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# Marcus Kalisch: the life and eclipse of an extraordinary Victorian\*

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EDWARD BREUER

The challenge in writing a biographical essay on Marcus Kalisch is not a dearth of material or a question of historical importance. There exists a great deal of material regarding Kalisch's life, and judged by the standards of mid-Victorian Anglo-Jewry, he was easily the most learned and prolific Jewish scholar of his era. His writings were known to both Jews and the broader British public, and Kalisch did not lack for important personal connections, ranging from the Rothschilds to leading churchmen and intellectuals. The challenge, really, is to explain why this extraordinary scholar has been largely forgotten in the annals of Anglo-Jewish history.

\* \* \*

Marcus Kalisch was born in Treptow an der Rega (today Trzebiatów, Poland) on 16 May 1825, a small rural community in the Pomeranian region of Prussia.<sup>1</sup> His family relocated to Berlin at some point in the 1830s, where his father was listed as a tobacco merchant, although he also served as a *hazan* and *shochet* in Ipswich in the 1840s while the family

1 Some biographical entries give the year of birth as 1828, and his naturalization papers of January 1862 list his age as 33; however, his gravestone in Willesden Cemetery and other sources indicate 1825 as his year of birth. The earlier year is correct: only in 1825 do his Hebrew and Gregorian birthdays align. That date is also attested in his *Abiturzeugniss* (high school record) in Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin, Sammlungen des Berlinischen Gymnasiums zum Grauen Kloster (Streitsche Stiftung), GKI Archiv, VI/4/88, S. 155; and in his marriage registration, Hessisches Staatsarchiv Marburg, Heiratsregister (Trauungsbuch) der Freien Stadt Frankfurt. Mit Namensverzeichnissen, auswärtigen Trauungen und Ehescheidungen 1862 (ISG Frankfurt am Main Best. STA 11/13), 68–9. His naturalization papers are in The National Archives, Kew, HO/1/103/3717.

\* This paper owes much to the director and archivists of The Rothschild Archive, London: Melanie Aspey, Justin Cavernelis-Frost, and Natalie Attwood. I wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance and guidance they provided over many years and visits.

remained behind; Kalisch's mother died in Berlin in 1841.<sup>2</sup> The family was thoroughly traditional and until his early twenties he entertained the notion of becoming a rabbi.<sup>3</sup> His education, in any event, was double-tracked: while working towards his Abitur certificate from the venerable Gymnasium zum Grauen Klosters in 1844, he also engaged in rabbinic text-study, at least partly at the Talmud-Vereins under the auspices of Rabbi Jacob Oettinger, the acting Chief Rabbi and the foremost rabbinic scholar of Berlin.<sup>4</sup> Kalisch excelled at the Gymnasium, where in addition to a classical humanistic education suffused with Greek and Latin he also studied French, Italian, and English, and he matriculated with the intention of studying "Philology and Jewish Theology".<sup>5</sup> Towards this end Kalisch enrolled in the university in Berlin and studied classical philology and oriental languages with some of the leading scholars of the generation.<sup>6</sup> He became disenchanted with the traditional study of the Talmud and gave up on a career as a rabbi, while at the same time appearing intrigued by the figure of Aaron Bernstein, an early reform-minded Jewish writer then active in Berlin.<sup>7</sup> He received his doctorate from the university in Halle in April 1847 with a dissertation on an Arabic text of Maimonides's thirteen principles of faith.<sup>8</sup>

As a Jew, Kalisch had trouble securing a teaching position at a Gym-

2 Kalisch's father, Moses, was born in Czerniejewo, a town in the Posen region; little is known about his mother. Other than Marcus, the Kalisches had another son and daughter. See n.1 and Jacob Jacobson, *Die Judenbürgerbücher der Stadt Berlin 1809–1851* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1962), 325. Moses was also in England in the mid-1830s for purposes unknown. On Moses' connection to Ipswich, see Robert Halliday and Bernard Susser, "The Ipswich Jewish Community in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 40 (2002): 157.

3 See Beno Pillitz, "Kalisch M. Hat Levele", *Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat Évkönyv* 28 (1909): 237, 241.

4 Henry Morais, *Eminent Israelites of the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: E. Stern, 1880), 171, wrote that Kalisch had studied "at the Rabbinical Institute", and the only body of that sort in the 1840s was the Talmud-Vereins. Oettinger was a traditional figure, but he ended up teaching an extraordinary group of bright and talented young men with broader scholarly horizons, including Solomon Munk, David Cassel, and Michael Friedlander.

5 See n. 1. His *Abiturzeugnis* notes his exemption from oral examinations on account of his excellent written exams.

6 These included August Boeckh (Classics and philology), Karl Lachmann (classical and German philology), Julius Petermann (Semitic languages), Franz Benary (Semitics and Bible), Ernst Hengstenberg (Old Testament Studies), and Johann Vatke (Old Testament Theology).

7 Pillitz, "Kalisch M. Hat Levele", 233.

8 *Ibid.*, 241.

nasium. Continental Europe, meanwhile, was soon swept with revolutionary ferment, and as the events of 1848 buffeted Prussia, he came to experience them personally. In a letter to a Hungarian friend, Kalisch described himself as something of a reactionary, eschewing “street democracy” in favour of a political process and an elected assembly, and voicing his opinions in the press. But when the political process reached a stalemate, and the Hohenzollern ruler unilaterally imposed a monarchist constitution in December of that year, Kalisch protested and spoke out. What happened next is unclear, but he promptly left Berlin at the end of May 1849.<sup>9</sup>

Kalisch had studied English for six years and long appreciated England’s political culture and its relative openness, and as such, it became a natural destination.<sup>10</sup> At mid-century, England was attracting Jews from German and Habsburg lands, including a small cadre who arrived with serious rabbinic and academic training, and formed a new Anglo-Jewish intelligentsia.<sup>11</sup> Settling in London, Kalisch struggled with the “unruly chaos of this materialistic cosmopolitan city” but found his footing quickly. Within weeks he secured a position as secretary to Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler as well as tutor to his children.<sup>12</sup> From October 1849 he also served as the British correspondent for the liberal *National-Zeitung*, one of Berlin’s largest-circulation newspapers. Less than a year after his arrival Kalisch added one more family to his roster of private tutoring: the children of Lionel and Charlotte de Rothschild, and soon afterwards the daughters of Anthony and Louisa. Lionel sought to induce Kalisch to devote more hours to that family, a move that the young émigré initially resisted.<sup>13</sup> But not for long: by 1853, he was in the full-time employ of the Rothschilds.

9 Ibid., 242.

10 Kalisch was familiar with the writings of Disraeli and Dickens and the social and political realities that informed their work; *ibid.*, 231–2. Although his father served at the time in a congregational role in Ipswich, Kalisch’s arrival incurred his father’s disapproval and does not appear to be a reason for emigration; *ibid.*, 243.

11 The educated and learned émigrés arriving between the late 1830s and the 1850s included Abraham Benisch, Emanuel Deutsch, Leopold Dukes, Zvi Hirsch Edelman, Gustav Gottheil, Louis Loewe, Albert Löwy, Solomon Schiller-Szinessy, Tobias Theodores, and Joseph Zedner. To this group should be added learned figures from Eastern Europe like Herschell Filipowski.

12 Pillitz, “Kalisch M. Hat Levele”, 239, 243–4, 249. Kalisch tutored the three Adler daughters in French and German literature; it is unclear what he taught the boys.

13 Ibid., 244.

The decades-long relationship that developed between Kalisch and the Rothschild family had many dimensions. The education he provided was broad and expansive, as Anthony and Louisa's daughter, Constance, much later recalled: "Undaunted by our extreme youth – I was about eight, and my sister under seven – our preceptor undertook the task and proceeded to teach us the Hebrew alphabet. I can remember sitting on the ground and writing out Hebrew verbs on large sheets of paper. We learnt not only Hebrew, but a great many other things besides from this extraordinary young student, all aflame with his passion for political and religious freedom and the love of fine literature."<sup>14</sup> Her journal entries of the 1850s, in fact, record that beyond Hebrew, German, and readings in Genesis and Goethe, Kalisch instructed the sisters in philosophy, the art of good conversation, and more.<sup>15</sup> These journals also suggest that Kalisch often stayed with the Rothschilds at their Buckinghamshire estates, and played and dined with his charges, who affectionately tagged him with various nicknames.

Kalisch's role extended beyond tutoring as he became something of an in-house Jewish counsellor to the Rothschilds, called on to affix the *mezuzot* at the 1855 consecration of Mentmore Towers,<sup>16</sup> and reciting the Passover Haggadah for the extended family at the home of Lionel and Charlotte.<sup>17</sup> Kalisch assisted Charlotte with her *Addresses for Young Children* (1859) and with the second volume (1867), which he also translated into German.<sup>18</sup> He also advised Constance and Annie on their *History and Literature of the*

14 Constance Battersea, *Reminiscences* (London: Macmillan, 1923), 30. Kalisch began tutoring Constance and her younger sister Annie in the late winter of 1851; see the journals of Louisa de Rothschild in the British Library, Battersea Papers, Add. MS 47952, vol. XLIII, p. 41.

15 See typescript copy of selections of the journals in The Rothschild Archive, London (hereafter, RAL) 000/297/3. Some journal entries are also cited by Constance's cousin Lucy Cohen, *Lady de Rothschild and her Daughters 1821–1931* (London: John Murray, 1935), 79–81.

16 This was Mayer de Rothschild's estate in the Vale of Aylesbury; see Louis Loewe, ed., *The Diaries of Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore*, 2 vols. (London: Griffith, 1890), vol. 2, 57–8; one can only presume (hope?) that Kalisch was not tasked with affixing *mezuzot* to all Mentmore's entrances and 80 rooms, as Jewish practice would dictate.

17 Battersea, *Reminiscences*, 22.

18 The preface to the first volume acknowledged "the obligations of the writer to the learned Dr. Kalisch, whose great work has been frequently consulted, and whose kind advice has been unweariedly given, and gratefully accepted, as the best assistance and encouragement". The German translation appeared as *Sabbath und Festreden . . . Zweiter Band* (Frankfurt: Steng, 1868). Charlotte's youngest daughter, Evelina, died as the second volume was nearing completion, and Kalisch encouraged Charlotte to add the final chapter memorializing her. He also spoke at the *shiva*; see Cohen, *Lady de Rothschild*, 127.

Israelites.<sup>19</sup> Kalisch, it bears adding, served as a Jewish presence in another, more sensitive manner: his death in 1885 prompted Constance, who had married an Anglican, to write: “I have often felt when much tempted to enter another faith that the very fact of his existence would prevent me from doing so”.<sup>20</sup>

The Rothschilds, for their part, supported Kalisch’s publications, beginning with the first volume of his English commentary on the Bible.<sup>21</sup> When Kalisch published a Hebrew grammar, Nathaniel (Lionel and Charlotte’s eldest son) presented copies to his Cambridge dons in the hopes of having them recommend the book to their students.<sup>22</sup> And there were yet other literary aspects to their relationship: possessing a poetic bent, Kalisch penned German poems for members of the Rothschild family,<sup>23</sup> and in 1860 he delivered public lectures on English literature in Aston Clinton and Mentmore, a neighbourly gesture to the villagers living around the family estates.<sup>24</sup>

Due to the enduring personal connection, the Rothschild family letters provide an unusually detailed view of Kalisch’s personal life. News of his engagement to Clara Stern of Frankfurt in 1861 – a match apparently made by one of Charlotte’s aunts – was shared among family members, not without some good-natured teasing. Kalisch’s return trip to Frankfurt prompted Charlotte to write touchingly about her hope for his marital happiness, and other letters tracked his frustration with the German bureaucracy in registering the wedding.<sup>25</sup> Subsequent letters

19 C. and A. De Rothschild, *The History and Literature of the Israelites* (London: Longmans, 1870); Kalisch is mentioned alongside others in the Preface, but he is virtually the only scholar cited in the section on the Pentateuch, and Constance later singled him out for his role; see Battersea, *Reminiscences*, 410; Cohen, *Lady de Rothschild*, 113–14.

20 Cohen, *Lady de Rothschild*, 116, quoting Constance’s journal (italics in Cohen).

21 *Jewish Chronicle* (hereafter, JC), 28 Jan. 1853. The Rothschild support for this project might well have been a factor in Kalisch’s moving to their full-time employ.

22 See the letters of Nathaniel de Rothschild from March 1862, RAL 000/12.

23 Three of these, written in 1854 for the birthdays of Charlotte, Louisa, and Constance, are preserved in the Jewish Museum, London (C 2001.97.3-5); a fourth, written for Leopold (Lionel and Charlotte’s youngest son) is preserved in Charlotte’s *Commonplace Book*, RAL 000/1063.

24 Marcus Kalisch, *The Life and Writings of Oliver Goldsmith: Two Lectures Delivered to a Village Audience* (London: Longmans, 1860). On the circumstances of these lectures, see Israel Abrahams, *By Paths in Hebraic Bookland* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1920), 334–6. Kalisch also served as an occasional and unofficial secretary for Lionel on certain public matters, e.g. Lionel’s position on the board of the Palestine Exploration Fund, London; see PEF/1865 no. 1.48.

25 Letters of 6 Aug., 13 Nov., and 14 Dec. 1861, RAL 000/84; undated letter from

record that Lionel served as godfather to Kalisch's son Alfred, and that his daughter was named after Constance.<sup>26</sup> Charlotte's letters recorded the Kalisches' comings and goings, their illnesses and vacations. They even yield a touchingly human if awkward moment when the Rothschilds, struggling to keep the dinner guests at Evelina's wedding to a hundred, have the "unpleasant task" of informing Kalisch that his wife could not be included.<sup>27</sup>

Kalisch maintained a connection with the male Rothschilds even as they went off in turn to study at Cambridge. His visits there were ostensibly aimed at providing ongoing religious instruction, which justified the brothers' absence from chapel, although the trips seemed to be largely social.<sup>28</sup> With Leopold, however, Kalisch took on an academic role when the young Rothschild, and more importantly his parents, fretted about his progress as the Classical tripos (the final examinations) drew close.<sup>29</sup> Leopold asked his parents to arrange for Kalisch's coaching, and he arrived in Cambridge within weeks.<sup>30</sup> Kalisch stayed for a month and left early

Nathaniel, Aug. 1861, RAL 000/12; see also letter of 1 Aug. 1864, RAL 000/84. In the letter of 13 Nov. 1861 Charlotte wrote: "The little man has been so upright and honorable, so self-denying and so devoted throughout life, that he really deserves the fullest measure of joy and happiness and I only hope that his poetic fancy may be satisfied and pleased with the bright star selected by our amiable aunt to shed radiance over his path. I shall be very anxious to hear from him or of him". Note the playful pun on the fiancée's name: *stern* is German for star. The amiable aunt seems to be Henriette Montefiore, the Frankfurt-born and raised daughter of Mayer Amschel Rothschild. The bureaucratic obstacles may have prompted Kalisch's application for naturalization in January 1862, which Lionel attested and signed; see n. 1 above.

26 Letters of 11 July 1864, 7 Aug. 1866, RAL 000/84. Kalisch's son Alfred may well have been named after Lionel and Charlotte's son, to whom he was apparently close; see Battersea, *Reminiscences*, 31.

27 Letter of 22 May 1865, RAL 000/84. *The Times*, 8 and 10 June 1865, reported erroneously that Kalisch assisted the Chief Rabbi in performing the ceremony.

28 The visits were scheduled around performances of the Amateur Drama Club; see undated letters of Nathaniel, RAL 000/12 (formerly RFam C/3/78, 87, 90, 129), and of Alfred, 15 Aug. 1861 (1862?), 12 Feb. 1862, RAL 000/40. Kalisch himself saw the visits as an opportunity for scholarly contact. On 10 March 1864, Charlotte wrote: "The little Doctor has just been here and giving me a delightful account of his visit to Cambridge. Of course what pleased and interested him the most was the reception he received at the hands of the learned world"; RAL 000/84.

29 Charlotte's letters to Leopold, 1, 13, 25, and 28 Nov. 1864, and the rising level of anxiety in letters of 23 May 1866 (in which she complained that "you allude only to amusements and never to studies") and finally 1 and 15 Nov. 1866, RAL 000/84.

30 Lionel to Leopold, 21 Nov. 1866, RAL 000/13; Charlotte to Leopold, c. 10–16 and 20, 22, 24, 27, 28, 29 Dec. 1866, RAL 000/84. While Kalisch was in Cambridge, Charlotte fretted

only because his wife fell ill. Ever anxious, Charlotte prodded Leopold to find someone “to replace, if possible, the most excellent and encouraging tutor who has just left your side”.<sup>31</sup>

It is not surprising that among all the personages, aristocrats, and senior government officials who engaged the Rothschilds, the name Kalisch hardly registered. And yet, this diminutive German Jew clearly enjoyed a genuine friendship with the family. When he died, Constance wrote in her diary: “Distinguished, learned, erudite scholar that he was, to us he was a charming, delightful companion and I shall never forget how much I owed him”.<sup>32</sup> “Ours”, she wrote years later, “was a lasting and warm friendship until his death. Many cherished memories of old days are connected with his name”.<sup>33</sup>

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In his first years in England Kalisch delivered occasional sermons and lectures before Jewish audiences; coming at a time when Anglo-Jewish figures bemoaned the dearth of Jewish letters and learning, his contribution was noted and appreciated.<sup>34</sup> He also garnered a reputation as a scholar who could be profitably consulted, as evident in a lengthy letter to Benjamin Disraeli responding to the latter’s questions about Job and Psalms.<sup>35</sup> In 1853, his scholarly ambitions came to public notice when he announced his intention to produce an English commentary on the Bible and wrote to the two Jewish weeklies explaining the nature and guiding principles of his work-in-progress.<sup>36</sup> The new Pentateuch would include the Hebrew text, an English translation (essentially a

about his needs and wellbeing, lauded his kindness and geniality, and expressed relief at the positive reports she was receiving.

31 Charlotte to Leopold, 11 Jan. 1867, RAL 000/84. Charlotte’s letters also expressed concern for Clara Kalisch, whose convalescence she monitored. In the end, Leopold earned an honour’s degree, but only Third class, second to last; see J. R. Tanner, *The Historical Register of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917), 628.

32 Cohen, *Lady de Rothschild*, 116.

33 Battersea, *Reminiscences*, 31.

34 He lectured in Birmingham and at the New Synagogue in London in 1851, the latter published as *Hegyon Emet . . . Two Lectures* (London: Shaw, 1853), and reviewed in the *Hebrew Observer*, 4 March 1853, the *JC*, 25 Feb. 1853, 13 and 27 May. He also lectured at Sussex Hall, London (the popular name of the Jews’ and General Literary and Scientific Institution) in February 1856.

35 Kalisch to Disraeli, 27 Jan. 1854, Dep. Hughenden 133/1, fols. 3–7.

36 The initial announcements came in a front-page, lead article in the *JC*, 28 Jan. 1853, and a brief notice in the *Hebrew Observer*, 4 Feb. 1853.

revision of the Anglican version), and what he called a philological-historical commentary. This English commentary was a remarkable scholarly undertaking, not only by Anglo-Jewish standards but even those of contemporary German-Jewish Bibles.<sup>37</sup> Kalisch said he would approach the history of the Israelites as “an integral part of ancient history”, including a comparison of biblical laws to the laws of other nations that aimed to demonstrate their “natural and historical relation to the mental culture of the ancient world”. Although his work included classical literature, Semitic languages, and even Christian commentaries, Kalisch insisted that his own commentary would “rest on a strictly positive Jewish basis”. This, he explained, meant drawing a line round new critical approaches to Scripture then prevalent among German scholars. The biblical text would be subject to critical analysis only “where it has already been done or prepared by recognized Jewish authorities”; and, alluding to questions regarding the historical composition of the Pentateuch, he wrote that “the modern sceptical hyper-criticism will only be mentioned in order to be combated, if possible, on its own ground, and with its own weapons”. His ultimate hope, however, was that his commentary would overcome the fact that Jews were “accustomed to regard Judaism as something foreign to, and unconnected with, our modern culture”. Such a Judaism had “lost its hold on many hearts, and threatens to be entirely estranged from their minds”.<sup>38</sup>

The first volume of *A Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament*, on Exodus, appeared in 1855.<sup>39</sup> At over 600 pages, it was an impressive work that made good on his promise. Kalisch drew on Jewish, classical, and Christian sources from late antiquity, historical and archaeological evidence, medieval and modern Jewish exegesis, and frequently referred to the best of nineteenth-century German-Protestant scholarship. He utilized contemporary advances in the historical and philological study of the Hebrew Bible, but sought balance: modern criticism, he averred, “has been pursued with one-sided rigour; the desire of consistency

37 In England, the most sophisticated Bible commentary to this point was *The Sacred Scriptures in Hebrew and English* (London: Samuel Bagster, 1844) by Morris Raphall, David A. De Sola, and I. L. Lindenthal; only Genesis was published. With regard to German-Jewish Pentateuchs, the most extensive commentaries were Salomon Herxheimer, *Der Pentateuch; oder, die fünf Bücher Mose's* (Berlin: Lewent, 1840–41), and Ludwig Philippson, *Die Israelitische Bibel: Der Pentateuch* (Leipzig: Baumgartner, 1844).

38 Kalisch, letters to *Hebrew Observer* and *JC*, 18 Feb. 1853.

39 His letters to the *JC* explained that the Genesis commentary published in 1844 (see n. 37 above) was still widely available and presented a “similar point of view”.

has led to extremes. The treasures of the old, especially the Jewish commentators, were neglected; the positive basis was deserted; every traditional conception was rejected". He, by contrast, "tried to produce an equilibrium between the faith of former ages and the science of our century".<sup>40</sup> The unity of the book of Exodus had been questioned "by that school of Biblical critics which dismembers the sacred writings . . . but even more moderate interpreters believe that our book is disfigured by spurious interpolations."<sup>41</sup> The *Commentary* sought to refute such claims and to assert "*the completest harmony in all parts of Exodus*".<sup>42</sup>

Kalisch also published an abridged edition for "the general reader" that omitted the Hebrew text and the linguistically technical parts of the commentary.<sup>43</sup> In this edition, he cast his *Commentary* as "perfectly unsectarian", a work which "does not labour to defend the doctrines of any particular creed"; it was, rather, a means of "reconciling the conflicting opinions, and of promoting harmony and true brotherly love among the different sects of society".<sup>44</sup> Kalisch was rewarded for his efforts by appreciative reviews in some widely read general and Anglican weeklies.<sup>45</sup> His erudition, combined with his rejection of biblical criticism, fitted well with the kind of learned religious conservatism then favoured by English churchmen and scholars.<sup>46</sup>

For reasons that soon become clear, Kalisch decided to include a commentary to Genesis after all, another hefty tome that appeared in 1858.<sup>47</sup> The general introduction to this volume addressed a highly topical

40 *A Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament with a New Translation: Exodus* (London: Longmans, 1855), iv.

41 *Ibid.*, x. For examples of his responses to critical comments see *Commentary on Exodus* 6:26, 11:1, 12:1 (introductory essay, p. 187), 13:2, 21:1 (p. 386), 24:1, 25:1 (intro., pp. 483, 499) 28:30.

42 *Ibid.* (italics in original).

43 This English Edition, as the title page had it, was also a considerable tome of over 450 pages. The editions were published simultaneously, and the dual format was retained for all subsequent volumes.

44 *Ibid.*, English Edition, v.

45 Reviews appeared in *The Athenaeum*, *Literary Gazette*, *The Leader*, *Journal of Sacred Literature*, and in the *JC*.

46 For a broader treatment of the English context see Edward Breuer, "Community and Controversy: Jews, Anglicans and Biblical Criticism in Mid-Victorian England", *AJS Review* (forthcoming).

47 *A Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament with a New Translation: Genesis* (London: Longmans, 1858). On his initial decision to skip the Genesis volume, see nn. 37, 39 above.

issue in mid-Victorian England, namely the relationship of Scripture and the sciences. Kalisch rejected the assertion that Scripture and science inhabited separate realms that yielded no points of contact, and he dismissed attempts to reconcile the Bible and the sciences on literary or substantive grounds. Instead, he argued that the Bible reflected the limited knowledge of the natural world prevalent in antiquity, and had to be interpreted as such; the value of Scripture, in his view, rested on its spiritual and moral aims.<sup>48</sup>

Kalisch did not explicitly raise the issue of biblical criticism, and his call to set aside “preconceived theory” and draw conclusions with “unreserved frankness” were assumed to accord with the scholarly parameters of his first volume.<sup>49</sup> But the commentary itself offered something new and potentially contentious. The reader could see this early on when Kalisch discussed the differences in the creation narratives in Genesis 1 and 2–3: “The second account has, then, been composed with clear consciousness after, and with reference to, the first; the author of the Pentateuch added to an ancient document on the creation, the history of man’s disobedience, and its consequences. . . . He did not reject indiscriminately all former historical documents; but he arranged, revised, and completed them.”<sup>50</sup> Elsewhere, he referred to these texts as “the account of the Elohist, in contradistinction to that of the Jehovist or the author of the Pentateuch”.<sup>51</sup> The story of Noah provided another example. The narrative, it had long been noted, contained a discrepancy between Genesis 6:19–20, instructing Noah to take one pair of every species, and Genesis 7:2–3, telling him to take seven sets of “clean” animals and one pair of an “unclean” species. Dismissing traditional solutions as “foster[ing] sophistry and perverse reasoning”, Kalisch offered a different approach:

The author of the Pentateuch, or the Jehovist, used . . . an old and venerable document, or that of the Elohist, and he based his immortal work upon it; but he enlarged it, wherever he believed that the context required an amplification . . . The beginning of the seventh chapter is such a supplementary addition of the Jehovist. In the time of the earlier Elohist the system of sacrifices was not yet developed . . . the difference between clean and unclean animals was not yet established. The Elohist was, therefore, satisfied with one pair of every species; his only end was the preservation

48 *Ibid.*, 1–2, 38–52.

49 *Ibid.*, iii.

50 *Ibid.*, 84–5.

51 *Ibid.*, 161.

of the animal kingdom . . . But the Jehovist deemed a thank-offering after the flood indispensable . . . The Jehovist, therefore, prudently introduced the significant number of seven pairs.<sup>52</sup>

It is important to stress that in Kalisch's view, this approach was not about finding contradictions or competing voices in the Pentateuch: "The Jehovist designed full harmony with the Elohist, and he has preserved it in all other respects".<sup>53</sup> The Elohist account provided "a perfect history of the deluge. But the Scriptures do not intend to give mere history. They desire to make the facts subservient to ideas . . . and thus to spiritualise the facts. And this task is frequently performed by the Jehovist . . . He treats the events as a base for a spiritual edifice. He infuses into the mute materials the living breath of religion. And this is the advance which the Pentateuch shows within its own pages . . . It is no dead letter; it admits of a more and more spiritual acceptance."<sup>54</sup> Here and in another dozen sections of Genesis, Kalisch employed the supplementary hypothesis, a critical view then regnant in German lands that posited the existence of a foundational document later supplemented to form what we know as the Pentateuch.<sup>55</sup>

The ideas that Kalisch introduced had hardly been voiced in England, and this was certainly the first English commentary to incorporate this kind of historical-literary criticism. In the British Isles, biblical criticism had long been viewed as a distinctly German endeavour, often dismissed as a form of "German rationalism". Although there had been English Nonconformists who had recently broached such notions, they were overwhelming rejected by Britons of all religious stripes.<sup>56</sup> It is unclear why Kalisch had shifted his view, but the fact of his new critical stance was clear to all: "Since his Exodus", one British periodical wrote, "Dr. Kalisch has materially altered his 'stand-point' as an interpreter. His conception of the Pentateuch – its authorship, its historical character, and its objects – is not what it was when he issued his commentary on Exodus."<sup>57</sup> Another journal noted that what he had done "equals anything we have seen in

52 Ibid., 184.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., 184–5.

55 See Thomas Römer, "Higher Criticism": The Historical and Literary Approach – With Special Reference to the Pentateuch", in Magne Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation*, vol. 3, pt. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 410–14.

56 The only English Bible scholar to embrace these ideas, in 1856, was Samuel Davidson; see John Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1984), 170–208.

57 *The Nonconformist*, 9 Feb. 1859, 116.

German productions”, and wondered about the firmness of his religious commitments.<sup>58</sup> But in the confessional politics of the moment, what Kalisch wrote was a matter for the Jews to deal with; Anglicans and Nonconformists disapproved and left it at that.

Anglo-Jews, however, were not eager to address the issue. Members of the German-trained Anglo-Jewish intelligentsia were cognizant of contemporary critical approaches to the Bible, and in 1857 two of them explicitly disparaged Abraham Geiger’s use of textual-historical criticism.<sup>59</sup> What Kalisch had now written set him on a par with some of the most advanced critical scholars on the Continent, and his claims were surely more objectionable than Geiger’s. And yet, when Leopold Dukes penned two English reviews of Kalisch’s Genesis commentary he praised the work – but completely ignored the critical notions that Kalisch had articulated.<sup>60</sup> No Anglo-Jew, in fact, is known to have commented directly on Kalisch’s notions on the composition of Genesis. Rather than applaud, criticize, or weigh the value of his claims, they chose to say nothing.

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Before proceeding to the commentary on Leviticus, Kalisch published a grammar of biblical Hebrew which appeared in three parts in 1862–63.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, the issue of biblical criticism became the subject of two highly public and voluble controversies concerning the publication of *Essays and Reviews* (1860) and the first volume of Bishop John Colenso’s *The Pentateuch and Joshua Critically Examined* (1862). The two books were altogether different, but what they had in common was an openness to the critically minded study of the Bible and a challenge to Anglican conservatism. Tens of thousands of copies were sold. Anglican officials, public intellectuals, and laymen struck back with alarm and hostility, expressing their opposition in formal church proceedings and in hundreds of treatises and essays, not to mention incessant coverage in weekly and daily

58 *North British Review* (Nov. 1858): 565. See also reviews in *The Athenaeum*, 24 July 1858, 108–9; *Westminster Review* (Oct. 1858): 555.

59 On the criticism of Abraham Benisch and Leopold Dukes, see Breuer, “Community and Controversy”.

60 Leopold Dukes, reviews, *JC*, 11 June 1858, 206; *Hebrew Review* (1860), 653–5, 670–71, 697–702, 714–18.

61 *A Hebrew Grammar with Exercises*, 2 vols (1862–63), and *The Key to the Exercises* (London: Longmans, 1863); by 1885, this grammar was selling well and ran to three editions and five printings.

papers.<sup>62</sup> This included the *Jewish Chronicle*, which covered the public contretemps and the church trials in editorials, opinions pieces, letters, and notices. Most notably, this Jewish weekly published a fourteen-part critique of Colenso's book.<sup>63</sup>

Kalisch followed all this with keen interest, although he initially chose to comment anonymously. Only a week after the publication of Colenso's first volume *The Spectator* ran a book review, unsigned as were all such reviews. Three months earlier Kalisch had told Charlotte de Rothschild that the editor had commissioned him to contribute weekly articles, and it appears that this review of Colenso was almost certainly his.<sup>64</sup> First, it was markedly different from other early responses to Colenso's work in that it was not a Christian review in any sense: it disregarded the issue of Church authority or the right to interpretative freedom, and never referred to Christian teachings, even in the manner of liberal theologians. Second, this review did not object to Colenso's critical perspective *per se* but on account of its failure to consider the Bible in the light of the historical development of the ancient Hebrews and their traditions. The reviewer suggested that Colenso's critical arguments regarding the "unhistorical nature" of the Pentateuch missed a broader truth. "The Pentateuch in its present form does not represent contemporary history, but a body of tradition and legislation edited at a time when the first outlines of the Mosaic legislation had developed . . . For we are convinced on their own evidence that the traditions of the Exodus are the traditions of the early discipline of a tribe not yet matured into a nation at all, but undergoing the divine education requisite for a nation that was intended to teach all other nations to know God." The review urged that the biblical record be seen as "a kind of historical testimony which multiplies a hundredfold our faith, not only in the living will of God, but in the general outlines of the domestic, social, and political destiny in which Hebrew Tradition reported to Hebrew History that that will had been seen".<sup>65</sup> In claiming the

62 See Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism*, 209–237; Josef Altholz, *Anatomy of a Controversy* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994); Victor Shea and William Whitla, eds., *Essays and Reviews: The 1860 Text and its Reading* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); Peter Hinchliff, *John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal* (Edinburgh and London: Nelson, 1964).

63 The series was written by the editor, Abraham Benisch, and began on 28 Nov. 1862, only weeks after Colenso's publication; later published as a book, *Bishop Colenso's Objections to the Historical Character of the Pentateuch . . . Critically Examined* (London: Jewish Chronicle, 1863).

64 See Charlotte to Leonora and Leopold, 19 Aug. 1862, RAL 000/84/1.

65 *The Spectator*, 8 Nov. 1862, 1251.

Hebrew Bible for the people who bore it as a tradition, the review had all the markings of a distinctly Jewish approach to historical criticism, one that accorded with the continental writings of *Wissenschaft des Judenthums*. It also anticipated, by five years, Kalisch's work on Leviticus.<sup>66</sup>

Weeks later, as the furor against Colenso grew, Hermann Adler, the recently ordained youngest son of the Chief Rabbi, penned a letter to *The Athenaeum* dismissing Colenso's work for its weak knowledge of Hebrew and his reliance on the Authorized Version and its mistranslations. Adler suggested that a knowledge of Jewish traditions of interpretation would have obviated the bishop's claims, and buttressed the criticism with specific examples of his errors.<sup>67</sup> The following week, *The Athenaeum* published a letter signed "Philobiblicus" composed by someone with an intimate knowledge of rabbinic literature and medieval Jewish exegesis, almost certainly a Jew. This letter defended Colenso's determination to "read the Bible by its own light" and to do so critically without recourse to implausible Talmudic interpretations; and, for good measure, it pushed back against Adler's claims by challenging him on his "corrections" of Colenso's readings.<sup>68</sup> The fact that two of the textual points adduced by "Philobiblicus" either matched what Kalisch had already published, or anticipated a comment made in his later Leviticus commentary may not prove his authorship, but taken together, it points fairly strongly to his hand.<sup>69</sup>

Kalisch, in any event, soon reached out to Colenso in a letter applauding the fact that the bishop's "lucid and fearless criticism contributes to open the public mind for an intelligent and unbiased investigation of Scripture". When Colenso, beset by condemnation, asked Kalisch if he could make public use of this letter, Kalisch agreed, penning another letter of support. From a letter of Charlotte de Rothschild we learn that the two soon met and that Kalisch tried to support Colenso in his dealings with the Church of England.<sup>70</sup> A month later, in February 1863, Colenso sought to defend

66 Compare, e.g., Kalisch's *A Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament with a New Translation: Leviticus Part I* (hereafter, *Leviticus I*), (London: Longmans, 1867), 38–49.

67 *The Athenaeum*, 6 Dec. 1862, 736. Adler later published a book-length response to Colenso, *A Jewish Reply to Dr. Colenso's Criticism on the Pentateuch* (London: Trübner, 1865).

68 *The Athenaeum*, 13 Dec. 1862, 771–2.

69 Compare this letter to the *Commentary on Exodus*, 401–2, and *A Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament with a New Translation: Leviticus Part II* (hereafter, *Leviticus II*), (London: Longmans, 1872), 512–17.

70 Charlotte to Leopold, 27 Jan. 1863, RAL 000/84: "Dr. Kalisch, who has exchanged

himself by publishing letters of support in *The Athenaeum* from eminent Bible scholars; they included two from leading German scholars – and the two letters from Kalisch.<sup>71</sup> His support for Colenso was now public. This was a remarkable turn of events: of all the Bible scholars in Britain, this Anglo-Jew was the only one Colenso could cite in his own defence. Kalisch, for his part, found himself counted among Europe’s leading biblical scholars. It certainly conferred a degree of importance. Over the next few years he met some of England’s more liberal churchmen and politicians, including Bishop Connop Thirwall and the MP Arthur Russell.<sup>72</sup> But Kalisch’s support for Colenso also created a rather awkward moment for his fellow Anglo-Jews.

When Benisch and Adler spoke out against Colenso, their aim was to add Jewish voices to the broad public condemnation of Colenso. Until this point, neither had publicly commented on Kalisch’s turn to biblical criticism, but Kalisch’s defence of the bishop was not as easy to ignore. Indeed, the *Jewish Chronicle*, always attentive to the general press and the mention of Anglo-Jews, immediately reported on Colenso’s item in *The Athenaeum*.<sup>73</sup> It reprinted the letter from one of the German scholars, with an editorial note excoriating its Christian anti-Judaism. And it reprinted the letters of Kalisch – without a single word of comment. Kalisch’s public stance spoke for itself, but the *Jewish Chronicle*’s silence was nonetheless conspicuous.

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In 1867 Kalisch published the first part of his Leviticus commentary. His preface spoke of the recent “intellectual revolution”, mentioning Colenso, Darwin, Mill, and others, and he embraced this “spirit of regenerating enquiry” that left no traditional view unquestioned.<sup>74</sup> And question he did, in what was easily the most learned scholarly piece on Leviticus in Victorian

visits with Dr. Colenso, is much pleased with him, and has made an arrangement with that celebrity to pre[s]ent the letters, which have passed between the two worthies, to be read in Convocation”. It is difficult to determine if in the original letter the word “pre[s]ent” might have been “pre[v]ent,” but either reading affirms Kalisch’s willingness to help Colenso. My thanks to the archivist, Justin Cavernelis-Frost, for his examination of the original letter.

71 *The Athenaeum*, 28 Feb. 1863, 297; the other letters were from Heinrich Ewald and Hermann Hupfeld.

72 Charlotte to Leopold, 3 April 1864, 8 May 1866, RAL 000/84.

73 *JC*, 6 March 1863.

74 *Leviticus I*, v–vi.

England. In an astoundingly ambitious 470-page “Preliminary Essay”, he offered a comparative analysis of the sacrificial and cultic practices of ancient Israel and other cultures, rife with historical and anthropological insights. Along the way, he critiqued both Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity for distorting the original teachings of the Bible.<sup>75</sup> What he concluded about the book of Leviticus was as clear as it was, at the time, radical: “[The] sacrificial legislation of Leviticus originated at a considerably later time than that of Deuteronomy; and as the Book of Deuteronomy can, from internal evidence, not have been written earlier than the seventh century before the present era . . . the sacrificial laws of Leviticus were not compiled before the Babylonian period, and came into operation in the second Temple only, after the return of the Jews from captivity.”<sup>76</sup> Kalisch stressed that the evolution of the Levitical system of sacrifices reflected the national advance of theological ideas and a dynamic national spirit, a process rooted in the life of the people.<sup>77</sup> His analysis reflected the most critical notions posited by German scholarship of his day, especially the notion of the late or post-exilic development of the priestly legislation.<sup>78</sup> But even in European terms, his attention to the particulars of the sacrificial order and its evolution was unprecedented.

Among the British periodicals that reviewed this volume many were displeased with the “destructive” positions it espoused, not to mention what he had written about Christianity. The *Jewish Chronicle*, for its part, carried a most curious statement: “We do not intend to do more than notice this volume. Not that it does not deserve an ample review, but that we cannot spare either space or time for such a labour; and if we could there would scarcely be many of our readers that would care to peruse a thorough criticism of a series of most erudite disquisitions, the nature and contents of which place their consideration beyond the sphere of a popular journal.” The announcement concluded with: “Although there is much in this volume that we approve, and more, that we admire, there is yet much more of its contents from which we dissent, and some few which we could have wished had remained unwritten. With these few remarks, we commend the volume to all those who are sufficiently prepared to

75 Ibid., 143–8.

76 Ibid., 43.

77 Ibid., 38–9; and see 85–6, 92, 308–23, 396.

78 These notions had been raised earlier in the century by Wilhelm M. L. de Wette, Johann F. L. George, and Vatke, but were taken up far more assiduously in the 1860s by Abraham Kuenen and Karl Heinrich Graf.

appreciate and examine such grave matters. We can promise them that they will derive from the study thereof much information, and learn to regard the Bible from new, albeit not always acceptable, points of view.”<sup>79</sup>

In mere sentences, this Jewish weekly managed to convey respect, censure, and ambivalence, saying nothing about what made the book objectionable. The *Jewish Chronicle* of these years continued to publish articles that attacked biblical criticism on the part of non-Jewish scholars; it also had a few passing references to Kalisch that deliberately downplayed his importance.<sup>80</sup> Interestingly enough, the rabbinic voices of opposition to biblical criticism came from London’s small Reform community;<sup>81</sup> the Chief Rabbi and other ministers remained silent, and at least outwardly maintained a civil relationship with Kalisch.<sup>82</sup> When one of the lay leaders of the Sephardi community made a plea for Kalisch to be publicly repudiated, he was ignored.<sup>83</sup> No one, it seems, wanted to challenge Kalisch directly or substantively.

The second volume of the *Leviticus Commentary* appeared in 1872. In preparation for this tome, Kalisch reached out to Thomas Huxley with zoological questions, and Huxley even consented to review the proofs.<sup>84</sup> The provocative element of this volume, however, had nothing to do with comparative anatomy, but with religious rituals. Kalisch argued that practices associated with the Day of Atonement and Sukkot were late historical developments that found their way into the Bible only in the fifth

79 JC, 13 Sept. 1867, 6.

80 See Albert Löwy’s two-part “Pseudo-Criticism of the Bible”, JC, 18 Feb. and 11 March 1870. For the passing references see JC, 1 and 22 Oct. 1869.

81 Löwy was the second minister at the West London Synagogue, and Rev. David Marks, the synagogue’s spiritual leader, also spoke out against biblical criticism. This subject needs separate treatment.

82 Hermann Adler, once tutored by Kalisch, paid him a *shiva* call in 1871, and Kalisch later sent him a copy of *Leviticus II*. Kalisch’s note alluded to their differences, but it also held out the hope of mutual respect; University of Southampton, Anglo-Jewish Archives, MS 390, A4049/2/20. By contrast, an earlier letter of Charlotte de Rothschild, 30 May 1864, RAL 000/84, noting the coinciding visits of Kalisch and Chief Rabbi Adler, wrote that they “were like kittens (probably as false as cats to each other)”.

83 See Breuer, “Community and Controversy”. Perhaps the only Anglo-Jews who cited Kalisch approvingly at this time were Constance and Annie de Rothschild in their *History and Literature of the Israelites*. One of these citations was of a historical-critical nature, a move that drew Disraeli’s disapproval as inappropriate for a work that was otherwise popular-narrative in nature; see Cohen, *Lady de Rothschild*, 115.

84 Imperial College London Archives, Thomas Henry Huxley Collection, 19.122–123; Leonard Huxley, ed., *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1913), vol. 3, 211.

century BCE.<sup>85</sup> The author, to be clear, was not seeking to abolish Jewish practices or to diminish their meaning. He repeated his earlier assertion that the composition of the Pentateuch told the story of a progressively refined religious evolution that was the signal achievement of Israelite history. His concluding words were a ringing statement of “the grand spiritual and political history of the ancient Hebrews”: “In abandoning the traditional conceptions of the origin of the Pentateuch, we gain a great and most valuable boon; for in viewing the marvellous religious edifice of the Hebrews as their own and patiently achieved creation, their intellectual life and struggles are brought home to our understandings and our human sympathies, and thus cannot fail to inspire us with a new interest and a higher admiration.”<sup>86</sup> Here and elsewhere, he insisted on the compelling spiritual value of critical scholarship.

British periodicals once again noted Kalisch’s latest offering. Conservative reviewers objected, while still appreciating its deep scholarship.<sup>87</sup> Liberal publications, meanwhile, were beginning to open up to the new critical methods, with *The Athenaeum* commenting that “the literature of the Pentateuch has now fairly entered on a new phase in England”, and recognizing Kalisch’s contribution to this development.<sup>88</sup>

The *Jewish Chronicle*, for its part, finally decided to review the Leviticus volumes, and what it published was a remarkable twelve-part critique that appeared over the course of a year.<sup>89</sup> The review, like others, was unsigned, although readers were assured that the reviewer’s “attainments are worthy of competition with those of the gifted . . . scholar, whom he criticizes”.<sup>90</sup> That reviewer, in fact, was Michael Friedländer, another German-Jewish émigré to London and the Principal of Jews’ College.<sup>91</sup> Despite some biting comments, his review took the position that it was best to weigh the evidence in reasonable and dispassionate terms. Friedländer pointed out Kalisch’s questionable assumptions, his inconsistencies and self-contradictions, his failure to consider evidence to the contrary, and his

85 *Leviticus II*, 266–79, 505, 512–17.

86 *Ibid.*, 640.

87 *London Quarterly* (April 1872): 194–214; *Non-Conformist*, 27 March 1872, 328; *Christian Observer* (Jan. 1875): 54–67.

88 *The Athenaeum*, 4 May 1872, 551–2; see also *Westminster Review* (April 1872): 494–7; *The Academy*, 1 July 1872, 247–9.

89 This serialized review was the longest of its kind since Benisch’s series on Colenso’s Pentateuch a decade earlier.

90 *JC*, 19 Sept. 1873, 414; see also 27 Sept. 1872, 358.

91 Friedländer’s authorship was mentioned in passing in *JC*, 25 Dec. 1891, 14.

too-quick dismissal of rabbinic explications. The review thus sought to systematically deflect or defuse Kalisch's claims, but it did so while studiously avoiding a number of issues: with one brief exception,<sup>92</sup> it did not discuss the matter of biblical criticism as a scholarly endeavour, nor did it engage the theological and historical claims that informed Kalisch's broader argument. Friedländer, moreover, never questioned Kalisch's religious commitments or beliefs, nor did he attempt to delineate or defend some notion of traditional orthodoxy. This review, in other words, did everything to avoid a religious controversy over Kalisch and his *Commentary*.

\* \* \*

Kalisch fell ill soon after publishing the Leviticus commentary and he never fully recovered. Hoping that a move back to the Continent might help, he left England in July 1875 and remained abroad for ten months, at least partly supported by the Rothschilds.<sup>93</sup> He never completed his *Historical and Critical Commentary*, but with his limited energy he published two studies: *The Prophecies of Balaam* and *The Book of Jonah*, each still offering hundreds of pages of erudite scholarship, including essays on the relationship of the ancient Hebrews with heathens and other peoples.<sup>94</sup> Kalisch did not waver from his critical approach. With Balaam, for example, he distinguished between the original narrative, which was open to non-Israelite prophecy and portrayed Balaam positively, and the later Deuteronomistic version that drew a far sharper distinction between Israelites and others, and cast the narrative in far more problematic terms.<sup>95</sup> This volume was reviewed in two Jewish weeklies. They readily acknowledged the deep learning and instructive notes, clearly finding much that was worthwhile: they seemed to suggest that were Kalisch to set aside his critical insights his work would be so much more compelling, not to mention acceptable.<sup>96</sup>

92 JC, 12 July 1872, 214. where the reviewer took a swipe at "modern criticism, which is not satisfied to read what is written before it, but presumes to find by its infallible ingenuity the original intention and plan of the author".

93 Charlotte to Leopold, 10 and 12 May 1875, RAL 000/84, and Kalisch's letters to Charlotte, RAL 000/924/6/4.

94 Published as *Bible Studies*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, 1877–78); he planned a third part on Ecclesiastes.

95 See e.g. *ibid.*, pt. I, 16–40.

96 *Jewish World*, 12 Oct. 1877, 11; JC, 1 Feb. 1878, 7.

Kalisch published another book in 1880, *Path and Goal: A Discussion on the Elements of Civilisation and the Conditions of Happiness*, a remarkable work that showcased the full breadth of his learning.<sup>97</sup> Written in the newly revived genre of symposia, the book was structured around the discussion of sixteen individuals of different religious and intellectual traditions, from East and West, who gather to discuss Ecclesiastes and the themes raised in that enigmatic text. The discussion was wide-ranging and sophisticated, a challenging book to read and absorb, and not a few critics declared it a literary failure.<sup>98</sup> But the book said a great deal about Kalisch and his thinking. *Path and Goal* sought to locate principles common to all traditions, ideas that pointed to truths that were to be revealed in and through the advance of civilization, and that would ultimately transcend all forms of religion and culture. It was at once a book profoundly humanistic, but at the same time Jewish, ending with statements of the Prophets that melded a universalist outlook with the message of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>99</sup>

This was Kalisch's last publication, and he died five years later, in August 1885. The *Jewish Chronicle* devoted three quarters of a folio page to an obituary and two entries in a regular column, "Notes of the Week".<sup>100</sup> The obituary, which spoke at length of his relationship with the Rothschilds, described his writings clearly and fairly, including his critical views regarding the historical development of the Pentateuch. It portrayed these critical insights as being commensurate with the work of Heinrich Graf and Julius Wellhausen, the leading German proponents of the documentary hypothesis, thereby acknowledging – but only implicitly – Kalisch's serious contribution to modern biblical study.<sup>101</sup> The obituary was reticent in two regards: it refrained from passing judgment on his critical views, and while evincing respect for his scholarship, it stopped short of noting that among Anglo-Jews, if not all Britons, Kalisch's contribution was truly exceptional.

The two notices that appeared in the "Notes of the Week" were different,

97 London: Longmans, 1880.

98 See e.g. *The Academy*, 8 May 1880, 335; *JC*, 23 July 1880, 11.

99 *Path and Goal*, 509.

100 *JC*, 28 Aug. 1885, 5, 10; none of these items were signed. David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo Jewry, 1841–1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 67–82, presumed that Asher Myers, the editor, wrote "Notes of the Week".

101 Although in certain respects his work "anticipated Wellhausen's account of the history of Israelite priesthood and sacrifice" (Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism*, 244), Kalisch's critical approach differed from the documentary hypothesis and the direction in which the field subsequently developed.

for they addressed themselves to the most obvious question regarding Kalisch's life and biography, namely the incommensurate relationship between his accomplishments and his marginality. The first notice flatly declared Kalisch to be "one of the most learned Jews of the century", but then offered a number of explanation as to why he left no imprint among Anglo-Jews: his alleged deism, which favoured intellect over religious feeling; the "advanced" nature of his views; the difficult scholarly manner in which his opinions were expressed; and the isolation borne of his years of ill-health. The second notice was altogether different, and focused on his marginalization at the hands of German Bible scholars; although his work contained "an amount of erudition and subtlety of combination which have not been surpassed", they ignored him, thus denying him due credit for his role in the advancement of biblical studies.

There is a great deal of truth in these assertions. Kalisch's real legacy was indeed his *Commentary*, but in a field dominated by German Protestants, being English and a Jew made him easy to neglect. The fact that Kalisch insisted that his critical insights demonstrated a Jewish genius for religious development was not something they could abide. His historical and textual scholarship, meanwhile, were hardly accessible or meaningful to Anglo-Jews. For those who did read him, his views of the development of the Bible, not to mention the history of Judaism in general, were at odds with the casual religious conservatism of mid-Victorian Anglo-Jews. It was the very nature of this conservatism that led members of the Jewish community, whether consciously or intuitively, to shy away from confronting Kalisch and creating a public religious controversy. Kalisch, for his part, was dedicated to his scholarship and did not relish, or seek out, confrontation; he was happy to lend his name to the kind of open-mindedness represented by Colenso and Huxley and other liberal Victorians, but declined opportunities to join their public battles.<sup>102</sup> In the end, slowed by illness, his broad intellectual horizons were expressed only in the whimsical literary device of his final work.

Kalisch did indeed live and write on the margins – of Anglo-Jewish society, of the British intelligentsia, of the new guild of Bible scholars. Without a controversy to his name and with relatively few to appreciate and acclaim his accomplishments, there was a certain invisibility that surrounded him. Kalisch, as it were, fell into a blind spot of Anglo-Jewish

102 Kalisch was invited to join Huxley at the founding meeting of the Association of Liberal Thinkers; Thomas Henry Huxley Collection, 19.124.

history and then quickly receded in the distance. But his life and writings, as well as his obscurity, should illuminate our understanding of the Victorian era.