

Herzl 90210

Herzl Way – now in Beverly Hills

Luxurious suburb renames street after father of modern Zionism on occasion of his 150th birthday

Shosh Maimon

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LOS ANGELES – A street renamed after Theodor Herzl, the father of modern political Zionism, was inaugurated Sunday in the heart of Beverly Hills, on the backdrop of Israeli flags and to the sound of Hebrew music.

The luxurious suburb's Jewish mayor was unable to hide his excitement as he removed the covering off "Herzl Way" – a rare gesture on behalf of the city, which has named only few of its streets after foreigners.

Beverly Hills Mayor Jimmy Delshad inaugurated the street in the presence of Israeli Consul-General in Los Angeles Jacob Dayan and hundreds of excited Israelis and Jewish Americans.

The Herzl Way inauguration ceremony was scheduled for May 2 – the 150th birthday of the most famous bearded Zionist in the world.



'If you will, it is no fairytale' Photo: Shosh Maimon



'Inspired by Herzl throughout my life' (Photo: Shosh Maimon)

"This is by far one of the best days of my life," Delshad said at the ceremony. The Jewish mayor spoke about his childhood in Iran and the inspiration he drew from Herzl's phrase, "If you will, it is no fairytale."

"This saying was behind me my entire life," he said. "As a young man, I never dreamed that one day I would be here, as the mayor of Beverly Hills, recognizing the visionary of the [State of Israel](#), Theodor Herzl."

Delshad, who spent several years in Israel before immigrating to the United States, recalled how Herzl "was behind me, talking to me, saying 'Nothing is impossible.'" He said he had been inspired and pushed by Herzl's image throughout his life.

Herzl Way is located on one of the city's main intersections, near a synagogue and a Jewish school.

Consul-General Dayan said during the event that the street marks "the bond between Beverly Hills and Israel, which is not only verbal, not only spiritual, but also physical."

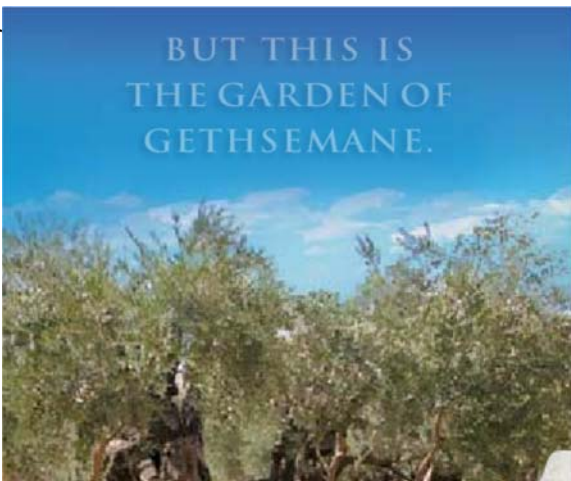
"And today," he said, "the citizens of Beverly Hills are saying, 'Herzl Way is our way. We believe in the strong, vibrant, innovative country of Israel. We believe in the movement that paved the way for millions of Jews to return to their homeland after 2,000 years in the Diaspora. We believe in this vision.'"

Delshad and Dayan rejected fears that the street would serve as a target for anti-Semitic or anti-Israel acts. "You must never be afraid in life," the consul-general said. "You must push for things you believe in."

Temple Emanuel Senior Rabbi Laura Geller welcomed the initiative and the efforts invested in implementing it. She said that when she had visited Israel with her daughter, "she saw the street signs and kept on asking me,

"Who was Ussishkin? Who was Chaim Weizmann? Who was Ahad Ha'am? And it turned into a tour of Israel's history."

The street's renaming, the rabbi added optimistically, would prompt children to ask "Who was Herzl? Why was he important enough to have a street named for him?"



Yitzhak Benhorin in Washington contributed to this report