

Name and Symbol: Part 1
From the Shavei Tzion Archives
Judith Temime April 2017

Moshav Shavei Tzion, founded as a Tower and Stockade settlement in the Land of Israel in April 1938, faithfully preserves in its collective memory the village of origin of the first pioneering settlers here: picturesque **Rexingen** in southwest Germany, in the state of Baden-Württemberg, at the edge of the Black Forest. On the eve of World War 2, **Rexingen** had some 1,000 inhabitants, about a third of whom were Jews. The Jewish community there—stable, fruitful, proud—was then 400 years old.



Postcard. Looking east toward **Rexingen** near Horb, on the Neckar River.
To the left of center in the photo is the light-roofed synagogue. 1920s-30s (?)
From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**.

In his English-language booklet *Shavej-Zion, Experiment and Promise, 1938-1963*, published for the moshav's 25th anniversary, member-poet-amateur historian **Leopold Marx** wrote, "An exposé for the wireless written by **Rabbi Dr. Neufeld**...show(s) that as early as 1650 the first Jews settled in **Rexingen**. They came from Poland, evidently refugees from the Chelmnitzki pogroms..." In a history of the **Rexingen** Jewish community written in 1875, **Rabbi M. Silberstein** noted that those refugees, **Wolf Pollack** and **David Buchbinder**, were given a unique dispensation to reside at **Rexingen** by the Knights Hospitaller of Saint John, who governed the district.

Other Jews followed **Pollack** and **Buchbinder**, as Jews wandered, or were harried, throughout Europe. So, over the course of several centuries, Jews lived and flourished in **Rexingen**. "Like most Jews living in the country", wrote **Leopold Marx**, "they were traders, principally in cattle, some in horses, others in textiles or agricultural products. Besides, there were small shops, (a) baker, butchers and inns... Like most Jewish villages they kept to their religious traditions and were little affected by the tendencies to assimilation shown by those who had moved to the town. Their Jewishness had its footing in the family and the synagogue." With the growth of the historical community, **Leopold** noted, the first synagogue had been built in 1710; it was replaced in 1837 by a new synagogue with a capacity of 500 persons. In the 1930s, despite the fact that **Rexingen** had no resident rabbi, all of the institutions required for a communal religious life were in place: there was the synagogue, and also a Jewish school, a burial society and a cemetery with close to 1,000 graves. Thus, wrote **Leopold**, the Jews of **Rexingen** maintained their identity while, at the same time, they lived peaceably with their Christian neighbors and participated in village civil life (for example, as members of the local fire brigade).

In the chapter "Rexingen" in the *Place of Refuge and Safe Harbor, Shavei Tzion 1938-2008* catalogue which accompanied the moshav's 70th anniversary exhibition, **Barbara Staudacher** writes: "The Jewish men were tied to their beloved (*German*) homeland (*and*) went to war (*that is, the First World War*) like their Christian neighbors. Many of them were volunteers (*because*) it was important to them to negate the endless prejudice and slander against them. The German Jews wished to prove their loyalty

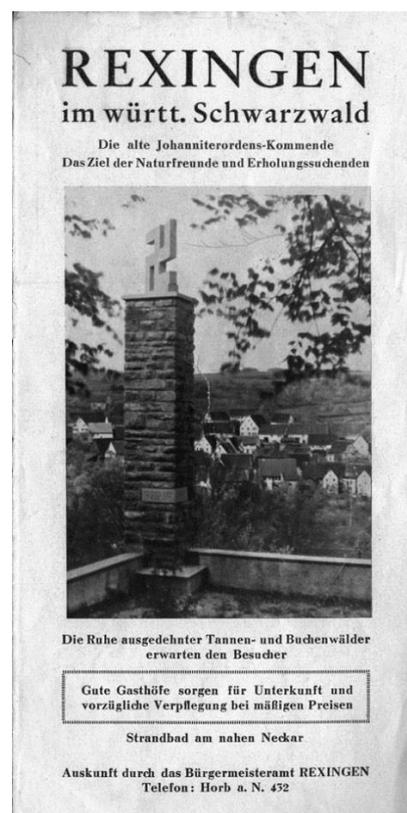
and devotion to the Kaiser and to the homeland, and to demonstrate their courageous willingness to put their lives at risk." From among the Jews of **Rexingen**, 78 men went to war; 15 never returned. The comprehensive *In Stein Gehauen, Lebensspuren auf dem Rexinger Friedhof* published in 1997 by the Horb Municipal Archives, contains meticulous documentation of every grave in the **Rexingen** Jewish cemetery. On the gravestone of **Rudolph Reuven Zürndorfer**, who fell in battle in October 1917, we read, "I gave my heart for my homeland / I gave my utmost!"



Partial view of the **Rexingen** Jewish cemetery:
the memorial to the 15 Jewish soldiers of the village who fell in World War 1.
The inscription below the Star of David, taken from the second book of Samuel 1:19, reads "O beauty of Israel! On your high places shall lie the slain! How have the heroes fallen!"
Photographer: **Charly Kuball**, Horb. Photo Source: Rexinger Synagogenverein.

In German, "Vaterland" has the meaning of "the state as homeland", while the word "Heimat"--also "homeland"--refers more nearly to the place where one was born, the place to which one remains attached through family ties, sentiment, memory and affinity. For generations of Jews, both Germany and **Rexingen** represented "homeland". But the reality of life in the little village, as everywhere in Germany, changed after the rise to power of the National-Socialist party. In the *Place of Refuge* catalogue, **Carsten Kohlmann** writes: "At the demonstration on May 1, 1933 marking the 'National Labor Day' in **Rexingen**, the Jews understood to what extent National-

Socialism had infiltrated their homeland. Young men who had only recently joined the SA paraded (*there*) for the first time, in their brown uniforms and swastika armbands." In January 1934, **Carsten** says, the newly-appointed permanent mayor of **Rexingen**, was a Nazi party member: "As his first act, (*the mayor*) changed the names of the streets (*and*) Brühlstraße, where many Jews lived, became Adolph Hitler Street." The discriminations and restrictions affecting German Jewry as a whole (for example, concerning the supply of kosher meat), naturally affected the Jews of **Rexingen** as well. The clearest and harshest early sign of the fundamental changes occurring may well have been the erection of an enormous swastika on a hill overlooking the village. **Carsten Kohlmann** writes that the swastika monument was dedicated in October 1933, within the framework of "German Day" when "600 SA men arrived in **Rexingen**... the symbol (*that is, the swastika*), was meant, of course, to humiliate political opponents, in particular the Jews." **Carsten** quotes **Hermann Gideon**, one of the founders of **Shavei Tzion**: "It scared us," he said, "to death".



Brochure promoting **Rexingen** as a vacation destination for persons "who love nature and those looking for rest or recuperation." "The vast peace of the fir and hornbeam (*ironwood*) forests," reads the caption under the photograph, "awaits your visit". The brochure was published at some point after the dedication of the swastika monument in October 1933. Image source: Ortsarchiv Rexingen.

Carsten Kohlmann writes that as “the inequities increased, the Jews began to withdraw into their own social and religious world. But the internal life of the community (*in Rexingen*) actually blossomed in the shadow of external pressures.” In the commemorative booklet *Shavej-Zion*, **Leopold Marx** wrote, “The Jews and the (*Christian*) villagers (*in Rexingen*) who had always lived and worked side by side in peace and amity--now an abyss had been torn open between them... the prohibitions (*enacted against the Jews*) increased. Life became intolerable. The only way out was emigration”. The Jews of **Rexingen** concluded that there was no future for any Jew in Germany and emigration became a much-discussed subject. Before that, Zionism had been unheard of in **Rexingen**. The idea of immigrating to the Land of Israel as an entire community was first debated by the Jüdische Jugendbund Rexingen—the Rexingen Jewish Youth League--led by **Alfred Pressburger**, and then inspired by the new teacher, a charismatic personality and an avowed Zionist, **Wolf** (later **Zev**) **Berlinger**. At a meeting in Stuttgart, **Alfred** said, “...if we must leave, we wish to go to the land of our forefathers, to Zion, to Jerusalem.”

In 1976, many years after she and her family had left Palestine, **Hedwig Neckarsulmer**--who had been born in **Rexingen**, like her husband, their parents and their grandparents--published a short memoir in *Pioneer Women*, the magazine of The Women's Labor Zionist Organization of America. She wrote: "In early 1937, after many long discussions, we, the young people, single and married and those with small children like myself, decided that—if we wanted to survive—the only way for us was to go in and group, and the only place to go was Palestine. We wanted to be farmers, settle and build a new community together, a new life for ourselves and for our children. We were full of enthusiasm and idealism. We would work together and share everything, except our family life, which would be kept strictly private, each family living in a house, according to the size of the family. Ideas and reality are often far apart, as we had to learn the hard way. Palestine by that time was under English mandate, and visas and immigration certificates were available only to those who had the money to pay for them, much more than we could possibly raise. So we went to our local Jewish and Zionist organizations for help... Having never been Zionists ourselves, nor belonging to any organization for that matter, wherever we went, we

were met with disbelief and skepticism. No organization wanted to waste their precious visas on us, while long-time activists and Zionists had to wait. But our idea was new. A whole community leaving together, settling and working the Palestine in a collective community—like a kibbutz... this had never been done before. With our stubbornness and with increasing publicity, Zionist leaders from all parts of Germany began to become interested and wanted to meet these country Jews who wanted to settle in Palestine. Meeting followed meeting, until one day we were told that land belonging to the Jewish National Fund (*JNF; Keren Kaymet L'Israel*), would be made available to us and that we should send men to choose the location we wanted to settle on. Like the spies in the Bible who were sent to Canaan to look over the land, we sent three men."

In 1985, **Lothar Stern** wrote "Preparations for the Immigration of the **Rexingen** Jews 47 Years Ago": "In 1937, four years after Hitler came to power in Germany, the Jews were already in great distress (*and*) they understood that the only way to save themselves was to emigrate. The Jews were well established in Germany and they perceived it as their homeland. The idea that they would ever be compelled to leave that homeland was foreign to them. They had no languages (*apart from German*) and the average Jew had never left Germany, except as a faithful soldier in the Kaiser's army. They were completely loyal to Germany..."

Lothar explained how, with the multiplication of sanctions and prohibitions, "...many Jews wished to emigrate from Germany (*but*) border control in the neighboring countries had begun to note the Jewish problem and the entry of German Jews was restricted (*when it was realized*) that they were not tourists but refugees...and as such, they were undesirable. In desperation, the Jews looked toward distant, exotic countries, anywhere in the world they might be able...to enter. Countries amenable to immigration, with open immigration policies such as South America, Canada, Australia and South Africa, closed their borders. The German authorities 'made it easier' for the border control officials of other countries to recognize Jewish German passport holders. The Nazis enacted a law which required all Jewish men to add the name 'Israel' (*to their own first names*) and all Jewish women to add the name 'Sarah', and the first page of their passports was stamped with a large Latin letter 'J' (*for*

Jude/Jüdin). The impetus to leave Germany was strengthened (*but*) there were fewer and fewer chances of finding a safe haven anywhere in the world. Many people were waiting to receive visas to Palestine—the Land of Israel...but for the Jews, the Land of Israel was now the Promised Land. Biblical declarations were no longer empty words but now an anchor. Suddenly everyone was a Zionist.”

In September-October 1937, the **Rexingen** Jews invested **Alfred Pressburger**, **Manfred Weil** and **Julius Fröhlich** as “spies” to tour Palestine with the Jewish National Fund in order to choose the parcel of land on which their settlement would be built. The land that they chose at the end of the tour--Ard el Massarib, located south of Nahariya and bordered on the north by Wadi el Majnuna (Beit HaEmek Creek)--had earlier been assessed for its suitability for agricultural settlement. In March 1937, the findings of that assessment were reported to the Jewish Agency in Germany by the Tel Aviv agronomist **S. Dyk**. The report considered, among other things, the quantity of fresh water available, the quality of the soil and climate factors, and it concluded that the land at Ard el Massarib would be suitable as well for a training farm where “a decent education could be offered to the sons and daughters of many settlers.”

When it became widely known that the **Rexingen** Jews were planning to emigrate as a group, a number of their relatives and friends who lived elsewhere expressed their desire to be included in the project. Eventually, more people from outside of **Rexingen**--from Ludwigsburg, Tuttlingen, Rieneck, Heilbronn and Mergentheim, for example-- than from **Rexingen** itself would immigrate together to build and populate the new settlement. But the future settlement became indelibly identified with **Rexingen**. Early correspondence between the would-be settlers and the organizations overseeing settlement in Palestine--the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund, Rassco (the Rural and Suburban Settlement Company)—both discussed and addressed directly the “Gruppensiedlung **Rexingen**” or the “**Rexinger** Gruppe” or simply the “**Rexinger**”, that is “the **Rexingen** Group Settlement” or “the **Rexingen** Group” or “the **Rexingen** People”.

PALÄSTINA-AMT BERLIN
der JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE

Vom Herrn Reichminister des Innern durch
Verfög. v. 25. 7. 1924 Nr. 6174 B als gemeinnützige
Auswanderungs-Beratungstelle anerkannt.

משרד ארצישראלי

BERLIN W 15, MEINEKESTRASSE 10

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An das Gemeindefblatt
der Jüdischen Gemeinde Berlin
Redaktion
Berlin W 4.
Oranienburgerstr. 28/31

Herrn Manfred Weil, Rexingen
zur gefl. Kenntnisnahme.

Man

ABTEILUNG
Mittelstandsansiedlung

IHRE ZEICHEN IHRE NACHRICHT VOM

UNSERE ZEICHEN TAG

Dr. B/Gtn. 27.1.1938

Im Antwortschreiben sind anzugeben:
Abteilung, Zeichen, Datum und Betreffvermerk

BETRIFFT: Gruppensiedlung
Rexingen

Sehr geehrte Herren,

wir nehmen an, dass auch Ihnen das Siedlungsvorhaben in Palästina bekannt ist, das seit einigen Monaten unter dem Namen "REXINGER GRUPPE" als erster Versuch einer derartigen mittelständischen Gruppenansiedlung verschiedentlich besprochen worden ist.

Aus dem Dorfe Rexingen über Horb/Neckar, das noch heute 240 jüdische Einwohner umfasst, und auch aus anderen Ortschaften werden im Monat Februar d. Js. die ersten Familien nach Palästina abfahren, um dort mit dem Aufbau ihrer Siedlung zu beginnen.

Interessant hieran ist, dass zum ersten Male der Versuch gemacht wird, eine grössere jüdische Gemeinde geschlossen nach Palästina zu überführen und sie dort ebenfalls gemeinsam anzusiedeln. Die Durchführung dieses Vorhabens ist besonders dadurch erleichtert worden, dass es sich um Menschen handelt, die auf Grund ihrer Herkunft und ihres bisherigen Lebens sich ihre Beziehung zur landwirtschaftlichen Arbeit bewahrt haben. Die Ansiedlung selbst wird durch die von der Jewish Agency begründeten Siedlungsgesellschaft "RASSCO" in Palästina auf einem Bodenkomplex erfolgen, den der Keren Kajemeth Lej Israel nördlich von Haifa zur Verfügung gestellt hat.

Die Vorarbeiten hierzu und die Durchführung der Ueberseidlung hat das Palästina-Amt Berlin in Gemeinschaft mit der Reichsvertretung und anderen jüdischen Organisationen vorgenommen.

Die erste Gruppe der Siedler wird bereits Mitte Februar Rexingen verlassen, um noch vor Beginn der Frühjahrs-Saison in Palästina mit den Vorarbeiten anzufangen. Die Gemeinde Rexingen, die im Übrigen eine der ältesten jüdischen Dorfgemeinden in Deutschland ist, veranstaltet aus diesem Anlass am

Sonntag, den 6. Februar 1938 vormittags

eine Abschiedsfeier, an der auch Vertreter der Reichsvertretung, des Palästina-Amtes, sowie des Oberrates der Israeliten von Württemberg usw. teilnehmen würden.

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... ohne jede V

Letter to the bulletin of the Berlin Jewish community, on the subject of the **Rexingen** group's planned settlement in Palestine. January 27, 1937. The letter makes note of the project as a first experiment in the collective settlement of a "large" middle class Jewish community that desired as well to settle together in the Land of Israel.

From the collection of the **Shavei Zion Archives**.

In March 1938, the first small group of settlers from the **Rexingen** initiative arrived in Palestine. Two additional groups would follow, early in 1939; the immigration of the later groups would be delayed until the return home of those Jewish men who had been imprisoned for months in Dachau and other concentration camps in the course

of the pogrom on “The Night of Broken Glass”, November 9, 1938. On the eve of the aliyah of the first group, in February 1938, a farewell ceremony was held in the **Rexingen** synagogue. It was attended by the pioneers, their families, friends and supporters and by important personages in the German Jewish community.

The teacher **Zev Berlinger** was among the speakers at the ceremony. He said, “We have gathered here today... in order to celebrate our leave-taking as immigrants to the Land of Israel... and if we found a new village, on a collective basis, will we be able to sustain it? I am not denying my doubts, but I have faith in and depend upon God’s help which has preserved the brotherhood and the amity of the Jewish people through the generations, and (*I have faith in*) our religion and in the Bible.” **Hans Sternheim**, a correspondent for the Württemberg Jewish community’s bulletin, the *Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt* reported on the ceremony and on February 16, 1938, (in **Benedict von Bremen**’s translation from the original German): “For German Jewry the planning and execution of a unified group aliyah represent proof that, with cooperation, it becomes possible to achieve the impossible. With this project, the vision of **Theodore Herzl**, the founder of political Zionism, has been realized as it was outlined in his book *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*). **Sternheim** quoted **Herzl**: “Settlers from Germany, people who are by their nature tied to the soil, will immigrate to the Land as a unified group, with a flag at their head, upon which is written their aspiration”. **Herzl** had written in *The Jewish State*, “We have no flag, and we need one. If we desire to lead many men, we must raise a symbol above their heads.”

Thus, the **Rexingen** group prepared a flag as a symbol of their aspiration and their faith and this flag was presented at the farewell ceremony and was carried with them when they immigrated to Palestine. **Sternheim** wrote: "On the front, the flag had the Hebrew words ‘Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom’ (*Psalms 145:13*), followed by the name of the colony-- "Malchutia"-- in large letters. On the bottom was the emblem of the *Israelitischer Oberrat* (*the high council representing all Jewish communities in Württemberg*), the words "Truth, Justice, and Peace" (*Ethics of the Fathers 1:18*), the Mogen Dovid (*Star of David*) with the name of God, and the words ‘In memory of our aliyah in the year 5698’. This flag,” wrote **Sternheim**, “is a symbol of the holy will of the **Rexingen** settlers to use their religious and physical powers for

In early 1938, the *Jüdische Rundschau*, the newspaper of the Zionist Federation of Germany, published a short article titled "From Rexingen to Malchutia". The name "Malchutia" chosen by the **Rexingen** group for the settlement it would build was grounded in the desire to commemorate the name of the village of origin, the source of the impetus to immigrate. The settlers believed that the name "**Rexingen**" was derived from the Latin word "rex": "king". That is, "מלך" / "melech" in Hebrew. Thus, the Hebraized construction of "**Rexingen**" as "Malchutia".

Hans Sternheim noted in his article about the farewell ceremony that **Rabbi Naphtali Berlinger**, the principal of the Jewish school in Buttenhausen, had designed the "Malchutia" flag. The rabbi himself had three descendants among the members of the **Rexingen** group and, in fact, **Rabbi Berlinger** also intended to join the settlers in Palestine. The position of community rabbi had been reserved for him and he had been signed to a contract that said that he would assume his duties in March 1939. Those duties included all of the usual rabbinical tasks but he would also serve as the mohel (the ritual circumciser) and the shochet (the ritual slaughterer) in the settlement, and he would give religious instruction to the children and adolescents there. The rabbi was gifted and respected. Among his talents, he often illustrated his classroom lessons with beautiful chalk drawings and it was perhaps natural that he design the "Malchutia" flag. But to the great sorrow of his family and the entire community, his permission to immigrate was endlessly delayed and he never reached Palestine. In 1942, **Rabbi Berlinger** was deported to Theresienstadt and there he perished.



Chalkboard drawings by **Rabbi Naphtali Berlinger**,
 in his classroom in Buttenhausen, Germany. 1930s (?)
 Courtesy of **Aron Berlinger**.

The white ground was the only resemblance between the flag of the Jewish state imagined by **Theodore Herzl** in 1896 and the "Malchutia" flag designed by **Rabbi Berlinger** and carried by the first **Rexingen** immigrant-settlers. **Herzl** wrote of his design (in **Sylvie D'Avigdor's** translation, published in 1946): "I would suggest a white flag, with seven golden stars. The white field symbolizes our pure new life; the stars are the seven golden hours of our working-day. For we shall march into the Promised Land carrying the badge of honor". But the **Rexingen** group carried their own flag proudly and they may well have known that work itself would be their badge of honor.



Approximate reproduction of the Malchutia flag, made by **Alisa Goren**.

The top picture shows the front of the flag, with the name "Malchutia" embellished with crowns and, below that, the motto of the Baden-Württemberg Jewish community: "Truth, justice and peace". Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel would say:

"By three things is the world sustained: law, truth and peace".

The bottom picture shows the reverse of the flag, bearing the verse "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? (Exodus 15:11).

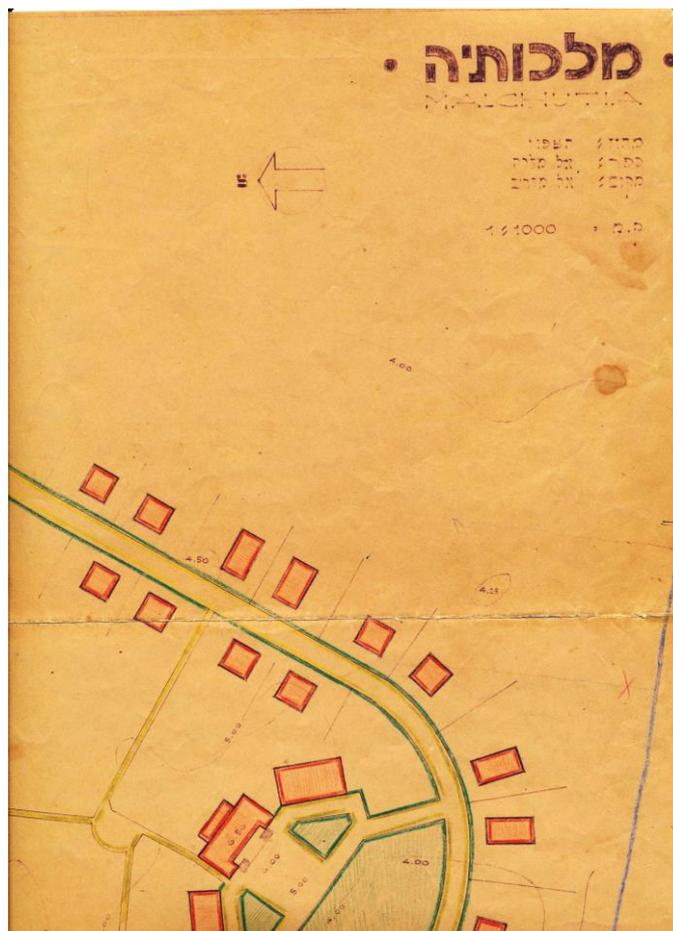
The name "Malchutia", commemorating "**Rexingen**", would have neatly and poetically connected the settlers' past and future. That significance can be seen as well in the wood-burned name on the work tools that **Alfred Pressburger** brought with him to

the new life he expected to establish for his own family and the new life of monumental communal labor that the collective anticipated.



Alfred Pressburger's hand ax, wood-burned with an abbreviation for the name "Malchutia". The reverse of the handle is stamped "A.P." The ax was one of the large stock of work tools, farm implements and household goods that **Alfred** and his wife **Resi** shipped to the new settlement. The ax, owned now by **Resi's** son **Yonatan Schwarz**, is on permanent loan to the "Shavei Tzion: Place of Refuge and Safe Harbor" exhibition, at the Jewish Prayer Room in Horb, Germany.

Photo courtesy of **Barbara Staudacher** and **Heinz Högerle**.



Detail of a plan for the village of "Malchutia". The arrow at top left indicates "north". This undated plan, by architect **Arthur Reis** of Tel Aviv, was never realized.

From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**.

Despite the sentiment and the hope invested in the name "Malchutia", the choice of the name was actually based on a fundamental misapprehension. The German suffix "-ingen" means "belonging to-" or "descendants of-", so that it was certainly possible to believe that the name of the village **Rexingen** suggests a historical connection to "rex", a king, that is, a kingdom that governed the vicinity. But the settlers' assumption was mistaken. **Barbara Staudacher** and **Heinz Högerle**, co-authors of the *Place of Refuge* catalogue tell us that **Rexingen** was founded as an Alemannic settlement, a settlement belonging to an archaic Germanic tribal alliance. "The name '**Rexingen**', " write **Barbara** and **Heinz**, "has its source in the Alemannic name 'Raciso'--a surname-- that evolved over time from 'Raggelingen' (meaning 'belonging to Raciso') to '**Rexingen**' ". The affix "Rex-" has no connection with "king", but that was what the settlers did not know.

The **Shavei Tzion Archives** recently corresponded with **Rémy Wehrung**, a resident of the small village of **Rexingen** located in French Alsace. **M. Wehrung** tells us that his village was founded as "Reckesingen" in the 13th century. It is possible, he says, that the source of the German name was the location of the village "on the back of a hill". The language spoken in French **Rexingen** had been a German dialect that today, **M. Wehrung** tells us, is disappearing under the domination of French. There had never been a Jewish community in French **Rexingen** nor had there been any connection at all with its German namesake. But, says **M. Wehrung**, Jews lived in nearby Sarre-Union, Struth and Diemeringen until the 1930s when their livelihood (mostly in livestock handling, like that of the Jews of Baden-Württemberg) declined and they removed to the cities. The synagogues of the three Jewish communities are still standing, but they are no longer in use. **M. Wehrung** adds that the Jewish cemetery in Sarre-Union was desecrated "by youths" a year ago.

In the Brandeis University blog *Geography, Economics and Demography* of October 2013, in an article titled "The Geography, Demography and Economy of Israel; An Analytic Narrative", we read that "...names and naming practices played a major role in the drama of Jewish restoration and in the formation of a Zionist geography... From a Zionist perspective, reclaiming Eretz Israel and repossessing it meant suppressing both

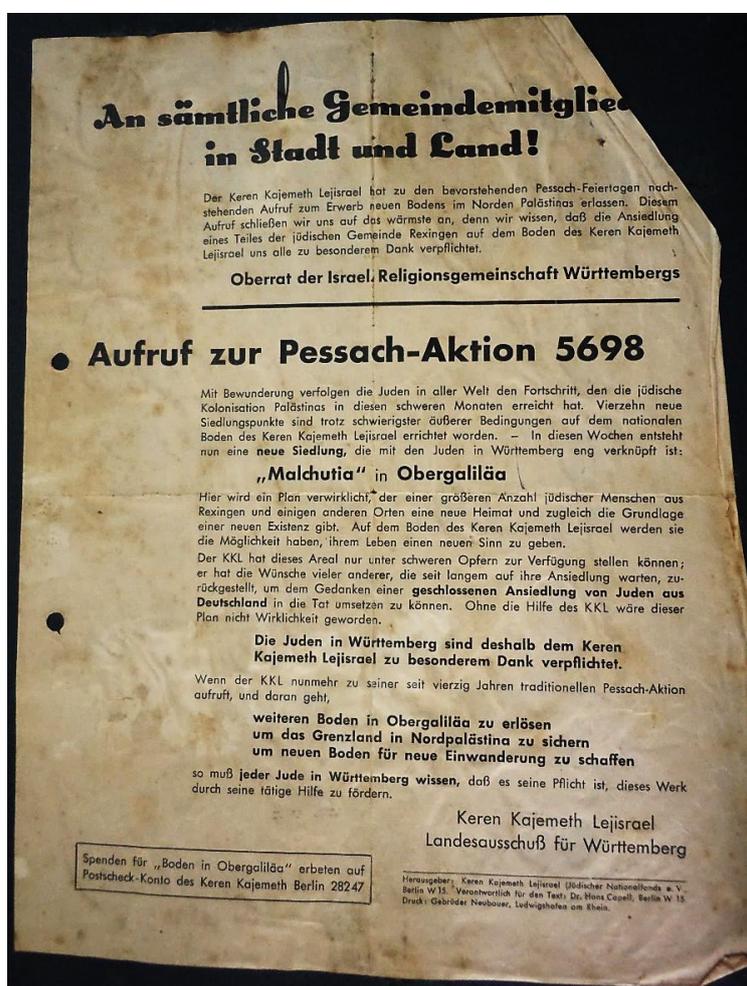
Palestine's past under Ottoman rule and (*the settlers'*) European past, the 'exile' they left behind". The authors of the blog, **S. Ilan Troen**, **Maoz Azaryhu** and **Arnon Golan**, note that "the names given by those who settled the New World often echo the 'old country': New England, New Brunswick, New Orleans, New York and New Madrid recall an earlier homeland. In Israel there is no New Vilna, New Bialystock, New Warsaw, New Minsk, New Pinsk nor New Plonsk."

Dr. Manfred Scheuer, the leader of the **Rexingen** group at the founding of the settlement and the British Mandate-appointed mukhtar (village head), had immigrated to Palestine in 1937 and he was competent in Hebrew. He himself had suggested the name "Malchutia". But in January 1938, he wrote that he had been apprised that the name was problematic. It had been made clear to **Dr. Scheuer** that the suffix "יה" -- "yah" in conjunction with "ות" -- "oot" did not sound well in Hebrew and, also, that the root of the name "מלכות / מלך" – "kingdom / king" was inappropriate as the rationale for the name of a collective settlement. In addition, **Heinz Högerle** and **Barbara Staudacher** remind us, the settlement authorities did not approve of commemorating the name of a place from which Jews had been exiled, or had fled.

Dr. Scheuer placed great importance on choosing a name before the arrival of the first **Rexingen** group and he hastened to suggest a name to replace "Malchutia": "הדר הים", "Hadar Hayam" -- "Glanz des Meeres" -- "Glory of the Sea". That name and other names suggested by the **Rexingen** leadership were rejected. Just days before the tower and stockade camp was erected on April 13, 1938, the secretary of the Jewish National Fund's "names committee" wrote in Hebrew to **Zev Berlinger** and **Dr. Scheuer**: "When you were at (*our*) office, we suggested two names from which you were to choose one as the 'legal entity' for your group: 'גאולים' (*Geulim*' --'The Emancipated') and 'שבי ציון' (*Schawe Zion*' in the typical German spelling; 'The Returnees to Zion'). I explained to you that the name 'Geulim' symbolizes the exodus from Egypt and the name '**Schawe Zion**' symbolizes the exodus from Babylon. Your opposition to the name '**Schawe Zion**' because there is a neighborhood named 'Shivat-Zion' in the vicinity of Rishon-LeZion, is reasonable; but we do not understand your

opposition to the name 'Geulim' because 'that name is not yet spiritually appropriate for us (that is, for you)'."

In the meantime, although the name "Malchutia" had already been rejected by the settlement authorities in Palestine and a permanent name for the **Rexingen** group's settlement was still under discussion, in Germany at Passover in 1938, a JNF fundraising campaign publicized the "Malchutia in Upper Galilee" project. There, in Malchutia, declared the lands committee of Württemberg in its flyer, German Jews had found a new homeland where they were building new lives.



Flyer of the Lands Committee of the JNF in Württemberg, Germany, April 1938. From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**.

The mid- April letter of the names committee secretary to **Zev Berlinger** and **Dr. Scheuer** continued: "The name 'She'ar Yishuv' (*'The Remainder of the Settlement'*) is attractive but there is already a settlement organization by that name.—(*The*) name 'Keter Hayam' (*'Crown of the Sea'*) is unattractive, because the word 'crown' has no 'association' with the word 'sea'.-- I will bring the suggested name 'Keter Naphtali' (*'Crown of Naphtali'*) to the next meeting of the names committee." The letter ended, "I suggest that you...accept the name 'Geulim', for the 'legal entity' of your group,-- until the names committee decides on a name for your settlement."

Ultimately, in November 1938, another group of German Jewish immigrants built a tower and stockade settlement in the Sharon Plain and named it "Bnei Geulim" -- "The Sons of the Emancipated". In 1945, those settlers moved to Kfar Yedidia and Yemenite Jews occupied the original settlement which was renamed Talmon-Geulim and, later, simply Moshav Geulim.

A few days after the construction of the **Rexingen** group's camp here on April 13, **Dr. Scheuer** responded to the names committee secretary, and his frustration is evident. "Because we have meanwhile taken up our land," he wrote, "we have agreed with Rassco to choose the name '**Schawe Zion**' for our group as you and **Dr. (Yeshayahu) Foerder**, the director of the Rassco company, had advised us to do. We ask you not to change the name of our group--our land again. We will be very glad if in the near future you visit (*our*) new settlement." The reply to **Dr. Scheuer's** letter explained that the names committee would still check "whether it would be possible to assign a historical name" to the settlement. "If there are no grounds for assigning a historical name to your settlement," read the reply, "the committee will consider your wish to confirm for your settlement the name "שְׁבִי-צִיּוֹן" (*'Schawe Zion'*)."

In fact, there had been a historical settlement on the lands of the **Rexingen** group. The archaeologist **Moshe Prausnitz**, in his authoritative book *Excavations at Shavei Zion* published in 1967, wrote that the point at which the sea and "the Beit HaEmek River" (*Wadi Majnuna, in Arabic*) meet "form(s) a natural anchorage which in Arabic is called El-Mina (the port)...Nea Come, the new village, was apparently a fishing village the foundation of which was still remembered as new in Roman times." **Prausnitz**

discusses the evidence and concludes that Nea Come, the ancient fishing village with its natural harbor, "should be located at **Shavei Zion**". In **Leopold Marx's** booklet of 1963, he wrote, "About the former name of the place nothing is known as yet. The only hint is to be found in a description of the Greek geographer **Strabo**...who passed a night in NEO KOMÆ (Newborough) travelling from Aksib to Acre. Maybe it was at this spot." The evidence that **Prausnitz** examined and the historical name that he associated with the lands of the **Rexingen** group were unknown here in 1938, but even had they been known, they would not have served "Zionist geography" nor been of use in assigning an appropriate name to a settlement in the resurgent Land of Israel.

On April 24, 1938, the Jewish Agency for Palestine congratulated the group of settlers on their "arrival to build the new settlement '**Shavei Tzion**'... we have been following your activities with great interest--the return of an entire Jewish community to the land of (*our*) forefathers and the possession of the soil by means of communal labor and mutual support. We hope that our agriculture will put down deep and everlasting roots in the homeland, and that it will underpin the growth and the prosperity of our entire nation-building enterprise".

Jewish media in Palestine and abroad found the **Rexingen** project very interesting, and the new settlement was widely reported. Thus, for example, the headline of an article published on May 19, 1938 in *The Sentinel*, a weekly Jewish newspaper in Chicago: "Entire German-Jewish Community Moves to Palestine Agricultural Settlement". The article reported that **Dr. Israel Goldstein**, the national co-chairman of the United Palestine Appeal in the United States, had noted the establishment of "...22 new agricultural settlements (*in the previous 16 months*) which have been founded in Palestine in an effort to increase opportunities for the immigration and colonization of oppressed Jews of Central and Eastern Europe." **Dr. Goldstein** said, "These new colonies have been set up chiefly by men and women who only a year or so ago were weighed down by sorrow and despair in the lands of oppression. Today they are builders and pioneers, heroic participants in a great drama of human reconstruction in Palestine... They have returned to the ancient soil of Palestine which gives them new hope and new courage and shines like a beacon across the entire world into the darkest corners of Jewish misery..."

The German-Jewish journalist and theater critic **Hermann Sinsheimer** left Germany in 1938 and that same summer toured the Land of Israel. He reported what he had seen in "Journey in Palestine", a series of articles published in a Swiss newspaper. His report on the settlement here appeared in the first article, under the title "Rexingen in Pälastina". "The settlement," he wrote, "is called 'Chawe Zion', that is 'Rückkehrer nach Zion' (*the Returnees to Zion*)..." **Sinsheimer** was impressed by the burden of work taken on by the members of the collective and he remarked upon the sound of "the ax and the saw (*which*) rang out" in the camp. In *The Palestine Post* of December 16, 1938, in an article titled "Rexingen to Acre: German Settlers at 'Shavei Zion', the name of the settlement is translated as "Zion's Return". The article described a framed picture hanging on the wall of the communal dining room in a wooden barracks in the camp or, rather, the several pictures that had been grouped within the frame: a view of **Rexingen** and photographs of the synagogue and the cemetery there. A stamp in German at the bottom of the framed pictures read, in translation, "The Israelite Community of Rexingen". **Hermann Sinsheimer**, too, wrote that he had seen pictures of the "Heimatdorf", the village of origin of the settlers here, but he was impressed by the lack of sentimentality among the settlers, even, he said, among the women. He wrote, "One needn't worry about these Swabian Jews. They're used to hard work and a difficult and meagre life".

Almost from the outset, even in the absence of a sanctioned permanent name, both the settlement authorities and newspapers in Palestine and abroad called the new settlement "**Shavei Tzion**", although the name was rendered in Latin letters in half a dozen different ways. The Jewish National Fund publicized the **Rexingen** group's settlement in a fundraising campaign that highlighted the familiar "Blue Box" used from the beginning of the 20th century by Jews around the world to deposit their contributions to the redemption of the Land of Israel--to the purchase of land for Jewish settlements in Palestine. A German-language JNF brochure published for this purpose noted that in the name "Heimkehrer Zions"-- that is, "**Shavei Tzion**-- one hears "pathos, confidence and joy" all at the same time.



"From Rexingen to Shavej-Zion"

Cover of a JNF brochure publicizing the new settlement of **Shavei Zion**.
The photograph was taken on April 13, 1938, the day on which the land "was taken up"
and the rough tower and stockade camp built.
From the collection of the **Shavei Zion Archives**.



"From Rexingen to Shavej-Zion"

Text of the Jewish National Fund flyer shown on the previous page, publicizing the **Shavej Zion** settlement, 1938: "A Jewish community from Württemberg is building its new village in the Galilee..." The motto in Hebrew at the center of the page, repeated in German at the bottom, is the first verse of Psalm 126, a Song of Ascents: "When the LORD brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like unto them that dream..."

From the collection of the **Shavej Zion Archives**.

Yet, despite the fact that the settlement authorities and the news media in Palestine and abroad had begun consistently to refer to the settlement here as "**Shavej Zion**", a permanent name was only assigned an entire year after the camp was built.

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כ"ג בכסיון תרצ"ט
12.4.39

ט"ז יאא/מר/1190.



למבור
קבוצת "שבי-ציון",
דואר היפה.
ת.ד. 1448.

א.נ.

הנידון: קביעת שם לנקודת-ישובכם.

הננו מתכבדים להודיעכם, כי ועדת-השמות על-יד הקה"ל, בישיבתה מלפני
כמה ימים, החליטה לאשר את השם "שבי-ציון", אשר היה עד כה רק שם
קבוצתכם, גם בתורת שם נקודת-ישובכם.

בכבוד רב,

ועדת-השמות על-יד הקה"ל,

המזכיר: י.א.א.

לא קפוח בתחומים ישר ללשכה הראשית ורא ע"פ" כותבת עובדי

Letter addressed to the "Shavei-Tzion" Group. April 12, 1939.

The letter reports the final decision of the JNF names committee: "Shavei-Tzion", the name of the settlers' group, had been approved as the name of the settlement itself.

From the collection of the **Shavei Tzion Archives**.

Shavei Tzion continued to be closely identified with the village which had been the source of the collective immigration initiative. In 1988, 50 years after the founding of the moshav, the jubilee celebrations here included an original musical play, both comic and moving, written by **Israel Wisler**, better known as "**Putcho**". The play told the unique story of the moshav in song, dance and video film. The performers were all local people. One of the wonderful sketches had a chorus line of men dressed as typical "Yekkes"-- German immigrants-- in authentic old short jackets, hats and knickers. They carried suitcases that had been carried by the settlers of 1938-39 and they sang, in four stanzas, an ode to **Rexingen**:

*In the Black Forest, with its tableau of
Trees, stone houses, tiled roofs,
The cows returning from pasture,
The peaceful village, the tradition of generations*

Yes, yes, yes

So far and yet so near.

It's as if we, too, had walked in the streets there,

And in our hearts the name still chimes:

Rexingen Rexingen Rexingen

In the moshav newsletter *Beineinu (Between Us)* for May-June 1953, **Leopold Marx** wrote a long essay for **Shavei Tzion's** 15th anniversary that appeared both in German and in a Hebrew translation he signed as "**Aryeh L. Marx**". He wrote, "Fifteen years of existence here in Israel is like a century and a half elsewhere in the world. We're so young here and yet we are ancient among the peoples of the world... Who are we? A collective of settlers in Israel. What is our name? The Returnees to Zion: **Shavei Tzion...**" And, in the commemorative English-language booklet of 1963, **Leopold** wrote, "We, the individuals, are bound to examine ourselves critically again and again, but on the whole we can look back with satisfaction. Only—we must remember: SHAVEJ-ZION, the way back to Zion means that the aim is not reached, but always before us. It means: ZION is not meant as a locality, but as a task. To stay true to this task, that is what we owe to the place in which we live."

A 1983 German script by **Cornelia Strauss**, a copy of which is held in the **Shavei Tzion Archives**, brings the moshav to a radio audience: "Across the Sea: the History of a Jewish Community from the Black Forest". Visiting here, she interviewed moshav members, including an unnamed veteran couple who, we read in the script, "like to reminisce about their homeland in Germany: their house, the villagers, the vicinity". "But", said the elderly woman, "I no longer want to go back." For the generation of

first settlers and for all the later immigrants, the real return home, requiring so much hope and demanding so much labor, has been the aliyah to the Land of Israel. All those who chose to immigrate, all those who chose to build their lives here—they are all **Shavei Tzion**.