 1916, at the age of 18, he was called up for military service. He served as a non-commissioned officer in a light machine-gun unit on both the Eastern Front in Russia and the Western Front in France. His letters home, which have survived, show that in the long stretches of inaction he occupied his time studying scores and reading Goethe, Shakespeare and the like.

After the war he studied law, philosophy and economics in Jena and Berlin. His father died while he was still a student, leaving the family in difficult financial circumstances. His mother, however, insisted that he finish his law studies. As soon as he qualified, he was taken on as a junior assistant by one of the great lawyers of the

day in Berlin–who shortly thereafter retired. Although he was only in his first years of practice, many of the great man's clients stayed with my father. Because of this and because of his own ability to draw important clients, he was within a very short space of time doing immensely well, earning enough to support both his mother and his sister–as well as to live the life of a successful lawyer and eligible man-about-town. He practiced in the field of industrial, commercial and banking law. He was invited by the President of the German Bar to be one of the co-editors of the standard work on commercial law.

In fact he was doing so well and had so great confidence in his future that only a few years later, in 1929, he took what to me has always seemed the extraordinary step of withdrawing from his one-man practice for a year to go first to the London School of Economics and then to the Sorbonne to pursue studies in economics. At that time he was a member of a study circle of economists and several of his earliest publications were in that field. In particular, he published on monetary and tax reform–including an article entitled 'Problems of monetary reform in China'.

He returned to his legal practice in Berlin and shortly after met my mother Gretl Magnus. She had been brought up in Holland in Utrecht where her father, Rudolf Magnus, a well-known physiologist, was professor. By a strange coincidence they met on the very day that her father died. After his death my mother went to Berlin to work at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute as a translator. They married in 1931 and I would say that he loved her unreservedly until the day of her death almost forty years later in 1968.

After Hitler came to power my father's professional situation became increasingly difficult but it was not until summer-autumn 1937 that we left Germany. By then there were three children–myself, the eldest, aged four, Lucas (today known as Luke) aged

two and Angelica, only a few months old. The youngest, Benjamin (Ben), was the only one of us to be born in England.

When he first arrived in England with wife and three small children, my father became the director of Belcolor Ltd., a printing company he established with Erich Loening, the cellist from his student quartet– all of whom, incidentally, emigrated to England and who continued for many years to play occasionally as a quartet. Loening had invented a new technique for fine grade colour printing. My father put most of the small amount of money he had been able to get out of Germany into the business. Very quickly it attracted major customers, including Dunlops and one of the railway companies, but, just as it was becoming a going concern, the war started. Within a short space of time my father and Loening were both interned and the business was impounded as the property of enemy aliens. It collapsed, never to be revived.

We lived in Gerrards Cross, a village between London and Oxford with a population of around 5,000. My father was interned on the Isle of Man as an enemy alien for some ten months from June 1940, after the fall of France, to April 1941. My mother was left in the village with four children under the age of ten and next to no income. Though local friends rallied magnificently to support her, the strain of coping must have been very great. She nevertheless somehow found the time and the strength to write to him several times a week–a wonderful and moving series of letters that we still have.

One can only imagine the exasperation and frustration for those who were interned–to flee from Nazism and then to find themselves not merely unable to assist the war effort, but actually locked up as possible spies, often, as in his case, leaving loved ones to an uncertain fate. But whatever my father felt about being interned as an enemy alien, he turned it into a major positive experience, exactly as he transformed

all problems and painful experiences throughout his life. Those who were thus thrown into each other's company were an extraordinary collection of people. My father, then in his early forties, was one of those in internment who gave intellectual, moral and spiritual leadership–helping to organize lectures, seminars and discussion groups on a great variety of topics as well as religious study and different forms of musical expression.

May I read his description of this process in one of his earliest writings dated June 1941–'The Power of the Spirit in Internment', published by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation:

The most interesting point in the internment problem is not how much the interned have had to suffer–for suffering is general all over the world at present–but how far they have been able to stand up, spiritually, to their trial, and to transform their adversities into productive experience… The first sign I noticed of the opening of the "spiritual defense" was on the morning after our internment. Hundreds of men, hungry and tired, roamed restlessly through the camp; but one, armed with a small Hebrew Bible and a gigantic dictionary, was sitting quietly in the open air, getting to work without delay. He was a publisher from Hamburg who had made up his mind to use this opportunity to read the Bible for the first time in the original Hebrew. I asked permission to join and very soon a small group rallied around him every day… The camp was terribly overcrowded and lack of privacy made concentration very difficult. Nevertheless, it was possible to open a kind of university, which offered about 40 different lectures a week on the most varied subjects ranging from theoretical physics to Greek philosophy and Russian for beginners.

He concluded this article:

I myself early saw that internment for me meant bidding a strange farewell to the world. Although it had been forced upon me, I felt I must enter wholeheartedly into this spiritual detachment which might lead to the conquest of material superficiality. It was somewhat like the fairy-tale where a child falls into a deep well and finds at the bottom a wonderful green meadow; and the old truth became abundantly clear to me that it depends largely upon ourselves whether or not we turn suffering into blessing.

He came out of internment more than fit and well. He came out with a calling to speak and to write both to Jews and to non-Jews. His published writings, other than in the technical fields of law and economics, started at this stage of his life.

Amongst his papers I found a file of notes for lectures he gave in that dark period of the war in 1942-43 on subjects like 'The synagogue in the post-war world', on 'The spiritual basis of the Atlantic Charter in its relationship to Russia', on 'The Jewish Vision of Totality'. His writings of the period included articles, in both Jewish and Christian publications, entitled: 'The Day of

Atonement', 'The Way of the German Jew', 'A Jewish view of the "Sword of the Spirit"', 'The Jewish Question is a religious one', 'The Future of the Continental Jews', 'Jews and Christians in a Changing World', 'Jewish Youth in the Crisis'.

Having been cleared of any intent to damage the British Empire, he was employed on his release from internment by the Ministry of Information and the Educational Department of the Ministry of War as a lecturer to the British and American forces. He went all over Britain talking to servicemen, mainly about Germany, about anti-Semitism and about 'the Jewish question'. He was never a Zionist nor, at least until then, had he been especially religious. He was brought up by parents who observed only at the High Holidays. Until he came to England these issues seemed not

to have surfaced as concerns. So far as I know, it was principally Nazism and the intense experience of the internment that drew my father into deep thought about the history, the fate and the future of the Jews. He always however had a strong spiritual side and from that period onward this was expressed amongst other things by religious observance. Attendance at synagogue was important to him and when, in his final years he was no longer physically able to go on his own, he was always profoundly happy when someone was able to take him.

In 1944, at the age of 46, he applied for the job of Secretary of the Friends of the Hebrew University. He was appointed to the job–at a modest salary of £400 a year. The office was over a pet shop in Baker Street. The office staff consisted of one secretary, Miss Greta Stein. He was Secretary of the Friends for almost twenty-seven years until his retirement in 1970 at the age of 72. One measure of the development of the Friends in that period is the amount of money raised for the University. In his first year it was £23,000; in his last it was £339,000.

At his last annual meeting as Secretary of the Friends in December 1970, my father said he was retiring in order to devote himself to writing and research–or as he put it, rather more eloquently, ‘to leave the realm of ways and means and to devote myself–before it is too late–with an undivided mind to the purposes of every university in the world, study and thought in the search for truth’.

Mainly through the good offices of his old friend, the distinguished Arab and Arabist, Albert Hourani, he became a Senior Associate Fellow of St Antony’s College, Oxford. This was for him the intellectual culmination of his life–a true Indian summer. Now a widower, he continued to live in London, but every week in term he

went to Oxford for the Middle East Centre's Friday seminar followed by dinner and conversation at High Table.

For close to twenty years he was an active member of the College and of the Middle East Centre, until failing eye-sight made his visits to Oxford increasingly difficult and finally impossible.

It was a source of great satisfaction to him that in his retirement he was awarded an Honorary

Fellowship of the Hebrew University and was created an Honorary Governor.

The last years of his life were spent, blind but contented, even serene, in a home for the elderly in South Croydon where he was wonderfully and lovingly cared for. He died peacefully last April at the venerable age of 94, essentially of old age–having 36 hours earlier still been able to experience a seder service, lying in bed, in his prayer shawl and yarmulke, being read to by myself, my wife and my two children.

He was a man who combined many qualities. He was a true scholar with a scholar's love of depth of learning and of the apparatus of scholarship. Even his newspaper articles were steeped in learning. Though totally blind, in his 94th year he was still ordering heavy tomes from the library for his secretary to read to him. He pursued his daily studies in Hebrew grammar until his death–as a form of mental gymnastics.

But unlike most scholars he was also a highly effective man of affairs. Improbable though it must have seemed to anyone who knew him, he had not merely been a soldier who saw active service but one who was decorated for valour in action. For

many years he was a highly successful lawyer, then for a while a businessman and for the Friends an accomplished administrator. Hewas even a notable fund-raiser.

He had an encyclopedic knowledge of classical music. If you sang or whistled the tune he would tell you not just the composer but the key and the opus number. Or, if you identified the piece, he would sing the theme. He played, mainly string quartet. But in addition, he devoted countless hours to nurturing the musical education of his children, and especially of the youngest, Ben, who went on to become a professional musician. My introduction to opera from the age of 13 or 14 was his playing through the score on the piano whilst singing all the parts–before we went to hear the opera itself.

He was a serious gardener–in Gerrards Cross in wartime, gardening for the first time in his life, producing vegetables and fruit for family consumption–later, in the Hampstead home in London, with his mass of tulips in the spring and a glorious display of dahlias in the summer.

He loved walking–in Gerrards Cross the Sunday morning two hour walk around the Bulstrode Park, often with one or other of his children; in London through Hampstead Heath; in the summer holidays over more than twenty years in Sils Maria in the Engadin.

He led a sane, balanced life. I cannot for instance remember him bringing work home from the office. His evenings and weekends were for family life, recreation and reflection.

He was a person of conservative instincts. His walks invariably followed the same route. He went each year to the same place for holiday. He had his suits, always the same design, made by the same tailor. He told the same jokes–incidentally, very good

jokes–with great panache and appreciation (his as well as the listeners). However many times one had heard them before one always enjoyed hearing them again.

He spoke English with a distinct German accent, but the English was especially well-expressed, even in ordinary private conversation. He was a natural public speaker–indeed, one could say an orator. His lectures and speeches were delivered, usually without notes, in a form that could have been transposed to the printed page with little, if any, editing. But the same was true of his speaking in private life. To hear him in full flood about one of the topics dear to his heart was to hear a discourse at the same time learned, entertaining, and illuminating. Even in his frail last years he could hold his listener's attention. I recall an occasion close to the end of his life when, sitting in his wheel-chair, he told a music critic his often repeated story of the experience of playing as a Conservatory student under the legendary conductor Arthur Nikisch. His listener was spell-bound. (In his last years he used to say that he was probably the last person alive who had played under Nikisch. He also said that Nikisch exercised such a demonic power over the musicians as to make him realize why in the middle ages they burnt witches.)

My father was an impressive person, physically quite small, but with a powerful, commanding presence. He did not expect to be interrupted–and he rarely was.

But he could also listen. He usually took a real interest in the people he met and would get them to talk of what concerned them. He had a knack for establishing warm human relations with everyone, regardless of rank and attainments. In particular of course, he was always interested in the lives of his children and grandchildren. If he did not hear everything going on around him–a self-defense mechanism learned perhaps at the time when he had to cope with four normally noisy growing

children–he nevertheless heard a great deal. He savored the comedy of life and could always be relied on to see some deeper meaning in even trivial incidents.

His impressive, measured way of speaking, his way of always seeing both sides of any question and his capacity to see deeper meanings in both large and small matters gave him something of the aura of a sage long before age and white hair gave him the appearance for the part.

He had a particular sweetness of personality. There was usually a twinkle in his eye or a smile on his face. He saw the best in people and brought out the best in them. He was gracious and courtly in manner, in the formal continental style. He would always take the trouble to write (not phone) to send a greeting or thanks, or sympathy.

He had, and conveyed–often by the mere raising of an eyebrow or a mild question–a profound sense of right and wrong. But he was very loath to judge other human beings and found it almost impossible to speak ill of them. His mother perished in the Holocaust but I never heard him denouncing the Germans or even the Nazis. In all the time that he worked for the Friends I cannot recall him speaking disparagingly or slightingly of anyone involved in his work. He virtually never lost his temper or even raised his voice. Gossip, malicious or otherwise, was completely foreign to him. He was also very much of a piece–utterly himself in all circumstances.

In my experience of him he virtually always, regardless of circumstance, had what one would call equanimity or serenity. I am not sure that I can say where it came from. I do not think it came from formal religion, though it may ultimately have derived from a spiritual source. Its central core probably had something to do with his concept of ‘Strength through Suffering’, the title of a remarkable article in the Jewish Chronicle written in July 1941–within weeks of his coming out of internment.

He took as his text Dostoevski's statement in an essay on the Jewish question that 'there is no other people in the whole world who at every moment, with every step and every word, bewails its fate, its suffering, its humiliation and martyrdom as the Jews'.

He thought there was some truth in Dostoevski's observation. To lament, he suggested, was unworthy and embarrassing.

It is also feeble, and in contrast to silent sorrow, can never release truly creative forces.

There was, he suggested, a deep cause for this–'lamenting is only possible if a person is at variance with his fate and has proved himself incapable of mastering his lot.'

Such an attitude, he thought, was incompatible with the innermost character of the Jew. Truly Jewish, he suggested, was that great vision that saw human history as one all-embracing unity.

The more we realize that everything we experience historically–whether it contains joy or sorrow–is a part of this spiritual unity, the more we feel at one with the historical reality, the greater will be the forces we develop and the possibilities we shall find of contributing creatively toward the shaping of history. To use his own words, he was not a person at variance with his fate. So, for instance, I hardly recall a single occasion when I heard him lamenting what must have been the hardship and indeed the agony of gradually, over years, becoming blind.

He had a powerful instinct for peace-making–not so much in the sense of negotiated peace based on bargaining but more in the sense of a true recognition of the justice of the other side's position. This came out particularly in his work over decades for

better understanding between Jews and Christians, between the Christian Churches and between Jews and Arabs.

Perhaps I may be permitted to quote the words of Sir Isaiah Berlin written on the occasion of his 90th birthday:

Walter Zander is probably the purest-hearted man I have ever met during my long life. He seems to be moved by a vision of spiritual ideals shared by the major religious faiths and forms of life shaped and dedicated to such ideals. lf ever there was an embodiment of integrity and the disinterested pursuit of the good life, these qualities shine through in everything he has done and been.

If I turn to his work as Secretary of the Friends, I could say a good deal. In his retirement speech he said he was happy with the work done by the Society:

We have over the years given considerable support to the Hebrew University. We have sent large amounts of money, have bought valuable books, manuscripts and collections, as well as scientific instruments; we have erected buildings, established Chairs and Lectureships, and endowed funds for scholarships and research grants. Perhaps most important, we have helped many gifted young Israeli men and women to be trained who are now distinguished members of the Hebrew University staff. All these are important contributions. They provide the material tools which the University needs to function. But they are means to a purpose, not a purpose in themselves. The purpose of a university is not to collect money, not even to erect buildings, laboratories or libraries. The purpose and the essence of a University is learning, teaching and creative thought.

I believe that his greatest satisfaction was to have taken the intellectual and practical leadership in the establishment of Asian and African Studies at the University. It took

many years for this project to come to full fruition. He treasured a personal message sent to him by the Prime Minister, Ben Gurion himself:

It is of the utmost importance for Israel to accelerate its existing progress in the establishment of closer links with the Asian and African peoples. I believe that a study of Asian and African culture can contribute to this end, and I am strongly in favor of this enterprise.

Let me turn finally to his writings. Over the years he wrote a good deal–mostly in the form of articles, published in a great variety of journals.

I would divide these writings into three main categories: writings about aspects of 'the Jewish question', including relations between Jews and Christians; writings about the Holy Places in Jerusalem and especially the Christian Holy Places; and writings about Jewish/Arab relations.

The writings in the first category were mainly in the period of 1941-45 but included also his short book Soviet Jewry, Palestine and the West published by Gollancz in 1947. Many of these would I believe bear re-publication today. The last contribution in this field was an article in 1976 in the journal New Outlook entitled 'Where Does Israel Belong'–addressed to the meaning of Israel's Jewish identity in the context of UNESCO's regional groupings. In 1962 Israel had said it wished to join UNESCO's Asian regional grouping. A decade later it changed its mind and asked to be counted in the European grouping–a request that was defeated by 48 votes to 38. Its membership of UNESCO was unaffected but Israel was the only one of the 130 member states not aligned to any regional group.

The issue was due to come up again in November 1976. My father expressed the hope that this time Israel's wish to join the European grouping would prove successful. But

at the same time he asked whether in a deeper sense this would be fully satisfactory. ‘Would it really answer the question of where Israel belonged?’ Significantly, Israel was the only country ever to have changed its mind on the question. There were strong arguments for the view that it belonged to either the Asian or the European grouping, or perhaps to both. But he cited the pronouncement of the Midianite Prophet Balaam that Israel’s people ‘shall dwell alone’. Yaacov Herzog, former Director–General in the Prime Minister’s Office, in his posthumous collection of essays had said that he thought this was the innermost nature of Israel reborn. Contrary to the view of the Zionist theoreticians that Israel would become a nation like all other nations, Israel was alone. It had friends across the world but it belonged neither to the East nor the West, neither to the Afro-Asian bloc nor to the underdeveloped world. ‘We belong’, Herzog had said, ‘to no framework except our own.’

Nearly a hundred years before, the article concluded, Dr Leon Pinsker proclaimed ‘We are everywhere present and nowhere at home’. Many had believed that all that was needed was the establishment of a national state. Now, my father suggested, with the state established it almost seemed as if the state itself continued to wander from continent to continent, knocking at the gates, asking for admission. How could Israel’s membership of any regional grouping be reconciled with its uniqueness? He left the question unanswered.

His second main grouping of writings concerned the Holy Places–and especially the Christian Holy Places–of Jerusalem. This was his chief intellectual preoccupation during the last twenty five years of his life – the period from his retirement from the Friends. He was concerned chiefly from two very different points of view. First he became fascinated by the history of the disputes over the Holy Places between the

Christian Churches. His book Israel and the Holy Places of Christendom, published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson in 1971, is a scholarly, as well as absorbing, exploration of these disputes. The book brought him recognition as one of the world's leading authorities on this arcane but politically very sensitive subject. For a Jew to be acknowledged as a world authority on the affairs of the Christian Church was, to say the least, unusual.

He was also drawn to the subject because he felt that both the Israeli Government and the Israel Supreme Court were in error in their approach to the problem of dealing with these disputes between the Christian Churches. In the 1971 book and in subsequent articles he offered new information based on original research, important new insights and even proposals for concrete solutions to the actual conflicts. I have in mind in particular his two major articles in the Israel Law Review–'On the Settlement of the Disputes about the Christian Holy Places', 1973 and 'Jurisdiction and Holiness: Reflections on the Coptic-Ethiopian Case', 1982. Both of these articles, written respectively in his seventies and his eighties, were regarded by the experts as not merely profound and learned, but significant contributions to practical decision-making.

Perhaps the most remarkable of all his publications and the one most immediately relevant to our current concerns was his 50-page pamphlet Is This the Way?, published by his friend Victor Gollancz in 1948, price 1 shilling.

The sub-title was A Call to the Jews. It started on the title page with two quotations. One from Leviticus: 'And they will confess their iniquities'; the other from Macarius, archbishop of Novgorod in Russia in 1526: 'Abstain from accusing others even in

your most secret thoughts: accusations only destroy our peace of mind, they serve no purpose at all.'

The pamphlet was finished a few months before the historic moment of the foundation of the State of Israel in the teeth of the passionate opposition of the entire Arab world, indeed of all countries from Morocco to India. My father, though not a Zionist, had always sympathized with the foundation of a home for the Jews in Palestine. But he wrote to urge with all the eloquence at his command that the way in which the Jews were approaching the opposition of the Arabs was morally as well as politically wrong. As may be imagined, it was not at that moment what people wanted to hear.

In the Introduction to the pamphlet he referred to the tendency to blame others:

For many years it has been our custom to put the blame for every new difficulty and every new setback to our cause on the shoulders of others; and we have made great efforts to convince the world and ourselves that not we but outside forces were responsible for every resistance to our aims. "Arab absentee landlords" or "Moslem religious fanatics", "Fascist and Nazi agents" and in recent years "British imperialists and anti-Semites"–all in turn were made responsible for our misfortunes. But great as the influence of all these groups was, it is impossible to be satisfied with the belief that these outside forces were alone responsible for the course of events.

The cardinal problem of the Palestinian issue, he wrote, 'can be summed up in the single sentence that we Jews had to build our National Home in a country in which another people is living'. The solution of this problem, he suggested, was the paramount task. 'But instead of concentrating on this task all our efforts and creative energies, we have treated the Arab question, when it was remembered at all, as if it were of secondary importance'. He quoted the words of Ahad Ha'am, the guiding

intellectual presence and chief internal critic of Zionism, in an article in 1891, ‘The Truth from Palestine’. Ahad Ha’am was the first Zionist to call attention to the issue of the Palestinian Arabs:

How careful we must be in dealing with an alien people in whose midst we want to settle. How essential it is to practice kindness and esteem towards them For if ever the Arab could consider the action of his rivals to be oppression or the robbing of his rights then, even if he keeps silent and waits for his time to come, the rage will remain alive in his heart.

Ahad Ha’am had continued these Cassandra-like warnings. In 1920, near the end of his life, he said: ‘since the beginning of the Palestinian colonialization [the Jews] have always considered the Arab people as non-existent’.

The following years, my father suggested, had seen no change. Instead of concentrating all their diplomatic efforts on the Arabs, the Jewish leaders had concentrated their attention on the mandatory power.

We succumbed to the superficial and portentous mistake that the fate of the country would be determined in the long run not by the people itself, but by the ephemeral influence of the Mandatory Power.

Not only did the Jews fail to give the Arab problem first priority, ‘we also deceived ourselves about the seriousness of the Arab opposition’. Moreover, no serious attention was given to the practical question of how the two peoples could In fact live together In Palestine. The 1946 Report of the Anglo-American Committee had said:

It is not unfair to say that the Jewish community in Palestine has never as a community faced the problem of co-operation with the Arabs. It is significant that in the Jewish Agency's proposals for a Jewish state, the problem of handling a million and a quarter Arabs is dealt with in the vaguest generalities.

My father continued:

To justify our claims, we have put forward strong and most impressive reasons. We have pleaded the need of our homelessness. We have pleaded all the miseries of persecution, the millions of our dead, the despair in the camps of displaced persons, the burning longing and hope of those who, in unseaworthy vessels, cross the seas in their quest for home We have compared our need with the vast possessions of the Arab nations, and have proclaimed our right to survive as a people and to restore once again our national life in the land which our forefathers have made a sanctuary to the world. With all this we have aroused sympathy, but have not convinced the Arab peoples that the country is ours. Even Mr. Gandhi, a saintly man, maintained that his "sympathy does not make him blind to the requirements of justice. What could we expect under these conditions from the Arabs? They regard themselves as the possessors of the country for more than a thousand years, and if that is true, even the most heart-breaking need of the Jewish people does not deprive them of this fact and all the rights arising from it… To the Arab our return without his consent remains a forced invasion … If war were the issue, I feel it has to be admitted that rarely in human history have conquerors been driven by greater need than the Jews. Great countries, even continents were conquered for much less reason. The issue however is not war but must be peace. And if we search through all that we have written and said through all these years to prove our case, we shall find that we have said everything to stress our need, but that we have omitted one thing which might have changed the

whole relationship with the Arab: Never in the thirty years' argument have we admitted that our return, justified as it appears to us, inevitably requires from the Arabs a sacrifice of the first magnitude–the sacrifice of giving up his right to rule himself. So much have we been involved in the problems of our own case that we have not even realized the position of our neighbor and what we were asking from him. Of course, we frequently pointed out the benefits which he derived from our coming: the rising standard of living, the improvement in the health service, and perhaps even social progress. But all this could only make things only worse and was bound to insult the Arab if at the same time we did not stress equally the loss and sacrifice which our coming must have meant to him. The decisive point for him was not the profit he might make, but the harm and the wounds which he felt he received from our hands; and paradoxical as it seems–a frank discussion of these wounds (and how to heal them) would have been infinitely more profitable than all talk of alleged advantages. Nobody, of course, can prove that a wiser attitude would have led to a constructive solution of the problem. But it is safe to say that the method which we adopted has not only failed, but was bound to lead to the present deadlock.

Fifty years ago Ahad Ha'am warned us to show to the Arab, not only kindness, but esteem; and this shy and awkward man was a greater realist than most of his noisy and self-assured opponents. If we had followed his advice, Arab chivalry might have given us an unexpected, positive response. But we have failed, and this failure is not the result of intellectual shortcomings. It springs from a lack of moral courage.

Needless to say, his pamphlet was not very well received by the Jewish community. The Jewish Chronicle for example dealt with it in a brief note of some 10 lines.

But for the 45 years between its publication and his death last year, my father felt that its essential message remained unanswered.

Then last year we saw the beginnings of what is called the Peace Process. For all his nearly 95 years, he died, alas, a few weeks too early to witness this extraordinary and unexpected development.

What would he have made of it?

First, he would have counseled caution and not have jumped to any hasty conclusions. One of his favorite sayings was the remark attributed to Mao Tse Tung who when asked for his view of the French Revolution is said to have replied 'Much too early to judge'.

Second, he would have rejoiced greatly at the possibility that Jew and Arab were finally contemplating peaceful relations–with all that implies.

But I imagine he would not have been truly content nor even very confident for the future for he would have looked in vain, I think, for any sign of a change of heart in regard to what he regarded as the essential issues. He would not have seen much sign of 'esteem' toward the Arab–nor would he have seen any sign of a recognition by the Jews of the great injury done to the Arabs by coming to live in the land they had occupied for over a thousand years.

What he would have seen was the beginnings of a reluctant and suspicious accommodation of the two sides–greatly to be welcomed and vastly to be preferred to hostile relations, but far from an ideal basis for the future.

For my father the essence of the matter was spiritual. In the final page of his 1948 pamphlet he quoted Dostoevski's statement that in spite of forty centuries of history the final word about the Jews had not yet been spoken. Our history, he suggested, is not yet completed and a last and decisive event is still to come.

As he said in the pamphlet, 'To deal with the Jewish question without regarding the things of the spirit is to ignore the very essence of the issue'.

Through thousands of years, Jewish life has seen the ultimate reality in the spirit and has found its deepest expression in religion. The restoration to the Holy Land must have its final meaning in our religious destiny. It must be more than the renascence of Hebrew as a living language and the birth of a new literature and art, more than the revival of an ancient and venerable national civilization, and even more than the creation of a new society. The return to Palestine is the precondition of a new era in our religious development–an era in which the present spiritual frustration will end and Israel will finds its redemption.

So, while he would have been heartened, he would not have recognized the present Peace Process as a sign of the salvation of Israel's soul–'in spirit and in truth'–for which he longed.

He wrote, 'There is a deep longing in the Jewish heart for the establishment of an ultimate oneness of mankind, and the pious pray thrice daily to hasten the day "when He will be One and His Name be One". '

The words–'And on that day His name will be one'–were what he asked us to put on his gravestone.