

# World Mizrachi Movement - E-History Series

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## The World Mizrachi Religious Zionism e-History Series



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### Rav Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874)

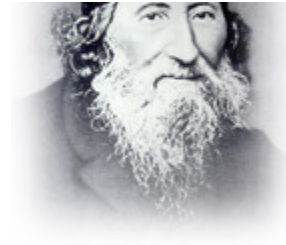
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Rabbi Kalischer, as had Rabbi Alkalai before him, saw an **intrinsic connection between the national aspirations of the Jewish people and the traditional messianic belief.** He was greatly influenced by the emancipation of the Jews in France and the Germanic countries during Napoleonic rule. These various emancipation decrees were seen by Rabbi Kalischer as part and parcel of the traditional and historical development of the Jewish people. However, he also saw this in a more esoteric structure – that of belonging to the period immediately before the messianic era. **Therefore, he viewed the developments of rising nationalism among the Jewish people as one of the first stages in the process of natural redemption, i.e., that process by which man himself would help bring about the beginning of redemption in which at least some Jews would return to Eretz Israel.**

His first expression of Zionism is to be found in a letter that he wrote in 1836 to the head of the Berlin branch of the Rothschild family.



There he explained that the beginning of the Redemption would come through natural causes – by human effort and by the will of the governments to gather the scattered of Israel into the Holy Land. These notions, however, did not engage him seriously until 1860, when an otherwise unknown doctor, Hayim Lurie, organized a society in Frankfurton the Oderto foster Jewish settlement in the Holy Land. Kalischer joined this group, and though the organization was short-lived and had no practical achievements to its credit, it provided him with the impulse to write his important Zionist work, *Derishat Zion* (“Seeking Zion”), which appeared in 1862.



Kalischer’s professional career was not remarkable. After completing his education in the conventional modes of the ghetto, he settled in Thorn, where he served as the Rabbi of the community for forty years. Financially independent in his own right, he was able to engage, after 1860, in innumerable journeys, meetings and myriad literary and practical activities on behalf of the ideal to which he was henceforth devoted.

Some tangible results flowed from his efforts, for he was instrumental in getting a group to buy land for colonization on the outskirts of Jaffa in 1866. His prodding finally moved the Alliance Israelite Universelle, the organization that had been created in France in 1860 for the international defense of Jewish rights, to found an agricultural school in Jaffa, Palestine, in 1870.

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### **From his Writings: *Seeking Zion***

#### **A Natural Beginning of the Redemption**

The Redemption of Israel, for which we long, is not to be

imagined as a sudden miracle. The Almighty, blessed be His Name, will not suddenly descend from on high and command his people to go forth. He will not send the Messiah from heaven in a twinkling of an eye, to sound the great trumpet for the scattered of Israel and gather them into Jerusalem. He will not surround the Holy City with a wall of fire or cause the Holy Temple to descend from the heavens. The bliss and miracles that were promised by his servants, the prophets, will certainly come to pass – everything will be fulfilled – but we will not run in terror and flight, for the Redemption of Israel will come by slow degrees and the ray of deliverance will shine forth gradually.

My dear reader! Cast aside the conventional view that the Messiah will suddenly sound a blast on the great trumpet and cause all the inhabitants of the earth to tremble. On the contrary, the Redemption will begin by awakening support among the philanthropists and by gaining the consent of the nations to the gathering of some of the scattered of Israel into the Holy Land.

Can we logically explain why the Redemption will begin in a natural manner and why the Lord, in His love for His people, will not immediately send the Messiah in an obvious miracle? Yes, we can. We know that all our worship of God is in the form of trials by which He tests us. When God created man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, He also planted the Tree of Knowledge and then commanded man not to eat of it. Why did He put the Tree in the Garden, if not as a trial? Why did He allow the Snake to enter the Garden, to tempt man, if not to test whether man would observe God's command? When Israel went forth from Egypt, God again tested man's faith with hunger and thirst along the way. The laws given to us in the Torah about unclean animals which are forbidden us as food are also a continuous trial – else why did the Almighty make them so tempting and succulent? Throughout the days of our dispersion we have suffered martyrdom for the sanctity of

God's Name; we have been dragged from land to land and have borne the yoke of exile through the ages, all for the sake of His holy Torah and as a further stage of the testing of our faith.

If the Almighty would suddenly appear one day in the future, through undeniable miracles, this would be no trial. What straining of our faith would there be in the face of the miracles and wonders attending a clear heavenly command to go up and inherit the land and enjoy its good fruit? Under such circumstances what fool would not go there, not because of his love of God, but for His own selfish sake? Only a natural beginning of the Redemption is a true test of those who initiate it. To concentrate all one's energy on this holy work and to renounce home and fortune for the sake of living in Zion before the voice of gladness and the voice of joy are heard – there is no greater merit or trial than this.

### **The Holiness of Labor on the Land**

Another great advantage of agricultural settlement is that we would have the privilege of observing the religious commandments that attach to working the soil of the Holy Land. The Jews who supervised the actual laborers would be aiding in the working of the land and would therefore have the same status as if they had personally fulfilled these commandments.

But, beyond all this, Jewish farming would be a spur to the ultimate Messianic Redemption. As we bring redemption to the land in a this-worldly way, the rays of heavenly deliverance will gradually appear.

Let no stubborn opponent of these thoughts maintain that those who labor day and night will be taken away from the study of the Torah and from spiritual to secular concerns. This counter argument is shortsighted. On the contrary, the policy we propose will add dignity to the Torah. If there is no bread,

there can be no study; if there will be bread in the land, people will then be able to study with peace of mind. In addition, we are sure that there are many in the Holy Land who are not students of the Torah and who long to work the land. These will support the physically infirm scholars to whom no man would dare say: Work the land! But to whom all would say that they should devote themselves entirely to serving the Lord.

Such a policy would also raise our dignity among the nations, for they would say that the children of Israel, too, have the will to redeem the land of their ancestors, which is now so barren and forsaken.

If we strengthen ourselves and go to the Holy Land to plant, build, establish and grow, our eyes will see the blessing upon our fields, and we will have blessing to no end, and we shall be praised with praises of the Holy Land – and through this the redemption of Israel will come!”

### **Settling the Land of Israel:**

After we have described the nature of the emergence of the light of salvation...we must explore the reasons how we can achieve living in the Holy Land and guarding the sanctified path which is to make the Holy Land plentiful, a land pleasing to the inhabitants, for this is the beginning of Redemption...

... And why are we hesitant; when will we make it our home? Until now we have been strangers attached to strange lands, thinking that just upon the hope in our hearts we will fly to the Holy Mountain. This is not the way, my brethren. It is not enough for our mouths and hearts to be open but rather all is determined according to our actions; for thought without action is like a soul without a body.

If we strengthen ourselves and go to the Holy Land to plant, build, establish and grow, our eyes will see the blessing upon

our fields, and we will have blessing to no end, and we shall be praised with the praises of the Holy Land— and through this the redemption of Israel will come!

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Kibbutz Tirat Tzvi is named in memory of Harav Tzvi Kalischer. It was founded in 1937. Tirat Zvi was the first group of Kibbutz HaDati settlers to enjoy the privilege of setting up a new settlement. In keeping with the difficulties of those times, they found themselves settling in a distant, isolated location. The area was rife with security problems and the physical conditions that they had to endure were harsh indeed. The farming and economic potential in the area were great unknowns.



The decision to establish Tirat Zvi was made, land was set aside in promise for future settlements in the immediate locale and the first neighboring settlement, Sde Eliyahu, was established some two years later.

During the first years that the young group of people lived in the valley, they developed good neighborly relations with the local Bedouin. Notwithstanding that fact, the first large-scale attack on the kibbutz was launched in February 1938. This was the only time during that period of unrest that Arab irregulars tried to conquer and destroy a Jewish settlement. The attack was repelled at the stockade walls and the besieging forces retreated with their dead and wounded.



During the next few months there were violent incidents all over



the country. The isolated settlement in the Bet Shean valley suffered greatly during those times. Mines, sniper fire and uprooted orchards were the norm and five

Jews died en route to Tirat Zvi. During that year, all the other settlements in the area were attacked and suffered losses.

Today the Kibbutz has 254 members and still welcomes new ones. It is famous for its meat packaging factory but also boasts fisheries, agriculture – especially dates –and has cottages available for vacation rental.

**Website:** [http://www.tiratzvi.org.il/code/tirat\\_eng.htm](http://www.tiratzvi.org.il/code/tirat_eng.htm)

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For additional information on Rabbi Kalischer, you may also visit the following websites:

[http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/Shokel/000330\\_Kalischer.html](http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/Shokel/000330_Kalischer.html)

<http://www.jafi.org.il/education/100/people/BIOS/kalish.html>

<http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/biography/Kalischer.html>



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