

הו אריאל אריאל סימן אעד איוז

*Ho, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped (Isaiah 29,1)*

# אריאל ariel

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# Zamenhof and Esperanto

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One hundred years ago there were no native, primary, or habitual speakers of Hebrew or Esperanto. Conventional wisdom denied the possibility of either reviving a "dead" language or creating a viable international neutral language which would be widely accepted. Today, over three million Hebrew speakers (including Arabs, Druze and Circassians) and approximately one million Esperantists (drawn from every nationality, race, and religion) use these languages. Thousands of original and translated works and two living speech communities are achievements which belie sceptics such as Theodor Herzl who once asked mockingly..." Who among us can as much as ask for a railway ticket in Hebrew?", or modern day opponents of Esperanto who have equated it with the Newspeak of George Orwell's "1984".

The monumental achievements of two men, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and Lazar Ludwik Zamenhof, provide inspiring examples of devotion to learning, prophetic vision and identification with Jewish heritage and destiny. The parallels between Ben-Yehuda, who was responsible for the revival of modern Hebrew, and Zamenhof, who created Esperanto, are uncanny. They were born within one year of each other (1858-9) and grew up in similar homes, infused with the "Litvak" (Lithuanian-Jewish) atmosphere of the *Haskala* (Enlightenment) movement, in which respect for secular learning was esteemed equally with Jewish tradition. Their humanitarian ideals led them both initially to embark upon a career in medicine. Both made enormous professional, material and physical sacrifices to advance the cause of their languages, despite their opponents' derisive claims that they were "eccentrics" or "fanatics", to the ultimate success of witnessing living communities of Hebrew and Esperanto. The physical appearance of them both, marked by a frail build, modest demeanour, neatly trimmed beard, horned-rimmed pince-nez eyeglasses, was exaggeratedly bookish. Finally, both

men had unusually devoted wives who gave unstintingly of their love and devotion, thereby enabling them to persist in their task against abuse and petty jealousies.

The life and work of Ben-Yehuda are well known, and his memory is widely honoured by the State of Israel and its institutions. But the life and work of Zamenhof deserve to reach a far wider audience than has heretofore been the case. The vision which motivated and sustained him throughout his life's work was that of a secure, productive, and culturally creative existence for the Jewish people living in a world of understanding and mutual respect among the nations.

On the centennial of his birth in 1959, the United Nations called upon all governments and cultural organizations to join in honouring Zamenhof, as "one of the great personalities of humanity". The UN, as well as its forerunner, the League of Nations, passed resolutions favourable to the teaching of the international language he devised. He was one of the first members of *Hovevei Zion*, the earliest Zionist political movement, and author of the first comprehensive scholarly grammar of the Yiddish language yet, remarkably, his portrait appeared on Soviet postage stamps before those of Marx and Engels.

A Polish ship bears his name as do streets and memorial plazas in over two hundred cities (including Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Warsaw, Budapest, Vienna, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Zagreb, Marseilles, Antwerp, Barcelona and Rio de Janeiro). A silk factory in the People's Republic of China annually produces thousands of banners emblazoned with his picture and a Japanese publishing house recently reissued his collected works. In spite of all these international honours, most people still fail to identify his name.

Why this is so is not difficult to understand. A very small proportion of the world's peoples have a reasonable command of a second language and, for example, only eight percent of American colleges have any foreign language requirement. Most of the world is composed of essentially of monolingual speakers. Where the language in question is "prestigious", such as English, Russian, Spanish, German or French, speakers are liable to view the idea of an international neutral language as eccentric and superfluous. Esperanto's popularity has been greatest precisely among speakers of "minor" languages such as Hungarian, Bulgarian, Danish, Dutch, Finnish or Greek who have already acquired one or more foreign languages in order to communicate beyond the boundaries of their own countries.

The linguistic situation in the Diaspora today stands in sharp contrast with that of previous centuries, when Jews enjoyed a reputation for linguistic accomplishments. During the Middle Ages, translations by Jews of scientific, medical, and philosophical texts had helped bring about a revival of scholarly activity and secular interests. Jewish merchants in Europe and the Middle East were often, by necessity, fluent in three or more languages. A linguistic consequence of the Holocaust was a drastic reduction in the number of Jewish speakers of German and Yiddish, Hebraists, and several million Jewish multi-lingual speakers of languages such as Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Serbo-Croatian, Dutch, Greek, Lithuanian and Ladino. The centres of Yiddish cultural activity in Europe were obliterated, although a handful of refugee authors were able to keep the spark of Yiddish literature alive in the new world.

Jews constituted a large proportion of the pre-World War II Esperantists in Central and Eastern Europe. They fell victim to the twin oppression of Hitler, who as early as the publication of *Mein Kampf* in 1923 had declared Esperanto to be "the creation of Jews, Communists and Freemasons", and Stalin's xenophobia. The Soviet Union initially adopted a favourable attitude towards the international language and supported an Esperanto theatre during the nineteen-thirties. Many socialists referred to Esperanto as "the Latin of the Proletariat". A reversal occurred when it became clear to Stalin that Esperantists outside the USSR were unwilling to follow the party line as dictated from Moscow and, even worse, that Soviet Esperantists were able to inform correspondents abroad unchecked about the ugly realities of Soviet life. The result was that by 1938 the Soviet press and penal code had designated Esperanto as a "tool of Zionism and Cosmopolitanism", and almost all Soviet Esperantists either perished in the great purges or languished in Siberian labour camps until the Khrushchev thaw of 1956.

Both Zamenhof and Ben-Yehuda regarded the problem of Jewish identity as inseparable from the question of language. Ben-Yehuda's vision focussed on the revival of Hebrew as a pre-condition for a Jewish national renaissance. At various times Zamenhof, too, had toyed with the idea of reviving Hebrew, and the use of the Latin alphabet for Yiddish. He ultimately rejected both solutions in favour of a neutral international language. This language would, at the same time, be used as a Jewish national language. Zamenhof argued that only a common language (Esperanto) and a common territory offered a solution to the insecurity

of Jewish existence (for a time he advocated Jewish settlement of the American West aimed at statehood along the lines of the Mormon settlement of Utah). For a brief period, Zamenhof held out a dual hope for the progress of Esperanto as the "New Yiddish", as well as the more far-reaching goal of a widely accepted international auxiliary language.

History has of course disproved the negative evaluation of the future of Hebrew shared by Zamenhof and Herzl. Only the revitalization of Hebrew as envisioned by Ben-Yehuda, Ahad Ha-am (Arthur Ginsberg), and Mordecai Kaplan could fulfil the role of historic continuity and function as the authentic voice of "Judaism as a Civilization". The one pathetic attempt to create an autonomous Jewish culture in Esperanto was the brief existence of a *kolkhoz* in the Crimea, "Nova Vivo" (New Life) during the late 1920's and 1930's. The collective settlement was founded by Jewish Communists who had left Palestine after disappointment with the progress of Zionism and had joined the remnants of the Russian *Hehalutz* (pioneer Zionist) organization. The authorities rejected the use of Hebrew, and Esperanto was chosen by members of the new settlement. After strenuous efforts, Nova Vivo flourished, only to disappear in the great purges. Nothing remains of a Jewish national existence either in the Crimea or in the so-called Jewish Autonomous (and supposedly Yiddish-speaking) Region of Birobidjan in the Soviet Far East along the Amur River border with China. (According to Soviet statistics, fewer than 12,000 Jews lived in the region in 1976 – only 7% of the population. Of these, approximately 2,000 Jews gave Yiddish as their first language.)

To appreciate fully Zamenhof's life-work and achievement, one should study his background, upbringing, character, and motivations. Several biographies have appeared, all written for an Esperanto-reading audience. In all but one of these biographies\*, Zamenhof's Jewish motivation is omitted or considerably underplayed. Yet it was just that which was the very source of his success, where hundreds of professional linguists working full-time and with often generous financial support and technical assistance managed to produce only paper projects (among these being Volapük, Ido, Latino sine Flexione, Basic English, Occidental, Novial, and Interlingua).

\* The best, which gives full treatment to Zamenhof's Jewish background, is "La Kasita Vivo de Zamenhof" (Zamenhof's Hidden Life) by N.Z. Maimon, Japanese Esperanto Institute, Tokyo, 1978.

Dr. Lazar Ludwik Zamenhof

Lazar Ludwik Zamenhof was born in Bialystok, in the then Russian-ruled province of Grodno (today in northeastern Poland near the Lithuanian border). He was the oldest child in a family of nine brothers and sisters. Both his father and grandfather were instructors of foreign languages (French and German) and supporters of the Haskala movement, which had encouraged Jews to seek secular learning and aspire to social integration with the surrounding society while stopping short of assimilation. The goal of Haskala supporters was equal rights based on common loyalty and citizenship, without surrendering respect for Jewish heritage and traditions. The ideal of "a man abroad, a Jew at home" had made significant inroads among an educated minority of Lithuanian Jews who had long been opponents of Hasidism. "Litvak", legalistic-Talmudic inclinations were transformed into a passion for secular learning which formed a common motif in the life and work of both Zamenhof and Ben-Yehuda. The Bialystok of Zamenhof's youth was populated by Russian and Yiddish-speaking Jews who accounted for two-thirds of its population. The diverse groups of Polish and Lithuanian Catholics, Russian Orthodox Christians and German Lutherans lived in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and antagonism. The Jews, although the majority, were the only group subjected to physical violence, especially in the two infamous pogroms of 1902 and 1906. Poles and Lithuanians regarded the Russian-speaking Jews as agents of "Russification", while the Russian ruling class suspected the Yiddish-speaking Jews of being sympathetic to the Germans. This latter fear resulted in the expulsion of most of the Jews living in areas along the front lines during World War I, when the Tsarist authorities became convinced that the Jews would actively welcome a German advance.

These deep ethnic, religious, and linguistic divisions deeply impressed the young Zamenhof, who had already mastered half a dozen languages before entering the local gymnasium. Although many Jews were bilingual in Russian and Yiddish, Zamenhof had also acquired Hebrew, Aramaic, German and French through the influence of his father and grandfather. He had learned Polish from friends and at the state-run elementary school, and then Latin and Greek as a high-school student. To these he added a good reading knowledge of English and Italian and perhaps several other European languages. Later he would make use of important elements from all of these languages in creating Esperanto.

Although careful to sublimate his Jewish identity following the initial successes of the Esperanto movement, due to fear of provoking



# Esperanto at a Glance

## The Alphabet of Esperanto

A a B b C c Ĉ ĉ D d  
 ah ho tso cho do  
 E e F f G g Ĝ ĝ H h  
 eh fo go Joe ho  
 Ĥ ĥ I i J j Ĵ ĵ K k  
 hho ee yo zho ko  
 L l M m N n O o  
 lo mo no oh  
 P p R r S s Ŝ ŝ T t  
 po ro so sho toe  
 U u Ŭ ŭ V v Z z  
 oo woe vo zo

28 Letters. There is no Q, W, X, or Y.

A, E, I, O, U have approximately the vowel sounds heard in Are thEre thrEE Or twO.

C is not sounded like S or K, but like *ts* in *tsetse-fly, bits*.

J has the sound of *y* in *yew*.

The sounds of Ĉ, Ĝ, Ĥ, Ĵ, Ŝ, and Ŭ are heard in *leech, liege, loch, leisure, leash, and leeway*.

ESPERANTO IS PHONETIC.

All letters sounded: one letter one sound.

ACCENT or STRESS falls on the last syllable but one.

No IRREGULARITIES. No EXCEPTIONS.

THE GRAMMAR is based upon SIXTEEN FUNDAMENTAL RULES, which have no exceptions.

THE PARTS OF SPEECH are formed from Root-Words by the addition of appropriate Letters.

**O** is the ending for all names of things (NOUNS) **A** is the ending for all names of things (ADJECTIVES) (descriptive words) end in

fakto	gluo	evidenta	ŝveĉa
distanco	fajro	longa	furioza
piano	tasko	granda	simpla

NOUNS and ADJECTIVES form PLURALS by adding

evidentaj	longaj	grandaj
faktoj	distancoj	pianoj (aj, oj sound as in my boy)

THE SIMPLE VERB HAS ONLY SIX ENDINGS.

INFINITIVE	PRESENT	PAST	FUTURE	CONDITIONAL	IMPERATIVE
<b>I</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>IS</b>	<b>OS</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>U</b>
ESTI	estas	estis	estos	estus	estu
LERNI	lernas	lernis	lernos	lernus	lenu
HELPI	helpas	helpis	helpos	helpus	helpu

**N** marks the ACCUSATIVE (direct object). **E** marks the ADVERBS end in

Mi (I) helpas lin (him)	energie
Li (he) helpas min (me)	entuziasme
Ŝi lernas Esperanton	diligente

# GENEZO

## UNUA LIBRO DE MOSEO

**1** EN la komenco Dio kreis la ĉielon kaj la teron. **2** Kaj la tero estis senforma kaj dezerta, kaj mallumo estis super la abismo; kaj la spirito de Dio ŝvebis super la akvo. **3** Kaj Dio diris: Estu lumo; kaj fariĝis lumo. **4** Kaj Dio vidis la lumon, ke ĝi estas bona; kaj Dio apartigis la lumon de la mallumo. **5** Kaj Dio nomis la lumon Tago, kaj la mallumon Li nomis Nokto. Kaj estis vespero, kaj estis mateno, unu tago.

**6** Kaj Dio diris: Estu firmaĵo inter la akvo, kaj ĝi apartigu akvon de akvo. **7** Kaj Dio kreis la firmaĵon, kaj apartigis la akvon, kiu estas sub la firmaĵo, de la akvo, kiu estas super la firmaĵo; kaj fariĝis tiel. **8** Kaj Dio nomis la firmaĵon Ĉielo. Kaj estis vespero, kaj estis mateno, la dua tago.

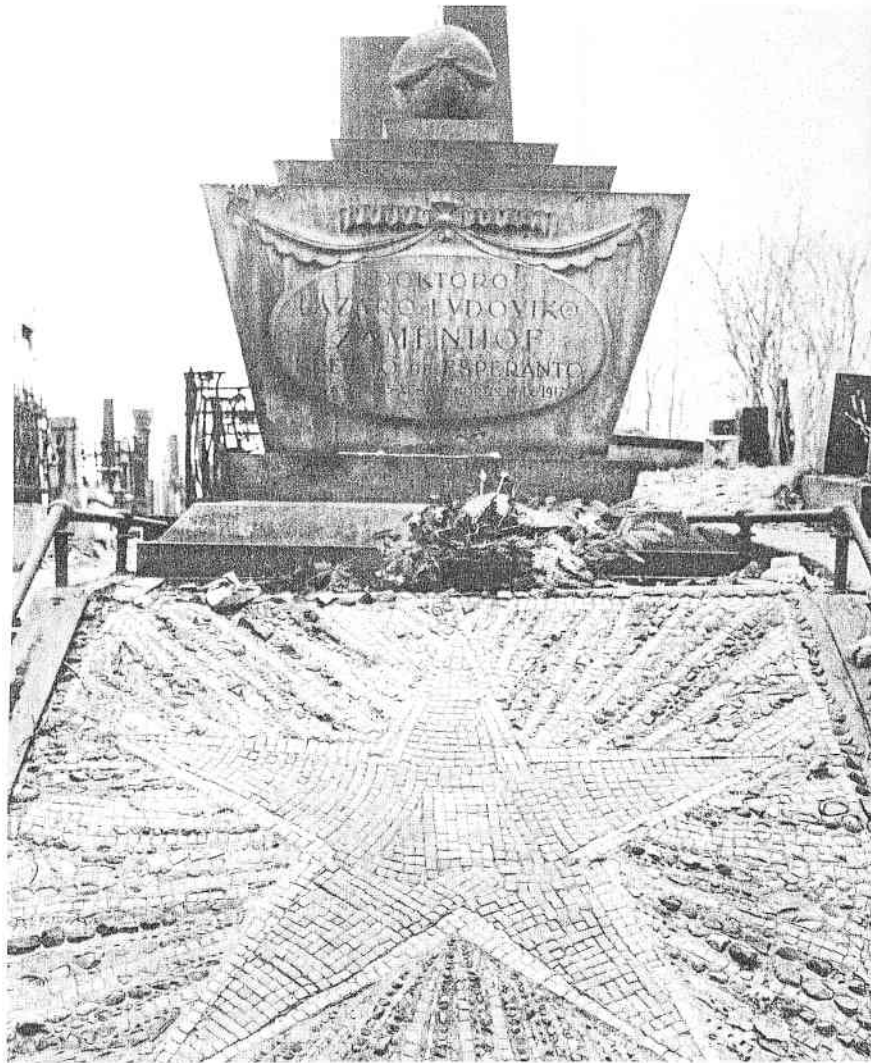
**9** Kaj Dio diris: Kolektiĝu la akvo de sub la ĉielo en unu lokon, kaj aperu la sekaĵo; kaj fariĝis tiel. **10** Kaj Dio nomis la sekaĵon Tero, kaj la kolektiĝojn de la akvo Li nomis Maroj. Kaj Dio vidis, ke ĝi estas bona. **11** Kaj Dio diris: Kreskigu la tero verdajn, herbon, kiu naskas semon, fruktarbon, kiu donas laŭ sia speco frukton, kies semo estas en ĝi mem, sur la tero; kaj fariĝis tiel. **12** Kaj la tero elkreskigis verdajn, herbon, kiu naskas semon laŭ sia speco, kaj arbon, kiu donas frukton, kies semo estas en ĝi mem laŭ sia speco. Kaj Dio vidis, ke ĝi estas bona. **13** Kaj estis vespero, kaj estis mateno, la tria tago.

**14** Kaj Dio diris: Estu lumajoj en la ĉiela firmaĵo, por apartigi la tagon de la nokto, kaj ili prezentu signojn, tempojn, tagojn, kaj jarojn; kaj estu lumajoj en la ĉiela firmaĵo, por lumi super la tero; kaj

fariĝis tiel. **16** Kaj Dio faris la du grandajn lumajojn: la pli grandan lumajon, por regi la tagon, kaj la malpli grandan lumajon, por regi la nokton, kaj la stelojn. **17** Kaj Dio starigis ilin sur la ĉiela firmaĵo, por ke ili lumu sur la teron, kaj por ke ili regu la tagon kaj la nokton kaj faru diferencan inter la lumo kaj la mallumo. Kaj Dio vidis, ke ĝi estas bona. **19** Kaj estis vespero, kaj estis mateno, la kvara tago.

**20** Kaj Dio diris: La akvo aperigu moviĝantajojn, vivajn estaĵojn, kaj birdoj ekflugu super la tero, sub la ĉiela firmaĵo. **21** Kaj Dio kreis la grandajn balenojn, kaj ĉiujn vivajn estaĵojn moviĝantajojn, kiujn aperigis la akvo, laŭ ilia speco, kaj ĉiujn flugilhavajn birdojn laŭ ilia speco. Kaj Dio vidis, ke ĝi estas bona. **22** Kaj Dio iln benis, dirante: Fruktu kaj multigu, kaj plenigu la akvon en la maroj, kaj la birdoj multigu sur la tero. **23** Kaj estis vespero, kaj estis mateno, la kvina tago.

**24** Kaj Dio diris: La tero aperigu vivajn estaĵojn, laŭ ilia speco, brutojn kaj rampaĵojn kaj surterajn bestojn, laŭ ilia speco; kaj fariĝis tiel. **25** Kaj Dio kreis la bestojn de la tero, laŭ ilia speco, kaj la brutojn, laŭ ilia speco, kaj ĉiujn rampaĵojn de la tero, laŭ ilia speco. Kaj Dio vidis, ke ĝi estas bona. **26** Kaj Dio diris: Ni kreu homon laŭ Nia bildo, similan al Ni; kaj ili regu super la fiŝoj de la maro kaj super la birdoj de la ĉielo kaj super la brutoj, kaj super ĉiuj rampaĵoj, kiuj rampas sur la tero. **27** Kaj Dio kreis la homon laŭ Sia bildo, laŭ la bildo de Dio Li kreis lin; en formo de viro kaj virino Li kreis ilin. **28** Kaj Dio benis ilin, kaj Dio diris al ili: Fruktu kaj multigu, kaj plenigu la teron kaj submetu ĝin al vi, kaj regu super la



anti-Semitic opposition in the wake of the Dreyfus trial, Zamenhof did not hesitate to express his deepest Jewish emotions and convictions in private correspondence or before selected Jewish audiences. In a letter to a French Esperantist, A. Michaux, in 1905, Zamenhof wrote:

"If I had not been a Jew out of the Ghetto, the idea of the unity of mankind would either never have come into my head or it never would have held me so obstinately during the course of my entire life. The unhappiness of the disunity of mankind can never be felt so strongly as by a Jew out of the Ghetto who is obligated to pray to God in a long-dead language, and who receives his education and instruction in the language of a people who oppress him, and who has co-sufferers throughout the world with whom he cannot inter-communicate".

The greatest irony in Zamenhof's life was his failure to appreciate the possibility of reviving Hebrew. Ben-Yehuda's efforts were still in their infancy when Zamenhof first launched the Esperanto movement in 1887. Hebrew writers of his generation were still forced to use a stilted unnatural style when using Hebrew for modern secular themes. Quite a few authors of the 1880's such as Mendele Mokher Seforim (Shalom Jacob Abramovitsch) abandoned Hebrew for Yiddish, but later returned to Hebrew following the pioneering efforts of Ben-Yehuda. Zamenhof's last great project, completed during World War I, was the translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Esperanto. Those who know both languages can appreciate the fidelity of Zamenhof's translation of the concepts, mood, and the majestic rhythm of the original Biblical Hebrew. However, Zamenhof doubted that the Hebrew language could be made sufficiently flexible to accommodate the needs of modern society and preferred to dedicate his energies on behalf of the Jewish masses of Eastern Europe by "reforming" Yiddish.

At the age of seventeen he began three years of intense research, which resulted in the completion in 1879 of the first scholarly and comprehensive Yiddish grammar. This was partially published in the Vilna Journal, *Lebn un Vissenshaft*, in 1909. Zamenhof's reluctance to publish the manuscript earlier has never been fully explained, but it may be assumed that he was already enthusiastically engaged in efforts to create Esperanto and wanted to give it all his efforts.

On more than one occasion, Zamenhof confessed to a deep love of Yiddish but feared that even in his reformed Latinized version, it would remain a barrier, confining Jewish life to the ghetto. Moreover, he was aware that millions of Jews outside Eastern Europe and the Tsarist Empire were unable to speak or understand Yiddish and that the language lacked the prestige and historical continuity of Hebrew. There exists considerable speculation on direct and indirect borrowings by Espe-

ranto of elements from both Hebrew and Yiddish which can only be briefly touched upon here, but reveal some of the workings of Zamenhof's "Litvak"-rationalist frame of mind. (For a thorough appraisal of possible borrowings, see "Towards a Study of the Possible Yiddish and Hebrew Influence on Esperanto", by Prof. David Gold of the Department of Jewish Languages, the University of Haifa). Hebrew and the other Semitic languages are built upon a root structure of consonants which bear an essential concept. Words which are related to the same concept are immediately recognizable by the presence of the same root.

For example, in Hebrew the root S-F-R means "to tell a story, to recount". The following words are related and all share the three root consonants S, F (which sometimes changes to P because of euphony), and R.

SeFeR	book
SiPuR	story
SiFRia	library
SoFeR	writer
SiFRut	literature

In Esperanto a stem provides the essential concept which can be expanded by the use of prefixes, infixes and suffixes. For example, in Esperanto the stem *san* means health. Thus we have:

<i>sano</i>	health	<i>sanilo</i>	cure, medicine
<i>sana</i>	healthy	<i>saneco</i>	healthiness
<i>sane</i>	healthily	<i>malsano</i>	illness
<i>sani</i>	to be healthy	<i>malsanulo</i> ,	sick person
<i>sanigi</i>	to cure	<i>malsanulejo</i>	hospital
<i>resanigi</i>	to convalesce	<i>malsaneco</i>	unhealthiness
<i>sanulo</i>	healthy person		

Another interesting parallel is the use of a special causative construction. In Hebrew this is the *HiFil* form in which the consonants H or M make the verb causative or transitive. The same function in Esperanto is performed by the suffix *ig*, thus:

Hebrew: LoMed: he learns	Esperanto: Lernas: he learns
meLaMeD: he teaches	Lernigas: he teaches
(causes someone else to learn	Lern: stem, meaning to learn
LMD: root meaning to learn	

The anguish which gripped Russian Jewry following the pogroms of 1881 raised revolutionary hopes for change, as well as the question of mass emigration. Zamenhof arrived in Warsaw during a break in his medical studies at the University of Moscow and published an article calling for mass emigration to a Jewish homeland to be created in the United States. Zamenhof opposed Jewish settlement in Palestine purely on pragmatic grounds, arguing that the country's sensitive geopolitical location and its religious Christian and Moslem significance would raise serious barriers against Jewish revival. He did not question the emotional and religious Jewish ties to the Land of Israel but his logic led him to favour the United States. The end of such an attempt, in Zamenhof's estimation, would entail more tears, sweat and blood than could be justified in a land which, even if fully exploited, could, he thought, accommodate no more than two million people. His article achieved notoriety primarily because it evoked an avalanche of opposition from confirmed Zionists who were more familiar with conditions in the United States (but overly optimistic about problem-free settlement in Palestine).

Their arguments convinced Zamenhof to change his stance, a rare example of him being swayed by emotion. From 1881 to 1884 he became one of the most active leaders in the Hovevei Zion movement, collecting funds and writing articles while completing his medical studies. During the same period, Ben-Yehuda became the first habitual speaker of Hebrew, demonstrating by sheer force of will that the revival of the language was a necessary and logical consequence of Zionism.

It was another telling, if coincidental, parallel, that Zamenhof published his first Esperanto textbooks in 1887 under the pseudonym "Doktoro Esperanto" ("Dr. Hopeful"), just a few years after the composition of the Zionist anthem *Hatikva* ("The Hope"). Zamenhof finally abandoned his Zionist activities about the time of his graduation from medical school and marriage in 1884. Through the generosity of his father-in-law, he succeeded in publishing the first Esperanto textbooks in major European languages in 1887 (Russian, German, Polish, French, English), followed by Italian, Swedish, Hebrew and Yiddish editions in 1888. The initial response to Zamenhof's project was favourable but progress was slow until the turn of the century. Zamenhof withdrew from Jewish affairs to devote himself to Esperanto, but followed with intense interest the deliberations of the first Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897 and the debate over territorial alternatives to Palestine (such as

Argentina, the United States, Canada, Australia and Uganda). By 1901, Zamenhof had just begun to enjoy the dedicated admiration of thousands of followers when he felt obligated to take part in the great debate over the future of the Jewish people.

He was very careful about compromising the Esperanto movement because of his own beliefs and Jewish identity. Zamenhof had frequently espoused belief in what he called the "internal idea" of Esperanto, which he defined as the ultimate goal of a world order based on understanding, tolerance, and mutual respect between peoples. Each community would preserve its own customs, religious beliefs, and language "at home", but would meet each other "abroad" on a neutral basis. This "internal idea" provoked the hostility of chauvinistic and anti-Semitic forces which saw in it evidence of another "Jewish conspiracy" aimed at world domination.

Under the pseudonym *Homo Sum* (I am a Man) Zamenhof wrote a pamphlet entitled "Hillelism-A Project for the Solution of the Jewish Question". On the first page, he posed the terrible question: Why Jewish suffering? He argued that the Jews were the descendants of a people who had lost the essential national characteristics of land and language. Their chief misery and cause of suffering was the separateness of their religious doctrine, which alone among the great monotheistic faiths was limited to a single "nation" when it should be the universal possession of many peoples, in the same manner as Christianity, Islam, and Bahá'ism. The solution he advocated was a radical reform of Judaism stripped of ritual and the doctrine of the "Chosen People". The new reformed faith would follow the pure monotheism of Moses and the ethical commands of the prophets in the liberal spirit of the great rabbi, Hillel. Hillelism rested on a belief in the Supreme Being and in obeying the voice of one's conscience. It would slowly win adherents among Jews who would simultaneously strive to create a national existence in a common territory and through the medium of a common language. Esperanto being Zamenhof's choice. His ideas met with little response among the Jewish masses and were ignored by the Orthodox who had already pronounced a *Herem* (excommunication) against Ben-Yehuda for what they conceived as an audacious and blasphemous attempt to use Hebrew for purely secular purposes.

Zamenhof achieved a major breakthrough as the result of an international congress in France in 1905 and the support he received from such intellectual giants as Tolstoy. He received the Order of the Legion of

Honour from the French government, the first of many such awards which brought him recognition and made Esperanto a serious cultural force by 1914.

This international recognition made Zamenhof even more ultra-cautious about his Jewish identity. The lack of Jewish response to Hillelism was a disappointment. He expanded his ideas into a program for a universalist-deist faith which he renamed *Homaranism* ("Mankindism"). In essence it was the old Enlightenment maxim of "a Jew at Home, a man abroad"; be a Russian, Frenchman or Englishman, at home, be a Christian, Moslem or Jew in your own house of worship, but find a common neutral language and ethical-religious meeting ground elsewhere through Esperanto and Homaranism.

Zamenhof himself died in 1917. His daughter, Lidja, was an accomplished Esperantist who eventually embraced Bahá'ism, the religious faith which most closely resembles Homaranism, yet she perished as a Jew along with the rest of the Zamenhof family in the Holocaust. A book on her life is appropriately dedicated to the "memory of thousands of Jewish Esperantists, friends, and co-workers murdered by the Nazis". In 1932, she visited Palestine where she was more impressed by the aesthetic beauty of the Bahá'í shrine in Haifa than in the pioneering efforts of the Zionist settlers. During a visit to the United States in 1937, she wrote to friends about the possibility of initiating a special course for the negroes of Harlem to "widen their horizons and lift them out of the narrow spiritual confines of their ghetto".

What can one learn from the parallel lives and work of Zamenhof and Ben-Yehuda? The question of a language for the Jewish people has been resolved. Hebrew was and is the only authentic language of Jewish civilization and the vital link between Israel and the Diaspora. Ben-Yehuda's vision of a national-linguistic revival was to eclipse Zamenhof's universalist ideal. Yet the promise of Esperanto for a future messianic time remains. This was recognized by Itamar Ben-Avi, the son of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. Ben-Avi argued on behalf of Esperanto as an international neutral language in his newspaper, the Hebrew daily, *Doar Hayom*. In a world of national, religious and language rivalries and frictions, Esperanto remains for hundreds of thousands a realistic hope for a neutral bridge where all can meet equally without any feeling of inferiority.