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PROTO-ZIONISM AND ITS PROTO-HERZL:  
THE PHILOSOPHY AND EFFORTS OF  
RABBI ZVI HIRSCH KALISCHER

Conventional wisdom asserts that Theodore Herzl was the father of Zionism by virtue of his ideological program and indefatigable efforts in shaping the Zionist movement. Zionist historians acknowledge, of course, that there were numerous precursors to the ideas found in *Die Judenstaat*, but they point to his ability at synthesizing the various earlier strands into a coherent whole.<sup>1</sup> Besides, they are wont to argue, Herzl's dynamism, his political savvy and diplomatic machinations set him apart from the others who were ideologues in the purest and most impractical sense. Thus, Herzl supposedly stands apart as a man who combined theory and praxis.

As with most conventional wisdom it retains some element of truth but is at base historically inaccurate. No one can deny that Herzl was indeed the prime mover of the Zionist movement, but this does not render him the first to combine intellectual and physical effort on behalf of a Zionist vision. That honor belongs to a number of individuals, including Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, a leading proto-Zionist and the moving force behind an incipient modern Religious Zionism. Between 1860 and 1870 Kalischer single-mindedly devoted his entire efforts to building a Zionist movement and setting up colonies in the Holy Land. His European meanderings and polemical efforts prefigured those of Herzl; the obstacles he faced were no less great. This study will attempt to trace some of these efforts and try to discover the reasons for his lack of success, failure that was fraught with consequences for the future evolution of Religious Zionism and the Zionist movement in general.

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Before getting into Kalischer's personal efforts at attracting support, it would be useful to survey briefly his general philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Although he received a traditional Ashkenazic Orthodox education (in Lissa, Poland), Kalischer combined his Talmudic knowledge with a broad reading of medieval and modern philosophy. In his book *Emunah Yesharah* he upheld the Halakhah yet condoned philosophy which questioned religious belief. The caveat he employed to explain this seemingly radical departure from Orthodoxy was that such philosophizing is acceptable only if the individual begins his inquiry with an *a priori* belief in the value and divinity of the laws under question. One could say that his perspective was "*Na'aseh v'nishmah*" developed along philosophical lines to "*Na'aseh v'nachkor*," all the while condemning *a posteriori* belief of "*Nachkor v'naaseh*." Consequently, we can understand his outright dismissal of Kant and Spinoza who attacked the underlying foundations of religion, while he quoted Mendelssohn and Wessely who after all were professing Jews. Nevertheless, Kalischer did not accept all of Mendelssohn's ideas, specifically rejecting Mendelssohn's reply to "einem Mann von Stande"<sup>3</sup> where Mendelssohn tried to give objective reasons as to why the Jews would not and could not settle in *Eretz Yisrael* at that time. As Dr. Isaac Barzilay points out, "Mendelssohn's observations . . . indicate a purely secular approach to the problem, and an attitude entirely emancipated from the mythological conception of redemption."<sup>4</sup> Kalischer, obviously, would not accept such a viewpoint.

His life spanned the throes of Jewish emancipation in Western Europe. The Reform movement arose during this epoch and attempted to show the complete loyalty and dependence of the Jews to the nation-state in Western Europe by deleting all mention of return to Zion in prayer and replacing Hebrew in the prayer book with the local vernacular. Rabbi Jacob of Lissa, Kalischer's Rebbe, vehemently opposed these changes. While agreeing wholeheartedly with his mentor, Kalischer nevertheless used the nationalism argument for his own positive purpose. Commenting on the emergence of nationalism Kalischer turned this phenomenon upon the Jews:

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Pay attention to what the Italians, Poles, and Hungarians have done. They placed their lives . . . at the disposal of their country . . . . We should be ashamed of ourselves, for these nations acted on behalf of their own honor, while we not only must think of our forefathers' honor but the glory of God as well.<sup>5</sup>

In essence, whereas the Reformers called for individual emulation of the Gentiles through Jewish assimilation, Kalischer counterproposed a corporate emulation of the Gentiles through a revived Jewish nationalism. He recognized, of course, that national struggles are painful processes and realized that it would take a sustained effort before success could be achieved in *Eretz Yisrael*. Yet he felt strongly that the Jews must start the redemption of the land themselves, for it was the only solution to the problem of world Jewry's anationalistic *Weltanschauung*. Nor did he merely foresee resettlement; he urged a reinstatement of the Temple sacrifices once most Jews had settled there.<sup>6</sup> In order to buttress these seemingly radical ideas and preempt traditionalist opposition, Kalischer found traditional sources of theological support.<sup>7</sup>

What distinguished Kalischer and his supporters philosophically from all previous generations was their discarding the fatalistic attitude of redemption arriving only when God wills it. Kalischer admonished that "one should not think that the Blessed One will suddenly descend from the heavens to tell his people — 'leave' — or that he will send his messenger any moment to call us on the trumpet."<sup>8</sup> This was a very crucial psychological as well as theological break with the recent past and he realized it, bringing quite a number of sources—ranging from the Bible to Kabbalah — to support his contention. Objectively, they were theologically valid, but the mere fact that he brought so many of them shows that he was aware of his divergence from a widely accepted Jewish theological principle with eighteen hundred years weight behind it.

In the introduction to his other major work *Rishon L'tzion*, published in 1864, Kalischer attacked the serious issue of whether an individual was allowed to go to *Eretz Yisrael* before the Messianic redemption. He acknowledged that many authorities said Rabbi Yehuda was to be taken literally in his assertion that

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"all who go from Babylon to *Eretz Yisrael* transgress a positive commandment,"<sup>9</sup> because Jeremiah proclaimed "to Babylon they will be brought and there they will remain until I call for them."<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Kalischer argued that this was invalid for a number of reasons, chief of which being the fact that Ezra was chosen by God to return to Zion thus fulfilling that particular prophecy. In addition, he pointed out that a prophetic utterance cannot supersede a Biblical command, in this case "You will inherit the land and you will dwell in it."<sup>11</sup> His argument here was especially telling, for the Rabbinic denial of Jesus' prophecy was based on the same argument of Biblical supremacy. Finally, Kalischer effectively quashed the argument that the settlers could not fulfill all the *mitzvot* dependent on the Land. Affecting astonishment he responded: "Let us rather look at how many *mitzvot* they *will* be able to keep."<sup>12</sup> In fact, he said, the Rambam himself argued that the mere settlement of *Eretz Yisrael* constituted a *mitzvah* in itself.

But Rabbinic persuasion was one thing. What could not be accomplished so readily was the conversion of Jewish mass psychology and behavior from that of apathy and fatalism to concerted and dynamic action. As a keen student of history, Kalischer understood that radical shifts of mass attitude could transpire only as a response to cataclysmic forces or barring that through a lengthy, evolutionary process of education. The former, especially in Western Europe had not yet occurred; Kalischer's job, therefore, was to prod here and there in the hope of awakening his people. He knew what lay ahead: "The knowledgeable understand the situation . . . We must not hurry matters at an imprudent pace, for the problem will not be resolved in a day. Rather, Israel's redemption will come very slowly; the fulfillment of our dream will be a tortuous affair . . ." <sup>13</sup>

For Kalischer, one question remained. What made the nineteenth century so propitious? After eighteen hundred years of dispersion why now? His answer was that "from the time of the Temple's destruction until recently, we have not had Jewish leaders as are to be found at the present."<sup>14</sup> For the first time, he claimed, Jews could influence the secular rulers through power

and wealth and need not solely bank on the mercy and good will of the governmental authorities. His original plan was to have these wealthy and influential Jews, Rothschild and Montefiore in particular, found a settlement in *Eretz Yisrael* which would attract other "rich Jews, respected by their brethren for their philanthropic hearts."<sup>15</sup> The plan would have four stages: the purchase of cities, fields, vineyards; the migration of Jews from Poland, Russia, and Western Europe who would work the land for these benefactors under the tutelage of agricultural experts; the setting up of a militia to guard against Arab marauders; and finally, the establishment of an agricultural school to educate subsequent generations, supplementing their religious training.

With this vision in mind Kalischer turned his efforts to practical implementation. Already in 1836 he tried to get the active support of Amschel Rothschild, the oldest of the illustrious brothers. Kalischer felt that the new regime of Muhammad Ali which replaced Ottoman rule would be more responsive to Jewish resettlement. He thought that since Ali stood alone, the money and influence of the Jewish nation backed by such as Rothschild could be decisive. Diplomatically, Kalischer cajoled Rothschild with a paraphrase of Mordecai's admonition to Queen Esther: "Who knows whether it was not for this period that God has given you your wealth and power."<sup>16</sup> His plan was a dual one — buying land from Ali and resettling those Jews whose plight in Europe could be considered socially terminal. The letter to Rothschild was replete with pilpulistic argumentation and Biblical allusions, yet Kalischer exhibited a keen awareness that supplication on humanitarian grounds was not sufficient, especially in dealing with someone with the business acumen of a Rothschild: "It is obvious that your money will not be lost but rather will multiply. When other Jewish leaders gather there from the corners of the earth . . . without doubt among them will be found many rich men . . . who will also invest in the area, leading to further monetary enrichment."<sup>17</sup>

The plan as Kalischer envisioned it was not to purchase the land outright but rather to buy other territory adjoining Egypt and trade one tract for another. Barring that, Kalischer suggested purchasing Jerusalem and as a last resort Mount Zion. While the

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plan was utopian in some respects, it at least showed that Kalischer had some comprehension of the realities of geo-politics. Although Ali certainly could have used additional revenue for his progressive program of Egyptian social development, no one could have expected him to acquiesce in the loss of a sizable amount of land. But by buying land adjoining Egypt, Kalischer hoped that Ali would feel that in trading land he was not losing land. The problem here was that Kalischer probably did not realize that the Holy Land was holy for the Muslim as well.

Rothschild's response was disappointingly noncommittal and, after some time, Kalischer turned his attention to Montefiore. While their correspondence is not extant we know of its existence through a letter to Albert Cohen of France in which Kalischer mentioned that he had presented his thoughts to Montefiore who answered that "my heart is always occupied with this."<sup>18</sup> Montefiore definitely had plans for some sort of settlement in *Eretz Yisrael*, writing in his diary that he planned on applying "to Mohammad Ali for a grant of land for fifty years; some one or two hundred villages."<sup>19</sup> If successful he then planned to "form a company for the cultivation of the land and the encouragement of our brethren in Europe . . . thousands of our brethren [to return] to the Land of Israel," adding, "I am sure they would be happy in the enjoyment of the observance of our holy religion, in a manner which is impossible in Europe."<sup>20</sup> It is interesting to note that there is a possible double meaning in Montefiore's statement. To be sure, the literal interpretation of religious observance "in a manner which is impossible in Europe" is a reference to religious persecution. However, the possibility remains that Kalischer's constant harping on "the possibilities of fulfilling the 'mitzvot dependent on the land' which comprise a sizable segment of the 613 Commandments"<sup>21</sup> may also have had its subliminal effect, and the statement could be interpreted in that fashion too. We know as well that this wasn't the only time Montefiore heard about this concept, for a letter to him from the Ashkenazic community in *Eretz Yisrael* in that same year emphasized "upholding the holy Torah in the Holy Land, in all its halakhot and takanot which are dependent on the land."<sup>22</sup>

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Montefiore had "several other requests to make of him [Ali] . . . that he will allow me to send people to assist and instruct the Jews in a better mode of cultivating land . . . ; that he will give me a firman to open banks in Beyrut, Jaffa, Jerusalem, and Cairo."<sup>23</sup> To the latter part Ali "appeared delighted, and assured me the bank should have his protection, and he should be happy to see it established,"<sup>24</sup> which Montefiore thereupon used as the carrot to gain his other demands. It would seem then that Kalischer was quite correct in judging that Ali would be amenable to at least a sober consideration of land purchase although it must be acknowledged that Montefiore's plan was different in scope and method than that of Kalischer. Yet the programmatic connection seems to be there, because Montefiore had no such plan the first time he visited *Eretz Yisrael*. Kalischer sent his letter in 1839, the same year Montefiore took his second trip with his resettlement program. In sum, while we have no acknowledgment of Kalischer's influence on Montefiore the similarity of ideas and concerns coupled with the timing of the letter and the trip would seem to suggest some correlation. One should not overestimate the possible influence Kalischer's ideas had on Montefiore but neither should one discard the correspondence as being fruitless, especially in light of the fact that Kalischer had other indirect channels to Montefiore, exchanging letters with Nathan Adler, Chief Rabbi of Great Britain who was privy to Montefiore's ear.<sup>25</sup>

At this time Kalischer was not aware that Rabbi Judah Bibas and his younger colleague Rabbi Judah Alkalai<sup>26</sup> were having similar ideas about resettling *Eretz Yisrael*. Bibas argued that not merely prayer and fasting but actual resettlement was necessary for a return to Zion. He was deeply impressed by the nationalist uprising of the Greeks and so carried matters a step farther than Kalischer, advocating the use of force for the Jews if necessary to achieve their national goals.

Alkalai predicted the century of 5600 to be a propitious one for resettlement. In his book *Shalom Yerushalayim* he propounded the concept of "Keren L'umit" — a tithe of ten percent to be paid by each Jew for this purpose. As far as Messianic redemption was concerned, Alkalai made a distinction between "Ma-

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shiach ben Yosef” and “Mashiach ben David,” the former being handpicked by the Rabbis of Europe to lead the migration to *Eretz Yisrael*, and the latter to arrive after the building of the Temple under the former: “It is obvious that the Mashiach ben David will not appear out of thin air in a fiery chariot with fiery horses, but will come if the Children of Israel bend to the task of preparing themselves for him.”<sup>27</sup> Here was a final justification for Kalischer’s “radical” break from traditional passive Messianism. Even if one were to still accept the idea that the Messianic Age should not be forced, this need only pertain to ultimate Messianism, the Davidic Messiah and not to the earlier Josephian Messiah. Without knowing it Kalischer was now covered on all theological flanks.

From what can be ascertained, Kalischer did not find out about Alkalai until the Hebrew newspapers arose and Alkalai started publishing articles in them. It is possible that Kalischer knew of Alkalai’s *Minchat Yehudah* from Ignatz Einhorn’s very unflattering review of it in *Literaturblatt des Orients*,<sup>28</sup> the same paper that printed an essay of Kalischer’s a year later.<sup>29</sup> Alkalai in turn found out about Kalischer with the latter’s publication of *Drishat Zion* in 1862 and was very pleased to discover another exponent of Religious Zionism. He mentions Kalischer in print for the first time in the bimonthly *Hamagid* in the summer of 1863,<sup>30</sup> and from then on they become philosophically intertwined in their writings.

Whereas Kalischer and Alkalai developed their ideas independently of each other with little philosophical influence at first one way or the other, Kalischer did heavily influence a number of other Jewish leaders. Rabbi Eliyahu Guttmacher who became Nasi of *Eretz Yisrael* in 1857 and who set up a *bet midrash* and a Yeshiva, turned into a staunch supporter of Kalischer upon being sent *Drishat Zion*. He was especially impressed by Kalischer’s idea of resettlement through naturalistic means of human endeavor. Rabbi Nathan Friedland is a different case in point. He published a book entitled *Kos Yeshuah V’nechamah* which actually appeared before *Drishat Zion*. Without the benefit of Kalischer’s analysis his argument was not altogether clear. He



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made a case for gradual resettlement but the first to go were to be the learned scholars, a sort of spiritual vanguard.<sup>31</sup> Subsequently other groups would follow, who according to Friedland would be sent by their governments. Why the governments would send them or how the original non-productive group would support themselves and ease the transition for others is not made clear. In the end, when most had settled, the Final Redemption would dawn, Friedland felt.

In 1859 Friedland visited Kalischer in Teheran where Kalischer explained to him the political and economic difficulties of Friedland's program, and convinced him instead to become his messenger and spokesman. Friedland accepted and traveled to Paris in 1860 where he turned to Albert Cohen, head of the Rothschild charities, to convince him of Kalischer's ideas on resettlement. Simultaneously, Kalischer sent Cohen his book and a letter in which he asked Cohen to persuade Rothschild and the King of France of the urgency for his program: "It is clear to me that the light of dawn has broken since God has given us world famous Jewish leaders such as the Rothschilds . . . It is their duty [to sound the call] in the royal palaces and especially in the house of . . . the French monarch."<sup>32</sup> This time Kalischer's entreaties fell on responsive ears but Cohen could not do much to convince Rothschild. Friedland himself wrote a letter to Napoleon III asking him to work through diplomatic channels for the return of the Jews to their land. Napoleon's reply, as can be expected, was to the effect that present diplomacy with Turkey precluded such an attempt at that time but he would keep it in mind for a more opportune season. Friedland then journeyed to London where Montefiore told him this time that he was no longer interested himself since "there were others to do this sort of thing."<sup>33</sup>

Recognizing that individual contacts were not fruitful, Kalischer decided to try another approach. In 1860 in Frankfurt Chaim Luria founded a society for the resettlement of Jews in Palestine. He was not yet cognizant of Kalischer's ideas. Luria viewed the revolutions of 1848 as being the beginning of the Messianic Age but felt that redemption would only arrive with the resurrection of the Jewish spirit for resettlement. To this end

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he managed to gain the support of a number of *Parnassim* in Frankfurt. His program included among other things the establishment of farms and the restoration of the *ma'aser shaynee*. In looking for outside support the society approached Kalischer among others and he replied that not only would he join but he would even consider visiting the proposed settlement to supervise it for a time! Although the society had planned to draw up a manifesto of its goals, upon reading it they realized that Kalischer's *Drishat Zion* had something even more suitable for their purpose. Kalischer thereupon dedicated the introduction to the society.

The society began auspiciously, recruiting men and money. Kalischer attempted to influence the Rabbinic leadership of Germany, especially Hirsch and Hildesheimer, but they refrained from a public endorsement. Although they approved of the idea of resettlement they were wary of the settlers' lack of observance of *mitzvot*. How much of this was rationalization to cover their Germano-nationalistic position and how much was real concern is difficult to assess. The suspicion remains, however, that lack of Orthodoxy was not their major concern, especially in light of Kalischer's offer to supervise for an initial period. Nevertheless, Rabbi Hirsch did quietly contribute to the society as did Zecharia Frankel of Breslau.

Membership was not restricted to Germany — Albert Cohen and Rabbi Joseph Blumenthal of Paris, Rabbi Nathan Adler of London, Vilna's S. J. Finn, Rabbi Judah Alkalai, and the Chief Rabbi of Budapest Dov Meisels, among others joined the society.<sup>34</sup> With this impressive array Montefiore was asked to be "honorary head" but he declined. Nevertheless, concerted action was now a possibility. Finn tried to gain permission from the Russian government to collect money but the lack of official permission hindered this effort in a country with the largest Jewish population at that time. Kalischer himself travelled to Konigsberg in 1862 to meet the Rabbi of Kuvna, Isaac Spector, who promised that "es solle jeder judische Hauseigenthumer 1 Procent des Miethertrages zum Collectieren — Berein abgeben."<sup>35</sup> Rabbi Abraham Licht travelled through Prussia signing up four hun-

dred members for the society. The literature the society disseminated included *Drishat Zion*, Alkalai's *Kos Yeshuah V'nechamah* and *Goral La'hashem* for the Hebrew readership, and Moses Hess' *Roma und Jerusalem* for the German readers. Magazines such as *Hamagid*, *Der Israelite*, and *Allgemeine Zeitung Das Judenthums* were utilized for shorter polemical articles. Inroads into Jewish mass consciousness were finally being made.

Unfortunately, the society collapsed in 1864. A personality conflict between Luria and most other members of the society was more fractious than any ideological schism could have been. Kalischer attempted to mediate the conflict but to no avail. It was a bitter pill for him to swallow and the one small consolation he had was that the society widened his contacts and allowed him to form some key friendships. Foremost on this score was Rabbi Joseph Natunk of Hungary who became a loyal and assiduous worker on Kalischer's behalf. Natunk advocated a large *aliyah* to *Eretz Yisrael* and even went so far as to call for the abolition of Turkish rule. Kalischer's keen disappointments had tempered his goals somewhat; he warned Natunk that this last idea was presently unfeasible and counterproductive. Kalischer advised that he should rather devote his energies to buying property and cultivating lands that had no private owners — the government's land.

In 1866 Natunk went on his extended errand for Kalischer to the large Western European cities. He worked for resettlement, trying to establish societies for the collection of funds. He visited Berlin, Frankfurt, Cologne, Amsterdam, and Paris, and in the latter two succeeded in setting up such societies. Kalischer by now had focused his attention on Paris. After the Frankfurt fiasco one may wonder what prompted him to become involved with another society. But Kalischer was not acting out of desperation. The Franco-Jewish press was replete with proto-Zionistic journalism. Already in 1864 M. Lazar Levy-Bing wrote two articles in the fortnightly *Archives Israélites* entitled "Retablissement de la Nationalite Juive" and "Suite d'une Polemique" in which he cogently argued that the only solution of the Jewish "problem" was to be found in the formation of a Jewish national state, just as all other nationalities have their homeland: "Il n'est pas une

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pulsation, pas une aspiration des fils d'Israel qui ne soient," he claimed, but rather "qu'ils en aient conscience ou non" because "toute la religion juive est fondée sur l'idée nationale."<sup>36</sup> Probably even more to Kalischer's liking was the fact that Levy-Bing couched his argument in a religious spirit — "Et l'Eternal sera le roi de toute la terre; en ce jour l'Eternal sera un, et son nom sera un"<sup>37</sup> — believing that a nation repudiating its faith in God would lose its essential morality.

Even the partially assimilated Moses Hess supported this in a lengthy series of articles entitled "Lettres sur la mission d'Israel dans l'histoire de l'humanité."<sup>38</sup> That Hess was in almost complete agreement and was probably influenced by Kalischer's ideas is borne out in his book *Rome and Jerusalem* where he devoted three pages to a verbatim quotation of Kalischer with respect to resettlement and to which "I heartily subscribe in all detail."<sup>39</sup> Obviously Kalischer's works had their impact not only in Talmudic circles but also ramified to the outer edges of traditional Jewish society. Hess acknowledged as much, pointing out that Kalischer was no ideological hermit. That currents of thought similar to his own were flowing in as remote an area as Australia, at precisely the time "there appeared the third part of the work of Rabbi Hirsch Kalischer — *Emunah Yesharah*,"<sup>40</sup> is also noted by Hess. Here of course there is no provable influence, but we do know that Kalischer was aware of those currents since a report of the Melbourne meeting was printed in *Hamagid* in East Prussia in March 1862.

Some time later (1866) another voice appeared in Paris urging Jewish resettlement — Henri Dunant, founder of the Red Cross. Although Kalischer was pleased at the backing of this "eminent Parisian official with his large organization involved in charitable work,"<sup>41</sup> he nevertheless did not want Christians to be the first to start a Jewish resettlement. As he put it, "how will they institute a settlement based on Torah principles?"<sup>42</sup>

Thus, with all this intellectual and journalistic ferment one is not surprised that Kalischer focussed on Paris. In particular, he joined the influential society *Kall Yisrael Chaverim* and donated 12,000 francs to its coffers on condition that it be used for the

redemption of Palestinian land. The society agreed, with the countercondition that the money be placed in escrow until more could be added in order to ensure the project's success. Consequently Kalischer issued an appeal in 1867 that was published in Hebrew, German, and English entitled "Kol Koray,"<sup>43</sup> in which he announced his reliance on the "Alliance Israelite" for the redemption of the "devastated, sacred soil" and its needed "colonization, cultivation, and improvement."<sup>44</sup>

Kalischer did have initial reservations about joining because the society originally had set its primary function as the dissemination of Haskala thought. Perhaps what caused him to allay his misgivings was the possibility of journeying to *Eretz Yisrael* "to see there after the strict observance of the religious commands connected with agriculture in Palestine."<sup>45</sup> In any case, the society's various pledges to him and Natunk won Kalischer over. Adolphe Cremieux agreed to work through diplomatic channels for the abolition of Turkish statutory regulations restricting Jewish purchase of Palestinian land; Albert Cohen pledged to help in founding and supervising agricultural schools; and the Chief Rabbi of France, Eliezer Isidore, gave his blessings to the whole project. Thus, in great part due to Kalischer's belief that "there could be no permanent colonization of Palestine without a training school for Jewish farmers,"<sup>46</sup> the Mikveh Yisrael Agricultural School was set up in *Eretz Yisrael* in 1870. Kalischer's efforts had finally borne some fruit.

Ironically and tragically, the greatest opposition to Kalischer's ideas came from the rabbinate residing in *Eretz Yisrael*. True, the Chief Rabbi of the Sephardic community Chaim David Chazan greeted *Drishat Zion* with enthusiasm and wrote a letter to Kalischer and to the Frankfurt society in 1863 urging them to redeem some land and emigrate soon: "And you, leaders of Israel, strengthen your hearts for the work necessary to buy additional houses, fields, and vineyards."<sup>47</sup> The Ashkenazic community, in *Eretz Yisrael*, however, was set against it. Some argued that conditions there were not propitious at that time. Others disagreed with Kalischer's concept of redemption through natural means. Making the situation all the more frustrating was the hypocrisy of their position since twenty-five years previously, in

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1839, the Ashkenazic leadership in *Eretz Yisrael* urged Montefiore in a letter to aid in resettling the land. Discussing various occupations which would be economically feasible, they claimed that "it is possible for many people to make a living here."<sup>48</sup> Sadly one must acknowledge that even these pious people were not above considerations of political self-interest, for it was obvious that Kalischer's plans threatened their position with a radical change in the status quo due to the projected mass immigration. The arguments were waged over the Jewish journals *Hamagid* and *Halvanon* with Kalischer's major support coming from Rabbi Judah Alkalai whose defense took the form of a pamphlet entitled "M'oded Eenuyim."<sup>49</sup> Kalischer himself was furious at their intransigence and berated them in the strongest possible language, calling them "liars," "adversaries of the holy path," and "simpletons."<sup>50</sup> The movement had obviously degenerated and failed to gain more momentum. Kalischer died in 1874, a disillusioned man.

In attempting to assess Kalischer's influence on his day one is met by a striking dichotomy. On the one hand he was read very widely. Kressel remarks that "Kalischer clung to the dust of the feet of the great Jewish leaders of his day . . . above all with Mordecai Jost, the historian . . . who cherished Kalischer greatly."<sup>51</sup> This friendship was crucial to the range of dissemination of Kalischer's ideas, for as Kressel notes, Jost "disseminated his works to the Jews of Western Europe in their tongues."<sup>52</sup> As we have seen, Kalischer's writings and personal contacts were as far flung as they were prolific. Yet on the other hand, Kressel acknowledges that Kalischer, Alkalai, and Guttmacher were not very successful materially, being "voices calling in the wilderness."<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, they were not really sedentary oases in the ideological Jewish desert of Europe but rather men "who wandered from place to place, with great zeal cajoling and urging others to great deeds."<sup>54</sup>

At the least, Kalischer *et al* were the founders of what Arthur Hertzberg calls "defensive Zionism," a program based on "the hope of exploiting the contemporary colonial expansion and na-

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tional stirrings of Europe to create a new-old home for the old values unchanged.”<sup>55</sup> But Hertzberg partly misses the point, for in presenting a defense for naturalistic resettlement Kalischer transmuted the “old” values into “new-old” values as well. In essence, of course, this “new-old” value was really an “old-old” one, and Kalischer was cleverly out-reactionizing the reactionaries. After all, if Joshua and David had to *conquer* physically the land of Canaan, how could mere resettlement be considered unJewish?

Yet Kalischer was ultimately unsuccessful in convincing the Jewish masses. Why? Here Hertzberg notes:

Alkalai and Kalischer were equally ineffectual because they appeared before the mass of east European religious Jewry . . . which had been seriously affected by modernity . . . The instinctive reaction to the Emancipation on the part of orthodoxy was to resist change and the threat of disappearance . . . The defections of many of the educated youth from Jewry, a large proportion through baptism, added substance to the resistance of the religious masses to anything which implied acceptance of modernity . . . Even the pious proto-Zionism of Alkalai and Kalischer implied some amount of entry by the Jew into the mainstream of modernity.<sup>56</sup>

So the rejection of Kalischer was more an emotional than a theological matter, a fear borne of Russian Jewry’s stupendous repression and the frightening future even Kalischer’s mild system entailed for the beleaguered traditional-minded Jew. Such a fear could only be overcome by an even greater fear, and it would have to wait for the pogroms of 1881 and thereafter before Kalischer’s persuasive arguments (from the mouths of others) could crash through Eastern European Jewry’s benumbed minds. In short, Kalischer wasn’t theologically “wrong”; he was merely too early.

The consequences of some of Orthodox Jewry’s not heeding Kalischer are still with us today in the form of minority representation within the State of Israel. Of course, one cannot say with any assuredness that Israel would be mostly Orthodox had Kalischer’s call been heeded, but it is quite obvious that his failure preempted the Zionist field and ultimately enabled the secularists’ viewpoint to predominate. To be sure, no one can be held

