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Thank you. It's a special honor to be here at Touro and have this opportunity to speak about Theodor Herzl – and especially, in fact, about early Zionism. I thank professor Igor Kąkolewski for proposing this discussion, and professor Stephan Lehnstaedt for accepting and organizing things.

I'm all the more grateful, as the topic of Zionism – early or otherwise – is hardly ingratiating of late. I've experienced this personally, with several planned lectures having been cancelled these past months.

Of course, I have to suspect that some of you have had far worse experiences since October 7.

My heart goes out.

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Though immodest, I think it's fair to say that the little book of mine you've read is the first real breakthrough in Herzl studies since Jacques Kornberg's landmark book *From Assimilation to Zionism* from 1993.

The relevance of my research is that:

First – it places Herzl *within* the history of 19th-cent. Zionism. That is, he's no longer *deus ex machina*, as he's presented everywhere in the literature of the past century-and-a-quarter. And that reshapes the telling of early Zionist history.

Second – it offers clarity on a range of opaque matters in Herzl's life – including his allergy to messianism, something that was among his greatest failings. And thus we have the Uganda debacle; his blindness to the potentials of "faith-based diplomacy", whether in regards to the Grand Duke of Baden, British policy-makers, and so on.

Third – it demonstrates once again – this time, in the person of Herzl himself – the cross-pollination between Jewish and Christian Zionisms. Just one example is that I've established Herzl's realtime awareness of the Blackstone Memorial of 1891, that boldest expression of US Christian Zionism in the 19th century.

Fourth – it tables a convincing hypothesis on the origins of the Dreyfus myth.

Fifth – it also offers a rich case of when whole generations of historians become hostage to received myth.

I'll now develop just that first point – namely, about how I move Herzl from *without* the early development of Zionism, to a place *within* it. The other points are ones we may wish to raise later this evening.

To begin, a word on Zionism – as a word, a term. Zionism is intrinsic to the modern era's Jewish national revival. Over the century-plus before 1948, it was focused on recreating an independent Jewish homeland, a center, a state, in Eretz Israel. Since 1948 – Zionism is the justification and protection of the right of Israelis to their state. *Raison d'être*.

Zionism is of course also something ancient. We know it from the Hebrew Bible. That after escaping from slavery in Egypt, the Jews ascended Zion and settled in the Promised Land. That one prophet after another foretold the resurrection of the dry bones, as in Ezekiel. That after the Babylonian captivity, the Jews once again returned to Judea and

began to re-establish themselves – politically, religiously. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe the efforts to recreate the state and to restore Judaism, centering it upon the Second Temple, then being rebuilt.

For most of the 18 centuries following that Temple's destruction, Zionism was usually a passively awaited hope or longing. "Next year in Jerusalem," went the prayer from generation to generation. But in the first decades of the 19th century, much changed and both Jews and Christians, primarily ones from Great Britain, began to devise plans for the return of the Jews to Palestine. These plans arose on the basis of several historical processes, among which emancipation garners much attention – initially as regards its promise, later its discontents. I wish however to highlight the international strengthening of Britain after the Napoleonic Wars, and the shrinking of the Ottoman Empire, 'the sick man of Europe' as we remember. Greece liberated itself in the 1820s, and so did Serbia just a few years later. Mehmet Ali of Egypt seized the Levant from Istanbul in the early 1830s. This is when Britain entered Palestine and established both a consulate in Jerusalem (1838) and (together with Prussia) a Protestant bishopric in 1841. Later, in the late 1870s, Bulgaria and Romania gained independence from the Ottomans... I repeat: the Turkish Empire was waning – while the British Empire was strengthening.

The 19th century was a time of national liberation and of romanticism. The period's romanticism encouraged the restoration not only of nations under the Turkish yoke. As we in Poland know, there were other empires to contend with. And as all of us know, in Italy, in the mid-19th century, steps towards risorgimento began – i.e. the effort to unite Italy. Yet again in the history of Europe, expectations arose for the restoration of the old world, in an improved version. I'm pointing to the cyclical European aspirations for the *restitutio imperii*. Professor Kąkolewski recently published an illuminating paper on the topic. The gist is that such romantic aspirations have been haunting, and motivating Europeans since the fall of Rome in the 5th century, CE. The EU itself is obviously the latest iteration of *restitutio imperii*, so conceived.

Back to the 19th century: after the creation of a modern Greece (capturing all the poetic attention it did across Europe), it was time for a modern Italy – and thereafter, for a modern Israel. Hence it's not a big surprise that one of the leaders of the risorgimento wrote a book in the early 1850s about the restoration of the Jewish state in the Land of Israel. The author is Benedetto Musolino (no, not the fascist!): Benedetto Musolino. Unlike Herzl – Musolino even stipulated the resurrection of Hebrew as a spoken language. Hence, the renewed centers of the Western world – Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem – were, in this romantic vision, to be the centers of a renewed Western world. Such was the poetry then, and it included the strong motif of a New Jerusalem in English thought. Strong to this day, I might add, what with *Jerusalem*, an English national anthem, still sung at soccer matches. Prog-rock fans will also flash on Emerson, Lake and Palmer's version.

For Jews and Christians alike, Zionism arose on the fertile basis of religious, especially messianic thinking that – in interpreting the early-19th century's promising signs, seeing in them the finger of God, anticipating the imminent fulfillment of prophecy – made the shift to "active messianism". Among the most important such Christian figures were Robert Haldane, Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, and Anthony Ashley-Cooper (Lord Shaftesbury). Haldane was a Scots evangelist whose work in Geneva in 1816 gave rise to the Swiss Revival (Réveil), with its Zionist thrusts. About the important writer and publisher Tonna, a friend of Moses Montefiore, just an anecdote: she took an early crack at coining 'Zionism' with the ringing phrase, "a movement, on the part of the Jews, Zionward" (1845). Lord Shaftesbury, in turn, was probably the most important Christian Zionist of the 19th century.

Among the Jewish religious thinkers was the Sephardic rabbi Yehuda Alkalai from Serbia. Not incidentally, Alkalai was the rabbi of both the grandfather and father of Theodor Herzl. Together with his Ashkenazi double, so to speak, the well-known rabbi Tsevi Hirsch Kalischer from Toruń, in Poland, Alkalai and Kalischer in the late 1830s made a breakthrough in thinking about the human role in their people's return to the cradle, to the

Land of Israel. The pronounced activism and fiery hope of these two men attracted not only other rabbis – if only to mention Joseph Natonek from Hungary, Jerusalem's Akiva Yosef Schlesinger (originally from today's Slovakia), and Eliasz Gutmacher from Greater Poland. No – the activism and fervent belief of Alkalai and Kalischer also appealed to people situated outside predominantly religious thought. Here we have, first of all, Leon Pinsker from Odessa, the author of 1882's *Autoemancipation!*, that surpassing work of Hovevei Zionism. That is, already 20 years before *Autoemancipation!,* back in 1862 Pinsker wrote favorably in a number of articles about Kalischer's Zionist masterpiece of that very year, *Derishat Zion* – seeking Zion, yearning for Zion, in English.

We also have Moses Hess from Germany, a socialist (once a close associate of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels), who at length cited *Derishat Zion* in his own Zionist masterpiece entitled *Rome and Jerusalem* from 1862. Among the many other secular Zionists inspired by Zionist rabbis, and indeed co-operating with them, we have Chaim Lorye from nearby Frankfurt am der Oder, and Adolf Cremieux from Paris. We also have David Gordon from Lyck, that is Ełk, in northern Poland, where he published *HaMagid* – the Preacher, in English – the most important Hebrew-language and Zionist magazine in the first decades of the second half of the 19th century. After all, Gordon energetically promoted Kalischer's thoughts in that weekly. And it was his publishing house in Ełk that published "Yearning for Zion". Rabbi Mohylever from Radom and Białystok in Poland, a man a generation younger than Kalischer, both avidly read *HaMagid* – and wrote for the magazine. Rabbi Mohylever was the co-leader of Hovevei Zion, about which more in a moment, and I'm guessing that some of you may also know Mohylever as the founding figure behind the Mizrachi movement, Merkaz ruchani – that is religious Zionism, with its youth-wing Bnei Akiva.

Any such sons here?

Put succinctly, Zionism – which in the mid-19th century transformed from a passive longing into concrete, funded projects (for both Christians and Jews) – went on to become a social movement in the early 1880s. We know this movement as Hovevei Zion, i.e. "the Lovers of Zion" – sometimes as "Hibbat Zion", i.e. "Love of Zion". It was Hovevei Zionism that gave birth to the First Aliyah, that of 1882 and the immediate years following. This movement was created around the above-mentioned figures. To give their names again: rabbis Alkalai and Kalischer – and Pinsker, Gordon, and rabbi Mohylever. The younger, latter three sit next to each other in the portrait of the participants at the famous – and first significant – international Zionist conference. It was held in Katowice, today's Poland, in November 1884 – such that we have the 140th anniversary ahead of us this year.

I hasten to add that a booklet of mine entitled *Birthing Zionism* – available in Open Access – focuses on the trio of Christian Zionists: George Eliot, Laurence Oliphant, and Rev. William Hechler who significantly contributed to the coalescence of Hovevei Zion. That work was originally published in Polish – and then in English by Fathom in London, part of BICOM, The Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre.

But yes, as a movement – not "merely" as an idea, not "just" as efforts, bids – Zionism as a *movement* was twice born in the 19th century, as Arthur Hertzberg once put it. First with Hovevei Zionism, and then again with Herzlian Zionism.

This portrayal I'm offering goes to show that – contrary to much of the discourse in historical writing on the topic – the term Zionism can be safely used to describe the period *before* Herzl. Although there is an allergy in some quarters to doing so. True, it wasn't until 1890 that the Viennese Hovev Nathan Birnbaum coined the term *Zionismus*. Before then, both Jews and Christians most often used the term "restorationism" – along with Hibbat Zion/Ahavat Zion, the latter also meaning "love for Zion". However, the *deus ex machina* myth regarding Herzl has deeply impacted the terminology – I'm thinking here of labels like "precursor" and "forerunner", the prefix "proto", etc. That rabbi Tsevi Hirsch

Kalischer is but a proto-Zionist, and even Mohylewer, who co-led the Hovevei movement, is merely a precursor. I my humble self reject that usage, as it simply perpetuates the myth that it all *really* began with *Der Judenstaat* in 1896. No, no. Just as there was gravity before Newton, not proto-gravity – there was Zionism before Herzl. Or, just as there was, say, homophobia before that term was coined the 50-some years ago…

Herzlian Zionists themselves knew this well. For instance, in 1902, Max Nordau, one of Herzl's closest collaborators, stated: "Zionism is a new word for a very old thing". Herzl himself used the terms Zionism/Zionist in reference to the decades before he published *The Jewish State*. For example, he labelled rabbi Mohylewer a Zionist. Just a few months after the rabbi's death in June 1898, at the Second Zionist Congress (in August), Herzl paid tribute to the man (with whom he had corresponded), saying the rabbi had been a Zionist since 1875. A year earlier at the *First* Zionist Congress, Herzl had also used the term 'Zionist' – in fact, "Christian Zionist" – about Henry Dunant, otherwise known to us as the founder of the Red Cross. Dunant's Zionist career had begun in the 1860s and remained strong into the 1870s.

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The tendency in much of the popular writing on early Zionism – whether in the press, in biographies of Herzl, or in compendia like Hertzberg's *The Zionist Idea* and especially the "renewed" edition by Gil Troy *The Zionist Ideas* – is to acknowledge a number of "forerunners", and then to respectfully dismiss their efforts as stillborn. The image created is that of quirky savants. Lone nuts, I might say. Not even trailblazers, inasmuch as the trails they laid out were purportedly totally overgrown by the time Herzl bounded upon the stage – hence they had to be blazed completely anew.

Let me share a few words about those trails, and then take up the Lone Nuts theory. What's striking is the continuity of approaches and tactics from Alkalai and Kalischer already in the late 1830s, to Herzl in the mid-1890s. This is, after all, precisely why Hovevei circles

at once rallied to Herzl already in 1896 – Lovers of Zion from Romania, Russia, Poland and Lithuania, Austrian Galicia – Vienna, Cologne. The similar pattern of approaches across the 19th century involved reaching out to the like-minded across national borders (that is, international coalition-building), courting wealthy potential patrons (Moses Montefiore, the Rothschild family, Baron Hirsch), pursuing press campaigns, publishing small-book-length Zionist appeals (Alkalai's *Harbinger of Good Tidings* from 1852, Kalischer's *Derishat Zion* from 1862, Pinsker's *Autoemancipation!* from 1882, Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* from 1896), organizing broad-based meetings vel conferences vel congresses, soliciting British support, and of course visiting the Porte in order to win a firman, that is, the Sultan's permission to take possession of a large tract of Palestine for Jewish settlement – the pursuit of a Charter. During the summer of 1867 rabbi Joseph Natonek met with the Grand Vizier in Istanbul precisely in this aim – as did the Christian Zionist Laurence Oliphant in May, 1879, before being granted an audience with the Sultan himself in April 1880. Sixteen years later in June 1896, Theodor Herzl, too, met with the Grand Vizier in Istanbul. So, a well-beaten path, though Herzl also failed to obtain a firman for the already venerable Zionist charter plan.

About the Lone Nuts theory, this is sheer nuts. Even in the period before Hovevei Zionism, what we in fact see is co-ordinated pan-European Zionist co-operation of a cross-sectional character. Socialist Zionists arm-in-arm with Zionist rabbis pursuing their shared aims vis-á-vis cultural Zionists, all the while closely followed by Christian Zionists, whom in turn the Jewish Zionists also followed.

The Swiss Calvinist Henry Dunant, whom I've already presented as an ardent Zionist, hailed from a high-brow milieu of Geneva-based Christian Zionists who led what was called the Swiss Awakening – triggered, as I mentioned, by Robert Haldane. One of them was Émile Guers, who circuited between London and Geneva, and happened to be in London in 1852 when Simon and Jacob Herzl's rabbi Yehuda Alkalai, then travelling across Western Europe trying to plant Zionist societies, was there. The Jewish Chronicle,

then the largest Jewish newspaper in the world, of course covered the story, describing the joint Jewish-Protestant effort in London, and the publication of Alkalai's latest Zionist pamphlet in both Hebrew and English – *Mevaser Tov/Harbinger of Good Tidings.* Guers wrote about the matter in the Swiss Protestant press, as well as in his book from 1856, "The Future of Israel", which of course focused on an Israel restored.

Interestingly, in 1867, fifteen years after Alkalai's efforts in London, the Jewish Chronicle reprinted the *entire* prospectus of Alkalai's Zionist society in follow-up to fresh Zionist news from Paris.

And rich news it was! Richer for us today, I think, than it was then. Whatever the case, the story was of the Hungarian rabbi I've mentioned, Joseph Natonek, operating as rabbi Kalischer's legate, joining forces with his pen-pal of several years Moses Hess (that's right!) in a bid to convince the central committee of the Alliance Israélite Universelle to expand beyond pro-Jewish advocacy and philanthropy, and pursue a "colonisation scheme" in Palestine. Hess himself (signing as *Moritz* Hess) described the whole course of Parisian events in The Jewish Chronicle, stressing that Natonek had been authorized by rabbi Kalischer to address the committee. Hess moreover credits rabbi Natonek with the success of having obtained written assurances from the Alliance's central committee, its head Alphons Crémieux, along with the chief rabbi of France, Lazare Isidor, and the philanthropist Albert Cohn that steps would be taken to advance the settlement plan. Indeed, Natonek and Hess's insistence on a policy-pivot led to the founding three years later in 1870 of the agricultural school at Mikveh Israel, near Jaffa.

And as we already know, Natonek then left Paris for… Istanbul. His visit there with the Grand Vizier was widely reported, including in David Gordon's HaMagid, in an article written by… ***dana!*** rabbi Yehuda Alkalai of Zemun, Serbia.

Examples of the dense web of interconnections between Zionists in the period preceding not only Herzl, but Hovevei Zion, are too many to recount this evening, but let me list just

a few more. Like rabbi Kalischer monitoring with approval the Zionist efforts of Henry Dunant in 1868. Like, to repeat, Pinsker in Ukraine and Hess in France writing in 1862 about Kalischer's "Yearning for Zion", published that year. Rabbi Professor David Kaufmann of Budapest publishing in 1877 a sparkling tract on George Eliot's Zionist novel *Daniel Deronda*. Peretz Smolenskin and Oliphant meeting in Vienna in the spring of 1882, and David Gordon publishing an interview with Oliphant in HaMagid just weeks later. And so on. Zemun, Serbia (for nearly a century now, a district of Belgrade) – London – Toruń – Paris – Geneva – Frankfurt am der Oder – Ełk/Lyck – Białystok – Budapest – Odessa – Vienna – Jerusalem – Bratislava… All these cities and more were knitted together by the energetic co-operation of mid-19th-century Zionists of all stripes.

Lone nuts, pshaw!

Their achievements are nonetheless often characterized as "stillborn". Well, the ungenerous might say that Herzl's Zionism was also stillborn. By 1903-04, it was plain to all too many Zionists that his leadership had floundered. Try as he might to pull a rabbit out of his hat, he no longer could. Following his premature death – he was only 44 – the Zionist movement as such largely dried up. Of course, the Zionist Organization continued to exist, the Congresses continued to be held, but mass defections, witherings away, and general apathy plagued things to a point where in the period prior to the outbreak of the First World War one may speak of generals without armies. David Ben-Gurion, who settled in Eretz Izrael in 1906 as part of the otherwise seminal Second Aliyah, opined that 9 of 10 settlers in his early years in Ottoman Palestine gave up and left for happier climes. My point here is that Zionism was not just twice-born, as I stated earlier about the 19th century, but thrice born – and we might add that the third time's a charm. For it wasn't until Nahum Sokolow, Moses Gaster, and Chaim Weizman co-fathered the Balfour Declaration with British Christian Zionists that the ball really got rolling. And this time didn't stop.

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Back to my book, I do toy with producing an expanded version one day. But for the time being, I really haven't got much new to add. I mean, since publication I've found a May, 1891 front page story on the Blackstone Memorial in a leading Hamburg newspaper. And I've discovered that Ahad Ha'am was reading about and commenting on the Lovers of Zion Petition while shipboard that same May on his way from Jaffa to Odessa. Again, but Herzl in Vienna, writing for the Neue Freie Presse, didn't have access to the news??? I've also found numerous fascinating articles in newspapers from Galicia – for instance, several reviews of *Der Judenstaat* where the topic of Zionism is introduced by recounting the impact of George Eliot and Laurence Oliphant. Additionally, these articles all treat Dreyfus as guilty, and do not link his trial to Herzl's Zionism in any way. On the contrary, they raise the case of Karl Lueger as being causative, Lueger being the leader of the antisemitic party (the Christian Socials) that won municipal elections in Vienna in the early spring of 1895.

Anyway, while these examples do strengthen several of my arguments, they do so rather negligibly.

My strong hunch is that truly rewarding research concerns the career of Oswald Boxer, Herzl's dear friend who died in Brazil while laying plans to found a Jewish colony there. Boxer had been living here in Berlin since 1885 when he left for Brazil on a well-backed mission in the spring of 1891. Also a journalist, he wrote for three German dailies, and focused on European diplomatic news. It seems all but certain to me that he was writing about the Jewish refugee crisis in 1891, when Russian Jews were fleeing from Moscow to Germany in large numbers. Given his decision to try and found an agricultural colony for them in Brazil, Boxer must have been describing those events, both in his newspapers – and perhaps privately in letters to "Theo", as he addressed Herzl in the couple of letters I know thanks to the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem. How easily one imagines Boxer

weighing the relative advantages of Baron Hirsch's plan for Argentina and that for Brazil, with which he involved himself, vis-à-vis the Palestinian plans of the Blackstone Memorial and the Lovers of Zion Petition. If so, that would put the icing on the cake. This is the stone I've left unturned.

Maybe one of you will do that research, and I can cite you in an expanded edition?

Thank you all for your attention – I now turn things over to Professor Lehnstaedt, eager for an interesting discussion with you.