

THE MESSIANIC SECRET OF HASIDISM



by
MOR ALTSHULER

BRILL

The Messianic Secret of Hasidism

Brill's Series in Jewish Studies

General Editor

David S. Katz (Tel Aviv)

Advisory Editors

Stuart Cohen (Bar-Ilan)

Anthony T. Grafton (Princeton)

Yosef Kaplan (Jerusalem)

Fergus Millar (Oxford)



VOLUME 39

The Messianic Secret of Hasidism

By
Mor Altshuler



BRILL
LEIDEN • BOSTON
2006

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data

Altshuler, Mor.

[Sod ha-meshihi shel ha-Hasidut. English]

The messianic secret of Hasidism / by Mor Altshuler.

p. cm. — (Brill's series in Jewish studies; v. 39)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 90-04-15356-X (alk. paper)

1. Hasidism—History. 2. Hasidism—Doctrines—History. 3. Jewish messianic movements. 4. Messiah—Judaism. 5. Hasidim—Biography. I. Title.

BM198.3.A.4813 2006

296.8'332—dc22

2006049914

ISSN 0929-2261

ISBN-10 90 04 15356 X

ISBN-13 978 90 04 15356 1

**© Copyright 2006 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Hotei Publishing,
IDC Publishers, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, and VSP.**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Brill provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to
The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive,
Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA.
Fees are subject to change.

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

CONTENTS

Credits	vii
Preface	ix

PART ONE

Introduction: The Messianic Element in Hasidism	3
Chapter One: “Time Does Not Assent to It”—Messianic Strains in the Besht’s Holy Epistle	14
Chapter Two: The Annals of the Zolochov Dynasty	29
Chapter Three: The Beginning of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s Career In 5532 (1772)	51
Chapter Four: Linkage	67
Chapter Five: A <i>Tiqqun Leil Shavu’ot</i> in R. Yehiel Mikhel’s Prayer House	81
Chapter Six: On the Character of the Group	105
Chapter Seven: Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781)— The Dissemination of the Torah’s Mysteries and the Death of R. Yehiel Mikhel	130
Chapter Eight: The Sweet Fruit of Messianism	152
Chapter Nine: The Hasidic Immigration of 5537 (1777)	165
Summary: From Esoteric Group to Mass Movement	193

PART TWO

Anthology: Disciples and Writings 215

PART THREE

Appendix I
 The Besht’s Holy Epistle—Editions And Versions 299

Appendix II: Hasidic Conduct Literature
 Introduction 307

 Chapter One: Descent For The Sake Of The Ascent 321

 Chapter Two: Equanimity 338

 Chapter Three: Torah Study 354

 Chapter Four: Prayer 373

Appendix III
 Family Tree 385

PART FOUR

Bibliography 399

Index 421

CREDITS

The publishers of the original edition in Hebrew

Haifa University Press and Zmora-Bitan Publishing House Ltd.

The illustration on page 298

With the courtesy of the Altshuler Family, Carmay Yoseph, Israel.

PREFACE

This study began in 1991 with a rather casual choice to dedicate my doctoral research to a lesser known Hasidic master, Meshullam Feibush ha-Levi Heller, whose two epistles to an anonymous friend were “not thoroughly investigated yet,” as described by my instructor, Joseph Dan. As a matter of fact, Prof. Dan, the Gershom Scholem Chair of Kabbalah in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem at that time, suggested an alternative subject: the writings of another Hasidic master, Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir. But Heller’s *Yosher Divrei Emet* (Honest Words of Truth and Faith) was a small, thin volume while Ze’ev Wolf’s *Or ha-Meir* (The Light that Illuminates) was a large, heavy one. Naturally, I chose the smaller book.

Sixteen years later, after thoroughly investigating the compositions of both Meshullam Feibush ha-Levi Heller and Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir as well as dozens, perhaps hundreds, of other Hasidic epistles, stories, tractates and compositions with fascinating titles, I now understand that the somewhat arbitrary choice of the young woman to go into the depth of Hasidic texts shaped the mature scholar. The restlessness that I felt whenever the immediate, literal meaning of Hasidic texts contradicted the dominant generalization of Hasidism as “The Neutralization of the Messianic Element” as it was phrased so clearly by Gershom Scholem, led me to call into question the validity of old truths. My curiosity directed me towards the “subversive” works of Ben-Zion Dinur and Isaiah Tishby that had observed a messianic core in the early days of the movement. Step by step I encountered a vivid, energetic Hasidism that revealed and revived its messianic secrets.

Yet, as critical as my conclusions were toward some of my predecessors’ assertions, I neither underestimated their intellectual efforts nor ignored their textual achievements and historical contribution. Hence, this book contains their wisdom even though some of its conclusions are not in accordance with theirs.

The progress of Hasidism research would not have been possible without the ongoing efforts of the best of historians and scholars of Kabbalah. Having their own doubts, they have reevaluated the old conventions, discovered new primary materials and expounded the

vocabulary with which Hasidism was understood. I am indebted to many scholars that write nowadays about the various aspects of Hasidic messianism, whose new findings and refreshing observations have been integrated into this study.

It is no coincidence that the reevaluation of Hasidism began in the last decade of the 20th century. In the third day of Tamuz 5754 (June 12, 1994), in the midst of a campaign to inaugurate him as the King Messiah, the 92 years old Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Menahem Mendel Schneerson, passed away in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Although expected, his death shocked his devotees of the Hasidic court of *Habad*. A few of them went so far as to deny his physical death or develop expectations to his rapid return or “reappearance.” This public affair demonstrated the durability of messianic hopes, and supplied scholars of religious studies with a rare opportunity to closely examine history in the making. No longer was it possible either to ignore the authenticity of the messianic atmosphere that surrounds certain Hasidic leaders or to attempt to undermine it by attributing this messianic drive to pre-Hasidic roots. The messianic burst of these *Habad* followers seemed like a spontaneous revival of a forgotten or denied authentic belief in the *Zaddik*, the Hasidic leader, as a semi-Messiah that would be easily revealed as a complete Messiah, should the historical circumstances and the individual greatness of the person allowed it. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the current revision of Hasidism started with a reflection on the theological meaning of the Kabbalistic oriented title *Zaddik*, both a noun and an attribute that expresses the Hasidic leader’s status as a vivid and tangible divine mediator.

What has been missing from the literature is a comprehensive study that integrates the theoretical observations and the historical events and retells the beginning of Hasidism as a story of a messianic movement. I hope to have achieved this goal in this study. The first steps were made in my doctoral thesis, which I submitted to the Hebrew University, Jerusalem in 1995. My instructor and mentor, Prof. Joseph Dan, has inspired me with his wisdom and I am forever indebted to him. With Prof. Peter Schäfer, Dr. Klaus Hermman and Dr. Leora Batnizky, Prof. Dan was the editor of *Jewish Studies Quarterly* that hosted my first articles, and I thank them all for the opportunity to publicize my first findings in this prestigious international arena.

A most important milestone was the publication of the Hebrew edition in 2002. It happened thanks to the determination of Prof.

Niza Ben Dov, the editor-in-chief of Haifa University Press. A brave, courageous soul and a free spirit, Niza gave me the precious gift of her friendship, which I will cherish forever. I am profoundly thankful to Prof. Aaron Ben Ze'ev, Prof. Fannia Oz, Dr. Shulamit Almog, Miriam Zaidan, the editor Gabriella Avigur-Rotem and book designer Hava Mordochoveich. As I leaf through the book, I remember the late publisher Ohad Zmora, may his memory be of blessing, and the late Captain Immanuel Klamperer of the Israeli Navy, whose expertise in marine navigation allowed me to reconstruct the 5537 (1777) journey from Eastern Europe to the Land of Israel.

At that time I was a senior fellow at the Shalem Center, Jerusalem. It is my duty and pleasure to thank Shalem's management and colleagues for supporting the research and sponsoring its English translation. I am thankful to *Yad ha-Nadiv* Foundation for their generous support as well.

As I continued my research I came to realize that the study of Hasidism was 'a cumulative project' as Hasidism itself was defined. Every conclusion I have reached raised new questions and motivated me to further investigations. Many friends and colleagues contributed to the broadening and deepening of this volume. I am grateful to Prof. Yehuda Liebes for the enriching dialogue and the consistent support; Dr. Esther (Etti) Liebes turned the Library of Gershom Scholem on Jewish Mysticism in Jerusalem into a *Pard'es* (Paradise) that welcomes scholars of Kabbalah and messianism; Prof. Moshe Idel shared his unique perspective with me; Prof. Jacob Barnai went into the trouble of rereading the work and adding useful insights; I enjoyed the support and the assistance of Prof. Dan Ben-Amos, Dr. Annelies Kuyt, poet Miron Izakson and Prof. Joseph Tubbi and his wife Zvia; Sally and Dr. Michael Oren have been devoted friends and have always found the time and the energy to encourage me in this tiresome voyage;

All these years I have the privilege of being assisted by Maya Levi, a young accomplished student of Bible and theology. Although she never attended my classes, I regard her as a student of mine, and I am confident that her achievements will overshadow those of her teacher's.

The publication of this updated English edition was made possible thanks to Prof. David Katz that believed in the value of the work and saved no efforts to introduce it to the English speaking audience; Prof. Matt Goldish, a dear friend and colleague, contributed his professional advice and I am profoundly thankful to him.

Joel Linsider was more than a mere translator with his informative footnotes as well as his graceful and fluent work. Brill's Acquisitions Editor, Mr. Michael Klein Swormink; Mr. Igor Nemirovsky; Production Editor, Mr. Michael J. Mozina; and the professional staff of Brill Academic Publishers have done their best to insure that the work will be published in the highest academic standards that have always characterized Brill's publications.

As my study came to a close, I finally grasped the depth of time. Behind the historical tale hid the story of my grandmother's ancestors, members of the small Hasidic group that was carried by its messianic hopes to the Land of Israel in 5537 (1777). I share their story with my beloved family: my father, Gideon, whose love and devotion turned this journey into a quest for the roots of my soul; my mother, Heiruth, whose intellectual legacy will always inspire me. My daughter Hemdat ('beloved'), who's singing opens the gates of Heaven for me; my son Avshalom, whose sculptures and paintings always challenge me, and his lovely bride Anat; My husband Zion, whose generous heart has healed all wounds and revived my soul.

Carmai Yoseph Israel 2006.

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

THE MESSIANIC ELEMENT IN HASIDISM

As we look around today and see giant billboards proclaiming the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the late grand rabbi of *Habad*, R. Menahem Mendel Schneerson to be the King Messiah, we may find it surprising that, only a few decades ago, the Hasidic movement could be characterized, in Gershom Scholem's phrase, as a "Neutralization of the messianic Element."¹ Like Simeon Dubnow and Martin Buber before him, Scholem, the founder of modern research into Kabbalah, denied that Hasidism could be defined as a messianic movement, and he saw its growth during the eighteenth century as a reaction to the Sabbatean apostasy. True to his dialectical approach to history, Scholem defined Hasidism as a religious movement that adopted the essence of Kabbalah but removed its messianic sting by forgoing its eschatological side and focusing instead on the redemption of the individual, which can be realized independently of national redemption. In Scholem's view, the individual's drive to "commune" with God took center stage within Hasidism and marginalized the anticipation of the Messiah and of the return from exile that had characterized messianic movements from sixteenth-century Safed Kabbalah through seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sabbateanism.

Scholem's conclusion is at odds with those reached by the historian Ben-Zion Dinur² and by Scholem's own student in kabbalistic research, Isaiah Tishby,³ both of whom identified an explicit or implicit messianic theme in Hasidism. In their view, a messianic movement does not necessarily slip into apostasy and leave the Jewish fold, as happened in the case of Shabbetai Zevi, who declared himself the messiah but converted to Islam, along with many of his followers, in 5426 (1666). They saw Hasidism as an exemplar of a messianic movement that stopped short of throwing off all restraints, remaining

¹ See Scholem 1971, pp. 176–202. The article's title "The Neutralization of the Messianic Element in Early Hasidism" clearly reflects Scholem's view on Hasidism.

² See Dinur 1955, pp. 83–227.

³ See Tishby 1967.

within the Jewish fold. Studies by contemporary scholars have provided added depth for the conclusions reached by Dinur and Tishby. Still, the messianic kernel of Hasidism remains hidden and ill defined. Its disclosure is intimately connected with the image of the “*zaddik* (righteous one),” the Hasidic community’s leader, whose followers attribute to him higher powers, even to the point of believing in his standing as the Messiah. It follows that any effort to reveal the messianic theology of Hasidism will be inseparably intertwined with reconstruction of Hasidism’s history as a movement, and both will require solving a basic mystery: who was the first Hasidic *zaddik* and under what circumstances did his followers come to see him as the Messiah?

The tradition of the *zaddik* as Messiah did not begin with Hasidism’s legendary founder, R. Israel Ba’al Shem Tov (the Besht). Gershom Scholem observed that neither during his life nor posthumously was the Besht designated “*zaddik*.”⁴ Likewise, the frequent portrayal in Hasidic hagiography of R. Dov Ber, the “*Maggid* (Preacher)” of Mezhirichi, as the Besht’s successor as *zaddik* and leader of the Hasidic movement is mere anachronism. It is a concept that hangs by a thread, reflecting late traditions based on events of doubtful authenticity. The historian Ada Rapoport-Albert has noted the gaps in reliable historical information about the early days of Hasidism, observing that “the need for farfetched conjectures in interpreting seemingly surprising events in the period following the Besht’s death grows out of the anachronistic expectation that the mantle of leadership would pass immediately and directly from the Besht to the *Maggid* [Dov Ber of Mezhirichi], in the way that leadership was passed (and sometimes fought over) in later Hasidic dynasties.”⁵ The desire to find a link grows out of the gap between the Besht’s death in 5520 (1760) and the beginning of historical Hasidism in 5532 (1772), when the first documents excommunicating the *Hasidim* were published. But there are no reliable data to support the proposition that the *Maggid* R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi served as the Besht’s successor during that twelve-year period, and the identity of the *Hasidim* who were the objects of those excommunications remains unknown. There likewise is reason to doubt the widespread view that R. Dov Ber began to serve as leader of the *Hasidim* in 5532 (1772), only a few months

⁴ See Scholem 1976/2, p. 241.

⁵ Rapoport-Albert 1990, p. 199.

before his death. No historical facts support it, and it fails to explain what led R. Dov Ber, a sickly man toward the end of his life, to forsake old ways and embark on a new path that would ultimately establish far-flung groups within the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe.

And so the questions recur: Who was the first Hasidic *zaddik*? When was the first Hasidic court established? Who were the members of that court and what aspects of their beliefs and activities generated opposition forceful enough to crystallize the *Mitnaggedim* (opponents of *Hasidim*) as an enduring stream within Jewish society since the end of the eighteenth century?

The present study attempts to return to the starting point and resolve some of these mysteries. It examines the years 5500 (1740) to 5541 (1781), Hasidism's Era of Redemption. That period, spanning two generations, produced two messianic characters from whom the movement developed: the Besht, as herald of redemption, and the redeemer himself—R. Yehiel Mikhel, the *Maggid* of Zolochov, who was Hasidism's first *zaddik*.

"The Era of Redemption" is a phrase borrowed from the terminology of those who "reckon the End"—groups of Jews who, since the destruction of the Temple, have sought to calculate when the Messiah will come and how the process of redemption will play out. For example, following the death of Shabbetai Zevi in 5436 (1676), some of his followers continued to believe that their Messiah did not die in the manner of all flesh but was "hidden away" in the higher realms. They accordingly sought to calculate when the period of his concealment would end, at which time he would reappear and redeem Israel.⁶ But the effort to reckon the End was not confined to Sabbatean circles; even those who rejected the Sabbatean calculations on the premise that "the deer [*ha-zevi*] has fled, having produced nothing good," spun their own alternative calculations. Among them was R. Isaac Hayyim Kohen min ha-Hazzanim, who calculated that the Messiah would be born in 5470 (1710) and that the redemption would take place in 5500 (1740), when he was thirty years of age.⁷

Among the well-known eighteenth-century reckoners of the End was the Italian scholar of Kabbalah Immanuel Hai Ricchi (5448–5503;

⁶ See Scholem 1937, pp. 377–378; Benayahu 1959–1960; Goldish 2004, pp. 162–170.

⁷ See Shazar 1970, p. 25.

1688–1743).⁸ His *Uprightness of the Heart* (*Yosher Levav*), composed in Aleppo, Syria, in 5497 (1737), includes detailed calculations of the End, written in the vague language typical of kabbalistic Sages. They led him to conclude that the time of redemption would be in the eighth month, Iyyar, in the year 5541 (April–May 1781).⁹ To reinforce his finding, he anchored it in the numerical value of the verse “Though it tarry, await it; because it will surely come, it will not delay” (Hab. 2:3), interpreted to refer to the coming of the Messiah. Ricchi added one important detail to all this: the signs of the redemption will begin to appear forty years before the event, that is, in 5500 (1740). This added feature is significant, for it anticipates an extended period of redemption, forty years or more, and it suggests an effort on Ricchi’s part to conform his results to those of earlier End-reckoners, who had determined that year to be the time for redemption. Similarly, R. Samuel b. Eliezer of Klovrio adopted Ricchi’s calculations and, in his work *Ways of Pleasantness* (*Darkhei*

⁸ Immanuel Hai Ricchi, a commentator of Lurianic Kabbalah with a possible Sabbatean undertone in his writings, had settled in Safed in 5478 (1718) and returned to Italy after the death of his daughter in a plague. In 5497 (1737) he settled in Jerusalem but a financial crisis forced him again to leave the Land of Israel and to return to Italy where he was murdered. For a detailed biography of Hai Ricchi, see Benayahu 1949; Wilensky 1949; Barnai 1992, “Hai Ricchi,” index; Morgenstern 1999, pp. 19–28.

⁹ See *Uprightness of the Heart* 47a: “If so, six and one-half hours of the divine ‘day’ are equivalent, in human terms, to 541 years and eight months. Thus, according to R. Simeon b. Yoḥai’s views, the mountain of the Lord’s house will have been established [cf. Isa. 2:2] by A.M. 5541. At that point, Israel will have respite from the wars and tribulations that must accompany the coming of the Messiah, which will wane during 5500 and the first two-thirds of 5541, up to the point at which we will be happy and joyful. Your evidence for this is the phrase ‘even if he tarry, await him’; for the numerical value of ‘if he tarry’ (אם יתמהר) is 541 [the Hebrew year designation, omitting the thousands figure], and the first letter of ‘await’ (חכה), ח has a value of eight, corresponding to the eight months, during which we await him, for he will come.” Ricchi’s calculations are based on the talmud’s statement (*Sanhedrin* 97a) that a day in God’s life corresponds to one thousand human years, based on a midrashic understanding of Ps. 90:4—“For a thousand years in Your eyes are as yesterday when it is past.” The talmud determines as well that the redemption will take place on God’s Sabbath—“a day that is all *Shabbat*”—that is, the seventh millennium of creation. On the basis of that and other traditions, Immanuel Hai Ricchi advanced the estimated onset of the redemption to the dawn of the sixth millennium. Relying on the calculation that 1,000 years=one day=12 hours, he determined that the dawn of the sixth millennium begins six and one-half hours after “midday” of the fifth millennium, that is, 5,000 years + 541 years and eight months after creation. The year 5541 corresponds to 1781. For additional detail see Tishby 1967, p. 17; Morgenstern 1999, pp. 19–36.

No'am), reiterated the determination that “it will be eight months into the year 5541 (1781), as noted, and our righteous Messiah will not delay his arrival beyond then.”¹⁰

Another year in the second half of the eighteenth century that aroused messianic expectations was 5537 (1777), during which the arrival of the Messiah was rumored. David Assaf held that “it may be no coincidence that the rumor about the coming of the Messiah gained currency in 5537 (1777), of all years . . . , for it was the centennial (comprising two jubilee periods) of Shabbetai *Zevi*’s death.”¹¹ Assaf assumed that the rumor was tied as well to Russian victories in Poland and to the belief that every conflict between Christian realms and the Muslim Ottoman Empire portended the liberation of the Holy Land from foreign rule.

By their very nature, End-reckonings and messianic dates tend to capture the attention of individuals and groups whose lives are already suffused with messianic concerns and who are eager to use the reckonings to confirm their expectations. During the eighteenth century, Ricchi’s works gained the attention of groups of Sages in Eastern Europe who engaged in extensive study of Kabbalah and in ascetic withdrawal from society in order to repair the sins of the age and accelerate the onset of the redemption.

This spiritual setting provided fertile ground for the stirrings of the Besht, regarded as the founder of Hasidism. A review of his life history illuminates the connections between his actions and the messianic expectations abroad in his day. The process of his revelation; his seven years of seclusion in preparation for his unique mission; his pledge not to engage in kabbalistic mysteries before attaining the age of thirty-six;¹² and his failed attempt to immigrate to the Land of Israel in 5500 (1740)—all were influenced by prophecies, such as Ricchi’s and R. Isaac *Hayyim* Kohen’s, of the imminent redemption.¹³

¹⁰ *Ways of Pleasantness* 5a; Tishby 1967, p. 17. Tishby cites End-calculations of other eastern European rabbis, including R. Israel *Harif* Hailperin of Satanov; they variously set the time for redemption in 5528 (1768), 5535 (1775), 5538 (1778) or 5542 (1782).

¹¹ Assaf 1996, p. 340.

¹² See *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), stories 5, 8. Unless otherwise noted, all extracts from *In Praise of the Besht* are from the Rubinstein edition.

¹³ According to early Hasidic traditions, the Besht was familiar with Ricchi’s *Teaching of the Pious* (*Mishnat Hasidim*) and knew how to pray in the manner there recommended. See *In Praise of the Besht*, story 149.

This study begins, accordingly, with a new look at the Besht's *Holy Epistle*, in all its versions. It shows that the Besht hoped to be the herald of the redemption, in the manner of Elijah proclaiming the Messiah's arrival, and that he devoted seven years of his life to that effort. Only on Rosh ha-Shanah of the year 5507 (September 1746), when his soul ascended to the Garden of Eden and encountered the Messiah, did the Besht come to realize that he would not merit greeting the redeemer during his lifetime. But even though his hopes were shattered thirteen years before his death, they left an indelible mark on his circle of students.

Most of the book is devoted to presenting the teachings and work of R. Yehiel Mikhel, the *Maggid* of Zolochov, a student of the Besht. R. Yehiel Mikhel embodies a different type of messianic character, the *zaddik*, whose soul is believed by his disciples to be the soul of the redeemer or who may himself believe that.

Born in 5486 (1726), the *Maggid* of Zolochov grew up in the intensely messianic environment, suffused with expectations and reckonings of the End, that surrounded the ascetic sects out of which Hasidism was to grow. In contrast to the Besht, who kept his mystical experiences to himself and to all appearances was undistinguished from the crowd, the *Maggid* of Zolochov chose to withdraw from the community and founded a prayer house (*beit minyan*) of his own. In that prayer house, which he established for his students in the town of Brody in eastern Galicia, the first Hasidic-messianic court was formed. Its members functioned as a kabbalistic fellowship, striving to fashion a living bridge between earth and heaven, between the human and the divine, and to bring about national redemption by means of prayer and mystical union. The principal messianic burden was cast on the leader, the *Maggid* of Zolochov. He was called "the soul of *Shaddai*," after "*El Shaddai*"—one of God's names—thereby showing the divine origin of his soul. His students understood that soul to be an embodiment of the *sefirah* (divine emanation) of foundation (*yesod*), the *sefirah* of the *zaddik*, from which the soul of the Messiah was hewn. This gave rise to the designation "*Zaddikim she-ba-dor* (the righteous ones of the generation)" by which the *Maggid* of Zolochov was known. This was the first time in the history of Hasidism that the term "*zaddik*" had been used as a noun rather than an adjective and applied to a man with a messianic mission. It served to convey the god-like stature enjoyed by the first Hasidic *zaddik* in the eyes of his disciples.

The book offers a comprehensive portrayal of the Era of Redemption of the *Maggid* of Zolochov and his students. It begins in 5532 (1772), with an incident at the slaughterhouse in the town of Korets, Ukraine, in which the *Maggid*'s students rose up against the oppression of the poor by the town's wealthy class and its rabbinical allies. That episode gave rise to the separatist Hasidic slaughter of kosher meat, and the associated documents attest for the first time to the existence of a band of people calling themselves "*hasidim* (Pious Ones)," worshipping in their own prayer house and adopting kabbalistic practices.

The second stage of the Era of Redemption took place in 5537 (1777). In the month of Adar, a group of *Hasidim* led by R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and R. Abraham of Kolyshki set out for the Land of Israel—heaven's gate, through which prayers ascend to the upper worlds. On the festival of Shavuot that year, the members of the group who had remained behind conducted a *tiqqun leil shavu'ot*¹⁴ and attempted, during the course of the night, to spiritually unite in shared prayer the group's members in the Land of Israel with those in the Diaspora, a step that would open the gate of heaven and bring about the redemption. Soon after that festival, beginning in 5538 (1778), the group began to publish esoteric kabbalistic books, intending to disseminate the secrets of redemption and accelerate its advent. The expectations of the band's members in the Diaspora and in the Land of Israel were focused on the eighth month, Iyyar, of the year 5541 (April–May 1781), in which Israel was destined to be redeemed.¹⁵ At that point, they published the *Besht's Epistle*, in the hope that disseminating the mysteries of the Messiah, encompassed in that letter, would consummate the messianic effort that the Besht himself had undertaken. Aryeh Morgenstern, who uncovered the connection between the time of the publication and the expected messianic date,¹⁶ saw Ricchi's influence on the *Maggid* of Zolochov's circle as definitive; indeed, R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, an important student of the *Maggid*, cited Ricchi's *Uprightness of the Heart* as a work essential to understanding the mystery of the redemption. Heller's

¹⁴ *Tiqqun leil shavu'ot* refers to the practice of staying awake all night on the festival of Shavuot, engaged in study or prayer, in commemoration of the giving of the Torah—**translator's note**.

¹⁵ That is, according to the reckonings of Immanuel Hai Ricchi in *Uprightness of the Heart*.

¹⁶ See Morgenstern 1999, p. 198.

own letters were published under the title *Honest Words of Truth and Faith* (*Yosher Divrei Emet*), alluding to the title of Ricchi's book. It appears that the lengthy period of redemption sketched by Ricchi enabled the members of the *Maggid's* circle to merge their messianic aspirations into a continuum that started with the Besht and to see themselves as carrying out the divine redemptive program that had begun in 5500 (1740) and that was to reach its climax in Iyyar of 5541 (April–May 1781).

The higher the hope, the deeper the despair. The publication of *Besht's Epistle*, with date and publishers prominently displayed, disclosed the messianic program of the *Maggid* of Zolochov and his disciples and made them the target of forceful attacks by rabbis and lay communal leaders. Unnerved by the very existence of a messianic band, these leaders feared the renewal of a Sabbatean sect that would undermine existing institutions and threaten traditional ways. They may also have feared the reaction of the Christian authorities and local populace, who might well take the appearance of a Jewish messiah as disparaging the Christian belief in Jesus as messiah. The mounting opposition to the *Maggid* of Zolochov and his circle generated a spate of excommunications and ostracisms, decreed in many communities during the months of Av and Elul 5541 (July–September 1781). These attacks appear to have brought about the death of R. Yehiel Mikhel in Elul 5541 (August–September 1781), four months after the anticipated redemption that had still not come. He died brokenhearted, ostracized, and excommunicated.

Paradoxically enough, the tragic death of the first Hasidic *zaddik* paved the way for the emergence of Hasidism as a mass movement. The *Maggid's* disciples, in contrast to those of Jesus and of Shabbetai Zevi and to the “dead *Hasidim*” of R. Nahman of Bratslav, did not believe that their master would return from the dead. Beyond that, the *Maggid's* students vowed never to choose a new leader, and the absence of an accepted heir led to the group's gradual disintegration. Some of its members claimed the title “*zaddik*,” gathered disciples, and established courts patterned after the esoteric court in Brody: the *zaddik* at its heart, and his believers sheltering him like the organs of the body, which both envelop the heart and draw vitality from it. The break-up into numerous courts, which transformed Hasidism from an underground movement into one with a mass following, also precluded the sprouting of its messianic seed, for when all is said and done, the nearly simultaneous appearance

of two or more messiahs makes a mockery of the notion of a single, chosen, Messiah. Hasidism's messianic impulse was thus tempered, sublimated into an internal aspiration. To this day, however, from the Satmar court in the United States to the Belz, Gur, and Vishnitz courts in Israel, tens of thousands of *Hasidim* cherish the belief that the Messiah will come forth from their own dynasties of *zaddikim* and will someday be revealed to all. That notwithstanding, open expressions of messianism associated with particular *zaddikim* have been infrequent and unusual. One such messianic outbreak took place in the nineteenth century, involving R. Nahman of Bratslav; another is the contemporary outbreak surrounding the Lubavitcher Rebbe. But though these later phenomena draw on deep-seated trends in the Hasidic doctrine of the "*zaddik*," they are merely a pale reflection of events in the early days of the movement. In the twentieth century, religious messianism, emphasizing the role and personality of the redeemer, has been displaced from the stage of Jewish history. It has made way for ideological and political movements, ranging from socialism to Zionism, though some of those movements retain messianic aspirations cloaked in modern dress: messianism without a Messiah.

The history of Hasidism as here presented differs from the picture of the movement's beginnings generally painted in Hasidic literature. But the book's account offers an alternative not only to Hasidic historiography but also to the conventional academic view, particularly with respect to early Hasidism's messianic dimension. That factor, which lies at the heart of the matter, has until now been examined only superficially.

At the epicenter of these events are R. Yehiel Mikhel, the *Maggid* of Zolochov, and the members of his band. Clarifying the link between their messianic belief and their interpretation of the *Besht's Epistle* discloses the continuity between the Besht's mission as herald of the redemption and the succeeding generation's efforts to actuate the redemption.

Beyond that, the activities of the *Maggid* of Zolochov and his students follow a pattern that shows the formation of a sect whose religious life was dominated by the messianic idea. The Besht's own mystical efforts to bring about the redemption had represented, for the most part, only the spiritual strivings of an individual. In contrast, the actions of the *Maggid* and his students attest to the flowering of a messianic movement, in the manner of earlier such

movements in Jewish history. A messianic movement of this sort draws no distinction between the redemption of the individual and the redemption of the Jewish people, through which the individual will also be redeemed; the leader of the movement is seen as the redeemer of the nation as well; the yearning for redemption is transformed in the believer's consciousness from a utopian vision to a driving force, active in history; and the believer's expectations are focused on the Land of Israel, the return to which is understood as carrying out the redemptive process in a concrete way.

These four defining features certainly characterize the activities of the *Maggid* of Zolochov and his disciples. They sought to disseminate their messianic tidings throughout Jewish society, and they directed their messianic hopes to their leader, believing that his soul was a reincarnation of the redeemer's soul and that it enjoyed a special affinity with the soul of Moses. Some members of the group went up to the Land of Israel as a vanguard, showing that they sought not redemption *in* the Diaspora but, rather, redemption *from* it.

Why, then, did the figure of the *Maggid* of Zolochov disappear from the history of Hasidism and why have most of his sayings and deeds been attributed to another *Maggid*, R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi? The answers lie concealed within the esoteric codes adopted by the disciples and behind the image projected by nineteenth-century Hasidic writers—the image of a literary Hasidism, which uses hagiography to backfill the gaps in the historical account, even where its connection to actual events is highly tenuous.

It is no simple matter to discern what lies behind the superficially complete picture painted by Hasidic hagiography. And it is still more difficult to piece together the data in order to uncover the inner account of a closed community that conceals its secrets from outsiders. To do so requires a fresh reading of Hasidic sources and a reassessment of conclusions reached during the fifties and sixties by historians and students of Kabbalah. The leading candidate for reevaluation is Gershom Scholem's definition of Hasidism as a neutralization of the messianic impulse—a definition given a decidedly ironic cast by the recent turn of events in the *Habad* court. Scholem vigorously denied any messianic element in Hasidism and dogmatically criticized the contrary view of Ben-Zion Dinur and Isaiah Tishby. But it appears, with the benefit of hindsight, that Dinur and Tishby studied Hasidism from an objective point of view, setting aside emotion and prejudice. Scholem, in contrast, was implicitly concerned

with the question of what Hasidism *ought to be*, rather than what it actually *was*. This failing on the part of the outstanding researcher of Kabbalah may have been mere happenstance, attesting to the elusive nature of messianic belief and to its tendency to conceal more than it reveals. But it may also be that Scholem was ensnared by his own refusal in principle to even consider the possibility of a messianic side to Hasidism. He may have been deterred from entertaining that possibility by his concern that acknowledging the messianic character of Hasidism might cast it in the same light as Sabbateanism, thereby obscuring the boundary between a movement that remained within the Jewish fold and one whose leader had converted to Islam and removed himself from the Jewish world. It is possible as well that Scholem's view of the matter tacitly expressed his unwillingness to regard Zionism as a messianic movement that carried on the messianic feature of Hasidism¹⁷—a position clashing with that of his contemporaries who often depicted the fierce commitment of the Zionist pioneers as a modern embodiment of the intense faith that characterized a congregation of *Hasidim*. Indeed, to understand the Hasidic immigration to the Land of Israel in 5537 (1777) as messianically impelled is to emphasize the continuity between the messianic immigrations and the early Zionist immigrations.

“Great are the searchings of the heart.” And even now, as the messianic mystery of Hasidism's beginnings is on its way to being solved, the picture remains far from complete. I've tried to present my findings as layers of a palimpsest being progressively uncovered, but many questions are yet to be answered. In addition, I've attempted in this work to tell a story that begins with great hope but ends with bitter disappointment and to depict for the reader both the heavy toll taken by the agonies of redemption and the sweet fruit that they bear in the ascent to the Land of Israel. May I thereby recall and give voice to the ideas that are explicit and implicit in the written record.

¹⁷ Scholem often expressed his skittishness about defining Zionism as a messianic movement. See, for example, Scholem 1990, pp. 85–90.

CHAPTER ONE

“TIME DOES NOT ASSENT TO IT”—MESSIANIC STRAINS IN THE BESHT’S HOLY EPISTLE*

The Besht’s Holy Epistle (Iggeret Ha-Qodesh)

R. Israel Ba‘al Shem Tov (the Besht), regarded as the founder of Hasidism, was born, as far as we can tell, in 5460 (1700) and died in 5520 (1760). He lived most of his adult life in the town of Medzhibozh, in Podolia.¹ To this day, the Besht remains a puzzling and mysterious figure; the Hagiography² disseminated about him during the nineteenth century offers no historical facts and instead portrays him anachronistically as a Hasidic *zaddik* of the sort that did not develop until decades after his death.³ Moshe Rosman, who located original documents about the Besht in the Medzhibozh community, proved that he was not a mere legend.⁴ Still, academic researchers have failed to clear the mists that enshroud the figure of the Besht and instead compound the uncertainty with their own disputes. One issue much debated is whether the Besht was the founder of historical Hasidism or whether he was portrayed as such only after the fact, in the generations that followed the crystallization of the movement. A related question involves the messianic impetus for some of the Besht’s actions, such as his failed attempt to immigrate to the Land of Israel in 5500 (1740): Did messianic

* This chapter first appeared in English in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*. See Altshuler 1999.

¹ On the geography and history of Medzhibozh, see Rosman 2000, pp. 87–112.

² Hagiography (*sippurei sheva'im* in Hebrew)—is a genre of fiction that glorifies the hero by portraying him as a person of exalted qualities, head and shoulders above the masses. Occasionally, supernatural powers are attributed to him. Stories of this genre tend to follow standardized patterns.

³ The first collection of stories about the Besht—*In Praise of the Besht* (*Shivhei ha-Besht*)—was published in Kapost in 5575 (1815). It encompasses some reliable traditions, though it includes legends and hagiography as well. In contrast, the later hagiographic accounts of late-nineteenth-century Hasidic literature are of very doubtful reliability. See Dan 1991; Altshuler 1994.

⁴ See Rosman 1987. See also Teller 1999.

aspirations move him to embark on that journey? And, if so, how are they connected to the formation of the Hasidic movement?

One reason for the obscurity surrounding the Besht's personality and actions is the paucity of his writings. As a practical matter, the only written document he left is a letter addressed to his brother-in-law, R. Gershon of Kutov, who immigrated to the Land of Israel in 5506 (1746).⁵ The letter, which came to be known as "*The Holy Epistle*" ("*Iggeret ha-Qodesh*"; it also is called "*The Besht's Epistle*," and that term is used here), documents the ascent of the Besht's soul to the upper worlds.⁶ The ascent took place during prayer, in the course of which the Besht's soul separated from his body and ascended to paradise in order to glimpse the wonders of the upper worlds. It is known that the Besht underwent such an experience more than once, and the stories in *In Praise of the Besht* tell of its physical effects: he would "tremble in his prayer," "his face burning like a torch and his eyes protruding and open."⁷

The *Besht's Epistle* reveals a mystic well versed in Kabbalah, who acquired most of his knowledge not from the written tradition but from a heavenly instructor, the prophet Ahiyah of Shiloh, known also as the prophet Elijah's guide.⁸ That shared quality sheds light on the Besht's latent ambition to serve as the herald of redemption, a role reserved by the tradition for Elijah. Beyond that, the letter reveals as well a messianic impetus for the ascent of the soul: the Besht's implicit desire to meet the Messiah and hear directly from him the tidings of redemption. That encounter, however, brought the Besht's heavenly journey to a surprising conclusion, ending the messianic period of his life. A veil of secrecy was once again spread over the mysteries of redemption that had been revealed to the Besht in heaven.

⁵ See Stiman-Katz 1986, "Gershon of Kutov," index; Barnai 1977.

⁶ In effect, the *Besht's Epistle* was written twice. On the differences between the two letters—referred to here as the First Epistle and the Second Epistle—and their various versions, see below, pp. 299–306.

⁷ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 18.

⁸ R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, a student of the Besht, attested to the link between his teacher and Ahiyah of Shiloh. See *Biography of Jacob Joseph (Toledot Ya'akov Yosef)* 166a: "Ahiyah of Shiloh, who received [teachings] from Moses our teacher, may peace be upon him, and was among those who departed from Egypt; later, he was a member of the court of King David, may peace be upon him, and was the master of Eli[jah] the prophet and of my own teacher, may his memory endure to the life of the world to come."

What is left unsaid can be as instructive as what is said: the *Besht's Epistle* does not portray its author as someone boldly proclaiming new religious tidings or founding a social movement. On the contrary; the Besht's journey to the upper worlds was a personal journey. It was given broader significance, beyond the personal realm, only by the ensuing generation.

When Will the Master Come?

The ascent of the soul described in the *Besht's Epistle* took place on Rosh ha-Shanah (the Jewish New Year) of the year 5507 (September 1746). In the course of the ascent, the Besht found himself in attendance at the heavenly judgment of the souls that takes place on Rosh ha-Shanah. This, however, was no routine judgment, of the sort that occurs annually; rather, it was a unique event that the Besht describes, in terms borrowed from the prophecy of Daniel, as the Day of Judgment or the End of Days. "The great angel Michael" that the Besht sees in Garden of Eden is "Michael the great Prince," described by Daniel as Israel's patron angel, who will appear in time of crisis and herald the redemption of Israel and the resurrection of the dead. "The princes of all the nations of the world" submit to Michael, representing the triumph of Israel over its persecutors. Even the bestowal on the righteous of numerous gifts—"and many great gifts were given to all the righteous ones (*zaddikim*)"—recalls the luxuries referred to in Daniel's visions. Moreover, Daniel's visions were combined with a revelation of the timing of the End, a matter that turns out to be the focus of the Besht's ascent as well.⁹

The vision that God revealed to me in the ascent will certainly be a wonder and a delight to you as it was a wonder to me as well, wonders known to you in connection with ascents of souls. I beheld marvels such as I had never before seen since attaining awareness, and what I saw and learned during my ascent cannot be recounted or related even face-to-face.¹⁰

* * *

⁹ The quotation here is from the version of the First Epistle in *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979*. See *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Mondschein), pp. 233–237.

¹⁰ The next paragraph, which deals with the fate of souls after death, is irrelevant to the matters at hand and is omitted.

I saw as well the princes of all the nations of the world coming together in submission, as servants before their masters, to the great angel Michael.¹¹ And many great gifts were given to all the righteous ones¹² and all the world, to enable them to endure the rejoicing and great delight—just as at the giving of the Torah¹³—which cannot be comprehended in Corporeality. And I was terrified and shaken by this vision, thinking that [the rejoicing] might have been on my account and that, God forbid, my time had come to depart the world. And it therefore may be proper to do so, but enough said.¹⁴ My soul grieved for myself and for my comrades at my dying outside the Holy Land. But I eventually arrived at and entered the palace of the King Messiah, where I beheld face-to-face what I had never before seen in all my conscious life and had revealed to me things that are not for you. There were also revealed to me wondrous and awesome profound meanings of the Torah, which I had never before seen or heard and which no one had heard for many years.

It occurred to me to ask him [the Messiah] whether all this happiness and joy might be in preparation for his advent. [I continued,] "And when will the Master come?" His lofty response could not be divulged, but "by this will you know it: it will be when what you have learned becomes widely known and manifest to the world and

¹¹ Cf. Dan. 12:1–3: "And at that time, the great prince Michael, who stands for the children of your people, will arise; and it will be a time of tribulation such as never was from the time they became a nation until then. And at that time your people will be rescued . . . and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth will awaken, some to everlasting life and some to reproaches and everlasting abhorrence. And those who are wise will shine like the shining of the sky and those who lead the many to righteousness will be like the stars forever and ever." See also *Hagigah* 12b. It should be noted that R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye observed (*Biography of Jacob Joseph* 202b) that "My teacher [the Besht] performed ascents of the soul and saw Michael, the great guardian of Israel, interceding on Israel's behalf." It follows that R. Jacob Joseph was acquainted with the Besht's First Epistle, for the Second Epistle, appended to his book *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* (*Ben Porat Yosef*), makes no mention of the angel Michael.

¹² Cf. Dan. 2:6: "And if you tell the dream and its meaning, you will receive gifts, presents, and great honor." See also Dan. 5:16–17, 7:9–15.

¹³ Oddly enough, the Besht conflates two occasions on which the heavens open—Rosh ha-Shanah and the giving of the Torah on the Festival of Shavuot—into a single event.

¹⁴ The Besht hints here at a hidden meaning that could not be stated explicitly. The implication of "it therefore may be proper to do so" is not at all clear, and it is difficult to infer just what it is that he needed to do before his death. He may have meant immigration to the Holy Land, as alluded to in the ensuing sentence.

your springs disperse abroad¹⁵ what I have taught you and you have comprehended, so that others will be able to perform unifications [of God's names] and ascents [of the soul] just as you are. And then, all the husks (*gelippot*)¹⁶ will be destroyed and the time will be one of favor and salvation." I was shocked and greatly distressed at how long that interval would be, wondering when all this was possible. But I regained my composure upon realizing that of what I had heard, three efficacious forces and three holy names could be easily learned and explained. I thought: it may be that by this means, other exceptional people can attain the level and degree of discernment I have attained; that is, they will be able to elevate souls heavenward and learn and comprehend as I have. But for my entire life I was not permitted to disclose this, and my request for your sake to teach it to you was not granted. I remain sworn to this from on high.

The Besht affirms in his epistle that he climbed within the upper worlds from level to level and from palace to palace, finding there great joy but unable to fathom its meaning. At first he thought that the denizens of Garden of Eden were happy that he had died and would be joining them. But when he reached the Messiah's palace, the highest of all, it occurred to him to ask the Messiah "whether all this happiness and joy might be in preparation for [the Messiah's] advent."¹⁷ This sentence says something about the Besht's hidden intention in ascending heavenward, and it leads into the ensuing sentence, where the Besht turns to the Messiah and asks when he will come. The Messiah's answer is unexpected:

And when will the Master come? His lofty response (*teshuvato ha-ramah* [or *ha-ramatah*, as explained below) could not be divulged, but "by this will you know it: it will be when what you have learned becomes widely known and manifest to the world and your springs disperse abroad what I have taught you and you have comprehended, so that others will be able to perform unifications [of God's names] and ascents [of the soul] just as you are. And then, all the husks (*gelippot*) will be destroyed and the time will be one of favor and salvation." I was

¹⁵ Cf. Prov. 5:16: "Let your springs be dispersed abroad."

¹⁶ A kabbalistic term for evil forces.

¹⁷ See also the Besht's Second Epistle in *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* 100a-b. In the version that appears there, the Besht believed at first that those in the upper worlds were happy over his death, but it became clear that his time was not yet up and the reason for the joy remained a mystery.

shocked and greatly distressed at how long that interval would be, wondering when all this was possible.

Simply understood, the Messiah's answer sets up an impossible condition. On the one hand, the Messiah conditions his advent on the Besht's springs being dispersed abroad and "what I have taught you" being revealed to the world. On the other hand, the Messiah admonishes the Besht in no uncertain terms not to disclose to anyone, not even to R. Gershon, the secrets he has learned: "But for my entire life I was not permitted to disclose this, and my request for your sake to teach it to you was not granted. I remain sworn to this from on high."

The Messiah's answer thus generates a paradox: the Besht must teach the Messiah's secrets to others in order make the Messiah's advent possible, but at the very same time he is forbidden, with the force of an oath, to teach those secrets.¹⁸ This sheds light on the Besht's comment that "I was shocked . . . wondering when all this was possible"; it can be seen as a reaction to the blind alley posed by the Messiah's answer.

Still, the mystery of the Messiah's answer remains unsolved: if the Messiah is not destined to appear—inasmuch as the precondition to his advent cannot be met—how does the Besht know that a long time would elapse before his arrival? And to what is he reacting when he says, "I was greatly distressed at how long that interval would be"? It appears that the Besht was here reacting as well to the first part of the Messiah's statement: "his [the Messiah's] lofty response could not be divulged." The comment alludes to a scriptural passage pertaining to the prophet Samuel: "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-El, and Gilgal, and Mizpah; and he judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah [which, by word-play, can also be taken to mean "and his lofty response"]", for there was

¹⁸ From ensuing allusions by the Besht, we can infer that he learned from the Messiah the secret of repairing souls, whose purpose is to "raise souls heavenward," that is, to repair and redeem the souls of sinners. Despite the deliberate obfuscation, the Besht hints to R. Gershon that the secret of that repair entails three efficacious forces and three holy names, by means of which the letters of the Torah and the prayers could be unified. See Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, pp. 193–223; Idel 2001, pp. 148–149. On the demand to communicate esoteric secrets for social and moral purposes in early Hasidism, see Loewenthal 1990, pp. 6–14.

his house; and there he judged Israel; and he built there an altar unto the Lord” (1 Sam. 7:15–17). But this portion of the Messiah’s response can also be read, taking account of the numerical values of Hebrew letters, as referring to a date: “And when will the Master come? His [the Messiah’s] response: [the year] הַרְמַתָּה (*h-r-m-t-h* [5645]). But it could not be divulged.” In other words, the Messiah says he will appear in the year 5645 (1885), and the ensuing words—“it could not be divulged” are both the Messiah’s admonition and an allusion to R. Gershon, to whom the matter could not be stated explicitly in writing. This accounts as well for the Besht’s “great distress at how long the interval would be”—the time is known, but the Besht clearly will not be permitted to greet the Messiah during his lifetime, for 1885 is 138 years after 5507 (1746), the year of the Besht’s soul’s ascension.

In sum, the Messiah’s answer lends itself to two interpretations: it may specify a date or it may set conditions. The double entendre grows out of the multiple readings of the biblical verse,¹⁹ and it fits well with the Delphic quality of the Messiah’s response, which affords the questioner no clear answer and counters each question with one of its own.

¹⁹ That is the implication of the Besht’s comments, in his Second Epistle, on the infinite nature of biblical utterances: “For each and every letter encompasses worlds and souls and divinity.” See Besht’s Epistle in *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* 100a. In the writings of Rav A.I. ha-Kohen Kook, this manner of reading involves intuitive leaps—“skipping” or multiple associations—which forge new and startling links, through which seemingly contradictory ideas are taken as complementary. See *Lights of the Holy* [*Orot ha-Qodesh*], vol. 2, p. 462. It should be noted that in some of its manifestations this view is associated with the idea of “One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard” (Ps. 62:12), understood to contemplate multiple interpretations of biblical texts. Moshe Idel points out that this linguistic approach in Hasidism is a synthesis of both mystical and magical functions of the language: the letters are regarded as magical tools, like talismans, while used to achieve a mystical union with the divine. Idel traces the origins of this concept in sixteenth century Kabbalists, Elkabetz and Kordovero, whose sources go back to R. Avraham Abulafia’s concept of the combinations of the letters and his interpretation of the *Book of Creation* (*Sefer Yetzira*). In fact, Idel quotes an anonymous Kabbalist of the Middle Ages, possibly a student of Abulafia, whose monadic concept of the Hebrew letters as containing “body and soul” as well as the *sefirot* and the “*olamot*” (worlds) reminds of the exact words used by the Besht! See Idel 2001, in particular p. 283. A different approach is taken by Rachel Elior: she finds it impossible to harmonize mysticism, which seeks out multiple meanings, and magic, which seeks out the absence of meaning. See Elior 1998, p. 80. According to her observations, the Besht’s linguistic teachings is mystical rather than magical, in that it seeks out multiple meanings rather than the absence of meaning.

This similarly ambiguous response appears as well in the Talmudic narrative that inspired the *Besht*. The story is told of R. Joshua b. Levi, a third-century C.E. Sage in the Land of Israel, who encountered the Messiah at the gates of Rome and asked him when he would appear. The story juxtaposes two characters as foils: the prophet Elijah, standing at the entrance to the cave of R. Simeon b. Yohai in the Galilee and the Messiah, living among the wretched and downtrodden at the gates of Rome. The geographic venues allude to the symbolic contrast around which the plot unfolds. At one pole is R. Simeon b. Yohai's cave, representing the entrance to Garden of Eden. At the other is the gate of Rome, the symbol of impurity, immorality, and idolatry; it represents Hell, at the entrance to which the Messiah dwells:

R. Joshua b. Levi found Elijah standing near the entrance to R. Simeon b. Yohai's cave. He asked him, "Will I enter the world-to-come?" He replied, "If God so wills." . . . He asked him, "When will the Messiah come?" He replied, "Go ask him himself." "Where does he dwell?" "Near the entrance to Rome." "And how can he be identified?" "He dwells among the poor afflicted with wounds. The others unbind and rebind all their wounds at once, but the Messiah unbinds and rebinds one wound at a time" (The Messiah did so in order to avoid any delay [on account of rebinding his other wounds] if he is needed.) So R. Joshua went to the Messiah and said to him, "Peace unto you, my master and teacher." He replied, "Peace unto you, ben Levi." He asked, "When will the Master come?" He replied, "Today." R. Joshua returned to Elijah, who asked him, "What did the Messiah say?" He replied, "Peace unto you, ben Levi." Elijah said, "The Messiah [thereby] assured you that you and your father would enter the world-to-come." R. Joshua said, "He lied to me, for he said 'I will come today,' yet he did not come." Elijah replied, "He meant, "'Today if you but heed His voice'" (Ps. 95:7)."²⁰

This story is pervaded by wordplay and ambiguity. We see them, first, in the Messiah offering R. Joshua an answer to a question that was addressed not to him but to Elijah, that is, whether R. Joshua and his father would attain the world to come. They appear again when R. Joshua poses a question—"When will the Master come?"—to which the Messiah does not know the answer. The Messiah is portrayed as one in constant readiness to receive his call, concerned

²⁰ *Sanhedrin* 98a. On R. Joshua b. Levi in spiritual-mystical contexts, see Frenkel 1977; Amir 1990.

lest he delay even to bind his wounds and therefore binding one wound before unbinding the next. We infer from this that the Messiah himself does not know when he will come, and that it therefore made no sense to pose the question to him. Finally, wordplay and ambiguity are apparent in R. Joshua's understanding the Messiah's reference to "today" as designating a precise date. The prophet Elijah, in contrast, interprets the Messiah's response as setting up a condition, by reference to the verse "Today if you but heed His voice" (Ps. 95:7). The double entendre—a time and a condition—recalls the Messiah's reply to the Besht, and it is similarly based on a verse from Scripture.

Another layer of meaning is indirectly developed in the narrative, through analogy to the Christian account of Peter, one of Jesus' twelve apostles. During the course of the Last Supper, Peter asks Jesus, "*Domine, quo vadis* (Lord, where will you go)." Jesus answers, "Where I go, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow me afterwards."²¹ This prophecy was fulfilled: After Jesus' crucifixion, Peter made his way to Rome to spread the gospel of the faith. But he was forced to flee the city to escape persecution by Caesar Nero, and, at the city gates, the image of Jesus appeared to him. Peter asked "*Domine, quo vadis* (Lord, where will you go)," to which Jesus answered, "I go to Rome to be crucified." Peter asked, "Lord, will you be crucified a second time?" Jesus answered, "Yes, Peter, I am going to be crucified again."²² Peter understood the message to be directed to him, turned on his heels, returned to Rome, and was crucified.

In the Christian story, the messiah is asked, "Where will you go," while in the Talmudic account the question is "When will you come?" But it is precisely that difference that highlights the similarity between the stories and raises the possibility that the talmudic narrative is a parody of the Christian story, portraying the Messiah, dwelling among the poor and the downtrodden, in the image of Jesus.²³ That would

²¹ John 13:36.

²² "Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Peter," in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, p. 424. See also Yuval 2000, pp. 46–107.

²³ For the idea that the Messiah is destined to suffer and die for the sins of humanity, see, for example, 1 Cor. 15:3—"For the messiah died for our sins, according to the scriptures." The scriptures to which Paul here alludes are the prophet Isaiah's descriptions of the servant of God. See Isa. 53:4—"Surely our diseases he carried and our pains he endured, and we accounted him plagued, smitten by God, and afflicted."

account for the plain meaning of R. Joshua b. Levi's explicit statement that the Messiah had lied to him: "He lied to me, for he said 'I will come today,' yet he did not come." Elijah reacts by citing a verse—"Today if you but heed His voice"—which implies that R. Joshua encountered, at the gates of Rome, not the true Messiah but Jesus, the false messiah, who failed to heed God's voice and was consigned to Hell. On this interpretation, Rome, the entrance to Hell, is Christian Rome, not only pagan Rome.²⁴ And the "poor afflicted with wounds" among whom Jesus dwells are not the exiles from the Land of Israel, who were condemned to suffer in Roman exile, but the poor, the sick, and the leprous, who were deceived into following Jesus after he falsely promised them the kingdom of Heaven as recompense for their suffering and poverty.²⁵ But Jesus' followers were punished by descent to Hell, and they are now condemned to the monotonous and pointless activity of binding and unbinding their wounds in a manner that brings no healing to the wounds but only emphasizes the hopelessness of Hell's denizens. On this understanding as well the story deals with vain hopes and false messiahs, and this interpretation thus harmonizes with the others rather than contradicting them.

Similarly, there is more than one way to approach the textual tapestry of the Besht's epistle. Another possibility is to unravel its threads, on the premise that the Messiah's response to the Besht comprises two versions of the reply that have been conflated.

²⁴ The identification of pagan Rome and Christian Rome, based on the analogy to biblical *Edom*, thus the Pope with the Roman Caesar, produced several messianic visions and acts: In his 1263 disputation with the apostate Pablo Christiani, Moses b. Nahman said that the Messiah would come to the Pope at God's command and ask of him the liberation of his people. See Silver 1927, p. 146; Scholem 1961, p. 128. In attempt to demonstrate his messianic identity, R. Avraham Abulafia risked his life and traveled to Rome to meet the Pope and to confer with him "in the name of Jewry." The various interpretations of this phrase and a literary equivalent can be found in Scholem 1961, p. 128; Idel 1990/2, pp. 51–74; Saperstein 1980, pp. 103–105. Inspired by both Jewish and Christian texts, Solomon Molcho went to Rome and met the Pope. See Eshkoli 1957, p. 292. R. Hayyim Vital dreamt of meeting the Caesar of Rome, meaning the Pope. See *Book of Visions* [*Sefer ha-Hezyonot*], pp. 67–68; Tamar 1984. Nathan of Gaza went to Rome to destroy the power of evil. See Scholem 1987, vol. 2, pp. 655–660; Tishby 1982/1, pp. 59–63; Goldish 2004, pp. 38–40. On the magico-Kabbalistic model of Messianism vis-à-vis Christianity, see Idel 1998/1, pp. 126–132.

²⁵ See, for example, Luke 6:20–24: "Blessed are the poor, for the kingdom of God is yours; blessed are those now hungry, for you shall be satiated; blessed are those who now weep, for you shall laugh . . . but woe to you rich, for you have already received your reward."

One version is “‘And when will the Master come?’ His lofty response (*teshuvato ha-ramatah*) was that it could not be divulged . . . I was greatly distressed at how long that interval would be.” The second version reads, “‘And when will the Master come?’ ‘By this will you know it: it will be when what you have learned becomes widely known and manifest to the world and your springs disperse abroad what I have taught you and you have comprehended, so that others will be able to perform unifications [of God’s names] and ascents [of the soul] just as you are. And then, all the husks (*qelippot*) will be destroyed and the time will be one of favor and salvation . . .’ I was shocked . . ., wondering when all this could happen.”

In the first version, the Messiah identifies a time, the year 5645 (1885), but the time is so far off that the Besht is distressed by the answer. In the second version, the Messiah poses a condition—“when what you have learned becomes widely known and manifest to the world and your springs disperse abroad”—but then precludes its fulfillment by forbidding the Besht from revealing his teachings to others; the Besht reacts with surprise, “wondering when all this was possible.” It is fair to assume that the first version has its source in the Besht’s First Epistle,²⁶ and that its first copyist intertwined with it passages from the Second Epistle, written four or five years later.²⁷

The Besht’s Era of Redemption

The exchange between the Messiah and the Besht clarifies the messianic purpose of the Besht’s soul’s ascent. The Besht ascended on high on Rosh ha-Shanah 5507 (1746) in order to confirm his expectation that the Messiah would appear on a specific date, perhaps on Rosh ha-Shanah itself.²⁸ When it became clear to him that the

²⁶ The fact that the first portion of the Messiah’s answer appears in both texts of the First Epistle rules out the possibility that it is a later addition.

²⁷ Cf. *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Mondschein), pp. 231, 235; Rosman 2000, p. 135. In contrast to their views, I have concluded that both of the Besht’s epistles were known among the *Hasidim* before the Second Epistle was printed in 5541 (1781), and the decision on which one to print and which to hide away was deliberate, based on their content, rather than happenstance.

²⁸ The idea of redemption is emphasized in the Rosh ha-Shanah *mussaf* service. R. Abraham Abulafia also draws a connection between Rosh ha-Shanah and the time of redemption (see Idel 1988, pp. 110–111), as does R. Nahman of Bratslav, the Besht’s great-grandson (see Liebes 1980).

Messiah would not appear during his lifetime, he was crestfallen. Moreover, the journey to the Land of Israel by R. Gershon of Kutov, the Besht's brother-in-law, may have been not mere happenstance but part of the messianic expectation associated with the year 5508 (1747–1748), represented by the letters תק"ח (*t-q-h*), which have the same numerical value as the letters שח"ר (*sh-h-r*), constituting the Hebrew word for “dawn” (שחר—*shahar*).²⁹ The deferral of the Messiah's advent may also explain why the Besht did not reiterate all this information in his Second Epistle, written in the year 5512 (1752). In 5510 (1750), the Besht, then at the Luka Fair, received a letter from R. Gershon,³⁰ advising the Besht that the Sages of Jerusalem were looking forward to his arrival:

In brief, your name already is known within the gates of Jerusalem and the Sages here asked me to write to encourage you to come and settle here, for they are eager to greet you. But what can I do, for I know your disposition, which requires you to worship with your own prayer group, as well as other considerations that lead me to despair of your coming to the Holy Land before the advent of the King Messiah (may that be speedily and in our days); and that is my great distress when I wonder when I will see you face-to-face.³¹

After reading R. Gershon's comments, the Besht saw no need to sadden his brother-in-law with the news that they would not be privileged to meet in Jerusalem.

Thus, the messianic endeavor of 5507 (1746) can be seen as the final link in the Besht's chain of attempts to bring the Messiah. It had been preceded by the failed effort to immigrate to the Land of Israel in 5500 (1740), which was destined to be the year of redemption according to the End-reckonings of R. Isaac Hayyim Kohen min ha-Hazzanim and Immanuel Hai Ricchi.³² R. Jacob Joseph of

²⁹ See Morgenstern 1999, pp. 85–89.

³⁰ See Besht's Epistle, in *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* 100a: “I received at the Luka Fair in the year 5510 (1750) [your letter], which you had sent with the emissary traveling from Jerusalem.”

³¹ See Barnai 1980, letter 1, p. 40. Cf. Stiman-Katz 1977. The letter was written in 5508 (1748) or 5510 (1750). It may not have reached the Besht in this form, for he notes in his reply, in 5512 (1752), that he had not seen R. Gershon's original letter, but only an “extremely abbreviated” copy. R. Gershon accordingly may have written two letters—the original and an abridgment, with the latter reaching the Besht at the Luka Fair in 5510 (1750).

³² See *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 133; Dinur 1955, pp. 192–206; Barnai 1978; Bartal 1985; Assaf 1996, p. 340, n. 101; Morgenstern 1999, pp. 37–75.

Polonnoye tells of the Besht's "famed journey" to the Land of Israel, in the course of which his ship was wrecked at sea and he was required to retrace his steps without reaching the Promised Land. Ahijah of Shiloh then explained to the Besht the significance of that experience, "after which he became determined to remedy [matters] in a fundamental way, in the manner known to him, etc."³³ Accordingly, the Besht dedicated the years following his failed immigration to an effort to repair the soul of the false messiah, Shabbetai Zevi,³⁴ "in whom there was a spark of holiness, though the Sama'el (the Satan) ensnared him."³⁵ The work of repairing souls is referred to in kabbalistic tradition as "gathering up the sparks." According to kabbalistic theory, the souls of sinners are sparks of divine light that fell into the depths of impurity and were imprisoned there by evil forces. Gathering up those sparks and repairing them is a task for one blessed with the highest ethical qualities, which afford protection against the enticements that lie in wait for him when he descends to the world of sin. The Besht therefore hoped he could successfully repair the soul of the false messiah, thereby preparing the way for the true Messiah. Nevertheless, when the Besht's soul ascended on Rosh ha-Shanah 5507 (September 1746), it became absolutely and finally clear to him that he had failed in that task and that he would not be privileged to see the coming of the Messiah during his lifetime.

The information received by the Besht when his soul ascended accounts as well for the change in his attitude regarding immigration to the Land of Israel; for it seems clear that the deferral to

On the Besht's journey to the Land of Israel as a messianic oriented trip, designed to repair the "heels" of the Messiah, see Wolfson 1995, p. 100.

³³ *Biography of Jacob Joseph* 201a ("matters I heard from my teacher"); *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 5.

³⁴ See Weiss 1951, pp. 78–79; Dinur 1955, pp. 188–192; Liebes 1980, p. 226; Liebes 1983/1. On failed messianic moments in Sabbatianism, see Goldish 2004, p. 137.

³⁵ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 38. Rubinstein notes that one manuscript version of the story reads that in Shabbetai Zevi "there was a spark of the Messiah, but the Sama'el seized him." See id., p. 133, n. 45. It should be noted that the Besht found Shabbetai Zevi together with Jesus, another false Messiah in Jewish tradition, both dwelling in the same compartment of Hell. The Beshtean story might have been inspired by the late medieval legend about R. Joseph della Reina who had taken the risk of confronting Christianity, symbolized by the satanic Samael and his vicar Ammon of No in order to bring redemption but had failed and fallen to Hell. Unlike della Reina, the Besht was morally strong and saved himself from falling to the depths of eternal punishment. For detailed discussions, see Liebes 1983/1; Idel 1989, pp. 94–100.

5645 (1885) of the Messiah's advent put an end to the Besht's hope to go up to the Holy Land. He likewise ended his support for immigration to the Land of Israel on the part of his associates, such as R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye. R. Jacob Joseph had several times prepared to set out for Jerusalem, but each time his plans were cancelled on account of "an impediment caused by God, may He be blessed." *In Praise of the Besht* strongly implies that the "heavenly impediment" was, in fact, the Besht's opposition:

On several occasions, the Rabbi [Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye] desired to journey to the Holy Land, but the Rabbi, the Besht, told him not to go. He added "Let this be a sign for you. Whenever you experience a craving to journey to the Holy Land, recognize that there are judgments against your town, may God protect us, and Satan is distracting you from praying on its behalf. Accordingly, when you experience a craving for the Holy Land, pray for the town."³⁶

It should be stressed that the Besht never changed his mind about the importance of the Land of Israel to the unfolding of the redemption and never developed an alternative concept of redemption in the Diaspora. That constancy is alluded to in the Epistle, where he says, "My soul grieved for myself and for my comrades at my dying outside the Holy Land." To similar effect is the conclusion to his Second Epistle: "For God knows that I have not abandoned hope of journeying to the Land of Israel and joining you if that is God's will, but the time does not assent to it."³⁷ His view thus appears to be that the Messiah's time has not yet come and that it is not God's will to redeem his people on this particular occasion. The Besht had no alternative but to accept the heavenly decree.³⁸

Some scholars, to be sure, have tried to read into *Besht's Epistle* ideas not to be found there: "new tidings, the manifesto of Hasidism"³⁹

³⁶ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 26; Dinur 1955, p. 194. In any event, R. Jacob Joseph's son, R. Abraham Samson, immigrated to the Land of Israel after 5540 (1780) and died in Tiberias in 5559 (1799). See Alfasi 1997, pp. 159–170, 315–317.

³⁷ Besht's Epistle in *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* 100b.

³⁸ See Wolfson 1995, p. 90: "one can indeed distinguish between at least two models of cleaving to God in Hasidic sources: the vertical one that entails the metaphor of ascent and descent, and the horizontal one that entails the metaphor of traversing from place to place. Hasidic writers used both models to delineate the individual's intimate relationship with God." As Wolfson points out, the Besht used both vertical and horizontal walking in his efforts to bring the Messiah. Cf. Verman 1988, p. 166.

³⁹ Dubnow 1960, p. 60.

or an original and unique doctrine of redemption.⁴⁰ But these concepts are inconsistent with the plain meaning of the *Besht's Epistle*. In contrast to these writers, Isaiah Tishby correctly saw that “according to the Epistle, the Besht aspired to hasten the redemption through acts of sacred magic, through unifications, ascents of the soul, and the use of God’s names—that is, through measures practiced in the generations preceding the emergence of modern Hasidism.”⁴¹ In *Besht's Epistle*, then, we find not an account of personal failure, not a rejection of kabbalistic End-reckonings, and not the beginning of a new religious way. We find, rather, either bad luck or a heavenly decree: all is ready for the Messiah’s advent except the Messiah himself, “for the time does not assent to it.”

⁴⁰ See Buber 1945, p. 21; Dinur 1955, p. 206; Scholem 1971; Scholem 1976/1, vol. 2, pp. 287–324, 325–350.

⁴¹ Tishby 1967, p. 45. To similar effect, see Liebes 1982/1, pp. 113–114; Idel 2001, pp. 145–151. See also Idel 1989, p. 99. The term “magico-messianic ritual” as used by Idel to analyze the practical Kabbalah of the *Book of the Responding* also suits the Besht’s form of action.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ANNALS OF THE ZOLOCHEV DYNASTY

The “Legacy” of the Besht and of R. Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezhirichi

R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov departed this world on the Festival of Shavuot in the year 5520 (May 21, 1760), but we know little about his activities from 5507 (1746) until his death. According to his Second Epistle to R. Gershon, he executed another ascent of the soul on Rosh ha-Shanah 5510 (September 1749); he did so in order to save Israel from “so great a denunciation that the Sama’el (the Satan) was nearly authorized to annihilate entire congregations, provinces, and communities. I therefore dedicated my soul to praying that we ‘fall now into the hand of the Lord and fall not into the hand of man.’”¹ Through this heavenly pleading, the Besht succeeded in transforming the decreed destruction by human forces into punishment by a divinely ordained plague.

Two contemporary events in Podolia resonate in this account. First, there were the uprisings of the Ukrainian Haidamacks,² members of the Orthodox Church, against the Polish-Catholic aristocracy. These uprisings were regularly accompanied by anti-Jewish pogroms, and the Besht may have been alluding to them in his reference to the destruction of Jewish communities by human forces. Second, plague was rampant at that time, and the Besht interpreted it as divine punishment.

The Besht executed yet another ascent of the soul on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement, ten days after Rosh ha-Shanah) Eve 5518 (September 24, 1757), in the course of which, he once again encountered the Messiah. The ascent, he tells us, was for the purpose of

¹ Besht’s Epistle in *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* 100a. The prayer is adapted from the words of King David: “Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; and let me fall not into the hand of man” (2 Sam. 24:14).

² “Haidamack” is from the Turkish for “escape”; it refers, by extension, to a brigand or itinerant outlaw. See Rosman 2000, pp. 75–78, 81; Etkes 2000, pp. 106–109.

taking action in the upper worlds that would rescue the Oral Torah from destruction; *In Praise of the Besht* reports that the Besht succeeded in canceling, in the upper realms, “a great denunciation of Israel that would cause the Oral Torah to depart from them.”³

The historical background of this story relates to the burning of the Talmud (the principal compilation of rabbinic teachings constituting the Oral Torah) at Kamenets-Podolskiy, an event in which Jacob Frank and his adherents were implicated. Frank, a Polish Jew, appeared in the Jewish communities of Europe and presented himself as the Messiah, a sort of continuation or reincarnation of Shabbetai Zevi. He promoted antinomian messianism, believing that in the time of the redemption, the commandments of the Torah would be cancelled, along with the concepts of good and evil implicit in them. Frank’s disciples slipped into public acts of heresy, accompanied by depraved, dissolute activities. Among other things, they proclaimed that the Talmud provides for the use of Christian blood in the baking of the Passover bread (*mazot*). Bishop Dembovsky of Kamenets sought to compel the rabbis of the communities in Podolia to appear for a disputation with the Frankists, but the communal leaders shied away from open confrontation. In the end, on 3 Marḥeshvan 5518 (October 17, 1757), they were required to appear before Bishop Dembovsky to hear his decree, in which he denigrated the evil in the Talmud and directed that it be burned in public. The ruling was affirmed the following day by the civil court in Kamenets and immediately executed.⁴ Eventually, following public disputations in Lvov (Lemberg) during the summer of 5519 (July–September 1759), Jacob Frank was baptized a Christian and joined the Catholic Church, along with many of his believers. This episode, the first time in history that Jews themselves had participated in a blood libel, deeply unsettled the Jewish communities in eastern Europe. Disquiet about possible pogroms was accompanied by a sense of revulsion toward the reprobates whose conduct had brought about bloodshed and conversion.

These two final ascents of the Besht’s soul demonstrate his strong spiritual involvement with the events of the day and his sense of responsibility and obligation to work for the survival of Jewish

³ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 20.

⁴ See Balaban 1934, pp. 160–162; Balaban 1935, pp. 181–192; Ya’ari 1958.

communities and the Torah.⁵ But nothing in his post-5507 (1746) remarks suggests a belief that he could bring about general redemption, as distinct from rescuing particular communities from localized adversity. Similarly, nothing in his activities evidences the founding of a movement with a religious message and a program for future action. And though he had students, confidants, and colleagues—including R. Gershon of Kutov, R. Aryeh Leib the Rebuker of Polonnoye, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, and R. Pinḥas Shapira of Korets—they never crystallized into a body with a stated mission and a defined plan of action.

Even less can be said about the life and activities of R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi, designated in late sources as the Besht's heir and leader of the Hasidic community. Ada Rapoport-Albert has already pointed out the anachronism in the claim regarding the Besht's "legacy"; there was no such legacy and, in any case, R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi had neither congregation nor court in which to inherit it.⁶ The documents detailing the Hasidic court supposedly founded by R. Dov Ber in the town of Mezhirichi, in the Korets region of Volhynia, are hagiographic texts that use literary imagination to fill the gaps in the historical data. Even as central a point as the removal of the court—if it in fact existed—from Mezhirichi to the town of Rovno, where R. Dov Ber died, has not been at all examined.⁷ It is particularly difficult to credit the account of a gathering with the *Maggid* R. Dov Ber at Rovno in the summer of 5532 (1772), at which the disciples were said to have gathered with their rabbi to devise a strategy against the attacks by the *Mitnaggedim* (opponents of Hasidism). The gathering is referred to in only one passage in a letter sent by R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady to R. Abraham of

⁵ That said, there is nevertheless no substance to the tradition that the Besht took part in the disputations against the Frankists held in Lvov in 5519 (1759). See Balaban 1935, pp. 295–320.

⁶ See Rapoport-Albert 1990, pp. 205–206.

⁷ Not even the date of R. Dov Ber's death is known with certainty. It can be inferred on the basis of an obscure sentence in an epistle by R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady. In the letter, R. Shneur Zalman announces his liberation from prison on "a day on which 'it was good' was doubled [an image based on Gen. 1:9–13, describing the third day of creation and the only one in which the phrase "it was good" appears twice]—the 19th of Kislev, the day celebrating the passing of our Holy Rabbi, may his memory be for a blessing." See Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 303. On this basis, it is generally assumed that R. Dov Ber died on 19 Kislev 5533 (December 15, 1772), but the year is only an educated guess.

Kolyshki in 5566 (1806), thirty-four years after the fact. These two Hasidic personalities are said to have taken part in a conference, and R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady recalls in his letter how their common teacher, R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, berated R. Abraham of Kolyshki for his unruly conduct, which had sparked the anger of the *Mitnaggedim* against the movement as a whole. By the time this letter was written, however, R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady and R. Abraham of Kolyshki had had a serious falling-out, and their relationship was in disarray. Ra'aya Haran has shown that their correspondence was reworked by supporters of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, who inserted passages disparaging to R. Abraham of Kolyshki.⁸ The account of the conference at Rovno may be one such passage, added to the letter to demean R. Abraham of Kolyshki; indeed, were that not the case, it would be difficult to explain the absence of any references to so crucial a conference in the writings of other disciples, who presumably would have attended it as well.

Aside from this questionable source, we have an account of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi recorded by the Jewish philosopher Solomon Maimon. Maimon was born in 5513 or 5514 (1753 or 1754) in a small Lithuanian village but roamed as far as Germany in search of education and enlightenment. In his autobiography *The Life of Solomon Maimon* (*Hayyei Shelomo Maimon*), written circa 5552 (1792), he recounts how, in his youth, he heard wondrous things about Hasidism from a young guest who was passing through. Struck with curiosity, he journeyed “to the city of M., residence of Rebbe B.”⁹ Young Solomon Maimon was indeed taken by the “magnificence of [the Rebbe’s] character, which inspired reverence” at the Rebbe’s Sabbath dinner and by the Rebbe’s insights into his guests’ hidden natures, even though he had never before met them. This esteem quickly turned to disdain, however, when Maimon found that the Rebbe was a cruel, unfeeling man who had ordered the flogging of a follower who had fathered a daughter. In addition, Maimon exposed the deception underlying the Rebbe’s wondrous knowledge. Like other Hasidic rabbis, “Rebbe B.” was not endowed with higher powers; rather, he operated with “the assistance of written reports and spies, a degree of insight into human nature, application of the science of

⁸ See Haran 1990; Haran 1996, p. 417, n. 66; Karlinsky 1998.

⁹ *The Life of Solomon Maimon*, p. 143.

physiognomy, and the energetic posing of questions that enabled [the Hasidic rabbis] to uncover the mysteries within a person's heart. [Thus] they gained renown among these naïve people as bearers of the spirit of prophecy."¹⁰ Summing up this episode, Maimon portrays Hasidism as a mystery cult, a secretive fraternity of cynical and dissolute people who "run about naked in the streets, relieve themselves in public, and so forth,"¹¹ and who threaten to take over Jewish society and destroy it from within.

Scholars disagree about whether Solomon Maimon's comments should be regarded as a reliable, objective account or as a subjective description that superimposes, on its kernel of truth, Maimon's later critique of Jewish society as degenerate and sunk in ignorance and superstition. But no one questions his having visited the Rebbe's court; and all assume that the events actually took place, that the "city of M." refers to Mezhirichi, and that "Rebbe B." is the *Maggid*, R. (Dov) Ber. And because Solomon Maimon left Eastern Europe no later than 5530 (1770), it seems reasonable at first blush to conclude that by the end of the 1760s, a Hasidic court was operating in Mezhirichi, along the lines of the later Hasidic courts established in the nineteenth century. But one should not reach that conclusion without taking into account that Maimon's memoirs constitute a *Bildungsroman*, whose central feature is a young hero venturing forth to seek the truth. En route, the hero falls prey to the deception of scoundrels, who try to seduce him into accepting false answers, but he eventually attains his destiny—uncovering the hidden light of high culture and philosophy. In a plot of this sort, the Hasidic episode can function as a false way station on the forced march toward the truth. The possibility that what we have here is a literary narrative is reinforced by the conclusion of Fishel Laḥover, who showed that Maimon's essay is not totally autobiographical and that portions of it are fiction, drawing on known literary sources.¹²

Solomon Maimon's account thus points to no definitive conclusion about the *Maggid* R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi. He may have been endowed with a dazzling personality and spiritual authority, which he used in organizing a Hasidic court that attracted brilliant youngsters craving wisdom. Or he may have been only an enchanting

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 145.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 149.

¹² Ibid., pp. 22–28.

charlatan, whose emissaries seduced young innocents into enlisting as *Hasidim* by dint of their rabbi's trickery. Indeed, the entire account may be nothing more than parable: Solomon Maimon's descriptions are so extraordinary that they cannot be relied on to support one conclusion or another. Clearly, the report cannot be accepted, without external corroboration in other contemporary accounts, as firm, historical evidence for the existence of a court at Mezhirichi or for its routines; and no such corroborative accounts have yet been found.¹³ And that is where the matter stands, for no critical biography of the *Maggid* R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi has yet been written, and the reliability of the sources has not been examined.

Twelve years accordingly elapsed between the Besht's death in 5520 (1760) and the first accounts of groups of people disparagingly and ironically said by their critics to be "known as *Hasidim* (Pious Ones), holy to the Most High."¹⁴ Nothing known about those years suggests the organization of a group that could be considered the kernel of the Hasidic movement. As a practical matter, no such group took shape until the messianic aspirations that had been aroused in 5500 (1740) and suppressed in 5507 (1746) were reawakened in 5532 (1772). That reawakening was led by a student of the Besht, R. Yehiel Mikhel, known as the *Maggid* of Zolochov. He inspired the establishment of the first messianic court of kabbalists in Eastern Europe, which flourished for about a decade—from its beginning in 5532 (1772) to its pinnacle in Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781), identified in some kabbalistic End-reckonings as the time of redemption.

R. Yehiel Mikhel failed in his efforts to bring about the redemption. His mission consumed his life, and he died ostracized and broken-hearted. Only the fourth of his sons (the five of whom he saw as corresponding to the five books of the Torah), R. Moses of Zvihil, succeeded in becoming himself the leader of a Hasidic court. The *admorim*¹⁵ of the Zvihil dynasty, centered in Jerusalem, continue to this day to be called "Guardians of the Sacred Covenant," that is, those who preserve the purity of the organ on which the covenant

¹³ See also Teller 1995, pp. 13–14, esp. n. 4 and sources there cited.

¹⁴ Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 37. The quotation is from a copy of a letter sent by the community of Vilnius, Lithuania, dated 8 Iyyar 5532 (May 11, 1772) and detailing the evil deeds of the *Hasidim*.

¹⁵ "*Admor*" (אדמו"ר) is an acronym for "*Adoneinu Moreinu ve-Rabbeinu*" ("our lord, master, and teacher"); it is a common designation for a *zaddik*, the leader of a Hasidic court.

of circumcision is performed.¹⁶ This designation alludes to the tradition that the *zaddikim* of the Zolochov family are able to set right the sexual offenses of other people, such as the wasteful emission of seed, which is regarded by the Talmud as an offense that delays the coming of the Messiah.¹⁷ Lurianic Kabbalah supplements this concept with the belief that the Messiah himself is able to repair, in a symbolic, after-the-fact manner, the sin of wasting seed, for the sins of the entire nation of Israel are represented within his soul.¹⁸

R. Yehiel Mikhel's many disciples—numbering more than twenty—likewise attest to the range of the house of Zolochov and its central position in the formative years of Hasidism. Some of these disciples established the first Hasidic dynasties, transforming Hasidism into a mass movement. The court of the *Maggid* of Zolochov appears to have served as the model on which they established and ran their own courts, each centered on the figure of the *zaddik*. After the fact, then, the first *zaddik* of Hasidism was transformed into the founder of a widespread and elaborate spiritual movement, one that left its mark on Jewish life in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora.

R. Joseph Spravidliever and R. Isaac of Drogobych

The figure of the *Maggid* of Zolochov (5486–5541; 1726–1781) has yet to be the subject of a critical and comprehensive biography. At the end of the nineteenth century, R. Nathan Neta ha-Kohen of

¹⁶ I am so informed by Mr. Simeon Deutsch, a member of a Hasidic family in the traditional communities of Jerusalem.

¹⁷ The wasteful emission of seed is brought about by sexual activities that do not lead to procreation, such as nocturnal emissions, masturbation, and homosexual relations. The Talmud mentions another sexual offense—"dalliance with children"—that also delays the coming of the Messiah. Solomon Isaaci (Rashi) understands this to refer to marrying girls below childbearing age, sexual relations with whom cannot lead to procreation. See *Niddah* 13b: "Our Rabbis taught: . . . and those who dally with children delay the Messiah, . . . as R. Yosi said, 'The son of David will not come until all the souls are embodied, as it is written [Isa. 57:16] "the spirit that enwraps itself is from Me, and the souls which I have made."'" R. Yosi derives the notion that the various forms of wasting seed (such as dallying with children) delay the coming of the Messiah from the verse in Isaiah, which describes God as the Creator of souls, which are enwrapped in bodies by men and women. The Messiah, son of David, will not appear until all the souls have been embodied, and it follows that one who wastes his seed disrupts that process and thereby delays the Messiah.

¹⁸ See Meroz 1988, p. 328.

Kolbiel published an annotated collection of the *Maggid's* sermons *Great Waters* (*Mayim Rabbim*).¹⁹ R. Nathan Neta gathered unique and informative oral traditions from descendants of the family, but his work is not scientific in nature. Recently, Isaac Matityahu Tanenbaum collected these traditions anew in *To'afot Harim—The Żolochev Dynasty*.²⁰ But these works, which draw no distinction between historical sources and hagiography, cannot take the place of a critical biography.

David Assaf has commented that “we still lack even an attempt at critical reconstruction of the life stories of the Besht . . . of R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi . . . or of other prominent figures in the history of Hasidism,”²¹ and his remark thus applies with full force to R. Yehiel Mikhel. Moreover, uncovering the details of his life is a particularly complicated matter, for his disciples' writings for the most part conceal his name through the use of various honorifics, such as “the great ones,” “the wise one of the generation,” and “the righteous ones (*zaddikim*) of the generation.” In some sources he is referred to simply as “the *Maggid*,” but that designation has been mistakenly associated with another *Maggid*, R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi. That error is made as well in the approbations and title pages of his students' books, where his teachings are incorrectly attributed to other Hasidic masters, especially the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi.²²

That notwithstanding, R. Yehiel Mikhel's essential teachings are preserved in the writings of his students, through which we can become acquainted with his doctrine of Hasidism. Information can also be gained from the writings of the *Mitnaggedim*, especially *Breaking of Sinners* (*Shever Posh'eim*), which often referred to him by name and revealed his identity, even while Hasidic writings concealed it. Important information can be found as well in *In Praise of the Besht*, which preserves a reliable tradition about R. Yehiel Mikhel's family. By piecing these sources together, we can sketch out the history of the house of Żolochev and the biography of R. Yehiel Mikhel.

R. Yehiel Mikhel was the scion of an aristocratic²³ Galician family that resided and played an active role in the town of Brody and

¹⁹ *Great Waters* with the annotations *Migdanot Nathan*, Nathan Neta ha-Kohen of Kolbiel (Warsaw 5659 [1899]).

²⁰ See Tanenbaum 1986; see also Horowitz 1999.

²¹ Assaf 1992, p. 2.

²² See Altshuler 1995, pp. 293–344.

²³ Miles Krassen characterized R. Yehiel Mikhel as “a spiritual aristocrat.” See Krassen 1990, p. 35.

its environs. According to family tradition, the dynasty began with R. Isaac Chayes (5298–5370; 1538–1610), a scholar from Prague, whose family claimed descent from Rashi and, ultimately, from King David.²⁴ A tradition attributed to R. Yehiel Mikhel's eldest son, R. Joseph of Yampol, tells that the Holy Spirit had not departed from their family for seventy-two generations.²⁵ And while the historical elements of such traditions cannot easily be distinguished from the hagiographic, it is important to recognize that the traditions did not arise after the fact: even during his lifetime, R. Yehiel Mikhel's students considered his lineage noteworthy, as they sought to associate the Zolochiev dynasty with a venerable and sanctified tradition. Their esteem for him found expression in the term used for him by his student, R. Meshullam Feibush Heller: "Son of the holy ones; a *zaddik* (*righteous one*), son of a *zaddik*."²⁶

R. Yehiel Mikhel's great-grandfather was R. Moses of Zvirsh, who, by family tradition, had been martyred without sensing his torment, so closely bonded was he to God.²⁷ R. Moses' son was R. Joseph Spravidliever, known as "Man of Truth." R. Joseph Spravidliever succeeded where the Besht had failed; it is recounted that he reached the Land of Israel, unlike the Besht, who had to retrace his steps to Europe.²⁸ His wife was known as "Yenta the Prophetess," for she heard voices from the higher realms. Their son, R. Isaac of Drogoibych—R. Yehiel Mikhel's father—was an "idler" (*batlan*) of the study hall

²⁴ R. Isaac Chayes appended to his signature "of the stock of the pious ones of Provence." His grandson, R. David Altshuler, and his great-grandson, R. Yehiel Hillel Altshuler, are known as "the authors of the *Fortresses* (*Mezudot*)," after their commentaries (*David's Fortress* [*Mezudat David*] and *Zion's Fortress* [*Mezudat Ziyon*]) on the sections of the Hebrew Bible known as the Prophets and the Holy Writings. They interpret the appellation "Pious ones of Provence" as referring to Rashi, whom the tradition regards, in turn, as descended from King David. See Assaf 1947; Elbaum 1990, index.

²⁵ See *Great Waters*, p. 137; Tannenbaum 1986, pp. 11–15. Cf. *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 192, where it is claimed the Besht partook of King David's soul. The two claims differ, in that the attribution of the Besht's soul to King David implies spiritual influence, not blood relation.

²⁶ *Precious Gleanings* (*Liqqutim Yeqarim*), Lemberg 5552 (1792) 19b; Jerusalem 5734 (1974) 110a.

²⁷ See *Great Waters* (Genealogical Table), at the end of the book, p. 3. The source of the story is in *Pillar of Service* (*Amud ha-'Avodah*) by R. Barukh of Kosov 210b, but it cannot be proven that the anonymous protagonist of that account is, in fact, R. Moses of Zvirsh.

²⁸ See *Great Waters*, p. 137; Tanenbaum 1986, pp. 18–23.

of R. Yozpa in Ostrog²⁹ and a preacher in the Gorokhov community. The Talmud uses the term “idler” to refer to a person supported by the community so he can devote his time to Torah study,³⁰ and in the study halls of the large Eastern European communities, the term was applied to halakhists and exceptional scholars whom the communal leaders undertook to support so they might study Torah regularly. It follows that R. Isaac of Drogobych was not only a kabbalist, conversant with the occult wisdom, but also an exceptionally learned halakhist.

In Praise of the Besht preserves authentic accounts of the personality of this rabbi-conjurer, endowed with supernatural knowledge and lethal magical powers. The Hebrew version of *In Praise of the Besht* reports that “all who touched the *Maggid* [R. Isaac of Drogobych] did not live,” while the Yiddish version says that all who touched him “met a horrible end.”³¹ His powers derived from his knowledge of divine names. The tradition ascribes divine powers to the letters that make up the names of God, such as אֱלֹהִים (*elohim*), אֲדֹנָי (*adonai*), and Y-H-W-H (the Tetragrammaton). One who knows the secret of how to use combinations of those letters can activate the divine forces concealed within them. The magical tradition about use of the holy names is already referred to in the Talmud, and it is known in Kabbalah as “practical kabbalah.” R. Isaac’s extensive knowledge of kabbalistic mysteries, which he passed along to his son, caused even the great halakhists of his generation to shy away from him uneasily.

One who suffered at the hands of R. Isaac of Drogobych was R. Isaac ha-Levi Horowitz Hamburger, who in due course was appointed to the prestigious office of Rabbi of the German communities of Altona, Hamburg, and Ansbach (known by the Hebrew acronym אֶה”ל [“*Ahu*”). They had a falling out when R. Isaac Hamburger was serving as chief judge of the Jewish court in Gorokhov and R. Isaac of Drogobych was appointed *Maggid* (preacher) there. The conflict originated with a poor butcher, whose cause R. Isaac of Drogobych advocated against the meat-tax farmer, referred to as “the owner of the tax.”³² At the time, many communities were moving

²⁹ See Biber 1907, p. 149; Heschel 1957.

³⁰ See *Megillah* 3b: “What is considered a large city? One in which there are at least ten idlers.”

³¹ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 39 and n. 16.

³² From the Yiddish. See Shmeruk 1955, p. 60.

from a system in which taxes were imposed on the basis of each citizen's wealth to a system known as "*korovkei*"—taxation of labor and foodstuffs. As a result, the tax on kosher meat became the main source of income for the communities, accounting for about one-third of their inflow.³³ This system, which benefited the wealthy and the powerful, was made even more onerous by the practice of tax farming: the tax collector collected the tax on kosher slaughter for the community, but because he pocketed a specified percentage of each impost, he profited as the tax imposed on butchers was increased.

These developments form the background for one butcher's complaint that he had been "left in debt to the tax farmer . . . and the tax farmer's wife took the butcher [that is, all the possessions in his house] as collateral, down to his pillows and blankets."³⁴ The poor butcher's wife came in tears to R. Isaac of Drogobych, who ordered the tax farmer's wife to return the collateral. She refused to obey, "and he cursed her, whereupon an infant of hers immediately died. When her husband [the tax farmer] returned from his journey, she recounted the events to him and said 'they appointed a preacher who cursed me, and the boy immediately died.'" The tax farmer, agitated and furious, dispatched a special messenger to R. Isaac of Drogobych, who was still living in Ostrog, with a letter "in which was written that if he [R. Isaac] had not yet moved from his place [in Ostrog], he should remain there, and if he was already en route [to Gorokhov] he should return to his place, for even if he arrives, he will be expelled from here [Gorokhov]." R. Isaac answered, "I will arrive in the community of Gorokhov when your bier is being carried out to greet me. And so it was. When R. Isaac arrived at the [Gorokhov] city gate, the tax farmer was being carried toward the city gate on his bier, and they were unable to pass through the gate with the body and they had to move the wagon to one side and escort the body. The tax farmer had a family, and they bore a deep-seated hatred that grew out of their fear of the *Maggid* [R. Isaac of Drogobych] as a result of which the dispute gained force. And no one who came in contact with the *Maggid* survived."

The tax farmer's wealthy and influential family recruited to its cause R. Isaac ha-Levi Horowitz (Hamburger), who served as the

³³ See Mahler 1954, pp. 287–298.

³⁴ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 39.

chief judge of the Jewish court in Gorokhov. The matter was quickly transformed into an open battle between him and R. Isaac of Drogobych. R. Ezekiel b. Judah Segal Landau, a renowned halakhist and author of the responsa collection *Known in Judah* (*Noda' bi-Yehudah*),³⁵ was eventually drawn into the conflict. R. Ezekiel was related to R. Isaac Horowitz, and the two had studied together in the kabbalists' *kloyz* (private study hall) in Brody. R. Ezekiel accordingly wrote to his relative, urging him “for God’s sake to make peace with him [R. Isaac of Drogobych], for he is a consuming fire.” R. Isaac of Drogobych was older than the two scholars, who in the years 5510–5514 (1750–1754) were only at the beginning of their rabbinic careers.³⁶ In offering his advice to R. Isaac Horowitz, R. Ezekiel Landau be seen as counseling a young friend to avoid engaging in conflict with an older figure already reputed to be dangerous. R. Ezekiel Landau went on to become a severe opponent of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his students, and that opposition may have been grounded in the conflict between R. Landau’s relative and R. Isaac of Drogobych.

The confrontation between R. Isaac of Drogobych and R. Isaac ha-Levi Horowitz Hamburger was not mere happenstance, nor did it simply grow out of the contrasting attitudes of the protagonists, one of whom chose to uphold the rights of a poor butcher while the other took the side of the wealthy tax farmers. The root cause of the confrontation was R. Isaac of Drogobych’s stringent application of Jewish law (*Halakhah*), which forbids taking as collateral garments or blankets that afford protection against the cold of night. The prohibition is Scriptural: “If you take your fellow’s garment as

³⁵ After Ps. 76:2.

³⁶ In 5510–5514 (1750–1754), R. Isaac Horowitz was still serving as chief judge in Gorokhov. In 5520 (1760), he was accepted as chief judge in Brody, and, following the death of R. Jonathan Eibeschutz in 5524 (1764), he was chosen rabbi of the communities of Altona, Hamburg, and Ansbach. From that time on, he was known as R. Isaac Hamburger. R. Ezekiel Landau was appointed chief judge in Yampol in 5506 (1746). In 5510 (1750), he was appointed “Overseer (*gabbai*) of the charitable funds of the four lands of Poland and one of the wise and princely of the Land of Israel,” and in 5515 (1755), he was appointed chief judge of the community of Prague, where he died in 5553 (1793). See *Record of the Council of the Four Lands*, p. 338. According to the account in *In Praise of the Besht*, the events transpired when R. Isaac Hamburger was living in Gorokhov and R. Ezekiel Landau was living in Yampol, that is, in 5509–5514 (1749–1754). Inasmuch as R. Isaac of Drogobych was still living in Ostrog in 5509 (1749), the range of years involved can be further narrowed, and it may be assumed that event in Gorokhov took place between 5510 (1750) and 5514 (1754).

a pledge, you shall return it to him by sunset, for it is his only covering, his garment for his skin; in what will he sleep? And it shall come to pass that when he cries out to Me, I will hear; for I am gracious.” (Exod. 22:25–26.) Rashi understands “covering (כסות—*kesut*)” to include “blanket (כסת—*keset*)”: “‘In what will he sleep?’—this is to include a blanket [within the prohibition].”³⁷ It follows that the tax farmer violated an explicit prohibition when he took the poor butcher’s bedclothes as collateral. R. Isaac Hamburger was willing to disregard this gross flouting of both law and morality, but R. Isaac of Drogobych came to the aid of the poor butcher and his wife. In doing so, he saw himself as carrying out a divine role or mission, for the verse clearly states that “it shall come to pass that when he cries out to Me, I will hear; for I am gracious.”

It is important to recognize that the position of *Maggid* (preacher) held by R. Isaac of Drogobych was an official communal office; the *Maggid* ranked second to the city’s rabbi and served as a judge on the court headed by the rabbi. The confrontation thus reflects a clash between two leadership styles within the scholarly elite of Eastern European Jewry: traditional leadership on the one hand and, on the other, leadership by a charismatic (Greek *charisma*, divine gift) figure endowed with an ethical sense and spirit flowing from divine grace.³⁸

The story as it unfolds in *In Praise of the Besht* lends expression to an additional attribute of R. Isaac of Drogobych: his supernatural knowledge, exemplified by his ability to tell another person of his hidden sins. He employed this talent in his service as judge, identifying and punishing transgressors against whom the evidence was insufficient to support a conviction. In one case, two men were found dead in the synagogue following a great thunderclap during prayers. The townsfolk came before R. Isaac of Drogobych and said to him, “Our Master, you have killed the people of God.”³⁹ R. Isaac of Drogobych responded that the two had died by reason of their sins, one in connection with a dispute and the other for having sworn

³⁷ See also Deut. 24:10–13; *Bava Mezi’a* 113a.

³⁸ On the common origin of *Hasidim* and *Mitnaggedim* within elite scholarly circles, see Hisdai 1984/1, pp. 147–162.

³⁹ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 39. The townsfolk’s statement quotes Num. 17:6, where that charge is leveled against Moses and Aaron during the course of Qorah’s rebellion and its aftermath. Consistent with that verse, the statement uses the plural form to address R. Isaac; the use of the plural also serves as a sign of respect.

falsely in the community of Brody that he had not stolen three coins. In fact, he had the three coins in his hand during prayers and was toying with them, and “the three coins were found in the hand [of the deceased].” Another story depicts R. Isaac of Drogobych’s practice of asking the litigants who came before him to attest to the truth of everything they said. If a litigant perjured himself, one of his children would die, so that the father might regret and confess his lie. Failing that, the father himself would die.⁴⁰

These stories demonstrate the belief in R. Isaac of Drogobych’s magical powers. The profound esteem in which he was held was tempered by fear of the destructive force he embodied and of his shattering of the taboo against using knowledge based in magic. This may explain why he was portrayed as the angel and messenger of the harsh attribute of justice; R. Ezekiel Landau’s reference to him as “a consuming fire” alludes to the description of God as “a consuming fire, a jealous God” (Deut. 4:24) and to the angel Metatron, characterized in the *Heikhalot* literature as “fire consuming fire.”⁴¹

It should be emphasized that the ability of R. Isaac of Drogobych to discern sins and reveal sinners, though tied to a particular aspect of folk prophecy, is not at base a folk phenomenon. *In Praise of the Besht*, to be sure, tells of times when madmen would experience ascents of the soul, beating themselves with stones and revealing their sins to people as part of a process of purification and penance.⁴² But the common folk were not endowed with that ability, except when possessed by a demon or *dibbuq* speaking from their throats.⁴³ But a regular ability to discern sins was understood as a form of prophecy, which *In Praise of the Besht* attributes to R. Isaac Luria (the Ari): “He would discern from a person’s brow the meritorious deeds and sins that he had performed or contemplated, and he knew the magnitude, location, and effect of the flaw associated with each sin as well as the magnitude of the effort needed to repair it through fasting, devotions, and recitation of [biblical] verses. And he would prescribe the needed repair for each individual, consistent with his sin. And

⁴⁰ Ibid., story 40.

⁴¹ Schäfer 1981, pars. 376, 389, 396, 484, et passim. The *Heikhalot* literature is an early strain of mystical literature.

⁴² See *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), “Author’s Introduction,” pp. 30–31, and story 38.

⁴³ One example of the phenomenon is a woman to whom the Besht’s hidden essence was disclosed by a spirit that had entered her body. (Ibid., story 8)

people would come to him from far and wide to obtain remedies for the sins they had committed.”⁴⁴

Subsequent to the Ari, this capacity is referred to in connection with Shabbetai Zevi and Nathan of Gaza, who, as part of the effort to hasten the repair of the world, began to prescribe repairs for the souls of people who approached them.⁴⁵ R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (Ram^hal) did likewise.⁴⁶ These figures, who pre-dated R. Isaac of Drogo^bych, were erudite kabbalists with messianist tendencies. Their capacity to uncover sins was tied to their desire to repair the souls of their fellow men in order to bring about the redemption of the world and hasten the Messiah’s advent. Beyond that, prophecy is the essence of the leadership through divine grace (charismatic leadership) that characterized the Hasidic *zaddik* before conduct of the court became transformed into a hereditary ministry. Most scholars have looked to the Besht or his circle for the prophetic spark that enabled the Hasidic *zaddik* to perceive the hidden. But this spark may in fact have been lit by R. Isaac of Drogo^bych, from whom it passed to his son, R. Yehiel Mikhel, the first Hasidic *zaddik*.⁴⁷

The stories about of R. Isaac of Drogo^bych are included in a collection of tales of the House of Zoloch^ev preserved in *In Praise of the Besht*. The collection encompasses as well stories about his son, R. Yehiel Mikhel, and his grandson, R. Joseph of Yampol. It is a distinct and self-sufficient tradition, not tied to the Besht; and Abraham Rubinstein, the student of Hasidism, therefore held that the stories about R. Isaac of Drogo^bych “are not Hasidic.”⁴⁸ In fact, the opposite is true: these are Hasidic stories, and they are not hagiography but history, preserving important details from the early days of Hasidism. It is hard to question their reliability, for their unique content breaks the hagiographic mold. In contrast to the hagiographic tendency to exalt the hero and enhance his virtues, these stories include details that do not reflect well on the protagonists of the House of Zoloch^ev and sometimes even present them in a frightening light. Their attention to detail stands in contrast to the paucity

⁴⁴ Benayahu 1967, p. 251.

⁴⁵ See Scholem 1987, vol. 1, pp. 192–193 and “*repair*,” index.

⁴⁶ See Tishby 1993, p. 810 and “*repair*,” index.

⁴⁷ On post Sabatean prophecy and the beginning of Hasidism, See Goldish 2004, pp. 166–168.

⁴⁸ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 39, n. 1.

of facts presented about the Besht's origins and birth and to the fixed, schematic structure of the stories about him, consistent with their hagiographic quality.⁴⁹ The fact that the tales of the House of Zolochov were preserved in *In Praise of the Besht*, a collection devoted to the Ba'al Shem Tov, indicates the standing of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his central place in the development of historical Hasidism.

That said, it remains necessary to distinguish between *In Praise of the Besht*, with the authentic tradition it preserves, and later Hasidic literature. *In Praise of the Besht*, for example, says nothing of any meeting between the Besht and R. Isaac of Drogoibych, even though they were contemporaries,⁵⁰ yet reports of such encounters appear in later collections of Hasidic stories.⁵¹ The most famous story describes a confrontation of the two magicians, the Besht and R. Isaac of Drogoibych, over the usage of the divine names.⁵² R. Isaac lost this debate because of his arrogance and vanity, and the story implies that The Besht's name, which he had written in his amulets, was in fact a divine name. Moshe Idel found that another tradition, which

⁴⁹ See Dan 1975/2, pp. 79–85; Elstein 1984, pp. 63–128.

⁵⁰ The year of R. Isaac of Drogoibych's death is not known; suggestions include 5510 (1750), not before 5518 (1758) or 5524 (1764). See Alfasi 1969, p. 34; Tanenbaum 1986, p. 49.

⁵¹ Tales of the House of Zolochov that draw no distinction between historical fact and hagiography appear in various Hasidic collections. A few of them are collected in *Great Waters*, pp. 137–144. See also Heschel 1957; Alfasi 1969, p. 34; Tanenbaum 1986, pp. 25–60.

⁵² “When R. Isaac of Drogoibych heard of the remarkable powers of the Baal Shem's amulets, it occurred to him that this was most certainly accomplished by means of the Holy Names written in them. So he decreed, “Because of the improper use of the Name of God, the power of the amulets must pass away.” And that, indeed, is what happened. The talismans issued by the Baal Shem were now unavailing, having lost their special potency . . . When the Baal Shem finally realized that his amulets were no longer providing any benefits, he sought the reason. It was eventually revealed to him that it was because of the *zaddik* R. Isaac's pronouncement. The Baal Shem thereupon wrought a remarkable feat by means of a Kabbalistic combination of the words of the prayer “*Ana Bakoah*.” As a result of the Baal Shem's feat . . . the Baal Shem confronted R. Isaac. “Why has your honor taken from me the power of my amulets—amulets which I dispense to help people?” Said R. Isaac, “It is forbidden to make personal use of the Holy Names.” “But there is no oaths nor any Names in my amulets,” argued the Besht, “save my very own, ‘Israel, son of Sarah, Baal Shem Tov.’” R. Isaac, unwilling to believe this, said it is not possible for the Baal Shem's name alone to possess such awesome powers. Upon opening several amulets which were brought for R. Isaac's scrutiny, he became convinced of the truth of what he was told. Then he uttered the following: “Lord of the universe, if a man earns his livelihood through the power of his own name, what do You care? Restore to him the potency of the amulets bearing his name.” And so it was.”

R. Pinchas of Korets had heard from R. Zevi, the Besht's son, resembled the story. Idel assumes that the Besht's name was understood to be a transformation of the divine name of 42 letters, which emerges from the acrostic of the prayer "*Ana Bakoah*."⁵³ Nevertheless, the authenticity of the tradition about the Besht's divine name and the fact that both the Besht and R. Isaac of Drogobych were practicing magic for redemptive purposes do not project on the authenticity of this nineteenth century story, which could have been created after—the fact, with the figure of R. Isaac of Drogobych crafted under the influence of his fearful image in *In Praise of the Besht*.

R. Yehiel Mikhel, The Maggid of Zolochov

R. Yehiel Mikhel, the *Maggid* of Zolochov, was born in Brody, in Eastern Galicia, apparently in 5486 (1726). (The date is not certain, but it is known that he died in 5541 [1781]), and a family tradition tells that he was 55 at his death.) His birth was under a clear messianic sign: a tradition of the famed Hasidic *zaddik* R. Uri "the Seraph" of Strelisk tells that R. Yehiel Mikhel's father, R. Isaac of Drogobych, "repaired a thousand reincarnations before bringing the soul of his aforesaid holy son into this world."⁵⁴ As far as we can tell, the term "repair of reincarnations" (*tiqqun ha-gilgulim*) alludes to repairing the earlier reincarnations of the Messiah, in whose soul are reflected the sins of generations of Jews, especially sexual infractions. This tradition thus indicates a Hasidic belief that R. Yehiel Mikhel's soul was pure and perfect, for it was formed only after the souls had been repaired. It may also hint that his soul was the soul of the Messiah.

Another Hasidic tradition attributes to R. Yehiel Mikhel the capacity to execute ascents of the soul at will or when summoned from Heaven. His student, R. Abraham Joshua Heschel of Opatow, relates "that his holy rabbi, our master R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochov would sleep toward one of two aspects of the sacred heavenly beings, when he wished to ascend to Heaven or when the cry to heaven was his voice, a voice to him."⁵⁵ Moshe Idel has pointed out that this gift

⁵³ See Idel 1989, pp. 100–106.

⁵⁴ *Great Waters*, p. 4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

is ascribed by tradition only to figures of early Hasidism—the Besht and R. Yehiel Mikhel, the *Maggid* of Zolochov.⁵⁶ Two of R. Yehiel Mikhel's five sons also were endowed with this capacity—his first-born, Joseph of Yampol, and his second, Isaac of Radvil.

R. Yehiel Mikhel spent his childhood and youth in Brody and other towns in which his father served in various capacities. His first position was that of preacher in the town of Kolki (Kalki). He was at that time a student of the Besht. An account preserved in *In Praise of the Besht* tells that R. Yehiel Mikhel stayed at the Besht's home in Medzhibozh while his wife was giving birth to Joseph, their first-born, at their home in Kolki.⁵⁷ This is the earliest Hasidic story that tells of a student staying at his rabbi's home while his wife is bearing a child in a distant town. That motif was developed in nineteenth-century Hasidic hagiography, which often tells how the Hasid abandons his family in order to remain near the *zaddik*, his spiritual leader.

It is not known when R. Yehiel Mikhel began his service in Kolki, but it clearly predates 5520 (1760), the year of the Besht's death. As for the length of his service, R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy, one of his outstanding students, cites him as “my venerable and pious teacher, a man of God, our teacher Yehiel Mikhel, preacher of the holy congregation of Kolki, may peace be upon him and may his memory be for a blessing.”⁵⁸ Since R. Benjamin began to write in 5528 (1768),⁵⁹ R. Yehiel Mikhel was still living in Kolki in at that time, eight years after the Besht's death.

From Kolki, R. Yehiel Mikhel moved on to serve as preacher in the town of Zolochov in eastern Galicia, and there he became famous. Whether he served elsewhere is not known, but the title page of the book *Precious Gleanings* (*Liqqutim Yeqarim*), by his student R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, tells that at the end of the days he was “accepted” in Yampol, a small Ukrainian town certainly ill-suited to his intellectual capacity and his standing among his students.⁶⁰ The diamet-

⁵⁶ See Idel 1993, p. 111.

⁵⁷ See *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 168. The town of “Alik” referred to in the story is a corruption of “Kolki” or “Kalki.” For more on the relationship between the Besht and the young R. Yehiel Mikhel, see *Light of Isaac* (*Or Yizhaq*), pp. 3, 25.

⁵⁸ *Intense Loving* (*Ahavat Dodim*) 16a.

⁵⁹ See Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 83, n. 16.

⁶⁰ See the title page of *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]): “with a supplement of precious words by the renowned and pious rabbi and *maggid*, the sacred

rically opposite path followed by R. Ezekiel Landau is instructive in this regard: he began his service as rabbi in Yampol, went from there to Brody, and, in the end, was asked to serve in the metropolis of Prague. We do not know for certain the reasons for R. Yehiel Mikhel's decline in stature, but his son, R. Isaac of Radvil, hints that his father was so embittered that he wished to depart the world.⁶¹ R. Benjamim of Zalozhtsy, his outstanding student, saw in the wanderings of the *maggidim* evidence of the truthfulness of their missions, for they serve God devotedly and "sniff out any sin that may be found in the city."⁶² When they then reprove the sinners, they suffer enraged responses and are expelled. Particularly important is the allusion to the reprover's ability to "sniff out" sins, something not characteristic of all itinerant reprovers; for that skill, attributed in *In Praise of the Besht* to R. Isaac of Drogobych, R. Yehiel Mikhel's father, is attributed by Scripture to the Messiah.⁶³ It is entirely possible that the portrayal by R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy provides a messianic explanation for R. Yehiel Mikhel's wanderings, whose voyages symbolize spiritual quest and provide him the opportunity to raise the holy sparks entrapped in the demonic realm and redeem the souls, as suggested by Elliot Wolfson.⁶⁴

Throughout the years of those wanderings, R. Yehiel Mikhel's activities remained centered on his birthplace of Brody, in eastern Galicia on the Ukrainian border. In 1441, Brody was turned over by King Vladislav Varnanchik to one of his nobles as a token of his gratitude for defending the region against Tatar attacks; at the time, it was a small village, surrounded by forests and swamps. Since then, it had grown and expanded rapidly as an independent city.

luminary, our master Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, who was preacher in several holy communities, and, at the end of his days, was accepted in the holy congregation of Yampol."

⁶¹ See *Light of Isaac*, p. 25 and pp. 53, 190.

⁶² *Intense Loving* 34a. With respect to the wanderings of the reprover, see also Weiss 1951, pp. 46–103; Dinur 1955, pp. 225–227; Cf. Piekarsz 1978, pp. 96–124.

⁶³ See Isa. 11:3 and R. David Qimhi (Radaq) and *Zion's Fortress* ad loc.

⁶⁴ See Wolfson 1995, pp. 88–109. Wolfson defined the messianic aspect in the wanderings of Hasidic itinerant preachers, whose physical journeys are meant to redeem the fallen sparks, sometimes described as the accomplishment of the stature (*koma*) of the Messiah. The messianic undertone is also found in the symbol of the foot as a phallus and the metaphorical meaning of walking as a sexual union between God and the *Shekhina*, with the *zaddik* as the *Sefirah* of *Yesod* (foundation) that brings them together.

A large fortress was built within it, and it was transformed into a center of commerce, one of the principal points for trade between Eastern Europe and Central Europe and beyond it to the west. The main trade route from Russia to Poland and Germany went through Brody. An additional route extended to Hungary and, from there, to Trieste, Italy. At various times, Brody was granted the status of a free city, in which goods could be bought and sold free of certain taxes and imposts, and those exemptions turned it into an important center of wholesale and transfer trade.

Paralleling these developments, Brody was transformed as well into a major Jewish economic and cultural center.⁶⁵ The first written documentation of Jewish settlement in Brody dates from the fifteenth century, but Jews had lived there even earlier. Protected by the city's rulers, the Jews enjoyed special economic privileges as well as the right to organize a community empowered to impose taxes and exercise judicial authority through internal institutions. The leaders of the Brody Jewish community were active in the Council of the Four Lands and in district councils, and the town was an important center of fund raising and fund distribution for the Jewish community in the Holy Land. Its stature rose even higher in the wake of the three partitions of Poland, which was divided between the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. In 1772, parts of Poland were annexed by Russia while another part, Galicia, was annexed by Austria. Further partitions took place in 1793 and 1795, but the political boundaries in no way weakened the familial ties among the Jews of the region or their sense of cultural unity.⁶⁶ Brody's location as a border town reinforced its importance as a meeting place for Jews ruled by the Russian Tsar and Galician Jews living within the borders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Brody gained fame as a city of scholars and great halakhists but also as a focus of kabbalistic study thanks to the denizens of its *kloyz* (private study hall). In contrast to the public study hall, which was usually funded by the community, the *kloyz* was a private institution, founded and administered by a wealthy family whose prestige was enhanced by its support of scholars. A small number of exceptionally learned scholars would populate the *kloyz*, devoting themselves

⁶⁵ On Brody and its Jews, see, generally, Gelber 1955.

⁶⁶ See Rapoport-Albert 1990, pp. 183, 210–214.

to Torah study for its own sake.⁶⁷ The prestige of the *kloyz*, like that of the public study hall, depended not on the founding family or on the scholarship of one member; rather, it was determined by the significance of the group of scholars as a whole.

The *kloyz* in Brody appears to have been founded by R. Jacob Babad, and it was headed for many years by his son-in-law, R. Hayyim Segal Landau.⁶⁸ Its residents were famed for their study of Kabbalah and their adoption of kabbalistic practices. In general, interest in Kabbalah was widespread in all the east Galician towns near Brody, and circles of pietists and recluses were active in the early eighteenth century, some of them encompassing surviving Sabbateans. The Sabbateans secretly adhered to a belief in Shabbetai Zevi, and their faith led them to interpret kabbalistic mysteries as referring to him as messiah. There is no evidence of any historical ties between R. Yehiel Mikhel's father, R. Isaac of Drogobych, and those groups, but, as already noted, *In Praise of the Besht* portrays him as possessed of magical abilities, which were characteristic of such pietists and recluses.

Brody was tightly linked as well to the Frankist movement and the battle against it; a series of bans directed against Jacob Frank and his followers were issued in Brody during the 1750s and 1760s.⁶⁹ In 5533 (1773), Jacob Frank dispatched emissaries to "Brody and the other towns" in the context of his campaign to convert Jews after his own acceptance of Christianity.⁷⁰ During that same period in Brody, excommunications were issued as well against R. Jonathan Eibeschutz and R. Leib Prusnitz, both suspected of Sabbateanism and heresy.⁷¹ It is no coincidence that Brody became a center of activity against groups that were potentially or actually dissolute, for such groups had become widespread in Ukraine and eastern Galicia and were active during the years in which Hasidism sprang up.

⁶⁷ See Reiner 1993, p. 290. The term *kloyz* (confined area) is related to the Latin terms *clausum* or *claustrum*, referring to a closed-off group of structures or inner courtyard of a monastery. The term "cloister" sometimes refers as well to the canons serving in a cathedral.

⁶⁸ On the *kloyz* in Brody, see Gelber 1955, pp. 62–81; Reiner 1993.

⁶⁹ See Balaban 1934, esp. pp. 127–129, 133–135.

⁷⁰ See Elier 1994/1, p. 58.

⁷¹ See Reiner 1993, p. 311; Elier 1994/1, p. 56. On the messianic tendencies of Eibeschutz and Prusnitz in both teachings and actions, see Liebes 1978; Liebes 1978–79; Liebes 1982/2.

R. Yehiel Mikhel lived and worked in a reclusive culture marked by an atmosphere suffused with messianic tension. Although he held no formal office in Brody, he maintained his own congregation (*beit minyan*)—a prayer house and study house—as reported by his student, R. Meshullam Feibish Heller, who dwelled in 5537 (1777) “in the holy community of Brody, may God protect it, in his prayer house.”⁷² And even when he served as preacher in various other communities, he kept his house in Brody and maintained his independent congregation there. He did so despite the explicit prohibition on independent congregations included in the Brody ban decree of 5532 (1772)—a prohibition directed against the existence of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s prayer house and against his activities there.

⁷² *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 117a.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BEGINNING OF R. YEḤIEL MIKHEL'S CAREER IN 5532 (1772)

The Korets Abattoir Affair

R. Yeḥiel Mikhel first emerged as a spiritual guide, a leader of students and disciples, in the context of his dispute with R. Pinḥas Shapira, an important rabbi in the town of Korets. The confrontation, involving the local abattoir, took place while R. Yeḥiel Mikhel was serving as preacher in Zolochov, apparently in 5532 (1772)¹—the bicentenary of the Ari's death.² The details of the story remain to be fully clarified, in part because the written documentation refers to R. Yeḥiel Mikhel sometimes by name and sometimes only as “the *Maggid*.” Two scholars of the Korets episode, Abraham Joshua Heschel and Rivka Schatz, took it for granted that “the *Maggid*” referred to in the texts was R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi.³ But the documents do not support that premise, for the “the *Maggid*” they refer to must be identified from the point of view of the episode's protagonists. R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy, one of the chief players, was a student of “the *Maggid*” of Zolochov,⁴ as was R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen, the chief

¹ See Heschel 1948–1952, p. 225 and p. 239, nn. 123, 126. Heschel is inconsistent in identifying the year: He assumes that R. Pinḥas of Korets, who died in 5550 (1790), lived in Ostrog “longer than twenty years.” Since the dispute took place while he was still in Korets, before moving to Ostrog, Heschel reasons that the events occurred in 5530 (1770). But he says as well that “one gets the impression that the dispute occurred after the death of the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi in the month of Kislev 5533 (1772).” As elucidated below, it seems to me that the dispute in Korets dates from 5532 (1772) and was responsible for the Brody excommunication decree issued that year. R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi, was uninvolved in the dispute, even if it took place during his lifetime.

² On the possible messianic implications of that date, see below, pp. 136–137.

³ See Heschel 1948–1952, pp. 221–233; Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, pp. 140–141. These scholars erred as well in identifying “the rabbi” in the story, who is not invariably R. Pinḥas of Korets. The designation is applied as well to R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen, the chief judge in Korets, who took R. Yeḥiel Mikhel's side, and one must distinguish between the two usages.

⁴ See below, pp. 258–262.

judge in Korets.⁵ And even if those men were students of both *Maggidim*, they still might have understood an unspecified reference to “the *Maggid*” as indicating R. Yehiel Mikhel, as is the case in writings by other students of the *Maggid* of Zolochov.⁶ Finally, the identification of “the *Maggid*” as the *Maggid* of Zolochov draws support from the account of the meeting that was arranged between R. Pinḥas of Korets and “the *Maggid*,” where R. Yehiel Mikhel is referred to by his full name.⁷

The story of the Korets abattoir comes down to us in two versions. The first, abridged and censored, appears in *Ms. Jerusalem 8 3759*; it is that version from which Schatz quoted. The second, more detailed and less censored, appears in *Ms. Cincinnati 62*, which was in Heschel’s possession and which he used in his article on R. Pinḥas of Korets. Unfortunately, that manuscript disappeared after Heschel’s death, and all that is known of its content is what can be gleaned from the quotations in Heschel’s article.⁸ In both versions, the anonymous narrator says he heard of the affair from R. Isaac b. R. Solomon Gleizer of Korets, termed “the elder.” The anonymous author committed “the elder’s” account to writing in 5587 (1827), more than half a century after the fact. “The elder” was associated both with R. Pinḥas of Korets and with his opponent, R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen, chief judge of Korets. It is not clear whose side he took, and he may even have attempted to mediate the dispute; but his efforts only inflamed the enmity.

It appears from “the elder’s” account that the dispute originated in the opposition of “the *Maggid*” and R. Isaac Eisik of ha-Kohen, chief judge in Korets, to the conduct of R. Moses Shapira, R. Pinḥas’s

⁵ See below, pp. 246–257.

⁶ In the writings of R. Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir, R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov, and R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, “the *Maggid*,” without specification, refers to R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochov, not R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi. See Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 71, n. 61; Altshuler 1995, pp. 114–120, 140–147.

⁷ See below, pp. 54–55.

⁸ Hebrew Union College Library in Cincinnati has a manuscript numbered “62,” but the initial examination of that manuscript showed that its source and subject matter are not Hasidic, and it is probably not the document from which Heschel quoted. On the other hand, Heschel refers, in his Yiddish article “Hidden Documents on the History of Hasidism,” pp. 113–135, to several Hasidic manuscripts that made their way to the YIVO Archive in New York. It may well be that Heschel was quoting from one of those, referring to it as *Ms. Cincinnati 62*, and the document exists in the YIVO Archive.

son: "a great dispute over slaughterers of kosher meat, caused by envy, for R. Moses b. R. Pinḥas had a position in Shafy, a place in which one could earn a salary by being the city's sole slaughterer, without associates."⁹ R. Moses b. R. Pinḥas of Korets had "a position in Shafy," that is, he had a prescriptive right or some other form of monopoly over kosher slaughter in the locale, a situation to which the *Maggid* of Zolochov and his student R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen objected. "The elder" claimed that their opposition was "on account of envy," seeing evidence for that in their resentment for the excessive profits he earned from his monopoly. But if one looks past "the elder's" tendentious interpretations, one can see that their opposition in fact grew out of an ethical imperative: they opposed the monopolist because he unfairly used his position to charge exorbitant prices for kosher meat. It thus appears that R. Yeḥiel Mikhel began his public career by following in the path of his father, R. Isaac of Droboych, who protested the moral lapse of the wealthy meat-tax collector who had taken unfair advantage of a poor butcher.¹⁰

The dispute, originating in matters related to kosher slaughter, developed into a wide and open conflict that implicated additional issues related to divine worship. R. Pinḥas of Korets took umbrage at "the *Maggid*'s" manner of prayer and could not tolerate "people gesturing in the manner of the *Maggid*"¹¹ and extolling his prayer. R. Pinḥas's criticisms imply opposition to the demonstrative nature of the *Maggid*'s prayer, hint at vulgar bodily movements, and disparage the *Maggid*'s pretensions to penetrate to the upper realms with his prayer. Allusions to the dispute can be found as well in a tradition attributed to R. Pinḥas of Korets, which tells of "a certain resentment between R. Mikhel and R. Pinḥas" related to matters of prayer. Their rivalry was expressed in R. Yeḥiel Mikhel's "grudge" against R. Pinḥas and R. Pinḥas's reaction: "The grudge that he bears in his heart against me because he cannot discern my prayers in the heavens is a vain grudge; for he is not alone in being unable to discern my prayers. Even the angels cannot discern them, for I have made my way directly to the Holy One, Blessed be He."¹²

⁹ Heschel 1948–1952, p. 239, n. 126.

¹⁰ See above, pp. 38–45.

¹¹ Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 140; to the same effect, Heschel 1948–1952, p. 226.

¹² *Sayings of Pinḥas (Imrei Pinḥas ha-Shalem)*, p. 250; Margolin 1999, pp. 259–271.

Beyond that, R. Pinḥas of Korets resented “the *Maggid*” for turning against him some of his long-standing students, “who called themselves the *Maggid*’s men.”¹³ This refers, first and foremost, to R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy, a previously devoted student of R. Pinḥas who became one “the *Maggid*’s” devotees.¹⁴ In the course of the episode, R. Isaiah appears to have been dispatched to Korets to act as mediator and arrange a meeting between “the *Maggid*” and R. Pinḥas, with the goal of bridging their differences. R. Isaiah was selected for the mission because he had previously been a student of R. Pinḥas and there was reason to believe he could succeed. In fact, he failed:

There ensued a great dispute in the city [of Korets]. Some people opposed him [R. Pinḥas] because he turned people away from his home, being unable to tolerate their adoption of the *Maggid*’s gestures or their calling themselves the *Maggid*’s men. And the rabbi [R. Pinḥas] said, with wonder: “They, the *Maggid*’s men, they believe that I disagree with the *Maggid*! If I were to step in the path of the *Maggid*, or the *Maggid* were to step in my path, we would be consumed by fire” . . . Likewise with respect to prayer, the rabbi [R. Pinḥas] said: “People said that the *Maggid* raised prayer on high, but it was I who raised prayer on high.”¹⁵

As far as we can tell, R. Pinḥas of Korets, “who turned people away from his home,” sent R. Isaiah packing, declaring publicly that he could have no meeting of the ways with “the *Maggid*.” That impression is given as well by his statement that “if I were to step in the path of the *Maggid*, or the *Maggid* were to step in my path, we would be consumed by fire.” The ambiguous term “step in the path” can refer both to following a particular system and to having a face-to-

R. Pinḥas’s criticisms of “the *Maggid*’s” innovations related to the manner of prayer go to the heart of the dispute over the question of prayer itself. According to R. Yehiel Mikhel, one can learn and teach how to attain commune with God during prayer, even though that communing, when all is said and done, can only come about spontaneously. R. Pinḥas of Korets, on the other hand, protested against the internal contradiction of that approach, arguing that communing with God arises out of spontaneous feeling, inherently incapable of being mastered or taught.

¹³ Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 140.

¹⁴ Their break is cited by “the Elder” of Korets: “And he said in the name of R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy, that he says of himself that he is of equal authority to, and disagrees with [R. Pinḥas].” See *ibid.*, pp. 140–141, n. 44.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 140. Many of the cited statements of R. Pinḥas of Korets are written in Yiddish in the original source. See the parallel in Heschel 1948–1952, pp. 225–226. The story appears to be divided in Heschel’s manuscript into several parts, which can be combined into a whole only through precise examination. Among other things, the ending appears one page before the beginning.

face encounter. In any event, "R. Yeḥiel himself later approached the rabbi [R. Pinḥas],"¹⁶ and their meeting took place, but they failed to reach a peaceful settlement. In the wake of the dispute, R. Pinḥas eventually had to leave Korets and settle in Ostrog. That R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen, R. Yeḥiel Mikhel's student, held the powerful position of chief judge in Korets may have been decisive in forcing R. Pinḥas to leave.¹⁷

Word of the quarrel also reached R. David Makov, who diligently collected dozens of accounts of the wicked deeds of the *Hasidim* and published them in a libel entitled *Breaking of Sinners* (*Shever Posh'eim*).¹⁸ Distorted echoes of the events can be heard in that work, which quotes, "in the name of speakers of truth," a story that took place "in Ukraine, [where] there are thousands and myriads of the aforementioned sect [the *Hasidim*]. One of the leaders was named Mikhel of Zolochew," who violated the Sabbath, "and the rabbi of the aforementioned city rose up and excommunicated him . . . , but the rabbi was obliged to flee because all the most powerful informers are in the wicked camp of the *Hasidim*, and the rabbi was nearly condemned to die, with but one step between him and death."¹⁹ The author of *Breaking of Sinners* exaggerates the number of people following the *Maggid* of Zolochew, and his remarks may have been written in the 1780s, during which time Hasidism was growing and spreading. In addition, he attributes to R. Yeḥiel Mikhel deliberate violation of the Sabbath, and his report is clearly unreliable regarding the subject of the dispute.²⁰ It is likewise unreliable with respect to

¹⁶ Heschel 1948–1952, p. 228. That statement supports the conclusion that "the *Maggid*" in the abattoir affair was not Dov Ber of Mezhrichi but Yeḥiel Mikhel of Zolochew, referred to elsewhere in the account simply as "the *Maggid*" but here called by his full name.

¹⁷ An indication that R. Pinḥas was critical of R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen can be found in a tradition attributed to R. Pinḥas, according to which R. Isaac Eisik "was born with good qualities" but was not a fully righteous man, having failed to train himself to overcome his negative qualities. See *Glory to the Upright* (*Pe'er la-Yesharim*) 27b. See also Gershom Scholem's note in Biber 1907, p. 220 in the copy in Scholem's collection.

¹⁸ See Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, pp. 19–28.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

²⁰ See also *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 19b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 110a, the comments of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, R. Yeḥiel Mikhel's outstanding student, on the wicked of the generation: "In truth, there are in this generation scoffers and deniers of wisdom . . . and they present themselves as righteous while insulting angels of God with fabricated lies and calumnies." The statement was written in 5537 (1777), and the dispute surrounding R. Yeḥiel Mikhel resonates within it.

the *Maggid* of Zolochov's allies, whom he terms "the most powerful informers," implying that they slandered R. Pinḥas before the government. But his remarks confirm that influential people sided with R. Yehiel Mikhel, and that R. Pinḥas had to leave town.

*The Three Bans Imposed by the Brody Excommunication
Decree of 5532 (1772)*

The victory of the *Maggid* of Zolochov and his students incurred the wrath of dignitaries and leaders in other communities, especially the town of Brody, the center of the *Maggid*'s activity. On 20 Sivan 5532 (June 21, 1772), "on the occasion of the fair, a time when all assembled," the Brody town councilors published an excommunication manifesto against "wicked people, sinning against God with their physical beings,"²¹ who separate themselves from the community and cast off the yoke of Torah. The evildoers are described in the terms used by Scripture for the people of Sodom—"and the people of Sodom were wicked, greatly sinning against God" (Gen. 13:13)—and the manifesto at first glance implies that the communal leaders demand their excommunication because their actions, like those of the Sodomites, run counter to the values of the Torah. But the real point of the manifesto is not what it says explicitly but what emerges from between its lines: the sectarians' actions are not inherently improper, and what disturbs the community is the tendency lurking behind them. That tendency is the messianism that underlay the activities of the *Maggid* of Zolochov and his disciples from the beginning of their efforts as a group.

Moreover, just as the framers of the manifesto declined to set out explicitly the charges against the excommunicants, so, too, did they avoid identifying them by name, perhaps because everyone knew who was being spoken of. And even though their silence invites interpretation, there is no doubt that their target was the *Maggid* of Zolochov and his students, for the three bans that were imposed fit no other contemporaneous Hasidic personality. The ban on independent slaughter is a consequence of the dispute over the Korets abattoir that R. Yehiel Mikhel instituted; the ban on independent

²¹ Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 45.

prayer assemblies can pertain only R. Yeḥiel Mikhel, who was the only one of the founders of Hasidism to maintain his own prayer house in Brody in 5532 (1772); and the ban on using the Ari's liturgy comports with what is known of the liturgical practices that he and his disciples adopted as well as their presumption to imitate the Ari and his students. Although left unstated in the manifesto, the intent behind the three bans was to stop the messianist group in its infancy and prevent it from gathering public support.

The first prohibition in the Brody excommunication decree pertains to kosher slaughter; it forbids slaughter with a polished knife and eating meat slaughtered with such a knife: "meat slaughtered with such polished knives is carrion and not kosher, and all the members of our community stand admonished not to eat of the product of such slaughter-knives."²² Similarly, the town councilors of Brody were authorized to expel any visitor who declined to eat meat slaughtered by the local butchers, and the slaughterers themselves were forbidden to display their knives on request, except to known, ordained rabbis.²³ The use of polished knives became a defining feature of independent Hasidic slaughter,²⁴ and the circumstances and timing together show this to be its origin; according to all indications, the Korets abattoir affair drove R. Yeḥiel Mikhel and his disciples to arrange for their own slaughterers, who were particularly strict about using polished knives. Nevertheless, slaughtering with a polished knife does not contravene Jewish Law, and it is not entirely clear why the use of such knives was forbidden.²⁵ Perhaps the prohibition should be understood as a cover for the town councilors' unease about the founding of a group with its own slaughterers and abattoir that might divert some of the meat-tax revenue that was so significant to the community's income. Similarly, the Brody town councilors were concerned about losing their right to supervise the slaughterers, which provided rabbis and dignitaries considerable influence and authority.

²² Ibid., p. 48.

²³ A slaughterer is required to show his knife to a rabbi. See *Gates of Repentance* (*Pithei Teshuvah*), a commentary on the *Shulḥan Arukh*, on *Yoreh De'ah* 18:8; Wertheim 1960, pp. 200–201.

²⁴ On the development of independent Hasidic slaughter, see Marcus 1954, p. 61; Shmeruk 1955; Wertheim 1960, pp. 200–208; Tishby 1967, esp. p. 41, n. 180; Shmeruk 1970; Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, pp. 44–49; Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, pp. 141–147; Elior 1994/1, pp. 48–49.

²⁵ See Stampfer 1999.

But the socio-economic view of the effects of separate Hasidic slaughter—focusing on loss of tax income and loss of power and influence—presents only part of the picture. The opposition to Hasidic slaughter was rooted in concern over its mystical aspect, which draws a connection between the manner of slaughter and the repair of sinners' souls reincarnated as animals and birds.²⁶ That mystical element likewise was at the heart of the Korets abattoir affair and the opposition of R. Yehiel Mikhel to R. Moses Shapira's perverse conduct.

The belief that the repair of souls is affected by the manner of an animal's slaughter and by the moral standing of the slaughterer was derived in the *Maggid* of Zolochov's circle from *Book of Kanah*, an anonymous medieval kabbalistic work.²⁷ *Book of Kanah* deals with the meanings of the Torah's commandments, adopting the premise that proper performance of the commandments will hasten the redemption.²⁸ Its author takes the position that the redemption will be brought about not by the Messiah but through the merit of Israel's performance of the commandments; only after the process of redemption has been completed will the Messiah appear. That premise, in turn, is tied in *Book of Kanah* to the belief that the souls of sinners are repaired through reincarnation. In the author's view, souls are reincarnated after death both as a punishment and as an act of kindness that permits atonement and the remediation of sins. The souls of sinners—especially those who have violated sexual norms—are reincarnated as pure or impure animals, depending on the severity of the offense.²⁹ For example, one who commits incest with his sister is reincarnated as a stork; one who has relations with his stepmother is reincarnated as a mule; one who engages in bestiality is reincarnated as a bat; and one who commits incest with his mother is reincarnated as a she-ass. Souls reincarnated in kosher animals can derive their repair from the slaughterer if he is a God-fearing man who is punctilious about the laws of slaughter and takes care not to distress the animal or cause it unnecessary pain before it is killed. Accordingly, the author of *Book of Kanah* disqualified a "cruel slaughterer" from service;³⁰ and he recounted how he himself had witnessed "a very

²⁶ See Shmeruk 1955, pp. 62–66.

²⁷ See Oron-Kushnir 1980; Oron 1982.

²⁸ See Oron-Kushnir 1980, pp. 301–309.

²⁹ See *ibid.* On the doctrine of reincarnation in medieval mysticism, see Scholem 1976/2, pp. 337–349; Elior 1986.

³⁰ *Book of Kanah*, p. 287.

elderly individual" slaughter a cow and immediately thereafter die: "And I inquired about him and found that he was not worthy of receiving judgment from the one that was slaughtered"—that is, the slaughterer's sins exceeded those of the sinner reincarnated in the animal. The author of *Book of Kanah* goes on to tell how two days later, a calf was born in the same household, "and at night I saw clearly that it was he," that is, the old slaughterer's soul had been reincarnated in the calf that was born.³¹

Book of Kanah thus implies a need to repair the souls of sinners reincarnated as animals in order to complete the process of redemption and permit the coming of the Messiah. This repair is accomplished by special attention to how the animal is slaughtered and to the moral standing of the slaughterer. Likewise important is care in how the meat is eaten: when a righteous person of lofty character eats the meat, he repairs the soul that was reincarnated in the animal by raising it to a high moral standing commensurate with his own.³²

The *Maggid* of Zolochov and his students studied *Book of Kanah* from manuscripts and, in 5542 (1782), they published a printed edition.³³ They had similarly high regard for *Kindness to Abraham* (*Hesed le-Avraham*), by the seventeenth-century Hebron kabbalist R. Abraham Azulai, in which the ideas of *Book of Kanah* are recapitulated.³⁴ Emphasizing the connection between kosher slaughter and repair of souls, *Kindness to Abraham* stresses the importance of the slaughter-knife, any imperfection in which can undo the repair.³⁵ Another learned authority whose influence on the *Maggid* of Zolochov's students is evident is R. Isaiah Horowitz, known as "the Shelah" (של"י), an acronym formed from the initial letters of the title of his work *Two Tablets of the Covenant* (*Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*). A renowned halakhist as well as a profound kabbalist, the Shelah served as rabbi of the city of Prague. He was born in 5325 (1565) and emigrated to the Land of Israel in 5381 (1621). He served there as rabbi of the Ashkenazi

³¹ Ibid., p. 307.

³² Ibid., pp. 277–279. In the sixteenth century, the capacity to repair souls reincarnated in kosher animals was ascribed to the Ari. See Benayahu 1967, p. 250.

³³ See below, p. 132.

³⁴ R. Abraham Azulai's *Kindness to Abraham* was relied on by R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, an outstanding student of the *Maggid* of Zolochov. See *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 21a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 117b; Shmeruk 1955, pp. 62–66; Altshuler 1995, pp. 2, 308–314.

³⁵ See *Kindness to Abraham*, sec. 32, pp. 221–222.

community in Jerusalem and lived as well in Safed and Tiberias, where he died in 5390 (1630). His *Two Tablets of the Covenant* refers to the mystery of interspecies reincarnation and includes admonitions to slaughter carefully and flawlessly: “For who can know what is reincarnated in it [the animal]. “‘Love your fellow as yourself’—choose for him a proper death’ [*Pesahim* 75a], that is, a flawless slaughter.”³⁶

These works profoundly influenced R. Yehiel Mikhel and his students. Inspired by their teachings, they began to be extremely meticulous regarding use of a polished slaughter-knife and they demanded as well that the butcher be free of any moral flaw. That care gave expression to their messianic belief that repairing the souls of sinners was to be hastened in anticipation of the forthcoming redemption.

It seems, then, that the Korets abattoir affair and the Brody excommunication of 5532 (1772), insofar as the decree forbade independent slaughter, were expressions of a socio-economic power struggle but also of much more. First and foremost, they represented the earliest attempt to combat the messianic mind-set of the *Maggid* of Zolochov and his students. The group had transformed animal slaughter from a routine activity, performed in accordance with Jewish law, into a symbolic action whose meticulous execution would repair the souls of sinners and hasten the arrival of the messianic age. As it happened, the Brody excommunication failed to restrain the group; throughout the 1780s, the *Maggid* of Zolochov’s students continued to propagate Hasidic slaughter. Prominent in this battle were R. Wolf of Chernyy-Ostrov, son-in-law of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, and R. Eliezer of Zhitomir, a student of R. Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir, who was, in turn, a student of the *Maggid* of Zolochov. R. Eliezer, himself a slaughterer and meat-inspector, composed a work on the laws of slaughter called “*Pirquei ha-Ne’ezar*.” He was acquainted with *Kindness to Abraham* by R. Abraham Azulai and quotes from it with regard to the inspection of knives.

The second ban imposed by the Brody excommunication decree pertains to worship in independent prayer-assemblies (*minyanim*; sing. *minyan*). The prohibition on these assemblies was justified on the

³⁶ *Two Tablets of the Covenant*, vol. 5, p. 126. The quoted talmudic statement is made in the context of a requirement to be merciful even when executing a verdict of death following conviction.

grounds that separation from the community was tantamount to rebellion against authority and tradition. Accordingly, excommunication was decreed against those evildoers who:

build altars [*bamot*, the biblical term for unauthorized altars outside of the Temple in Jerusalem] for themselves in order to break away from the holy assembly, establish independent prayer-assemblies instead of worshipping with the congregation in the synagogues and study halls established for the public. . . . We will dispatch this proclamation to all the borders of Israel, to raise the sound of excommunication, ban, and exclusionary vow against the wicked people who throw off the yoke of Torah and establish for themselves independent prayer-assemblies with altered liturgy, so they may not announce their actions of separating themselves from the community in any new *kloyzl* or study hall that has not been established for public prayer and assembly.³⁷

The term “*kloyzl*”—a small *kloyz*—is used disparagingly to mean a “prayer-assembly,” and it appears directed here against the independent prayer house established in Brody by R. Yeḥiel Mikhel. But this ban, too, failed to achieve its goal of disbanding the prayer house, which continued to operate in Brody until R. Yeḥiel Mikhel's death in 5541 (1781).

As the excommunication manifesto itself explains, the ban on isolating oneself in an independent prayer-assembly relates to the novel customs adopted by R. Yeḥiel Mikhel's students as they abandoned the practices approved by eminent legal authorities: “Those people practice novel customs. They depart from the prayer formulations of the Sages, the great legal authorities, and from the order of prayers [followed] in these lands.”³⁸ The excommunicators were particularly incensed by the separatists' worship practices “that have markers in kabbalistic mysteries” and by their having the temerity to use the Ari's liturgy, a privilege reserved in Brody to the kabbalists in the renowned *kloyz*. The decree's wording alludes to a previous excommunication, decreed sixteen years earlier in Brody, that banned the study of Lurianic Kabbalah. That ban was now supplemented by a prohibition on use of the Ari's liturgy by anyone other than the Sages of the *kloyz*, “renowned for piety, knowing their Master, and established in the path of truth. Only those renowned individuals

³⁷ Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, pp. 45, 49.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 45.

may worship in their manner from the liturgy of God's holy one, the Ari, may his memory endure to the world-to-come, but no one else [may do so].³⁹

The ban on use of the Ari's liturgy by the *Maggid* of Zolochov and those worshipping at his prayer house grew out of the complicated relationship that had developed vis a vis Lurianic Kabbalah. The Ari (an acronym for "the godly R. Isaac"; the word means "the lion") was R. Isaac Luria Ashkenazi, an important kabbalist of the sixteenth century—the golden age of Kabbalah in Safed. He was born in Jerusalem in 5294 (1534) and died in Safed at the age of thirty-eight, in 5332 (1572). The kabbalistic method that bears his name is known from the writings of his students, especially R. Hayyim Vital, and Lurianic Kabbalah acquired an aura of mystery and spread only bit by bit.⁴⁰ It was studied from manuscripts copied by kabbalists, members of esoteric circles, who were expert in both the *Zohar* (*Book of Splendor*) and other kabbalistic traditions.⁴¹ The allure of Lurianic Kabbalah flowed primarily from the seductiveness of its central theme, the inseparable intertwining of ruin and repair, exile and redemption. Lurianic Kabbalah gave living and persuasive expression to the concept that exile opens the door to redemption; and the concept was readily linked to a belief that the kabbalistic mysteries would be revealed and renewed with the approach of the End and that the study of the hidden teachings can itself bring about the miracle of redemption. In the seventeenth century, this amalgam provided fertile ground for the rise and fall of Shabbetai Zevi. His prophet, Nathan of Gaza, interpreted the image of the Messiah described in Lurianic Kabbalah as foretelling Shabbetai, and employed one of the central Lurianic concepts—descent to the depths in order to redeem the souls that had fallen there by reason of their sins—in justifying his leader's conversion to Islam. Nathan claimed that

³⁹ Ibid., p. 47; Gelber 1955, pp. 62, 107–108, 112–114; Dinur 1955, pp. 159–162; Tishby 1967, p. 4; Elior 1994/1, pp. 57–59.

⁴⁰ Ever since being recorded by R. Hayyim Vital, the Ari's doctrines were accompanied by an atmosphere of esotericism and of controversy. See Balaban 1934, pp. 127–135; Scholem 1940; Gelber 1955, pp. 62, 107–108, 112–114; Dinur 1955, pp. 159–162; Benayahu 1967, pp. 44–45, 64–65; Scholem 1974, pp. 123–124; Idel 1980; Meroz 1988, esp. pp. 39–94; Zack 1989; Elbaum 1990, pp. 183–222; Idel 1990/1; Idel 1991, pp. 206–207; Wolfson 1992, pp. 425–438; Liebes 1992, pp. 113–126; Haran 1993, pp. 396–460; Elior 1994/1, pp. 57–59.

⁴¹ For example, the messianist End-reckoner Immanuel Hai Ricchi was also an interpreter of Lurianic Kabbalah.

Shabbetai Zevi's conversion represented the descent of the Messiah to the depths of sin for the purpose of redeeming the sparks—the souls of the sinners—and thereby completing the repair of the worlds and bringing about the redemption.

The Sabbateans' interpretation of Lurianic Kabbalah had a profound effect on the attitude toward it. No one dared question its sanctity, yet those who wanted to study its mysteries began to be looked at with suspicion. In many places, people delving deeply into Lurianic Kabbalah were suspected of hidden Sabbateanism and of syncretizing Sabbatean ideas with seemingly innocent interpretations of this Kabbalah. The battle against the spread of Lurianic Kabbalah and the adoption of its practices thus became a key component of the rabbinic establishment's war against messianic sects.

In Brody, severe limitations were imposed in 5516 (1756) on the study of Lurianic Kabbalah; the step was part of the battle against Jacob Frank and his followers. A bill of excommunication issued that year authorizes the study of Kabbalah, such as the *Zohar* and the works of Safed kabbalist R. Moses Cordovero, only after the age of thirty and “on condition that [the text] be printed, not hand-written.”⁴² The latter condition was intended to block the spread of manuscripts that included Sabbatean propaganda in the guise of kabbalistic commentary or that were suffused with a blatantly messianist atmosphere. The study of specifically Lurianic Kabbalah was subjected to even more severe restraints: the excommunication decree stressed that “even those writings known for certain to be by the Ari, without error, are absolutely forbidden to be studied by any person until [he has attained] forty years. . . . And even [among those] who have attained the age of forty, not every one who wishes to claim the right may come and do so; [it is limited] to one who has fully studied [literally, ‘filled his belly with’] Talmud and halakhic authorities.”⁴³ In other words, only one who is expert in the revealed Torah and has “filled his belly” with halakhic works may study Lurianic Kabbalah. In this way, the Brody leadership retained for itself the authority to determine who might study Kabbalah and, even more importantly, who might not study it. As a practical matter, they authorized only the members of the Brody *kloyz* to study Lurianic

⁴² The Brody Excommunication of 5516 (1756), in *Treasury of Wisdom (Ozar Hokhmah)*, vol. 1, p. 27. See also Balaban 1934, pp. 127–128, 133–135; Idel 1980.

⁴³ *Treasury of Wisdom*, vol. 1, pp. 26–27; Cf. *Berakhot* 2:8.

Kabbalah. In that way, they reinforced their supervision of what went on in the city's scholarly circles and impeded the spread of messianist notions.

Sixteen years later, in 5532 (1772) the town councilors of Brody broadened the prohibitions related to Lurianic Kabbalah and forbade as well use of the Ari's prayer book in worship. Like the rest of the bill of excommunication, this prohibition was directed against the *Maggid* of Zolochov and his students, who had adopted the Ari's liturgy. The ban confirms and reinforces R. Pinḥas of Korets's complaint about the *Maggid* of Zolochov's deviant liturgical innovations and his pretentious striving to rise to the upper worlds through his prayers. Like the prohibitions of the Brody excommunication, R. Pinḥas's complaint was directed at the mystical view of prayer that R. Yeḥiel Mikhel had adopted in his quest to transform worship from a quotidian obligation into a highly charged activity having the power to break through to the upper realms and bring redemption down to the world.⁴⁴

The Ari and His Disciples as a Model for R. Yeḥiel Mikhel's Circle

Notwithstanding the prohibitions imposed by the Brody excommunication of 5532 (1772), R. Yeḥiel Mikhel of Zolochov and his students continued to immerse themselves in the study of Kabbalah, including the Lurianic strain. One of the students, R. Meshullam Feibush Heller of Zbarazh, gained expertise in the Ari's writings and often referred to them in his letters. (It was he who applied the name "Writings" to *Tree of Life* (*Ez Ḥayyim*) by Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital, the Ari's student, because he possessed manuscripts of the work but not a printed edition.⁴⁵ And to distinguish the Hasidic manuscripts in his possession from the older writings of the Ari, he termed the later material "The New Writings.")⁴⁶ R. Meshullam Feibush never states how the Lurianic

⁴⁴ On the *Maggid* of Zolochov's prayer, see below, pp. 68–77.

⁴⁵ See *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 22b, 24a, 28b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 122b, 126b, 138a. R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye likewise possessed Lurianic manuscripts. In contrast to the *Maggid* of Zolochov's associates, however, he did not conceal the origins of his teachings and did not attribute his "extreme formulations" to the Besht; instead, he forthrightly stated that "as is well known, this is from the writings of the Ari." See Scholem 1976/2, p. 353; Pachter 1986.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 27a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 134a.

manuscripts came into his possession, but similar texts were in the hands of other students in the *Maggid* of Zolochov's circle—in violation of the ban on studying Kabbalah from manuscripts.⁴⁷

There can be no doubt that this blatant flouting of the prohibitions enraged the excommunicators and their allies. Especially infuriating was the presumption shown by R. Yeḥiel Mikhel and his circle in striving to emulate the Ari and his students. In a letter dispatched in 5532 (1772) by Vilnius's dignitaries to the leaders of other communities, the "*Hasidim*" are accused of pretending to be God-fearing and pinning their sinful acts on a tall tree: "For new ones came up of late, which our ancestors valued not [cf. Deut. 32:17], and they call themselves 'pious ones (*Hasidim*),' . . . pinning their deeds on a tall tree."⁴⁸ The charges leveled by the Vilnius dignitaries do not mention the Ari explicitly, but he is hinted at as the "tall tree" on which the *Hasidim* hand. The formulation is ironic, echoing R. Akiva's statement that "if you wish to be strangled, hang yourself from a tall tree."⁴⁹

The Vilnius letter also contains the first appearance of the term "*Hasidim*" to denote a specific, defined group. The term indicates a group whose members regard themselves as distinguished in all respects and that seeks to emulate an elite band such as the Ari's. Their analogizing themselves to the Ari and his students is not mere happenstance, for it flows from the self-image they sought to nurture in the face of their persecution. When R. Meshullam Feibush Heller writes bitterly of the attitude toward his Hasidic teachers, "exemplary men possessed of the holy spirit" who were nonetheless the targets of harsh attacks, he compares them to the Ari and his group. In his view, the attacks on the part of "scoffers and deniers of the Sages" are no different from the rejection that was the Ari's lot:

⁴⁷ The practices set forth in *Precious Gleanings*, printed from manuscripts in R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's possession, include a large group of homilies that are simply commentary on passages in R. Ḥayyim Vital's *Tree of Life*. See *Precious Gleanings*, pars. 137–160, and parallels in *Light of Truth (Or ha-Emet)* 70b–80a.

⁴⁸ Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 62. A defense against such charges can be found in the comments of R. Samuel Shmulki of Nikolsburg. He justified the adoption of Lurianic practices, defusing the phenomenon by claiming that the practices were sanctified, having been received from Elijah the Prophet. See The Epistle of R. Samuel Shmulki Horowitz to the Brody Community in Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 85. The epistle was written in response to the Brody excommunication of 5532 (1772).

⁴⁹ *Pesahim* 112a.

In truth, there are in this generation scoffers and deniers of wisdom, just as there were in the time of the Ari may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, as R. Hayyim Vital may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come wrote. But I have always adhered in my heart to the faith of these Sages. . . . Woe to the wicked [opponents of Hasidism] who threw off the yoke of Torah and the fear of God (may He be blessed) and present themselves as righteous while insulting angels of God with fabricated lies and calumnies. . . . And the true prophets have already foretold of them that it would be thus in the final generation [the generation of the Messiah], as Scripture says, “And truth will be lacking,”⁵⁰ and “they say of evil that it is good and of good that it is evil,”⁵¹ and as is detailed in the Mishnah of *Sotah*,⁵² “in the time [preceding the coming] of the Messiah, [society will break down and be corrupted in numerous ways],” as [described by] our Sages of blessed memory. Let them [the scoffers] have what is theirs, but we have saved our souls.⁵³

R. Meshullam Feibush Heller construes the attacks against his teacher, “the angels of God,” as signs that the days preceding the coming of the Messiah are at hand, for those days are known to be a time of moral and social chaos: truth will be lacking and lies will rule; evil will be considered good and good will be seen as evil. Likewise, insolence—an arrogant attitude toward the faith and its heralds—will hold sway. This moral decay makes even more dramatic the change of course that will accompany the arrival of the Messiah, who is destined to redeem Israel from the low moral state to which it has sunk. In seeking to explain the persecution of his teacher and master, R. Yehiel Mikhel, R. Meshullam Feibush thus reveals his faith that the persecution heralds the imminent arrival of the Messianic Age.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Isa. 59:15.

⁵¹ Isa. 5:20.

⁵² *Sotah* 9:15.

⁵³ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 19b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 110a. A similar analogy appears in the works of R. Elazar b. R. Elimelekh of Lozansky. See The Holy Epistle in *Pleasantness of Elimelekh* (*No'am Elimelekh*) 111b: “My beloved brother, let your heart be confident that also in the days of the holy Ari, may his memory be for a blessing, there were those who quarreled with him.” See also the Introduction of R. Solomon Lutsker to *He Imparts His Words to Jacob*.

⁵⁴ See also the comments of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller in *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 23b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 125b: “In truth, in this generation the husk (*qelippah*) of reversal has gained strength, reversing with the flames of the flaming sword that turns every way [Cf. Gen. 3:24] and turning [by reversal of letters] friend (חֵרֵם—*haver*) to sword (חֶרֶם—*herev*).”

CHAPTER FOUR

LINKAGE

The Establishment of an Elite Hasidic Circle on Shavuot 5537 (1777)

The Messianic Era hinted at by R. Meshullam Feibush Heller was to culminate in the eighth month, Iyyar, of the year 5541 (April–May 1781)—the estimated time of redemption according to the calculations of Immanuel Hai Ricchi. The immediately preceding years were a time of awakening, of efforts to transform the expectation of redemption into actions that would simultaneously confirm and hasten the Messiah's advent.

An important step in that process took place in 5537 (1777), a year that itself was the subject of messianic expectations and during which rumors spread that “the King Messiah has come.”¹ David Assaf suggests the rumors originated in Sabbatean circles, whose members anticipated a renewed revelation of their messiah, Shabbetai Zevi, in 5537, the one-hundredth anniversary of his death. Political dislocations in the wake of Russian victories in Poland and Turkey also contributed to the sense that the End was approaching.²

In the month of Adar 5537 (1777), a group of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples set out for the Land of Israel under the leadership of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and R. Abraham of Kolyshki. Their goal was to establish themselves in the Land of Israel so as to greet the Messiah when he appeared, as they anticipated, in Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781). About three months after their departure, a *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* (the repair on the night of Pentecost)³ ceremony was conducted at R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house in Brody. The participants hoped to link up with their colleagues, who by then should have reached their destination in the Holy Land, and through them

¹ Assaf 1996, p. 328.

² See *id.*, p. 329, n. 56 and p. 340, n. 101.

³ *Tiqqun leil shavu'ot* refers to the practice of staying awake all night on the festival of Shavuot, engaged in study or prayer, in commemoration of the giving of the Torah.—*translator's note*.

to transfer their prayers from the Diaspora to the Holy Land—the gate of heaven through which prayers ascend to the sanctuary on high. The unique figure of the *zaddik*, R. Yehiel Mikhel, bore the crucial task of purifying the prayers of any contaminants, so they might be raised up to the higher worlds.

That *tiggun leil shavu'ot* in Brody also served as the occasion for the establishment of an elite circle of Hasidim, whose goal was to employ spiritual and mystical measures derived from kabbalistic traditions to bring about the redemption. This circle, under R. Yehiel Mikhel's leadership, was the first Hasidic court. Its structure, and the relationships among its members and between them and the *zaddik*, became the model for Hasidic courts to this day.

Despite their importance, the accounts of what took place at R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house in Brody were not committed to writing in any centralized way; they are dispersed among the writings of his students. A comprehensive picture can be gained only by piecing together the various texts. One important account appears in a letter from R. Yehiel Mikhel's student, R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, to the latter's brother-in-law, R. Joel b. Moses, one of the immigrants to the Land of Israel. The letter was written shortly after the Festival of Shavuot and the ensuing Sabbath, during which time R. Meshullam Feibush Heller had stayed at the Brody prayer house. In it, the author reports to R. Joel and his associates in the Land of Israel on the events that took place on Shavuot. Additional accounts appear in the writings of other students, including R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir, R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov, and R. Jacob Isaac, "the Seer of Lublin." Together, they paint a clear and vivid picture of what took place.

R. Yehiel Mikhel's Doctrine of The Linkage of The Souls

R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's first letter was sent from the town of Zbarazh, where he lived, on "Tuesday, 19 Sivan 5537"⁴ (June 24, 1777), thirteen days after the ceremony at the Maggid R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house in Brody:

⁴ *Honest Words of Truth and Faith (Yosher Divrei Emet)* 10b; *Precious Gleanings* (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 110a.

Inasmuch as I am in possession of the words of the *maggid* [R. Yehiel Mikhel] of blessed memory,⁵ which I heard from his holy mouth on the festival of Shavuot this year, 5537—for I spent the festival of Shavuot and the ensuing Sabbath there, and he delivered an extended discourse between the afternoon prayer of the first day and the evening prayer of the second day in his prayer house in the holy community of Brody, may God protect it—and I know your [R. Joel's] admiration for the words of the rabbi, the *maggid*, may he prosper, and I have the greatest [admiration] for what I was privileged to hear directly from his mouth, I determined to commit to writing for you the words he spoke on that occasion.⁶

R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's remarks show that in 5537 (1777), R. Yehiel Mikhel was maintaining his own prayer house in Brody. It thus appears that the excommunication decree of 5532 (1772), which forbade the existence of independent prayer assemblies had failed to bring about the dissolution of the prayer house, though the gathering in Brody may have been conducted undercover and kept secret. That view gains support from the fact that the passages in the letter recounting R. Meshullam's visit with R. Yehiel Mikhel in Brody, as well as portions of R. Yehiel Mikhel's discourse, were excised from the first two editions of *Precious Gleanings* and replaced with the entry "something missing here."⁷

During the two days of Shavuot,⁸ R. Yehiel Mikhel delivered a long discourse (*derush*) before his students.⁹ R. Meshullam Feibush, present at the prayer house, heard the discourse from beginning to end. In his letter, however, he split it into three portions, which he presented in a sequence differing from that of the original. He cast

⁵ The inapposite "of blessed memory"—R. Yehiel Mikhel was still alive—appears to have been inserted when the letter was printed, in 5560 (1800).

⁶ *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 117a.

⁷ See *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 21a, (Mezirov 5554 [1794]) 22a. The full discourse was first printed in the Zolkow edition of 5560 (1800), 22a-b, published after R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's death.

⁸ Outside the Land of Israel, the Festival of Shavuot is observed for two days, 6–7 Sivan. In the year 5537 (1777), the festival fell on Wednesday and Thursday, corresponding to June 11–12, 1777. The assembled group did not depart Brody on the Friday following the festival, instead remaining at the prayer house through the Sabbath.

⁹ *derush* (or *derashah*) is a discourse on matters of Torah delivered by the Rabbi before the congregation of worshippers on Sabbaths or festivals. Typically, the rabbi ties the subject of his discourse to the Torah portion read in the synagogue on the occasion.

the third part of the discourse as a separate pronouncement, torn from its context:¹⁰

The words of [a person's] prayers ascend by means of the person linking himself by uttering "I hereby subject myself to the positive commandment of 'Love your fellow as yourself,'" and thereby including himself, through love, with the holy soul of the righteous ones of the generation,¹¹ whose likenesses he is familiar with and whom he then envisions in his thoughts . . . And I indeed heard from the mouth of the holy one, the divine rabbi, our teacher R. Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory endure to the world to come, may he prosper,¹² that before each prayer, he would recite "I am linking myself with all Israel—with those greater than I, so my thoughts will rise up through them, and with lesser ones, so that they will ascend through me"; thus I heard from his holy mouth.

R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's comments deal with the linkage of souls during prayer: the worshipper links himself with "the holy soul of the righteous ones of the generation," and his own soul is tied, through them, with the souls of all Israel, for they are encompassed within the holy souls. To illustrate the manner in which souls are linked during prayer, R. Meshullam Feibush quotes his master and teacher, R. Yehiel Mikhel, who had the practice of linking in his prayers with the souls of "all Israel"—with those whose souls were on a higher spiritual plane than his own, and capable of raising him to their level, and with other, lesser ones, who could use his soul as a ladder for spiritual ascent. R. Yehiel Mikhel's soul thus became a link in the chain of all Israel's souls, originating in the prayers recited on earth but extending, like Jacob's ladder, to the heavens.

R. Yehiel Mikhel's practice of linking his soul during prayer with the souls of all Israel is referred to as well in *The Light That Illuminates (Or ha-Me'ir)*, a work by R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir. R. Ze'ev Wolf, a prominent student of R. Yehiel Mikhel,¹³ employs the convention of a dialogue to present the doctrine of linkage. The participants are the Besht and an anonymous Sage, identified only as "the Wise One of the Generation":

¹⁰ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 25b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 129a.

¹¹ The Zolkow edition of 5560 (1800) 25b reads: "the holy souls of the righteous ones of the generation."

¹² The two characterizations—"may his memory endure to the world to come" and "may he prosper"—are inconsistent. The latter refers to a person still alive; the former appears to have been added in the 5552 (1792) printing.

¹³ On R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir, see below, pp. 236–241.

I heard [the following] in the name of the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come. Once the Besht asked the Wise One of the Generation with respect to prayer, "How do you act, and to where do you direct your thought during prayer?" He replied, "I link myself with each and every created living being, for in everything within the rubric of creation there must be a vitality suffused with the divine. I link myself with them [the creatures] to utter words before God and raise on high the most profound of requests." He said to him, "If so, you destroy the world by drawing from them their vitality so as to rise and be elevated on high, [for] all the creatures are left without their vitality" . . . And yet, the truth is so. The genuine wise ones, who have the fortitude to stand in the King's sanctuary—that is, in prayer—are obligated to link themselves in the aforesaid manner, but only through the mystery of "running and returning," the profundities of which are known to the enlightened.¹⁴

Gershom Scholem has pointed out that the comments attributed to "the Wise One of the Generation" in *The Light That Illuminates* are quoted in R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's letter in the name of R. Yehiel Mikhel.¹⁵ But a comparison of the two texts shows that R. Ze'ev Wolf replicated R. Yehiel Mikhel's remarks as cited by R. Meshullam Feibush but chose to conceal their source and to refer to R. Yehiel Mikhel only as "the Wise One of the Generation." The juxtaposition of the Besht and "the Wise One of the Generation" raises questions about their comparative standing within R. Yehiel Mikhel's circle of students: On the one hand, R. Yehiel Mikhel, and not the Besht, is referred to as "the Wise One of the Generation." On the other hand, his name is concealed and his method of prayer is rejected—or at least it so appears.

Also obscure is why R. Ze'ev Wolf chose to conceal the name of "the Wise One of the Generation" and to adopt the framework of a literary dialogue to present an authentic saying of R. Yehiel Mikhel. Whether such a dialogue actually took place as described is, of course, a matter of secondary importance; even if the framework is fictitious, it reflects the fundamental problem raised by R. Yehiel Mikhel's

¹⁴ *The Light That Illuminates* 240a.

¹⁵ The copy of *The Light That Illuminates* in the Gershom Scholem collection in the National Library in Jerusalem contains the following marginal note in Scholem's handwriting: "and this is in *Precious Gleanings* in the name of R. Yehiel Mikhel." See *The Light That Illuminates*, copy 3204/2, 240b. This format of a story with an anonymous protagonist recurs later in *The Light That Illuminates*, and the protagonist may again be R. Yehiel Mikhel.

method of prayer. The criticisms that R. Ze'ev Wolf attributes to the Besht mean that the linkage of souls during prayer incurs the risk of leading, ultimately, to the destruction of the world and its creatures ("each and every created living being"); for when R. Yehiel Mikhel links himself with souls less than his own and draws their vitality from them "to rise and be elevated on high, all the creatures are left without their vitality." In other words, the souls that are linked through their prayer and elevated to the upper worlds leave their bodies with no soul and no vitality, and it follows that spiritual linkage during prayer may destroy the world and its creatures. The solution to this problem of "annihilation"—that is, changing "being" to "non-being"—lies not in abstract theory but in a practical measure: limiting linkage during prayer to "genuine wise ones," who are capable of standing in the sanctuaries of prayer—dubbed "the King's sanctuary"—without nullifying their own existence. Further, they must be limited by the mystery of "running and returning,"¹⁶ such that their souls commune for but an instant with the upper world and then return to their material home.

The doctrine of linkage of souls during prayer, as taught by R. Yehiel Mikhel on the Festival of Shavuot, appears as well in a version by R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochew. In his book *Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life (Masekhet Avot im Peri Hayyim)*, R. Abraham Hayyim, another prominent student of R. Yehiel Mikhel,¹⁷ reiterates his master's remarks. Like R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir, R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochew adds "thus have I received it from great ones," without identifying the "great one" from whom the words were received.

R. Abraham Hayyim begins with a commentary on the statement of R. Matya b. Harash in tractate Avot: "Greet every person; be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes."¹⁸ He interpreted the obligation to greet every person in terms of the commandment to love one another; a person is obligated to greet and love his fellow to fulfill the scriptural injunction "You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against your people; but you shall love your fellow as yourself; I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:18). Beyond that, the commandment

¹⁶ See Ezek. 1:14—"And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning."

¹⁷ On R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochew, see below, pp. 225–230.

¹⁸ *Avot* 4:15.

to greet every person and love one another applies as well to the nation as a whole: every individual Jew is commanded to love all Israel; and the practical implication is that the individual should link his soul with the soul of the nation. That linkage is accomplished when the worshipper faces Jerusalem in prayer, for all Jews turn in that direction, and the individual's prayer is thereby linked with the prayers of the nation:

Before praying, one must connect oneself with all Israel, and especially with those who know the intent of the prayer. And so I have accepted the practice of reciting before each prayer, morning and evening: "I hereby dispatch my prayer from here to the Land of Israel, from the Land of Israel to Jerusalem; from Jerusalem to the Temple Mount; from the Temple Mount to the courtyard; from the courtyard to the hall; from the hall to the sanctuary; from the sanctuary to the holy of holies; and from the holy of holies to the sanctuary of the sapphire pavement, to the very place where my patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob prayed. [My prayers are thus dispatched] together with the prayers from the synagogues and study halls and unifications of all Israel and especially with [those of] your children who know the intent of the prayer and its secrets. And with that intent I pray in fear and trembling, trembling and fear [?] in the name of all Israel." Thus have I received it from great ones, to be recited before each prayer.¹⁹

In his remarks on the dispatching prayers to the Temple in Jerusalem, R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov has reworked a rabbinic tradition regarding the directing of one's prayers:

Those who stand in prayer outside the Land [of Israel] face toward the Land of Israel . . . those who stand in prayer within the Land of Israel face toward Jerusalem . . . those who stand in prayer within Jerusalem face toward the Temple Mount . . . those who stand in prayer on the Temple Mount face toward the Holy of Holies. And why do they do so? [As Scripture says:] "They shall pray toward this place and You will hear in Your heavenly abode; and when You hear, You will forgive" [after 1 Kings 8:30; 2 Chron. 6:33].²⁰

This tradition explains the practice of facing the Temple in Jerusalem during prayer by reference to the biblical description of God dwelling in a heavenly Temple, a counterpart to the one on earth. According to this description, the Holy of Holies in the earthly Temple is a

¹⁹ *Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life* 39a.

²⁰ Jerusalem Talmud, *Berakhot* 4:5; parallel in Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 30a. See, similarly, Urbach 1978, pp. 45–46.

gateway and ladder ascending to God's heavenly dwelling place. R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov concretizes that idea in describing the prayers as coming together in the earthly Temple in Jerusalem, ascending from there to the heavenly Temple, and reaching the sapphire-paved sanctuary, referred to in the *Zohar* as the first of the seven heavenly sanctuaries.²¹ Similarly, R. Abraham Hayyim alludes to a rabbinic text when he mentions the three patriarchs worshipping in the sapphire-paved sanctuary in the heavenly Temple. The depiction is based on the remarks of R. Yosi b. R. Hanina, who took the view that the prayers had been instituted by the patriarchs: Abraham instituted the morning prayer; Isaac, the afternoon prayer; and Jacob, the evening prayer.²² Under the influence of that tradition, three of the divine emanations (*sefirot*; sing., *sefirah*)²³ are named for the patriarchs: the *sefirah* of grace (*hesed*; the right arm in the portrayal of the *sefirot* in human form) is called "Abraham"; the *sefirah* of judgment (*din*; the left arm) is called "Isaac"; and the *sefirah* of splendor (*tif'eret*; the heart) is called "Jacob."²⁴ The prayers are thus doubly tied to the patriarchs: the patriarchs instituted the prayers, and the prayers ascend from the Temple to the heavenly sanctuaries named after the patriarchs.

R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov's principal innovation, then, resides not in his depiction of the prayers' ascent to the upper sanctuaries but in the concept that souls can be linked with the select few who know the route taken by the prayers to those sanctuaries. The concept is further illuminated when R. Abraham Hayyim goes on to interpret the second portion of R. Matya b. Harash's statement—"be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes"—as an injunction to become linked to the great ones, who know the mysteries of prayer:

²¹ See Tishby-Lahover 1957, pp. 423–426. The sapphire pavement is referred to in the epiphany at Sinai (Exod. 24:10) and the sapphire is referred to as well in the prophet Ezekiel's vision of the chariot (Ezek. 1:26).

²² *Berakhot* 26b: "R. Yosi b. R. Hanina said, 'the prayers were instituted by the patriarchs.'" In contrast, "R. Joshua b. Levi said, 'the prayers were instituted to correspond to the *tamid* sacrifices.'" The *tamid* sacrifices were offered twice daily in the Temple, in the morning and in the evening. The dispute is resolved by a determination that the patriarchs instituted the sacrifices and the rabbis later associated them with the sacrifices.

²³ For the term "*sefirah*" see below, pp. 76–77.

²⁴ See below, pp. 77–80.

And after that, connect [in prayer], especially with those who know the intent of the prayer and its mysteries, and they are a select few. And do not say to yourself “Why should I connect with the select few, the great ones, who know the meaning of the prayer, for I am like a tail to them. It would be better to connect with the masses, for I am like a *zaddik* (righteous one) in comparison to them.” That is what he means when he says “be a tail to lions,” that is, link yourself in your prayer with the great ones who know the intent of the prayer and its mysteries, and be as a tail to them . . . for then your prayer will be heard and will ascend pleasingly with the intents of the great ones, who know the intent of the prayer, for you are linked with them.²⁵

R. Abraham Hayyim distinguished between the select few and the masses. He determined that one should be a tail to lions; that is, it is better to connect in prayer to the select few, known also as “the great ones,” than to be a “head to the foxes” by connecting with the masses.

R. Abraham Hayyim’s comments suggest that prayers can ascend heavenward by two routes. The first is through linkage to the holy site—the Temple—where the individual’s prayer is connected to the prayers of Israel as a whole, and all ascend heavenward together. The second is through linkage to the holy man—the great one, the select one, or the *zaddik*—who similarly serves as a conduit through which prayers can be raised to the upper worlds. It follows that the linkage of souls during prayer is two-fold or three-fold, for the individual connects with the nation as a whole, with the holy site, and with the holy soul. The worshipper faces the Holy of Holies in the Temple, thereby linking his soul with all Israel, who similarly face the Temple in prayer. At the same time, he is linked to the souls of the select few, who have the capacity to elevate the group’s prayers from the earthly Temple to the higher worlds. As a practical matter, R. Abraham Hayyim sketched a mystical scene in which the *zaddik* is depicted as a conduit or pillar, rooted in the earthly Temple and joining it to its heavenly counterpart. It is that conduit through which prayers ascend to “the sanctuary of the sapphire pavement; to the very place where my patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob prayed.” This colorful picture comprises several layers: the physical, symbolized by the structure of the earthly Temple; the spiritual, alluded to by the heavenly Temple of the sapphire pavement; and

²⁵ *Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life* 39b.

the human, the *zaddik*, serving as the bridge between the physical and the spiritual. To these are added a fourth dimension, the historical, represented by the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Like the *zaddik*, they, too, form a bridge from the earthly to the heavenly, from the present to the past, and from the temporal to the eternal. In this way, the doctrine of linkage of souls in its various layers is joined with the image of the *zaddik* as the Temple's conduit for prayer, forming together a comprehensive picture, suffused with life and mystery.

This picture is tied as well to the sexual image of the *zaddik* and to his divine essence. In the spiritual world of the Kabbalah, on which Hasidism drew, a “*zaddik*” (“righteous one”) does not refer to a person who acts justly and charitably; rather, it is a term used in the doctrine of divine emanations (*sefirot*). That doctrine developed among the medieval kabbalists, who understood literally the verses describing the creation of man in God's image. The kabbalists envisioned God as a sort of higher man, whose spiritual organs, called *sefirot*, are reflected in the organs of the human body. The ten *sefirot* of the divine essence are divided in a manner corresponding to the bodily organs. The first three, crown (*keter*), wisdom (*hokhmah*), and understanding (*binah*) represent the head or the brain. Following them are the six *sefirot* of the structure: the fourth—grace (*hesed*)—and the fifth—judgment (*din*) or strength (*gevurah*)—represent the arms. The sixth *sefirah*—splendor (*tif'eret*)—is the heart. The seventh and eighth *sefirot*—eternity (*nezah*) and glory (*hod*) are the legs (or the testicles). The ninth *sefirah*, that of foundation (*yesod*), represents, in the divine realm, the male organ—a sort of conduit through which the divine abundance flows into the created world. This *sefirah* is also called “*zaddik*,” after the verse “the righteous one (*zaddik*) is the foundation of the world” (Prov. 10:25), which compares the *zaddik* to a pillar on which the world rests.²⁶ In the kabbalists' imagination, the pillar became transformed into a phallic symbol of the conduit of abundance, energizing the world with its might.²⁷ The tenth *sefirah*, sovereignty (*malkhut*), represents the feminine side in the array of divine

²⁶ See *Hagigah* 12b: “On what does the earth rest? . . . R. Elazar b. Shamu'a says, ‘on a single pillar named *zaddik*, as is written, ‘and *zaddik* is the foundation of the world.’”

²⁷ On the *zaddik* as a phallic symbol in early Kabbalah, see Scholem 1976/2, pp. 216–236. On the image in the *Zohar*, see Liebes 1982/1, pp. 118–134.

sefirot, and it is identified with the *shekhinah* (God's presence)—the heavenly queen. The *shekhinah* is also called “Matronita,” “The Congregation of Israel (*keneset yisra'el*),” “Zion,” and “Jerusalem,” and she is depicted as a heavenly embodiment of Israel's Torah.²⁸ And so, when R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochew depicts the *zaddik* as the pillar of prayer or the conduit of abundance, he is portraying him, in effect, as an embodiment of the sefirah of foundation, a powerful divine image, an intermediary between the Godhead and humanity.

R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochew's discourse screens some additional information, lurking within the use of the term “great ones.” R. Abraham Hayyim notes that he received the doctrine of linkage of souls from “great ones”—“Thus have I received it from great ones, to be recited before each prayer”—and he goes on to emphasize that he connects in his prayers with those “great ones.” But he does not disclose the identity of those from whom he received his tradition and to whom he is linked in his worship. A similarly mysterious atmosphere envelops the text of R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir, who calls the *zaddik* “the Wise One of the Generation,” as well as the comments of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, who likewise describes the linkage of the soul with “the holy soul of the righteous ones (the *zaddikim*) of the generation.” But R. Meshullam Feibush Heller nevertheless mentions R. Yehiel Mikhel by name as the one who taught him the mystery of linkage, thereby identifying the *zaddik* to whom all three were connected in their prayers. It is, after all, R. Yehiel Mikhel whose name is concealed by such designations as “the Wise One of the Generation,” “the righteous ones (the *zaddikim*) of the generation,” “great ones,” and “select few.”

Linkage in Prayer

Three different versions of R. Yehiel Mikhel's doctrine of linkage of souls thus appear in his students' writings. Piecing the versions together produces a formula by means of which the act of linkage can be accomplished. R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's version tells that before

²⁸ On the *shekhinah* in Kabbalah, see Scholem 1976/2, pp. 259–307; Patai 1967, pp. 187–206, 258–269.

praying, R. Yehiel Mikhel would say, “I hereby take upon myself the positive commandment of ‘Love your fellow as yourself.’” He would then immediately begin to pray, while picturing in his mind the image of the *zaddik* and bonding with it. From R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov’s version we see that he undertook to recite, before every morning and evening prayer, “I hereby take upon myself the positive commandment of ‘Love your fellow as yourself.’” The formula for linkage thus comprises two components: recitation of “Love your fellow as yourself” (Lev. 19:18) before the prayer and picturing the image of R. Yehiel Mikhel during its course.

As for the purpose of linkage, R. Meshullam Feibush Heller describes it as an expression of inter-human love. He interprets the mutual bonding of human souls as an aspect of love between friends, expressed in their spiritual union: “Thus, the image [of a person] in one’s thought is a spiritual extension of the person one has seen, though he is not present, and when love for that person is aroused, the love connects and unites one with the image in his mind.”²⁹ In other words, picturing the image of a beloved person enables one to form a spiritual bond with him, even though the two are not in each other’s physical presence. To strengthen the notion that linkage of souls gives expression to love between friends, R. Meshullam Feibush notes that the numerical value of the letters in the Hebrew word “love” (אהבה) is thirteen, equal to the numerical value of the word “one” (אחד); he thereby implies that love between friends reflects the love of the one God. It should be noted that the idea of linkage between mutually loved souls, and the technique of bonding the student’s soul with his teacher’s by picturing the teacher’s image, were not novel, nor were they unique to R. Yehiel Mikhel and his circle. They are mentioned in the *Zohar*, which stresses the erotic motif in both the linkage of friends in this world and in the higher world of the *sefirot*.³⁰ And they appear among the Safed kabbalists, who call the tie between teacher and student “the mystery of conception in the lives of both,” that is, the life of teacher and student alike.³¹ From an historical perspective, one can see traces of the idea as well in the mystical experiences of Nathan of Gaza, which included

²⁹ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 25b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 130a.

³⁰ See Liebes 1994/1, pp. 79–80.

³¹ See Yinon 1994, pp. 175–179.

the visage of his friend and messiah Shabbetai Zevi engraved on the divine chariot.³² The impression of God's inspiration in one's heart during praying is mentioned also in the writings of R. Barukh of Kossow, a contemporary of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples.³³

Linkage in prayer thus institutionalizes the spiritual tie between the leader, R. Yehiel Mikhel, and his students. The goal of the linkage is to raise the *zaddik* to his place in the array of divine *sefirot*. And the designations that appear in the writings of the students, such as "the holy soul of the righteous ones (the *zaddikim*) of the generation," "great ones," and "the Wise One of the Generation" are not common nouns; rather, they cloak the personal name of R. Yehiel Mikhel. Beyond that, the students' accounts repeatedly attest to the remarks of R. Yehiel Mikhel himself about the manner in which he would bond before each prayer with all Israel—those above him in stature as well as those below him. These accounts reveal as well that those above him in stature, with whom he would bond in prayer, are the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—who represent the *sefirot* of grace, judgment, and splendor, to which the prayers of all Israel ascend.

Yet another aspect of the doctrine of linkage of souls emerges from a fourth version of the linkage formula, which appears in *Light of Truth (Or ha-Emet)*. The work was printed from a manuscript in the possession of R. Zevi Hasid, another of R. Yehiel Mikhel's students.³⁴ It shows the reciprocal nature of the spiritual tie between the worshipper and the *zaddik*, for the worshipper's picturing of the image of the *zaddik* brings forth in the mind of the *zaddik* the image of the worshipper, enabling the *zaddik* to pray on behalf of his disciple: "And you, too, will take an active part in this prayer. When you think of me, your image will simultaneously appear in my thoughts, and I will pray on your behalf."³⁵ This version puts particular emphasis on the value of undistracted prayer, that is, prayer unaccompanied by any thoughts of sin, for sin ruins prayer and impedes the redemption. It declares that one should "be punctilious at least with respect to reciting the *shema* twice daily [morning and

³² See Elqayam 1998, p. 175.

³³ See Liebes 2000, pp. 77–88.

³⁴ On R. Zevi Hasid, see below, pp. 287–293.

³⁵ *Light of Truth* 102a.

evening] free of extraneous thoughts; and doing so is a major, invaluable thing.”³⁶ This addendum deals with one of the *zaddik*’s central tasks: purifying the prayers of those who link with him from sinful thoughts, especially those related to sexuality, that may arise and persist during prayer. When the *zaddik* elevates his disciples’ prayers, he purifies them from extraneous thoughts and inklings of sin, which may spring up during the recitation of the *shema*,³⁷ and he facilitates their acceptance in the upper worlds.³⁷ Against this background, we can understand the statement of R. Isaac of Radvil, a son of R. Yehiel Mikhel, that his father “came to repair either himself or his generation, as it is written that the *zaddik* is called the ‘pillar of the world,’ (*Hagigah* 12b), for the world rests on the *zaddik*.”³⁸

Although piecing together the various accounts permits us to uncover the group’s secrets and see the spiritual link between its members and the *zaddik*, these accounts unfortunately have been kept almost totally obscure: the *zaddik*, with whom the members of the group are linked in their prayers, is referred to by various designations that conceal his name and identity. This atmosphere of mystery and anonymity cries out for explanation, and it may be that they are tied to a special oath of secrecy that the students took upon themselves. It is possible as well that their explanation is tied to other parts of the long discourse delivered by R. Yehiel Mikhel on Shavuot 5537 (1777), of which only the uncensored portion is cited above.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ The biblical passages related to *zizit* (fringes to be placed on four-cornered garments), which is included in the recitation of the *shema*, states: “so that you do not follow after your heart and after your eyes, which you stray after” (Num. 15:39). “After your eyes—that refers to sexual impropriety.”

³⁸ *Light of Isaac*, p. 25.

CHAPTER FIVE

A *TIQQUN LEIL SHAVU'OT* IN R. YEHI'EL MIKHEL'S PRAYER HOUSE

"The Soul of Shaddai Gives Them Understanding"

The lengthy discourse delivered by R. Yehiel Mikhel in his prayer house on Shavuot of 5537 (1777) is tightly bound up with the commitment to linkage that he and his disciples took upon themselves. To understand the circumstances in which they made that commitment, we must examine the full text of the discourse, which is presented in R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's first epistle.¹ As R. Meshullam Feibush describes it, the discourse began as a free exchange among R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples present in the prayer house. One of those in attendance read the 613 commandments aloud,² as is customary on the festival of Shavuot, and R. Yehiel Mikhel accordingly began to speak on the first of the Torah's commandments, "be fruitful and multiply."³ In due course, he posed questions to the group, challenged their replies, and then moved into his discourse, "speaking at length, as he did, explaining matters several times."⁴

Reconstructing the original sequence of R. Yehiel Mikhel's remarks shows them to comprise a form of discourse in which the speaker cites three biblical verses and spins them into a single idea. In this instance, R. Yehiel Mikhel considered the verse "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land" (Gen. 1:28) and connected it to the verse "I will look favorably toward you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will maintain my covenant with you" (Lev. 26:9).

¹ As noted, the full text of the discourse is included in the esoteric portion of the epistle, which was published only after the deaths of R. Yehiel Mikhel and R. Meshullam Feibush Heller.

² See *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 117a: "for he heard that one man was reciting the 613 commandments."

³ The commandment to be fruitful and multiply was given in the Garden of Eden: "God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land'" (Gen. 1:28).

⁴ *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 117a.

He ultimately connected those two verses with a third: “But it is a spirit in man, and the soul of *shaddai*,⁵ that gives them understanding” (Job 32:8). He interpreted the first verse—“be fruitful and multiply”—to refer to the natural birth of human beings, born of their parents. But he took the second verse—“I will make you fruitful and multiply you”—as referring to the creation of the nation of Israel, and he inferred from it that God had formed the nation of Israel *ex nihilo*, by a separate and unique act of creation, just as he had created Adam, the first human. It follows that Israel is not a collection of individuals and families, consolidated through history into a nation, but a basic entity, a primordial being, created directly by God. During the course of that creation—termed “inspiration (*ha’azalah*)”—the soul of Israel was distanced from the divine source, growing dense and encased in physical matter. Only during prayer can the spirit transcend its corporeality and return to the higher spiritual entity. And that, in effect, is the purpose of creation—the return of Israel’s souls to their spiritual root: “so that God, may He be blessed, may derive great delight in that the souls of Israel are inspired by Him and devolve through thousands and myriads of worlds until they reach this world, where they take on material garb, yet from there, at that great distance, they become purified and draw near to and commune with Him in their thoughts, loving Him and being bound to Him in communion, desire, and will.”⁶

In order to return to and commune with the divine being, R. Yehiel Mikhel continued, each and every Jew must overcome his material envelope and recognize that he has no separate existence; rather, his soul is hewn from a single great soul that encompasses the souls of all Jews and constitutes a portion of the divine being. He terms that recognition “regarding oneself as nothingness”: “[The nation of Israel] should regard itself as nothingness, understanding that, in truth, but for the might of the Creator may His Name be blessed, who created and sustains them, they would be nothing, just as they were before being created. Accordingly, there exists in the world only the Creator, may His Name be blessed.”⁷

⁵ As discussed below, “*shaddai*” is a biblical name for God; it often is translated as “the Almighty.” *translator’s note*.

⁶ *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 117a.

⁷ *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 117a–b. R. Eliezer Horowitz puts it this way in his book *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of*

That conclusion led R. Yehiel Mikhel to the third part of his discourse—its heart and its essence. There, he detailed the doctrine of linkage of souls and expounded on the idea of linking to the soul of “the righteous man (*ha-adam ha-zaddik*)” for the purpose of purifying the souls of Israel and uniting them with the divine source. The soul of the *zaddik*, through which the souls return to their divine source, is termed “the soul of *shaddai* (*nishmat shaddai*),” after the verse, “and the soul of *shaddai* gives them understanding” (Job 32:8). R. Meshullam Feibush Heller recorded his master’s remarks as follows:

And I heard from the holy mouth of the rabbi, the *Maggid* [of Zolochew], on the festival of Shavuot, when he delivered a great discourse on the verse “and the soul of *shaddai* gives them understanding,” which is to say, He is called *shaddai* (שׁדַּי) because he said to His world, “Enough (דַּי—*dai*),” that is, that the course of the world was to devolve from spirituality to materiality, all for the purpose of returning through the righteous man in his pure thought, to be a great delight . . .

[But] He said “Enough!” for He understood that [the return] would not be possible if, God forbid, there were to be an excess of materiality. In that event, it would not be possible for man to return to commune [with God]; but without that [return], what use to Me is the world; for the world was created only to command, that is, for communion with God.⁸

In opening this portion of the discourse, R. Yehiel Mikhel returns to one of the biblical names—*el shaddai*—through which God revealed Himself to the Patriarchs: “God appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am *el shaddai*; walk before me and be blameless’” (Gen. 17:1).⁹ He then draws on Resh Laqish’s interpretation of the verse: “I am *el shaddai*. I am He who said to the world ‘Enough! (*dai*).’”¹⁰ Developing the idea further, he explains that, at the time of creation, the world was “devolving from spirituality to materiality.” But God said to His

the Torah (*No’am Megadim u-Khevod ha-Torah*), *Portion Terumah*, 37a: “He should consider himself as naught, [saying] ‘What am I?’ as our master, the Light of Israel would say, ‘And we—what are we?’” “The Light of Israel” is the designation for R. Yehiel Mikhel in the writings of his disciple, R. Eliezer Horowitz. On the goal of creation according to Hasidism—negating “the existence” and revealing “the nothingness”—see Jacobson 1986, pp. 20–29, 36–43.

⁸ *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 116b.

⁹ God is called “*shaddai*” in a revelation to Moses as well: “God spoke to Moses and said to him, ‘I am the Lord (*Y-H-V-H*). I appeared to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob as *el shaddai* but by my name *Y-H-V-H* I did not make myself known to them’” (Exod. 6:2–3).

¹⁰ *Hagigah* 12a.

world, “Enough!” so that it would not become overly material, ending up so far removed from the divine source that it would be unable to return and commune with it. After explaining the origin of the name “soul of *shaddai*”—a soul that comes from *el shaddai*—he goes on to explain the task of that soul:

And it is the soul of *shaddai*, which is to say, the soul that comes from God, may He be blessed . . . that gives them understanding, which is to say, this thing informs us with the understanding that the world was not created for materiality but only to return to its [divine] source, for otherwise, why would He have said “Enough”? And understand that all of Torah and good deeds depend on this, and it is His purpose, and the purpose of the entire world, for the world to attain nothingness.¹¹

R. Yehiel Mikhel defines the task of “the soul of *shaddai*” to be teaching the souls of Israel the secret of their redemption—“[it] gives them understanding, which is to say, this thing informs us with the understanding”—and even to actualize that redemption by linking all souls to that soul, which comes from God. The mission assigned to the soul of *shaddai*—teaching the souls the secret of their redemption and redeeming them through acts of linkage—is a quintessentially messianic task, for it facilitates the redemption of Jewish souls from their material casings and their return to their source in the Infinite. The linkage of his disciples with R. Yehiel Mikhel during prayer attests that he was not discoursing merely as a matter of theory; rather, he appropriated that task for his own soul.

The messianic aspect of the discourse gains added emphasis from the very name “soul of *shaddai*” that R. Yehiel Mikhel takes for his own soul. “*Shaddai*,” a biblical name of God that expresses strength and might,¹² became a prominent messianic term. The kabbalist R. Abraham Abulafia took on the name “*shaddai*” as part of his messianic nature,¹³ and in the writings of the Italian kabbalist R. Mordecai Datto, “the soul of *shaddai*” is a term for the divine soul of Adam, the first human. It is, as well, the soul of the Messiah, destined to repair Adam’s sins and assume his place.¹⁴ The name also occupies a central place in the Sabbatean tradition; it is one of the divine

¹¹ *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 116b.

¹² *Shaddai* (שׁדַּי) appears to be from the stem שׁדד (*sh-d-d*), suggesting strength.

¹³ See Idel 1990/2, p. 29.

¹⁴ See Jacobson 1996, pp. 72, 223.

names of Shabbetai Zevi, who wore on his finger a ring engraved with the letters of *shaddai*.¹⁵ Moreover, the terms “kingdom of *shaddai*” and “repair of the world through the kingdom of *shaddai*” were interpreted by Shabbetai Zevi’s disciples as referring to his future messianic kingdom, and the biblical verse was associated with his soul—the soul of the Messiah—and its higher, divine, source. The Sabbatean essay *Beloved Day* (*Hemdat Yamim*) concludes with a call “to repair the world through the kingdom of *shaddai*,” an allusion to Shabbetai Zevi’s future kingdom.¹⁶ In the eighteenth century, the numerology of *shaddai* appears in yet another Sabbatean work composed in Eastern Europe, “*Zaddik, Foundation of The World*” (“*Zaddik Yesod Olam*”).¹⁷

It is hard to imagine that R. Yehiel Mikhel was unaware of the messianic tone he struck in referring to his soul as “the soul of *shaddai*.” The questions to be answered are why he chose to speak in such clearly Sabbatean terms and what hidden motive underlay his desire to raise and repair the souls of Israel.

The answers become clear when the accounts of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, R. Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir, R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov and R. Zevi Hasid are combined to yield a comprehensive picture of various aspects of a single event. As far as we can tell, the Festival of Shavuot in the year 5537 (1777) was the occasion on which R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples conducted a kabbalistic rite of linkage. The timing was deliberate: the choice of the festival was tied to the mystical significance associated with Shavuot, and the choice of the year was tied to End-reckonings and messianic aspirations, for bands of kabbalists would perform their linkage rites in years that were expected to be years of redemption.¹⁸ R. Meshullam Feibush Heller’s letter supports that view, for it is suffused with a messianic atmosphere of imminent redemption. The emigration that

¹⁵ If the names of the letters making up *shaddai*—שׁדׁי (*shin, dalet, yod*)—are spelled out, the numerical value of the letters used in spelling them out comes to 814, equal to the numerical value of the letters in the name Shabbetai Zevi. See Scholem 1987, vol. 1, pp. 190, 239. On the numerology of “*el shaddai*” and its significance in Lurianic Kabbalah, see Meroz 1988, p. 311.

¹⁶ See Scholem 1987, vol. 1, pp. 239, 315; Scholem 1987, vol. 2, pp. 449, 500, 727; Liebes 1992, p. 156, n. 391.

¹⁷ See Liebes 1978, p. 109.

¹⁸ For example, R. Elazar Azkari established his circle in Safed in 5335 (1575), which the contemporary kabbalists expected to be the year of redemption. Disciples of Ari also formed linkages among themselves that year.

year of a group of *Hasidim* to the Land of Israel likewise appears significant, suggesting more than mere coincidence.¹⁹

Shavuot Night—The Night of Sacred Nuptials

R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples decided to perform the linkage ceremony on the Festival of Shavuot, regarded by believers in mysticism as an occasion for rituals of linkage and repair. In mystical tradition, Shavuot represents the time of redemption, when the upper and lower worlds are repaired. It therefore became a festival on which individuals and groups would seek special inspiration, looking toward venerable sources of spiritual renewal.

Underlying the special status of the festival of Shavuot is the importance of the encounter at Sinai, which took place on that holiday.²⁰ At Mount Sinai, God publicly appeared to the entire nation. The climax of that revelation was the giving of the Decalogue, laws that would bind Israel ever after. That public theophany accorded the festival the unique status of a sort of fleeting revelation, during which Israel could briefly experience the Garden of Eden, where God resides, and enjoy the sweet taste of redemption, when God will return and publicly appear. Rabbinic midrashim construes the events at Sinai as both a return to Eden and a model for the future redemption, creating a meta-temporal continuum, beginning in the past, at Eden, and culminating in the future, at the time of redemption. Its two termini are commingled and embodied in a particular historical moment—the time of the giving of the Torah.

Prominent in the midrashic portrayals of the giving of the Torah is the depiction of God at Mount Sinai, accompanied by the angels who dwell in Eden and by the *shekhinah*.²¹ The word “*shekhinah*” is

¹⁹ On the messianic significance of the Hasidic immigration of 5537 (1777), see below, pp. 165–192.

²⁰ According to Exod. 19:1—“On the new moon of the third month after the Israelites left the land of Egypt, on that day, they arrived at the wilderness of Sinai.” Following on the Jewish tradition, Christians also assign an important role to the festival; on Shavuot (“Pentecost”), the holy spirit alighted on Jesus’ disciples. See Acts, Chap. 2.

²¹ See, for example, *Pesiqta of Rav Kahana*, p. 219; *Sifri of the Academy of Rav for the Book of Numbers*, pp. 83–84. On the concept of the *shekhinah* in the thought of the Sages, see Patai 1967, pp. 144–147; Scholem 1976/2, pp. 259–274; Urbach 1978, pp. 29–52, 115–160.

formed from the verb stem *sh-k-n* (שכנ—dwell) as used in the verse “They will make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell (*veshakhanti*) among them” (Exod. 25:8). The noun does not itself appear in the Hebrew Bible, but only in the Aramaic translations, where it denotes the presence of God, revealed or hidden, at a particular place. Rabbinic midrashim mention “the radiance of the *shekhinah*,” “the wings of the *shekhinah*,” or “the feet of the *shekhinah*,” referring to a female or feminine personification of the divine essence. According to the *midrash*, the *shekhinah* resides in the Garden of Eden, and she will be visibly revealed only at the time of redemption. Between the time of Eden and that of the redemption, the encounter at Sinai occurs, during which the *shekhinah* and the angels residing in Eden appear publicly for an instant. The midrashic motif recurs, with variation, in the *Zohar*: the *shekhinah*, referred to also as “the lower mother,” was expelled from the Garden of Eden after Adam’s sin but returns and fleetingly appears at the Sinai encounter.

The Sages’ depictions include, as an additional feminine image, “the congregation of Israel (*keneset yisra’el*),” a symbolic spiritual entity representing Zion and Jerusalem and sometimes identified with the matriarch Rachel. Midrashic literature uses the image in describing the covenant between the nation of Israel and its God: the covenant is seen as a wedding between the Holy One blessed be He as bridegroom and, as bride, the congregation of Israel—a lady and a princess. The encounter at Sinai is depicted in the midrash as the nuptial ceremony between the congregation of Israel and God: Mount Sinai, on which the Torah was given, is the wedding canopy; the angels who were revealed at Sinai and the Israelites standing at the foot of the mountain are the bride’s escorts on her wedding day; and the Torah, given at that encounter, is the bride’s ornament, with which she adorns herself that night in anticipation of her heavenly bridegroom.²²

The mystical literature of the Middle Ages took a new conceptual turn, based on a conflation of the feminine figures of the *shekhinah* and of the congregation of Israel into a single image representing the feminine side of the divinity. The image was identified with the *sefirah* of sovereignty (*malkhut*), the tenth in the array of divine *sefirot*,

²² See Lieberman 1960; Urbach 1988.

which acquired the status of God's heavenly bride.²³ That identification afforded new meaning to many of the midrashim and emphasized the significance of Shavuot night as the night of the holy coupling, giving it a role in the repair of the world (*tiqqun olam*) and its redemption. The word "*tiqqun*" (pl., *tiqqunim*) has many senses: making fit for use; improvement and enhancement; remedying a defect.²⁴ Kabbalistic literature uses all these senses: the *tiqqunim* of the *shekhinah* and of the congregation of Israel are not only the adornments of the bride on her nuptial day; they are also the remedies for the defects and flaws in the array of divine *sefirot*, which give rise to the flaws in this world. The coupling on Shavuot night of God and the *shekhinah* permits the repair of the upper worlds and the heavenly redemption, in the wake of which the world is redeemed and, as it were, reborn. This new understanding afforded the kabbalists an active part in the redemptive process, for religious acts—particularly prayer and Torah study—have a substantive part in preparing the *shekhinah* for her union. It follows that the kabbalists play a decisive role in repairing both the upper and the lower worlds. Through these depictions, the kabbalists shifted the center of gravity from the theoretical midrash of rabbinic literature to theurgy²⁵—human actions that influence the divine world and, in return, this world as well.

The kabbalists' role in elevating and repairing the *shekhinah* is clearly described in one of the *Zohar's* central chapters. The chapter describes the great assembly (*idra rabba*) convened, it appears, on Shavuot night for the purpose of elevating and repairing the *shekhinah*, who has dwelled in exile since the destruction of the Temple.²⁶ R. Simeon b. Yohai, the *Zohar's* protagonist, and the members of his holy band elevate the *shekhinah* and adorn her in preparation for her nuptials. Serving as the bride's attendants, they are called, on that night, "sons of the bride's sanctuary" or "sons of the wedding

²³ On the doctrine of the *shekhinah* in Kabbalah, see Patai 1967, pp. 186–206; Scholem 1976/2, pp. 274–307.

²⁴ Except where context otherwise requires, this translation renders the word generically in English as "repair." In so doing, it does not, of course, in any way exclude the other senses of the word. Where the generic sense is needed but "repair" is inappropriate, it simply uses the transliterated Hebrew.—*translator's note.*

²⁵ "Theurgy" is human activity that is performed with divine involvement or that influences God.

²⁶ See Tishby 1961, pp. 529–532, 570–572, and, more expansively, Liebes 1982/1, pp. 208–215.

canopy." Above them is spread a heavenly wedding canopy. The bride's ornaments are made up of Israel's Torah, given at Sinai. A passage in the biblical book of Isaiah describes the items of finery of the women of Jerusalem ("daughters of Zion") and identifies twenty-four items; the Kabbalah sees them as twenty-four *tiqqunim*: "the anklets, the fillets, and the crescents; the eardrops, the bracelets, and the veils; the turbans, the armlets, and the sashes; the talismans and the amulets; the signet rings and the nose rings; the festive robes, the mantles, and the shawls; the purses, the lace gowns, and the linen vests; and the kerchiefs and the capes . . . an apron . . . a diadem of beaten work . . . a rich robe" (Isa. 3:18–24; NJPS translation). The midrash takes the twenty-four items of finery as referring to the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible: "R. Levi said in the name of R. Simeon b. Laqish, 'Just as the this bride is adorned with twenty-four items of finery, so, too, must a scholar be energetic in twenty-four books.'"²⁷

The ritual of adorning the *shekhinah* thus included twenty-four pieces of finery, comprising mysteries of the Torah that were studied on Shavuot night and during the course of the festival.²⁸ Prominent in this ritual is the practice of relating to the *shekhinah* as a heavenly embodiment of Israel's Torah. Ever since the sin of the Golden Calf, in whose wake Moses shattered the tablets of the covenant, the Torah has dwelt in ruin and exile. Repairing the Torah by studying the mysteries encompassed in it completes the process of conflating the historical redemption of the congregation of Israel with the spiritual redemption that encompasses all the worlds. This conjoining of the redemption's historical and cosmic dimensions gave rise to unique and extraordinary visions. The Safed kabbalist R. Elazar Azkari, for example, in one dream saw the *shekhinah*, who, since the destruction of the Temple, had not budged from the Western Wall, where she prayed and pleaded for her *tiqqun*.²⁹

The image of Shavuot night as the night of sacred nuptials was particularly emphasized by the sixteenth-century Safed kabbalists. In light of it, there developed the custom of reading on Shavu'ot a form of marriage contract between "the bridegroom, the Holy One blessed

²⁷ *Exodus Rabbah*, vol. 6, (*Ki Tissa*) 41:5.

²⁸ See Wilhelm 1948–1952, pp. 125–130.

²⁹ See Pachter 1994, pp. 121–186 and "*Shekhinah*," index.

be He” and “the bride, the virgin of Israel.”³⁰ There also arose at that time the kabbalistic custom of assembling on Shavuot night for the purpose of repairing the *shekhinah*. The gathering, called “*tiqqun leil shavu’ot*,” was inspired by the *Zohar*’s description of the great assembly. Among the first to conduct a *tiqqun leil shavu’ot* were R. Joseph Karo, R. Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz, and the members of their circle. R. Joseph Karo (5248–5335, 1488–1575), author of the *Shulhan Arukh*³¹ and the greatest halakhic decisor of the generation following the expulsion from Spain, was also a kabbalist of unique inspiration, which expressed itself in the form of a divine voice speaking from within his mouth. His close friend, R. Solomon Elqabetz, author of the liturgical poem “*Come my Beloved (Lekha Dodi)*,” documented the *tiqqun leil shavu’ot* conducted by R. Joseph Karo and his associates in Salonika in 5293 (1533). His account is included in a remarkable letter, in which are revealed for the first time the details of the *tiqqun* as practiced by a renowned group of kabbalists.³²

In his epistle, R. Solomon Elqabetz continuously and consistently used descriptions of the encounter at Sinai. His purpose was to reconstruct the original encounter in the reader’s consciousness and to forge a connection between it and the group’s *tiqqun leil shavu’ot*. His description blends and intertwines the various layers into an integrated text that steers the reader to its object: bringing about the redemption by elevating the *shekhinah* and repairing it. The group’s leader, R. Joseph Karo, played a particularly prominent part, taking on Moses’ role as mediator between God and the Israelites. Like Moses at Mount Sinai, R. Joseph Karo was privileged that night to receive a divine revelation; when he began to study Torah and pray, the *shekhinah* began to speak openly from his mouth in the presence of witnesses—the members of the holy band, the bride’s attendants on her nuptial night. The *shekhinah* addressed those present, pleaded with them to continue their Torah study in order to repair her, and made them swear to go up to the Land of Israel in order to redeem themselves as well as her. The voice of the *shekhinah* emerging from R. Joseph Karo’s mouth gave the remarks an aura of prophecy,

³⁰ See Scholem 1976/2, pp. 132–133.

³¹ Lit., “A Set Table,” the most famous creation of R. Joseph Karo and a leading codification of Jewish Law.

³² See Epistle of Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz in *Preacher of Righteousness (Maggid Mesharim)* Sursky, pp. 18–20.

characterized by the assignment of an express mission—in this case, the mission to go up to the Land of Israel. The repair of the Torah through the study of its mysteries and the obligation of the group's leader and members to go up to the Land of Israel thus were linked as a single action, whose two parts round out the repair of the *shekhinah*-bride and her return to Zion.

The special status of Shavuot features prominently as well in the teachings of R. Isaac Luria (the Ari), who lived in the generation following R. Joseph Karo. The Ari saw Shavuot night as the night of the sacred coupling, when the Holy One blessed be He unites with the *shekhinah*. That night's activities and those of the ensuing day—Torah study, immersion, and prayer—repair and adorn the bride in anticipation of her nuptials: "we become the attendants of the lady Rachel, the female (*nuqva*) [consort] of the 'small face' (*ze'ir anpin*)."³³ These concepts of Lurianic Kabbalah portray the world of the *sefirot* in terms of divine characters. small face and female are the masculine and feminine aspects of the divinity; together, they direct the lower worlds and afford them life and bounty. The existence of the world thus depends on the coupling of small face and the female. Because redemption cannot be complete until their coupling is complete and permanent, they require help from below in the form of Torah study, prayer, and the like.³⁴

The Sabbatean movement, heavily influenced by Lurianic Kabbalah, likewise accorded special status to the festival of Shavuot: it was during a *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* that Nathan of Gaza, the movement's prophet, first proclaimed Shabbetai Zevi to be the Messiah of the God of Jacob.³⁵ The account of that night includes the participants' singing, Nathan's ecstatic dancing, in which he threw off his clothes, his fainting, and the voice emanating from his mouth in automatic speech, a sort of prophecy imitating that of Moses.

The mystical character of *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* is emphasized as well in post-Sabbatean writings, such as *Beloved Day*,³⁶ and in the writings of the eighteenth-century kabbalist R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (Ramhal), who had a pronounced messianic bent. Ramhal composed

³³ *The Gate of Kavvanot* in *Collected Writings of the Ari*, vol. 9, p. 203.

³⁴ See Tishby 1991, p. 146.

³⁵ See Scholem 1987, vol. 1, pp. 177–181; Goldish 2004, pp. 82–88.

³⁶ See Liebes 1982/1, p. 214, n. 34.

a prayer to be recited before *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* and a mystical poem to be recited following the night's study.³⁷

These various traditions, which had transformed Shavuot into the festival of Jewish kabbalists throughout the generations, are expressed in the *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* conducted in R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house in Brody. The theoretical side of the doctrine of *tiqqun* can be found in R. Yehiel Mikhel's comments on linkage of souls and in the discourse he delivered on his soul, "the soul of *shaddai*," and its messianic role. The ritual side of the *tiqqun* gains expression in the linkage formula introduced on that occasion. The formula recited before prayer comprises three stages, each of which represents a stage in the repair of the upper worlds. The first is the recitation of "Love your fellow as yourself" before prayer, as was the Ari's custom.³⁸ It represents the repair of the group's members, who establish linkage among themselves and call up the image of the *zaddik*. The second stage is the envisioning of the *zaddik*'s image during prayer, so as to elevate his soul to the upper worlds in order to complete the *sefirah* of foundation, representing the masculine side of the divinity. The third stage is the repair and elevation of the *shekhinah* through the recitation of the 613 commandments; R. Meshullam Feibush reports in his epistle that one person present in the Brody prayer house read the 613 commandments aloud,³⁹ consistent with the custom of reviewing all of the Torah's commandments on Shavuot in order to symbolically reinforce the covenant entered into at Sinai between God and the nation of Israel. That is done by reading the Decalogue⁴⁰ and by reciting either the 613 commandments or one of their poetic expressions, such as the "Admonitions" composed by R. Saadiah Gaon and by Solomon Ibn Gabirol.

Beyond that, reading the Decalogue on Shavuot entails a sort of reenactment of the reading of the *shema'* in the Temple in Jerusalem. According to the Mishnah, the practice in the Temple was for the

³⁷ See Tishby 1993, pp. 706–710, 718–719.

³⁸ See Halamish 1978.

³⁹ *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 117a. The name of the individual who reviewed the 613 commandments is not mentioned, and he is referred to as "one man." It is difficult to imagine that R. Meshullam Feibush Heller did not recognize him or that he forgot his name so soon after being together with him in the Brody prayer house, and it is more likely that the omission of the name was deliberate.

⁴⁰ As set forth in Exod. 20:2–14.

congregation to recite the Decalogue aloud before reading the *shema*;⁴¹ That custom was abolished for reasons not entirely clear, apparently “because of the heretics’ claim.”⁴¹

Accordingly, reciting the Decalogue on Shavuot expresses the wish to recreate, and not just symbolically, the golden days that preceded the Temple’s destruction and the exile. Moreover, the mystical literature describes the recitation of the Decalogue as a way to elevate the *shekhinah*, and the *Zohar* refers to the practice as one of the *shekhinah*’s repairs, in the sense, among others, of preparing her for her union.⁴²

When we examine the linkage formula of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples in the context of the kabbalistic and ancient prayer traditions, we find a ritual formulation comprising a three-fold *tiqqun*: first, repair of the group’s members and linkage of their souls by means of reciting “Love your fellow as yourself” before praying; second, “envisioning the image of the *zaddik*” during prayer, by means of which the members elevate the *zaddik*’s soul to the higher worlds and complete the *zaddik*’s *sefirah*, that of foundation; and, third, reading the Decalogue and reciting the 613 commandments, which complete the feminine *tiqqun* that elevates the *shekhinah*-bride and conclude the linkage formulation. The Shavuot gathering at R. Yehiel Mikhel’s prayer house in Brody thus was intended to repair the upper worlds, a purpose reflected as well in the ritual aspect of the linkage formulation that was established on that occasion.

The Shekhinah Speaks through R. Yehiel Mikhel’s Mouth

One of the mysteries within in the Shavuot *tiqqun* ceremonies involves the precise identities of the bridegroom and bride who enter the marriage covenant on that occasion. In the marriage between God and the Congregation of Israel, God is the bridegroom and Israel is the bride. In the marriage between Israel and the Torah, on the other hand, Israel is the bridegroom and the Torah is the bride. Israel’s dual role—bride of the Holy One blessed be He but bridegroom of the Torah—never attains unambiguous clarification. Some

⁴¹ *Tamid* 5:1. See also Jerusalem Talmud, *Berakhot* 1:8—“lest they say only these [i.e., the Decalogue] were given to Moses at Sinai.”

⁴² See Liebes 1982/1, p. 208.

of the central texts dealing with the mysteries of Shavuot veil the identities of the couple, alluding to them only in ambiguous terms. For example, the *Zohar* presents Moses, the protagonist of the Sinai encounter, as the Torah's bridegroom and designates him "husband of the *matronita* [the lady]." ⁴³ And R. Simeon b. Yohai, protagonist of the *Zohar*, is similarly presented as the image of Moses or his reincarnation. At the conclusion of the great assembly held on Shavuot night, the souls of three of the participants depart from them, and at the small assembly (*idra zuta*), the soul of R. Simeon leaves him at the time of his spiritual coupling with the *shekhinah*. His death is referred to in the *Zohar* as "nuptials" (*hilula*). The nuptial ceremony with the *shekhinah* highlights the messianic strains in his image and presents him as the *shekhinah*'s spouse, who redeems her from her exile. ⁴⁴

Among the kabbalists most influenced by the *Zohar*'s imagery was R. Joseph Karo, who saw himself in the image of both Moses and R. Simeon b. Yohai. His self-image was expressed in his mystical visions, in which he saw his soul ascend to the Garden of Eden for a heavenly wedding with the *shekhinah*. The righteous ones in Eden treated him as a bridegroom and designated him "the image of the King" and "the holy son of the lofty King." ⁴⁵ R. Joseph Karo's aspiration to serve as the Torah's bridegroom is especially apparent in the *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* described in the Elqabetz epistle. During the course of that night, R. Joseph Karo studied Torah with great devotion and thereby achieved union with the *shekhinah*, whose voice burst forth from his mouth. That experience, in which the *shekhinah* spoke from his mouth, underscores his messianic streak, particularly his belief that he was the reincarnation of Moses, husband of the *shekhinah*.

These sorts of descriptions and visions served as a source of inspiration for Shabbetai Zevi, who, playing the role of husband to the Torah-*shekhinah*, erected a wedding canopy and performed a marriage between himself and a Torah scroll. ⁴⁶ Likewise, R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto celebrated his wedding to Zipporah, the daughter of R. David Finzi of Mantua, in a manner symbolizing the redemp-

⁴³ See Patai 1967, pp. 281–287; Liebes 1996, esp. pp. 193–198.

⁴⁴ See Liebes 1982/1, pp. 191–194, 216–218; Liebes 1994/1, pp. 99–112.

⁴⁵ *Preacher of Righteousness*, pp. 5, 7.

⁴⁶ See Scholem 1987, vol. 1, pp. 127–128.

tion of the *shekhinah*. The couple and their associates saw in the bride's name—Zipporah, the name also of Moses' wife—proof of the symbolism in their wedding and of R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto's elevation, through union with his wife, to the status of husband to the *shekhinah*.⁴⁷

It is important to note that the coupling with the *shekhinah* is in the nature of a "coupling by a kiss," for one who worships or studies aloud engages, as it were, in kissing the Torah-*shekhinah* with his mouth. In contrast to physical coupling with a flesh-and-blood woman,⁴⁸ what is spoken of here is a spiritual coupling of souls that are bonded with each other in love, just as the redemption that follows on that coupling is a spiritual redemption that precedes the physical redemption and makes it possible. But even when the coupling is spiritual, the bridegroom, redeemer of the *shekhinah*, remains a flesh-and-blood figure—Moses, R. Simeon b. Yohai, R. Joseph Karo, Shabbetai Zevi, or R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto—whose physical existence does not contradict his sense of messianic mission. On the contrary, the soul of the redeemer is a divine soul clothed in flesh (or, in kabbalistic terminology, an embodiment of a divine *sefirah*), and that fact enables him to redeem the *shekhinah*. The redemption of the *shekhinah* likewise is pictured as having various layers: a symbolic meaning as the redemption of the *shekhinah*-Torah, and a historical meaning as the redemption of the nation and land of Israel.

R. Yehiel Mikhel fits into this tradition. His actions follow a pattern familiar in the mystical tradition, and his connection to messianic-kabbalistic types is expressed through his soul being called "the soul of *shaddai*," which embodies the *sefirah* of foundation. The messianic objective of the *tiqqun* he conducted in his prayer house on Shavuot becomes plain in the event's climax, when R. Yehiel Mikhel attains coupling-by-kiss with the *shekhinah*. Evidence of that can be found in *The Light That Illuminates (Or ha-Me'ir)*, a work by his disciple, R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir. That account suggests that on Shavuot in 5537 (1777) and on the ensuing Sabbath, R. Yehiel Mikhel realized the revelation of a divine voice that spoke from his mouth and throat. The term used by R. Ze'ev Wolf to describe the voice's revelation

⁴⁷ See Tishby 1993, pp. 729–739, 740–744.

⁴⁸ On the distinction between Jacob's coupling with the *shekhinah* and that of Moses—one bodily, the other spiritual—see Liebes 1996, pp. 193–198.

is “speech of the *shekhinah*.” The term denotes the divine inspiration that R. Yehiel Mikhel achieved in a moment of grace, when his soul was elevated above the physical plane and his body became a dwelling place or vessel through which the divine voice of the *shekhinah* echoed. R. Yehiel Mikhel attained this speech of the *shekhinah* after he succeeded in raising himself to the level of nothingness, where, in the absence of any human voice, his mouth and throat became a trumpet of the divine voice. In other words, by realizing in himself his demand to negate the self as a means of bonding with God—“regarding oneself as nothingness”—he became worthy of a divine revelation:

And I once heard the master R. Mikhel, the *Maggid* of the holy congregation of Zolochov, discourse in public, and he said “please listen to my words” and later said “not you alone⁴⁹ do I admonish and command, but I urge myself on together with you.” And I understood from his holy words that he intended what he said, and that represents an important rule, not to utter words except when instilling understanding into them. . . . And the meaning is that one should wait to utter words of Torah or prayer until the words come with a quality of understanding, in which case they may be said, but if they do not, he should hold back his mouth to restrain the words. And once I heard the *Maggid* may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come say to us explicitly, “I will instruct you in the best way to say words of Torah. One should not sense himself at all, but should be only an ear that hears what the world of speech says in him, but he is not speaking himself, and as soon as he begins to hear his own words, he should cease.” And on several occasions I saw with my own eyes that when he opened his mouth to speak words of Torah, it appeared to everyone as if he was not in this world at all *and the shekhinah spoke from within his throat*; and sometimes he would pause and wait awhile even in the midst of a topic or a word. And this all teaches that a wise person must wait for understanding and then utter the words with understanding, as was mentioned, “When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him” [Num. 7:89]—in reality with Moses, with the quality of understanding.⁵⁰

R. Ze'ev Wolf reports that R. Yehiel Mikhel publicly taught how to introduce “understanding” into words of Torah or prayer. “The quality of understanding” is parallel here to the “degree of nothingness,” in which the human voice disappears and the human being becomes

⁴⁹ The turn of phrase “not you alone” echoes Moses’ idiom in Deut. 29:13 (“Neither with You Only”).—*translator’s note*.

⁵⁰ *The Light That Illuminates* 81b–82a.

a trumpet for the divine voice.⁵¹ That is the highest level of prophecy, attributed to Moses and here termed “speech of the *shekhinah*.”

R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir does not explicitly state, however, that Shavuot was the occasion on which R. Yehiel Mikhel attained speech of the *shekhinah*. The timing can be ascertained only through close analysis of his report. R. Ze'ev Wolf asserts that “on several occasions I saw with my own eyes,” implying that the speech of the *shekhinah* alighted on R. Yehiel Mikhel more than once, and the question is which of those occurrences is the subject of the present account. The repeated use of the term “and once” creates the impression that R. Ze'ev Wolf is referring to two distinct occasions on which R. Yehiel Mikhel engaged in a conversation with his listeners, but the content of R. Yehiel Mikhel's appeals to the congregation demonstrates the artificiality of that impression. In fact, only a single occasion is being discussed, as becomes apparent when the two steps are conjoined:

And he said “please listen to my words” and later said “not you alone do I admonish and command, but I urge myself on together with you” . . . [and he said] “I will instruct you in the best way to say words of Torah. One should not sense himself at all, but should be only an ear that hears what the world of speech says in him, but he is not speaking himself, and as soon as he begins to hear his own words, he should cease.”

At the outset, R. Yehiel Mikhel turned to his congregation and requested their attention (and his own). By that unusual step, he directed their attention to the importance of silence, which is the key to hearing the divine voice. He then went on to instruct them on how to attain that state, i.e., “one should not sense himself at all, but should be only an ear that hears.” It thus appears that the occasions signified by the two uses of “once”—at the beginning of the passage and later on—are identical, as are the congregations that are referred to.

Special importance attaches as well to the content of R. Yehiel Mikhel's discourse on that occasion, for the verses he explicated supported his entry into a state of “not sens[ing] himself at all.”

⁵¹ On the quietist aspect of the *shekhinah*'s speech in Hasidism, see Weiss 1985, pp. 69–94; Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, pp. 110–121; Elijor 1993/2, esp. pp. 131–139, 171–175.

R. Ze'ev Wolf divided R. Yehiel Mikhel's remarks into two parts and presented them in a changed sequence, but that does not preclude reconstruction of the original discourse. The extract quoted above ends with the statement "*as was mentioned*, 'When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him,'" implying that the verse had already been cited at the outset. R. Yehiel Mikhel thus appears to have been discoursing on the verse "And when Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him, he would hear the voice speaking to him from above the cover that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; and He spoke to him" (Num. 7:89). By reference to this verse, he offered an example of how to attain Moses' rank by waiting in silence for "understanding" to be encompassed by speech—"and the meaning is that one should wait to utter words of Torah or prayer until the words come with a quality of understanding." Finally, he instructed those present in "the way to say words of Torah. One should not sense himself at all, but should be only an ear that hears," that is, one should wait until he hears not his own voice but the "world of speech," the *shekhinah*, speaking from within his mouth.

These clues permit us to date the event. The verse interpreted by R. Yehiel Mikhel—"And when Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him"—is from the weekly Torah *Portion* of *Naso*, which is read in the synagogue on the Sabbath following Shavuot. Accordingly, R. Yehiel Mikhel was discoursing on *Naso*, and it is reasonable to infer that he delivered his discourse on that Sabbath. That conclusion is consistent with R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's observation that the gathering in the Brody prayer house took place on "the festival of Shavuot in this year, 5537, for I spent the festival of Shavuot and the ensuing Sabbath there."⁵² Moreover, *The Light That Illuminates* by R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir preserves one formulation of the statement of intent related to linkage that was established on Shavuot in R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house, reinforcing thereby the conclusion that R. Ze'ev Wolf was among those present. The wording "to us" indicates that R. Ze'ev Wolf was present on that occasion as part of a defined group, and that the congregation in which the events transpired was not one that had come together only by chance. That detail as well is consistent with R. Meshullam

⁵² *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 117a.

Feibush's description, which implies that those present in the prayer house formed a recognized congregation and that R. Yehiel Mikhel engaged in conversation with them before beginning to discourse.

R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir's report thus provides additional information on what took place in R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house in Brody on the festival of Shavuot in the year 5537 (1777): on the festival itself, R. Yehiel Mikhel disclosed the secret of his soul—"the soul of *shaddai*"—and on the ensuing Sabbath he discoursed on the verse, in the *Portion Naso*, "And when Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him . . ." In explicating the verses related to Moses' prophecy and comparing it to his own, he provided for his disciples an example of how to attain that degree of prophecy, and in so doing, he in fact attained a sort of prophecy in the form of speech of the *shekhinah*. And that speech of the *shekhinah* was substantively tied to Moses' prophecy as well: the description of the heavenly voice, which R. Ze'ev Wolf characterized as "the *shekhinah* speaking from the throat" of R. Yehiel Mikhel, clearly calls to mind Moses, of whose prophecy the *Zohar* says that "the Holy One blessed be He and His *shekhinah* speak through his mouth."⁵³

In the background of R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir's description, accordingly, is the depiction of the *shekhinah* speaking from Moses' mouth at Sinai. The connection to Moses picks up on his important role in the giving of the Torah and rounds out the picture of Shavuot being celebrated in R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house as a reconstruction of the encounter at Mount Sinai. Moreover, the description in *The Light That Illuminates* and the content of R. Yehiel Mikhel's discourse recall the manner in which R. Joseph Karo attained speech of the *shekhinah*, for her appearance in his mouth is described in the Elqabetz epistle as patterned after Moses' prophecy, just as is the *shekhinah*'s appearance in R. Yehiel Mikhel's mouth.⁵⁴ R. Ze'ev Wolf

⁵³ *Zohar with the Commentary of "the Ladder"* (*Zohar im Peirush ha-Sulam*) (*Ra'aya Mehemna*) 17, sec. 372, p. 138. For midrashic sources, see *Midrash on Psalms Known as "He Who Awaits the Good"* (*Midrash Tehillim ha-Mekhuneh Shohet Tov*), p. 156; *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai*, p. 144; Heschel 1965/2, pp. 267–268; Ginsburg 1968, pp. 291–292, n. 201; Idel 1988, pp. 66–69; Tishby 1993, p. 630; Werblowsky 1996, p. 251, n. 18; Pickarz 1999, pp. 21–22. It should be noted that, contrary to the view of some scholars, the description of the *shekhinah* as speaking from Moses' throat does not appear earlier than the *Zohar*—not in the Sages' *midrashim* and not in Rashi's commentary on the verse "Moses would speak and God would respond with a voice" (Exod. 19:19).

⁵⁴ See *Epistle of Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz*, p. 18. Zevi Werblowsky has noted that

emphasized that “several times I saw with my own eyes,” using a testimonial formulation that calls to mind R. Solomon Elqabetz’s declaration that “our ears heard all of these things.”⁵⁵ This wording clearly links the two accounts and reinforces the conclusion that the revelation of the *shekhinah* in R. Yehiel Mikhel’s mouth was taken not only as a throwback to Moses’ prophecy but also as a reconstruction of the *shekhinah*’s appearance in R. Joseph Karo’s mouth.

Revelation of the Shekhinah in the Presence of the Disciples

The mystical tradition assigns utmost importance to the presence of witnesses at a time of revelation, for it is they who attest, directly and forcefully, to its authenticity. It follows that, in determining whether a revelation is authentic, an essential consideration is whether it took place in public. The only occasion on which Scripture reports a revelation by God to the entire nation is the encounter at Sinai. The public nature of that revelation made the encounter uniquely important, and bestowed on the Decalogue, given on that occasion, the force of eternal truth. The Sages’ midrashim likewise emphasize that the presence of the entire nation afforded the degree of publicity needed for a direct divine revelation.⁵⁶ Accordingly, public revelation became an important factor in assessing the truth of prophecy.

With the destruction of the Temple, the very contemplation of prophecy became problematic. R. Yohanan held that “from the day the Temple was destroyed, prophecy was taken away from the prophets and given to fools and children.”⁵⁷ He was referring to the destruction of the first Temple, but his comment reflects the dismay at the destruction of the second Temple as well as the status of the Sages as the prophets’ successors. In addition to the destruction of the Temple, the Sages were troubled by the predicament of exile, particularly the question of whether divine revelation was possible

the appearance of the divine voice in R. Joseph Karo’s mouth “is a sort of replication of Moses’ prophecy,” described as “the *shekhinah* speaking from within his throat.” See Werblowsky 1996, p. 251.

⁵⁵ *Epistle of Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz*, p. 18. The descriptions of R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto’s revelations were likewise influenced by the example of R. Joseph Karo’s revelations.

⁵⁶ See Urbach 1978, p. 125.

⁵⁷ *Bava Batra* 12b. “Fool” is used here in the sense of “insane.”

outside of the Land of Israel. The adage “Know that the *shekhinah* is not revealed outside the Land [of Israel]”⁵⁸ reflects the tendency to regard prophecy as an exceptional phenomenon, suppressed and concealed by reason of the Temple’s destruction and the nation’s exile.

But while prophetic visions disappeared, they continued to be reflected in the form of a heavenly voice, which a select few were privileged to hear.⁵⁹ And divine inspiration could alight on the entire community when ten men, constituting a prayer quorum, were taken to represent Israel as a whole: “Whenever ten assemble, the *shekhinah* hovers [among them].”⁶⁰ In kabbalistic tradition, the ten are termed “a fellowship,” whose presence is needed for the repair of the *shekhinah*; in the *Zohar*, the ten fellows, led by R. Simeon bar Yohai, engage in repair of the *shekhinah*. The ten symbolize the ten divine *sefirot* and represent all Israel, “the limbs of the *shekhinah*.”⁶¹ The requirement for a prayer quorum of ten is particularly pronounced in the *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* conducted by R. Joseph Karo and his associates. According to the account of R. Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz, they could not repair the *shekhinah* on the first night of Shavuot because the ten fellows were not present. Only on the second night, when ten gathered, did they accomplish the repair.⁶² In R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto’s group as well, the light of Moses our teacher was revealed to the fellows’ spiritual eyes.⁶³

From this, we see the importance of R. Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir’s report that R. Yehiel Mikhel attained “speech of the *shekhinah*” in the presence of his disciples and even instructed them on how to have a similar experience.⁶⁴ It signifies that the leader’s speech of the *shekhinah* did not remain a private experience. Moreover, what underlay R. Yehiel Mikhel’s desire to teach his disciples how to attain speech of the *shekhinah* was his wish to make the revelation a

⁵⁸ *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, p. 3.

⁵⁹ See Urbach 1947.

⁶⁰ *Sanhedrin* 39a. To similar effect, *Berakhot* 6a: “How is it known that when ten worship, the *shekhinah* is with them? As Scripture says, ‘God stands in the congregation of God’ (Ps. 82:1).”

⁶¹ As noted, each Jew is a limb of the abstract entity called *shekhinah* or congregation of Israel.

⁶² See *Epistle of Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz*, p. 19.

⁶³ See Tishby 1993, pp. 639–640, 849–850.

⁶⁴ For R. Pinhas of Korets’s criticism of R. Yehiel Mikhel in this regard, see above, p. 54.

public event, encompassing an entire community. Indeed, at least two reports suggest that several of those present at R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house in Brody achieved, through his inspiration, "speech of the *shekhinah*." One of these accounts can be found in the introduction to *This Is a Remembrance* (*Ẓot Ẓikkaron*) by R. Jacob Isaac, "the Seer of Lublin," a prominent disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel:

For the sake of the unity of the Holy One blessed be He and His *shekhinah*, in fear and trembling, to unite the names of God [may He be blessed], in complete unity in the name of all Israel, and to elevate the *shekhinah* from her dust. I am ready and prepared to commit to writing what the blessed God, may He be blessed, helped me originate in meetings of fellows who attended to my voice and the voice calling him: I began with the verse[s] "I said, 'Days should speak and a multitude of years should teach wisdom.' But it is a spirit in man and the soul of *shaddai* that gives them understanding." [Job 32:7–8.]⁶⁵

"The Seer of Lublin" asserts that he discoursed on the verse "the soul of *shaddai* gives them understanding" for the sake of the unity—that is, the unification—of the Holy One blessed be He and the *shekhinah* and to elevate the *shekhinah* from the dust. His report that he discoursed on that verse on the occasion of "meetings of fellows who attended to my voice and the voice calling him" may allude to the event at which the discourse was given, for this is the verse that R. Yehiel Mikhel explicated at the *tiqqun leil shavu'ot*. Particularly important is the depiction of the fellows, "who attended to my voice and the voice calling him." This difficult turn of phrase contains an allusion to the infinite circuit linking the members of the group and the speaker to the divine voice, which returns and pulsates within the group. A similar expression—"the cry to heaven was his voice, a voice to him"—was used by R. Abraham Joshua Heschel of Opatow to describe the ascents of R. Yehiel Mikhel's soul.⁶⁶

Rachel Elior has found that "the Seer of Lublin" began to write in 5538 (1778),⁶⁷ suggesting that his remarks were committed to writing a short while after the *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* of 5537 (1777). That dating is consistent with the premise that "the Seer of Lublin" was present at R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house in Brody; and he, too,

⁶⁵ *This Is a Remembrance* 4b. On R. Jacob Isaac, "the Seer of Lublin," see below, pp. 242–245.

⁶⁶ See above, pp. 45–46.

⁶⁷ Elior 1994/2, pp. 174–175.

may then have attained higher inspiration, on the model of his master and teacher.

Further evidence of what transpired at the *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* at R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house may be hidden in the report of R. Uziel Meizlish, another of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples.⁶⁸ In his book *Glory of Uziel* (*Tif'eret Uziel*), R. Uziel describes a *zaddik* from whose throat the *shekhinah* speaks, in the manner of Moses. He goes on to describe how the holy spirit alighted as well on the circle of disciples surrounding the *zaddik*, and he compares the members of the group to a circle of prophets, from whose throats the *shekhinah* speaks. An outside observer would think them possessed by madness, but it is, in fact, the holy spirit:

For it is known of Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, that the *shekhinah* would speak from his throat; and even though none has yet arisen like Moses, still, some attain the level of having the *shekhinah* of His might, may He be blessed, utter praise from within their throats . . . and this is called "exaltation of God in their thoughts"; that is, the exaltation of the *shekhinah* is in their throats, such that the *shekhinah* of His might speaks, as it were, from the throats of the *zaddikim*. . . . For this reason, we find in Scripture and the Talmud that pious men sing and dance in great excitement . . . And if one stands at a distance without hearing the voice of the instrument and sees this [pious one] dancing and singing, he will think him a madman.⁶⁹

Rivka Schatz has noted that R. Uziel Meizlish portrays the *zaddik* in the image of Moses our teacher and depicts the circle of his disciples as the Israelites at the giving of the Torah, when all present were granted a revelation of the holy spirit.⁷⁰ It is, to be sure, a general description, and R. Uziel identifies by name neither the *zaddik*

⁶⁸ R. Uziel Meizlish eulogized R. Yehiel Mikhel. See below, pp. 148–151.

⁶⁹ *Glory of Uziel* 19a. The depiction is influenced by the "company of prophets prophesying" that Saul met on his way to meet Samuel (1 Sam. 19:20–24). A similar idea appears in the writings of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, founder of the *Habad* dynasty; see *Holy Epistle in Gleaned Statements—Tanya* (*Liqqutei Amarim Tanya*) 139a-b: "And it is known to those acquainted with the hidden wisdom that the word of God is referred to as 'the *shekhinah*' in the terminology of our Sages of blessed memory, and that 'the lower mother' and 'the *matronita*' in the terminology of the *Zohar* refers to the word of God, which gives life and brings great souls into being . . . as our Sages of blessed memory said, the *shekhinah* speaks from within Moses' throat and, likewise, all the prophets and all those possessed of the holy spirit would have the higher voice and speech actually clothed in their voices and speech."

⁷⁰ See Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, pp. 119–120.

nor the disciples, but it is not beyond possibility that this picture as well conceals behind it the event at R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house.

The remarks of R. Jacob Isaac, "the Seer of Lublin," and the description by R. Uziel Meizlish thus complement the reports of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller and R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir on the happening at Brody on Shavuot of 5537 (1777). The premise that R. Jacob Isaac, "the Seer of Lublin," was privileged to originate words of Torah through a higher voice speaking through him in the presence of his colleagues fills out the picture and brings it closer to the one painted by R. Uziel Meizlish: a circle of disciples-prophets, through whose throats the *shekhinah* speaks.⁷¹

⁷¹ The mystical image of dancing in Hasidic writings is the erotic raising of the celestial bride—the *Shekhina*—to her divine husband, with the circle of dancers as the bridesmaids. See wolfson 1995, pp. 108–110.

CHAPTER SIX

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE GROUP

Kabbalistic Groups and Linkage Ceremonies

By reconstructing ancient ceremonies and reinvigorating them through the power of new inspiration, kabbalists may strive to attain the spiritual level of those who participated in the original ceremony. The reconstruction of ancient ceremonies relies on their literary representations, as left in sacred texts. And so, the rituals of *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* rely on the biblical description of the encounter at Sinai, as set forth in chapters 19–20 of Exodus.

The revival of an ancient text—its “renaissance” as defined by Yehuda Liebes¹—also permits a new element to emerge and gain expression, for the later group of participants does not replicate the original ritual exactly but adds something of its own. Accordingly, the accounts of Shavuot night gatherings during various historical periods, directly and indirectly interlinked, produce layer after layer of literature incorporating certain fixed components. The later writers are conscious of their ties to their predecessors, and each adds an additional link to the chain.

In kabbalistic tradition, the reconstruction of a sacred ritual, such as the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, is related to an event in which a group of kabbalists form an association whose members are linked to one another by oath. Such events are known from early mystical literature; for example, the *Heikhalot* literature describes those who descend to the divine chariot as “mighty ones of the group,” comprising members of the great Sanhedrin and a small Sanhedrin.² Personalities from various historical periods are said to be members of the association, showing that the group was striving to transcend the laws of time and to draw, in its linkage, on a higher, eternal authority not subject to the laws of history. The association’s

¹ See Liebes 1994/1, p. 115; Elior 1992/1, pp. 48–50.

² See Schäfer 1981, pars. 201–202.

gatherings as described in the *Heikhalot* literature “may be characterized as the first assembly of Jewish mystics, who carry out in unison a range of mystical, sectarian ceremonies and preserve their descriptions in a special text.”³

In the kabbalistic tradition of the Middle Ages, the *Zohar* similarly recounts a gathering of the association, telling of the great assembly on Shavuot night of R. Simeon b. Yohai and the members of his circle.⁴ That account, in turn, inspired the *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* conducted by R. Joseph Karo and his associates at Salonika in 5293 (1533). The participants in that ceremony recreated the encounter at Sinai and the gathering described in the *Zohar*, which provided the backdrop for their own linkage as a group. Moreover, R. Joseph Karo and his colleagues believed themselves to be reincarnations of the souls of R. Simeon b. Yohai and the members of his circle.⁵ It is fair to assume that R. Joseph Karo emigrated to the Land of Israel and settled in Safed because of that city's proximity to R. Simeon b. Yohai's grave on Mount Meron and because of his expectation that the *Zohar's* prophecy of redemption beginning in the Galilee would come to pass in his day.

In the generation following R. Joseph Karo, several associations were founded in Safed. Among them were the penitential associations of R. Elazar Azkari,⁶ whose participants would go up to R. Simeon b. Yohai's gravesite on Mount Meron and study the *Zohar* there. Another grouping was that of the Ari, whose members saw themselves as reincarnations of R. Simeon b. Yohai and his associates, to the point that the Ari seated his disciples at Meron in the same order as that of the participants in the great assembly described in the *Zohar*. That said, the Ari's association differed in one decisive way from its predecessors: it convened on Lag be-Omer (the thirty-third day after Passover) rather than on the festival of Shavuot.⁷ In the seventeenth century, Shabbetai Zevi gathered around him a select group of associates; and, in the eighteenth century, Sar Shalom Shar'abi's group was organized in Jerusalem, and the association of

³ Dan 1992, p. 16.

⁴ See Liebes 1982/1, pp. 134–151; Liebes 1989.

⁵ See Werblowsky 1996, pp. 124–148.

⁶ See Benayahu 1964; Pachter 1991/1, pp. 24–69; Pachter 1994, pp. 121–186.

⁷ See Benayahu 1967, pp. 179–181; Liebes 1982/1, pp. 109–110; Meroz 1988, pp. 287–291; Liebes 1992, pp. 150–151.

R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (Ramḥal) was active in Italy. The secretive nature of the group's linkage is evidenced by a letter written by Ramḥal following disclosure of its existence: "what had been concealed among a few friends has been publicized all over Venice, may God have mercy, and, thereafter, throughout Padua."⁸

Some of these associations of kabbalists are the product of literary fiction, while others are historical. The first ones are described in the early mystical literature; most are from the medieval period; and some date from early modern times. Though differing in time and place, they are characterized by several set features. These include a shared purpose; the *imprimatur* of a spiritual leader, empowered by higher inspiration; the establishment of a hierarchy and the imposition of restrictions; the formation of a bond among the members of the group, usually fostered by a shared key or code; the existence of encoded writings and an obligation to preserve their secrecy; and the composition of a codex for the group.

Similar characteristics typify the activities of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples. That they organized themselves into an association is confirmed, first and foremost, by the reports of their opponents, the *Mitnaggedim*: in his defamatory work *Breaking of Sinners*, R. David Makov writes that the members of the group "imagine in their minds that the man Mikhel of Zolochov is a reincarnation of the prophet Habbakuk"; that they assert of another member that "he is a reincarnation of Eli the priest"; and "that every member of their sect says he embodies a spark of one or another *tanna* or *amora*."⁹ R. David Makov's use of the word "sect" is quite deliberate. "Sect" was a disparaging term applied to the Sabbatean movement, and its use by R. David Makov shows that he regarded R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples as having formed a dangerously antinomian organization of law-breakers. Substantively, his remarks show that the members of R. Yehiel Mikhel's group saw themselves as reincarnations of Sages, such as R. Simeon b. Yoḥai, who are themselves in turn depicted in the *Zohar* as reincarnations of biblical personalities—the patriarchs, prophets, and priests.

Nor is it mere happenstance that R. Yehiel Mikhel was accused of regarding himself as a reincarnation of Habakkuk, who is portrayed

⁸ Ginsburg 1937, vol. 1, p. 70; Tishby 1993, esp. pp. 729–755, 809–821.

⁹ Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 170.

by the mystical tradition as the prototype of the mystic-prophet. Habakkuk's image as the prophet of the End of Days took shape in rabbinic literature and in *Pesher on Habakkuk* (*Pesher Habakkuk*), a work of the Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls) sect. In *Book of Brightness* (*Sefer ha-Bahir*), an early kabbalistic work of the Middle Ages, the image of Habakkuk is modeled on that of a mystic,¹⁰ and in the *Zohar* it is associated with the quality of fear of God. The Sabbatean tradition likewise afforded an honored place to Habakkuk's prophecy, interpreting the verse "and a righteous man [*zaddik*] will live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4) as alluding to Shabbetai Zevi. It is fair to assume that R. David Makov was aware of the Sabbatean interpretation of the verse and that his claim that R. Yehiel Mikhel saw himself as a reincarnation of Habakkuk therefore encompassed a veiled allegation that R. Yehiel Mikhel was a heretic in the manner of Shabbetai Zevi, who had elevated himself to a divine status. One must recognize, to be sure, that R. David Makov's claim is unsupported by any Hasidic sources. Still, an association between Habakkuk's prophecy and the incident on Shavuot, when R. Yehiel Mikhel directed his discourse on "the soul of *shaddai*" to his own soul, can be found in the *haftarah* (reading from the Prophets) for the second day of Shavuot, which encompasses verses from the Book of Habakkuk. And even though certain details regarding R. Yehiel Mikhel's group cannot be found in internal Hasidic sources, those texts nevertheless lend support to the general picture and point to the existence of an association of kabbalists, whose activities conform to a pattern characteristic of earlier such groups, as follows:

A. *Imprimatur of a spiritual leader empowered by inspiration from on high*

R. Yehiel Mikhel's status within his group derived from the standing of his soul as the "soul of *shaddai*" and his disciples' belief that it was the soul of the redeemer. In their eyes, his authority flowed from the divine inspiration that appeared through his mouth as the "speech of the *shekhinah*," in the same manner as the revelation to Moses. In this way, R. Yehiel Mikhel resembled the leaders of earlier groups of kabbalists—R. Joseph Karo, who was granted an appearance of the *shekhinah* through his mouth, or R. Moses Hayyim

¹⁰ *Book of Brightness*, pars. 68–79.

Luzzatto, whose authority among the members of his group was the product of their belief that he was Moses' "replication" (*ḥibbur*), "aspect (*beḥinah*)," or "conduit (*ẓinor*)" and that he had been assigned a messianic mission.¹¹

B. Establishing a hierarchy within the group and drawing lines that permit only the leader to perform certain functions forbidden to his disciples

The *Heikkhalot* literature describes the leader of the group, R. Neḥuniah b. ha-Qaneh, as sitting and arranging the descent to the chariot. He determines how the members of his group will ascend to the supernal sanctuaries and how they will descend from them. The members of the group swear not to depart from his determinations and not to change the code for the holy names he revealed to them.¹² In the *Ẓohar*, R. Simeon b. Yoḥai admonishes his associates not to delve into the mysteries of the Torah except insofar as they learned them through him.¹³ And the members of R. Joseph Karo's group took an oath incorporating the wording used by the Israelites at Mount Sinai, as reported by R. Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz: "And the pious one then arose . . . and admonished them as he had commanded and then said 'I am your servant.' And all of them responded 'We will do and we will obey.'"¹⁴ The Ari's disciples signed a certificate of linkage containing limitations on spreading his kabbalistic doctrine,¹⁵ and R. Moses Ḥayyim Luzzatto's disciples termed themselves "parties to the covenant" or "parties to the pact," after the covenant and oath through which they were united.¹⁶

R. Yeḥiel Mikhel's disciples likewise undertook, in the form of an oath, not to be heads to foxes but, instead, tails to lions. Apparently, they agreed not to be connected in their prayers with the supernal worlds except by way of the soul of the *ẓaddik*, as reported by R. Abraham Ḥayyim of Zolochev: "That is what he means when he says 'be a tail to lions,' that is, link yourself in your prayer with

¹¹ See Rubin 1997, pp. 216–220.

¹² See Schäfer 1981, pars. 203–205.

¹³ See Tishby-Laḥover 1957, p. 32.

¹⁴ *Epistle of Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz*, p. 19. "We will do and we will obey" is borrowed from Exod. 24:7.

¹⁵ See Scholem 1940.

¹⁶ See Tishby 1993, pp. 839–840, n. 98.

the great ones who know the intent of the prayer and its mysteries, and be as a tail to them . . . for then your prayer will be heard and will ascend pleasingly with the intents of the great ones, who know the intent of the prayer, for you are linked with them.¹⁷ It seems that R. Yehiel Mikhel's soul is the only bridge to be used by the members of the group in linking themselves to the supernal worlds. That model—the *zaddik* as exclusive mediator between the members of his community and God—characterizes Hasidic courts to this day.

That commitment is reflected as well in remarks that recur frequently in the letters of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller. He often admonishes the addressee, R. Joel, to avoid being caught in the trap of pride and not to imagine himself to be like “the select few of high stature, who had the privilege of being taught by the Besht and his disciples and took their path.”¹⁸ In contrast to them, “we are afflicted from the sole of the foot to the head, with no place sound . . . and our heart is not in the least purified of the desires of physicality.”¹⁹ Accordingly, he urges his friend not to engage in certain forms of ritual, such as prayer with the Ari's intentions, which are reserved to the worthy few.

C. Establishing a bond among the members of the group by use of a set key or code, which doubles as an invisible bridge between earth and heaven, between the human and the divine, and between the members of the earthly group and the heavenly angels

The *Heikhalot* literature, for example, describes that bridge as a ladder made up of divine names, reaching to the gate of heaven: “And the path of an exalted ladder, with one end on the ground and the other end at the right foot of the throne of glory.”²⁰ The description alludes to the ladder in Jacob's dream: “And behold, a ladder standing on earth with its top reaching to the heavens, and behold, angels of God ascending and descending on it” (Gen. 28:12).

¹⁷ *Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life* 39b.

¹⁸ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 28a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 136a.

¹⁹ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 27b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 135b. More generally, see Krassen 1990, pp. 372–402. “From the sole of the foot . . .” is taken from Isa. 1:6.

²⁰ Schäfer 1981, par. 201. See also Dan 1992, pp. 21–24.

In R. Yehiel Mikhel's group, the soul of the *zaddik* serves as the bridge between heaven and earth, between human and divine. Accordingly, the linkage formulation includes the recitation of "Love your fellow as yourself" before praying, in order to link the members of the group to one another, and the envisioning of the *zaddik*'s image, in order to elevate his soul and complete the act of linkage. It is possible that the word "peace (*shalom*)" may somehow be tied to the code, for R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov expressly states that "the word 'peace' is a linkage."²¹ The linkage formula implies that envisioning the image of the *zaddik* takes the place of reciting his name; R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples seem to have refrained from reciting the name to avoid mentioning a human's name instead of God's while praying.

D. Use of coded writing and commitment to preserving secrecy

The association's members undertake to keep secret the linkage between them as well as the code through which they accomplish it. In the *Zohar*, R. Simeon b. Yohai warns his disciples that disclosure of secrets brings about "sin"—the death of innocents.²² Lurianic kabbalah likewise emphasizes the death penalty for the disclosure of secrets, and the members of Sar Shalom Shar'abi's group undertook "not to disclose to any person in the world the fact that we have linked and bonded with one another."²³ Similarly, the oath of secrecy in the linkage document of R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto's group is termed "the rules of silence."²⁴

Preserving the secret is a matter of consequence, for the mystery encompasses the holy names of God, and one who knows those names can make use of them in the supernal realms and redeem the world. Thus, one who uses the names of God to repair the upper and lower realms is, in effect, competing with the Creator, and the vow of secrecy accordingly stems from the prohibition imposed on

²¹ *Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life* 39b. R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev, too, mentions "covenant and linkage" in the matter of "the linkage of the *zaddik*, who is linked to the Master of all, may He be blessed." See *Sanctity of Levi*, (*Qedushat Levi*), part 2, p. 331.

²² See Liebes 1982/1, pp. 134–137.

²³ *Record of Great Men* (*Shem ha-Gedolim ha-Shalem*), vol. 2, p. 270.

²⁴ See Tishby 1993, p. 840, n. 98.

use of the holy names in order to block rebellion against God. An early expression of this notion is that of Hillel the elder in the Mishnah—"one who uses the crown is departed," that is, has died.²⁵ The *Ẓohar* states that "the crown" refers to the tips of the letters and the crowns of the letters. One who uses them will die, as will, even more so, "one who hands over the secrets of the Torah or the mysteries of kabbalah, or the mysteries of creation or the mysteries of the ineffable Name."²⁶ R. Simeon b. *Zemah* Duran (*Rashbaz*) likewise interpreted the crown as referring to the ineffable Name: "One who makes use of the ineffable Name has no part in the World to Come."²⁷

The notion that there exist divine secrets, knowledge of which permits man to challenge God, goes all the way back to the story of the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden after eating from the Tree of Knowledge and acquiring information properly reserved to God: "The Lord God said, 'Now the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and what if he should extend his hand, and take as well from the Tree of Life and eat and live forever?'" (Gen. 3:22). God's concern that the information gained by humans may be turned against Him reappears in the story of the Tower of Babylon: because He is concerned about the challenge from humans, God thwarts the plan to build a tower extending to the heavens and confounds human language so that men cannot understand one another.²⁸ Thus, the idea of language as knowledge shared by God and man, the use of which imparts divine power, first appears in the Bible. The midrash develops the idea further, declaring that the divine language, which confers strength and power, is made up of "the great Name," that is, of the letters of God's Name. At the encounter at Sinai, God was willing to share the secret of His Name with the Israelites and wished to bestow on them eternal life, which had been denied them on account of the expulsion from Garden of Eden: "When God gave the Torah to Israel, they

²⁵ *Avot* 1:13.

²⁶ *Ẓohar with the Commentary of "the Ladder"* (*Ra'aya Mehemna*) 8, secs. 600–601, p. 231. Cf. *Megillah* 28b, where the term "crown of the Torah" is taken to refer to scholars.

²⁷ *Shield of the Patriarchs—commentary on Tractate Avot (Magen Avot al Avot)* 1:13. *Rashbaz*, by profession a physician, was born on Majorca in 5121 (1361). In the wake of Christian persecution, he fled to Algiers in 5151 (1391), where he attained the post of chief rabbi. His collection of responsa is known as *Ha-Tashbaz*.

²⁸ See Gen. 11:1–9.

were not susceptible to the Angel of Death's dominion . . . for because they had accepted the Torah, the Holy One blessed be He clothed them with the radiance of His glory, and what was that garment? . . . R. Simeon b. Yoḥai said, 'He gave them a weapon engraved with His great Name, and as long as they possessed it, the Angel of Death was unable to exercise dominion over them.'"²⁹ But the sin of the Golden Calf denied the Israelites the gift of eternal life, which would be restored to them only with the advent of the Messiah. According to the mystical tradition, the Messiah is destined to use the divine Names to redeem the world. The Messiah-Redeemer thus is understood to be a rebel against His God, challenging Him by employing the knowledge reserved to God alone.³⁰ Moreover, the Redeemer's role would properly be reserved to God, and the Messiah's mission signifies God's failure to carry out the task.

The *Ẓohar* clearly depicts the Messiah as one compelled to rebel against God in order to redeem the world and who forfeits his life for that rebellion. The leader of the circle, R. Simeon b. Yoḥai—a distinctly messianic personality—teaches the holy Name to his associates. He then is punished by death for having dishonored—that is, having revealed—"the glory of the exalted Name."³¹ Lurianic kabbalah likewise emphasizes the death penalty for use of the holy Names: "[Of] one who uses the names of the Holy [One], our Sages, may their memory be for a blessing, said: 'One who uses the crown is departed, and is uprooted from the world. He or his sons will apostatize, will die, or will become impoverished.'"³² It is no mere coincidence that the death of the Ari's young son was interpreted as punishment for his father having revealed the holy Names, and the Ari's own death was similarly interpreted. A similar idea appears in the Besht's *Holy Epistle*. The Besht recounts how the Messiah revealed to him the secrets of redemption, including three holy Names, but forbade him, for as long as he lived, to reveal them to anyone else, "and I remain sworn to this from on high."³³ The Besht

²⁹ *Exodus Rabbah*, vol. 6, (*Pequdei*) 51:8. It may be added in this regard that the Ashkenazi Pietists (*Hasidei Ashkenaz*) had the practice of revealing the holy names in a secret ceremony conducted near a water source. See Dan 1992, p. 25.

³⁰ See Liebes 1994/2.

³¹ See Tishby-Lahover 1957, pp. 32–33.

³² *Gates of Holiness (Sha'arei Qedushah)*, Benei Beraq 5733 (1973), part 2, gate 6, p. 70; Liebes 1992, pp. 135–137.

³³ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Mondschein), p. 235.

heeded the prohibition and his life was saved, but at the cost of deferring the Messiah's advent.

When we examine the encoded divine names, we see that the code sometimes is the name of a person. The connection between a human name and the divine names is hidden within the mysteries of Lurianic kabbalah, which offers a means for repairing the souls of sinners. The reparative activity (*tiqqun*) is known as "elevating the sparks," that is, elevating sinners' souls from Gehenna and returning them to their source in the worlds of holiness. The *tiqqun* formula is made up of a combination—a "unification"—of seven sparks, constituting seven sinners' souls that fell to the netherworld by reason of their sins, with seven divine *sefirot* and seven angels. The souls of the sinners are tied to the *sefirot* and the angels with the help of seven divine Names, each soul using the Name that befits it. In that way, the souls are purged of their impurity, join the worlds of holiness, and achieve their redemption.

Featuring prominently in the elevation of the sparks is the process of combining the letters of the name of the person in whose body the sinner's soul is reincarnated. The unification between the name of the sinner and those of the divine *sefirah* and the specified angel is accomplished with the help of the letters that form the name of the person in whose body the soul is reincarnated, who bears the responsibility of finding a *tiqqun* for that soul. For example, R. Hayyim Vital, a disciple of the Ari, recounts how his master and teacher revealed to him that the sinning soul of Cain had been reincarnated in his body and that his task in life was to repair it. To do so, it was necessary to combine the letters of the name Cain with those of the name Hayyim, which are the key to the names of the divine *sefirah* and the angel with whose help Cain's soul could be elevated from the netherworld. The personal name "Hayyim" was thus transformed into a sacred name, by means of which Cain's soul could be repaired.³⁴ That is why R. Hayyim Vital exercised self-censorship and refrained from detailing these matters in his public writings; they

³⁴ On the belief in the magical power of names, see Jesus' remarks after returning to life, in Mark 16:15–17—"God said, 'Go forth to the entire world and proclaim the good news to all creation: He who believes and is baptized will be saved but he who does not believe will be held guilty; and these are the signs that will accompany the believers—they will expel demons with my Name.'" See also Flusser 1979, p. 57.

are known to us only from his *Book of Visions* (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot*), an intimate autobiography not intended for publication.³⁵

The self-censorship of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples and their writing in code similarly grow out of prohibitions associated with use of sacred names. Thus, for example, R. Yehiel Mikhel's name is deleted from the linkage formula and replaced with the envisioning of the image of the *zaddik*. His name is encoded as well in the writings of his disciples, where he is often referred to by cognomens, such as "the wise one of the generation," "the righteous ones of the generation," "the great ones," and so forth. Similarly, his name is omitted from the title pages of his disciples' books, and the learning they received from him is attributed to others, such as the Besht, the *Maggid* R. Dov Ber of Mezhrichi, and R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany.³⁶ It appears that R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples came to regard his name as a sacred name, capable, like the sacred names of God, of redeeming those who linked with it.³⁷ Accordingly, they strove to conceal it. This recurring phenomenon casts light on R. Yehiel Mikhel's messianic role and on the standing of his soul as "the soul of *shaddai*," a divine entity with the ability to redeem the world.

Moreover, R. Yehiel Mikhel adopted the principle of encoded writing as part of his worldview. His son, R. Isaac of Radvil, asserts that his father was a scholar of "this Torah given from Mount Sinai as black fire on white fire."³⁸ The expression is borrowed from the Jerusalem Talmud: "R. Pinhas said in the name of R. Simeon b. Laqish, 'The Torah given by the Holy One blessed be He to Moses was given to him as white fire engraved with black fire, that is, fire mixed with fire hewn of fire and given of fire. And that is what is written, "At His right was a fiery Law"³⁹ for them" (Deut. 33:2).'"⁴⁰ The expression appears again in the introduction to the Torah commentary of R. Moses Nahmanides (Ramban), a halakhist, commentator,

³⁵ See *Book of Visions*, pp. 222–223, and, in contrast, the censored version in *Gate of the Holy Spirit* in *Collected Writings of the Ari*, vol. 10, p. 86.

³⁶ See further, below, pp. 312–316.

³⁷ On the Besht's name as a divine name, see Idel 1989, pp. 100–106. It is no coincidence that the tradition of the *zaddik*'s name as a divine name started with both the Besht and R. Yehiel Mikhel.

³⁸ *Light of Isaac*, p. 3.

³⁹ Reading, with the *qere* (Masoretic determination of how the text is to be read), **דָּשׁ דָּט** (*esh dat*). The *ketiv* (Masoretic determination of how the text is to be written out) has **דָּשׁ דָּט** (*eshdat*) as a single word.

⁴⁰ Jerusalem Talmud, *Sheqalim* 6:1.

and kabbalist of the Golden Age in Spain. Ramban interpreted the Torah in a mystical fashion, on the premise that it contained additional layers of meaning hidden behind the literal. He notes that the Torah given at Sinai was written as black fire on white fire, that is, written continuously, with no spaces between letters. Accordingly, it may be read in two ways: first, “in accordance with the Names,” regarding the continuous text as a long string of divine Names; and, second, “in accordance with the Torah and the commandments,” that is, following the accepted division into words and sentences that yield the literal meaning of the text. In his view, the Torah given to Moses was in accordance with the literal meaning, divided into words and sentences in the manner read by commentators and halakhists, but the “the reading in accordance with the Names . . . as applied by kabbalists” was given to him orally.⁴¹ R. Isaac of Radvil’s assertion that his father was expert in reading the Torah as “black fire on white fire,” in the manner of kabbalistic Sages, shows that R. Yehiel Mikhel was a master of the Name (ba‘al shem), that is, expert in the divine names encoded in the Torah. It may be assumed that he learned that tradition from his father, R. Isaac of Drogoibych, and from his teacher, the Besht.

An additional method of encoding practiced in Zolochov circles was the division of a text bearing mystical content into paragraphs that would then be inserted into diverse and remote passages so as to make it difficult to recombine them into a complete, continuous text. The phenomenon recurs in the writings of various disciples as well as in manuscripts dealing with the Korets dispute. Particularity noteworthy is the obscuring in this manner of the description of the *tiqqun leil shavu‘ot* held at R. Yehiel Mikhel’s prayer house. The various details depicting the event are dispersed among the writings of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, R. Ze‘ev Wolf of Zhitomir, R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov, R. Jacob Isaac, “the Seer of Lublin,” and R. Uziel Meizlish. Similarly obscured were the circumstances of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s death and even its date; the details

⁴¹ Nahmanides’ Introduction, in *Torah Commentaries by R. Moses Nahmanides (Ramban)*, vol. 1, p. 7. On the expression “black fire on white fire” in the context of the mystical tradition of reading the Torah, see Scholem 1976/2, pp. 42–52; Idel 1981, pp. 44–46. On Jewish mysticism’s unique understanding of language, see Dan 1997, esp. pp. 31–58, 355–394.

can be gleaned only by reading between the lines and combining various accounts by both *Hasidim* and *Mitnaggedim*.⁴²

E. *Composition of a codex, a collection of rules of conduct, that obligates the members of the association to adhere to specified practices, primarily prohibitions and stringencies going beyond the obligations imposed by halakhah on all Jews*

The texts that preserve these instructions are known in academic research as “Hasidic conduct literature.”⁴³ The term “conduct” can refer to guidance, direction, behavior, or custom. Conduct literature developed in the Middle Ages within the rubric of ethical literature and provided instruction and advice on behavior and ethics, especially in matters related to the observance of the commandments. In the sixteenth century, the golden age of Kabbalah in Safed, collections of conduct rules served as an effective means for spreading customs, especially those related to prayer, that had originated among the kabbalistic groups in Safed.

R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples also established special practices that would distinguish them from outsiders. The codex encompassed instructions in Hasidism and separateness, in the spirit of the Safed kabbalists. It is doubtful that the codex was instituted at the gathering for Shavuot 5537 (1777), for some of its practices are known as early as 5532 (1772). Still, it is possible that the members of the group took advantage of their assembly on that occasion to make copies of the conduct regulations so each could have one.

Various formulations of the group’s conduct regulations were preserved by R. Yehiel Mikhel’s disciples and were published beginning in 5541 (1781). The striking feature of their publication was their attribution to people who, at the time of publication, had already died.⁴⁴ The anonymity or masking of the authorship seems attributable not only to fear of the *Mitnaggedim*, who were at the time persecuting the *Hasidim*, but also to the penchant for secrecy. An allusion to that effect is found in one of the codexes, whose wording clearly

⁴² See below, pp. 140–145.

⁴³ See Gries 1990.

⁴⁴ On Hasidic conduct literature, see below, pp. 307–384.

reflects the dialectic of cloaking and uncovering, revealing and concealing, that was rampant among R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples: "It is a disgrace that should be suffered by no Jew, but even if he is asked, and even if he is a member of the sect, and even though it is commanded to publicize it, still, he should distance himself from it so as not to be accused, heaven forbid."⁴⁵ The wording clearly advises the *Hasid* to camouflage his membership in the "sect" and to deny it so as to avoid incurring trouble and persecution. And that is so despite the obligation to publicize the existence of the messianic group, perhaps because that publication itself reveals mysteries having the power to spread the faith in the coming of the Messiah and to hasten it. This dialectical approach of cloaking and uncovering may explain why the codexs were published with their sources camouflaged: doing so publicized the mysteries of the redemption without transgressing the ban on revealing them.

F. A common purpose and goal, for whose pursuit the members of the group came together

Kabbalistic associations generally had a messianic purpose, whether hidden or concealed. In the *Zohar*, the purpose of coming together on Shavuot night was the repair of the *shekhinah* and the redemption of Israel, the *shekhinah*'s limbs. In the *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* of R. Joseph Karo and his associates, the *shekhinah*, repaired and risen from the dust, states the goal explicitly as a command: "Go up to the Land of Israel, for not all times are equal[ly auspicious], and there is no major or minor obstacle to salvation."⁴⁶ Explicitly defining the goal as emigration to the Land of Israel gave the message a prophetic overtone, for a unique feature of prophecy is its verbal expression of an explicit mission with a defined purpose. Similarly, the Ari's concept of himself as the redeemer is alluded to in the account of his death and in the mystery of his reincarnation and that of his disciple, R. Hayyim Vital.⁴⁷ R. Elazar Azkari likewise had messianic purposes in establishing his mystical societies—ethical purification

⁴⁵ *Alphabet, Enlightening Letters (Alfa Beta Otiyot Mahkimot)*, letter three, in *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem (Zava'at ha-Ribash)*.

⁴⁶ *Epistle of Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz*, p. 18.

⁴⁷ See Meroz 1988, pp. 255–359; Liebes 1992.

and religious elevation in order to repair the *shekhinah*.⁴⁸ And so, too, Shabbetai Zevi and his associates: once Nathan of Gaza began to publicly broadcast the secret of Shabbetai Zevi's messianism, as it had been revealed to him in visions, the messianic purpose of his activity became apparent. Following Shabbetai Zevi, one should note R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto's group, whose messianic purposes were alluded to both implicitly and explicitly.

In a similar manner, the purpose of R. Yehiel Mikhel's gathering with his disciples on Shavuot night 5537 (1777) was tied to the messianic objective encoded in the linkage formula. This goal becomes apparent through explication of R. Yehiel Mikhel's "soul of *shaddai*" discourse and in additional sources, all placed in the unique context of the *tiqqun leil shavu'ot*. Taking account of all these factors, one can reconstruct the purpose of the group's linkage, directed toward the mystery of the redemption of the world: according to R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's report, R. Yehiel Mikhel, before each prayer, would link his soul with all Israel, "with those greater than I, so my thoughts will rise up through them, and with lesser ones, so that they will ascend through me";⁴⁹ This account fits nicely with that of R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov, according to which the role of the *zaddik* is to pray "in the name of all Israel" and to elevate their prayers from the Diaspora "to the Land of Israel, from the Land of Israel to Jerusalem; from Jerusalem to the Temple Mount; from the Temple Mount to the courtyard; from the courtyard to the hall; from the hall to the sanctuary; from the sanctuary to the holy of holies; and from the holy of holies to the sanctuary of the sapphire pavement, to the very place where my forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob prayed."⁵⁰

R. Abraham Hayyim's report suggests as well that R. Yehiel Mikhel was one of the select few *zaddikim* able to link Jewish souls of lesser stature than his own with those of greater stature, that is, with the souls of the Patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—who dwell in the sapphire-paved sanctuary. The leap from the *zaddik*'s soul to those of the Patriarchs shows that R. Yehiel Mikhel found no one in his own generation greater than himself. His comments on the

⁴⁸ See Pachter 1991/1, p. 30.

⁴⁹ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 25b; (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 129a.

⁵⁰ *Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life* 39a.

manner of linkage are directed to the Patriarchs of the nation and the divine *sefirot* they represent.

And so we find a pictorial description of the process through which the worlds are redeemed. In it, the *zaddik* embodies the *sefirah* of foundation, the organ of the circumcision covenant, and he sows the prayers of Jews as seed in the body of the Lady—the *shekhinah*, symbolizing the Holy Temple and its sanctuary. This description employs key kabbalistic symbols, which describe how the prayers of Israel construct “the limbs of the Lady,” that is, the limbs of the *shekhinah*. The picture highlights well the doctrine of repair of the supernal worlds, derived from the *Zohar* and Lurianic kabbalah: the limbs of the *shekhinah* are constructed from the mutual affection of the members of the group, who represent the congregation of Israel, and from their bonding with one another. After that bonding, the fellows envision the image of the *zaddik*, which completes the image of the divinity by adding the *sefirah* of foundation—the *sefirah* of the *zaddik*—thereby rounding out the array of ten *sefirot*. And because the *zaddik* embodies the *sefirah* of foundation, he bears the task of repairing the *shekhinah* by coupling with her. As noted, the *zaddik* draws the power needed for that *tiqqun* and that coupling from the prayers of the members of the group, which repair and prepare his image; and when he unites with the *shekhinah*, her broken limbs are rejoined and she is redeemed. Accordingly, the *zaddik*’s linkage is described in sexual terms: “A *zaddik* is one whose linkage with the Holy One blessed be He is like that of a adulterer with an adulteress from whom he cannot separate. That is the nature of [the *zaddik*’s] linkage with the Holy One blessed be He through prayer and study; his bond is so powerful that he cannot separate himself from her [the *shekhinah*], and this is alluded to with respect to the sanctuary of the covenant, which is called *zaddik*.”⁵¹ In the terminology of the *sefirot* doctrine, redemption is similarly described as the integration of the *sefirot* and sanctuaries with one another, particularly the *sefirot* of grace (*hesed*; Abraham), judgment (*din*; Isaac), and splendor (*tiferet*; Jacob). The soul that links them is the soul of the *zaddik* (the *sefirah* of foundation), and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it is the “soul

⁵¹ *Light of Truth (Or ha-Emet)* 25a. So, too, *Precious Gleanings* sec. 18: “Prayer is coupling with the *shekhinah*, and just as there is swaying at the start of a coupling, so should one sway at the start of the prayer.”

of *shaddai*,” which R. Yehiel Mikhel interpreted as referring to his own soul.

Identifying R. Yehiel Mikhel's Kabbalistic Group

Linkage ceremonies, such as that of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples, require at least ten men, forming a prayer quorum of ten (*minyan*) that represents all Israel. The *Heikhalot* literature speaks of ten “who descend to the chariot”; and there are ten participants in the great assembly in the *Zohar* and in the linkage ceremony of R. Joseph Karo and his disciples. Occasionally, the number of participants increases to twelve, the number of the tribes of Israel: in early Christianity, Jesus’ twelve apostles symbolized the twelve tribes; the Ari’s disciples apparently sought to have ten men sign their linkage document, but another version of the document includes twelve signatures; one of Shabbetai Zevi’s first acts after revealing himself was to select twelve residents of Gaza, whom he referred to as “the twelve tribes”; and the linkage document of Sar Shalom Shar‘abi’s disciples sets forth twelve signatures, equal to the number of the tribes of Israel.⁵²

It may be assumed that ten or twelve men were present at the linkage event at R. Yehiel Mikhel’s prayer house—or, at least, that an effort was made to gather that number. Three of them are known to us from R. Meshullam Feibush Heller’s letter: R. Yehiel Mikhel, R. Meshullam Feibush himself, and the son of R. Zusya of Annopol (the brother of R. Elimelekh of Lozansky), whose presence there is explicitly noted by R. Meshullam Feibush.⁵³ The name of another individual, referred to by R. Meshullam Feibush as the person who recited the 613 commandments, was censored. It also is reasonable to assume that the assemblage at the prayer house in Brody included R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov, R. Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir, R. Jacob Isaac, “the Seer of Lublin,” and R. Zevi Hasid, all of whom indicate in their writings that they were familiar with the goal of the linkage established on that occasion.

⁵² Additional signatures were added later. See *Record of Great Men*, vol. 2, p. 270; Benayahu 1995/1, pp. 14–17, 61–71.

⁵³ See *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 117a.

It follows that the identities of additional participants may be ascertained by locating the linkage formula or portions of it in contemporary Hasidic writings. It would be fair to assume that people known to have been *Hasidim* in the 1770s and 1780s and who incorporated the linkage formula into their writings were, in fact, among those who were present at R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house and who took upon themselves the group's oath. It must be emphasized, however, that we are dealing with inference, not fact, and that this sort of reasoning cannot lead to definitive conclusions.

An additional lead can be found in the list of "the leading ruffians, called by name to be hung on gallows that was prepared [cf. Esth. 8:9–10]; they alone produced the poison."⁵⁴ This listing of Hasidic activists is contained in *Breaking of Sinners* by R. David Makov, whose opposition to Hasidism led him to compile lists of its activists so he could pursue them to the bitter end, just as Haman's ten sons, alluded to in the foregoing quotation, had been pursued. This list, which appears to have been assembled in the 1780s or 1790s, includes sixteen names. Some identify persons whose connections to R. Yehiel Mikhel are known through their own writings or through manuscripts that had been in their possession: R. Jacob Isaac, "the Seer of Lublin," R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir, R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy, R. Mordecai of Nesukhoyezhe, R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev, the *Maggid* R. Israel of Kozienice, R. Zusya of Annopol, and R. Samuel b. Hayyim Haika of Amdur. Other individuals on the list are known to have quoted R. Yehiel Mikhel in their writings, though their connections to him have not yet been studied, and still others are associated with him only in Hasidic hagiography: R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, R. Elimelekh of Lozansky, (R. Zusya's brother), and R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl and his son, R. Mordecai.

Of course, it cannot be proven that the Hasidic leaders listed in *Breaking of Sinners* are the disciples of R. Yehiel Mikhel. Still, it is a reasonable inference, for most of the individuals mentioned in the list are tied in one way or another to R. Yehiel Mikhel. R. David Makov may have conflated several events, but it is possible that he had reliable sources of information about R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochov and his colleagues, the members of the "sect." In any event, even though his list may not be conclusive on its own, it provides additional support for evidence from other sources.

⁵⁴ Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 101.

Hasidism and the Commandment to Love One's Fellow

The linkage formula of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples comprises two parts: recitation of the verse "Love your fellow as yourself" before the prayer, and envisioning the image of the *zaddik* during its course. The commandment to love one's fellow ("Love your fellow as yourself; I am the Lord" [Lev. 19:18]) expresses the commandment to love God as formulated in the recitation of the *shema*—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5)—in that love of one's fellow is, in fact, love of the divine image in him.

The custom of reciting "Love your fellow as yourself" before prayer developed in kabbalistic circles in Safed, in which the bonds between the groups' members were assigned mystical significance as well. Moshe Halamish has noted that the custom's first liturgical appearance was among the disciples of the Ari.⁵⁵ From there, it spread to various Jewish communities, including those in Eastern Europe. The recitation appears, for example, in the prayer book *Voice of Jacob* (*Qol Ya'akov*) by the Sabbatean kabbalist R. Jacob Kopel Lifschitz, who lived in the town of Mezhirichi during the eighteenth century. R. Jacob Kopel's liturgical formulations influenced the early Hasidic prayer books, and it is known that R. Nahman of Bratslav worshipped in accordance with them. That influence is neither unusual nor surprising, for the writings of R. Jacob Kopel Lifschitz could be found in the study hall in Mezhirichi right next to the writings of the Ari, published in 5542 (1782) by disciples of R. Yehiel Mikhel.⁵⁶

That said, only a partial answer can be provided to the question of how the custom of reciting "Love your fellow as yourself" reached R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples. In his letter to his brother-in-law, R. Meshullam Feibush Heller writes "I hereby take upon myself the positive commandment of 'Love your fellow as yourself,' . . . which is an effective mechanism of great use, as explained in the book *Kindness to Abraham*."⁵⁷ The reference is to *Kindness to Abraham* by the kabbalist R. Abraham Azulai of Hebron, who ascribed great importance to this custom.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ See Halamish 1978.

⁵⁶ See Tishby 1982/1.

⁵⁷ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 25b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 129a.

⁵⁸ See *Kindness to Abraham*, chap. 23, p. 301.

Another possibility is that R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples adopted the custom under the influence of writings by the Ari that were in their possession. Yet another source may have been the writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, a disciple of the Besht. Moshe Halamish has pointed out that while the custom can be found in his writings, it is nowhere cited in the name of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi or R. Pinhas of Korets;⁵⁹ thus, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye is the only one of the founders of Hasidism to refer to the custom in his writings. Moreover, R. Jacob Joseph cites the custom to the writings of the Ari, thereby implying, by negative inference, that the source of the custom is not in the Besht's liturgy. That conclusion is consistent as well with the comments of R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir, who cited the Besht, in contrast to R. Yehiel Mikhel, as one who opposed linkage in prayer on the grounds that it might destroy the world for "all the creatures are left without their vitality."⁶⁰ Moreover, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye does not mention envisioning the images of the *zaddikim*, a crucial element in the form of linkage practiced in R. Yehiel Mikhel's circle. It is uncertain whether his comments on linkage of thought contemplate recitation of the person's name or envisioning of his image. The latter mechanism, representing a decisive turn in the nature and purpose of linkage, uniquely characterizes the Zolochov tradition of Hasidism.

Nevertheless, the fact that R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye mentions the custom provides important insight into how liturgical styles passed from the Kabbalah of Safed into Hasidism: the path was via the writings of Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, with no connection to the Besht's legacy or to R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi.

Most of the Hasidic writings that mention the recitation of "Love your fellow as yourself" before prayer were composed in the late 1770s or thereafter, that is, in the generation of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples. The references to the custom take various forms. A few are set forth in prayer books but most are included in discourses, epistles, or collections of conduct literature.

Moshe Halamish enumerated sixteen individuals in whose writings the custom is mentioned. Among them are the founders of the first Hasidic courts, such as R. Nahum, founder of the Chernobyl dynasty

⁵⁹ See Halamish 1978, pp. 549–553.

⁶⁰ *The Light That Illuminates* 240a.

of *zaddikim*, and R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, founder of *Habad*. The custom appears as well in the writings of the leaders of the Hasidic emigration to the Land of Israel—R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and R. Abraham of Kolyszki. It turns out that most of these individuals have a strong connection to the Zolochov dynasty.

In all, the following writers and works mention the custom of reciting “Love your fellow as yourself” before prayer:

1. R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, R. Yehiel Mikhel’s prominent disciple: “The words of [a person’s] prayers ascend by means of the person linking himself by uttering ‘I hereby subject myself to the positive commandment of “Love your fellow as yourself,”’ and thereby including himself, through love, with the holy soul of the righteous ones of the generation, whose likenesses he is familiar with and whom he then envisions in his thoughts.”⁶¹
2. R. Moses Shoham b. R. Dan of Dolina, author of *Nectar of the Fruit of the Tree of Life* (*Seraf Peri Ez Hayyim*).⁶² R. Moses was the father-in-law of R. Isaac of Radvil in the latter’s first marriage, that is, his daughter was married to the son of R. Yehiel Mikhel. By his account, he was also a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel, and he cites him as follows: “I heard with respect to this matter from the mouth of my daughter’s father-in-law, my master and teacher, the holy and divine rabbi, my master and teacher Yehiel Mikhel, preacher of truth, may his memory endure to the life of the world to come.”⁶³ It should be noted that R. Meshullam Feibush Heller was acquainted with R. Moses Shoham, designating him “the venerable, our teacher and rabbi, R. Moses, may he prosper,”⁶⁴ and even reproducing his prayer book’s version of the prayer to be recited before immersion. That citation shows that new liturgical formulations were being incorporated into Hasidic prayer books at that time.
3. R. Isaac of Radvil, author of *Light of Isaac* and R. Yehiel Mikhel’s son.

⁶¹ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 25b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 129a. See also above, pp. 70–72.

⁶² *Nectar of the Fruit of the Tree of Life* 16b.

⁶³ *Words of Moses* (*Divrei Moshe*), *Portion Bereshit* 3b.

⁶⁴ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 27a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 134a.

4. The prayer book *Order of Prayers for the Entire Year According to the Ashkenazi Custom* edited by R. Isaiah Mushkat.⁶⁵ R. Isaiah was R. Isaac Radvil's son-in-law. Part of the manuscript of *Light of Isaac* was copied from his archives, and he wrote the preface to the work.⁶⁶
5. R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov, a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel. As noted, his writings preserve one of the most complete and detailed versions of the formula linking R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples.⁶⁷ R. Abraham Hayyim also cites remarks in the name of R. Samuel Shmulki Horowitz of Nikolsburg on the commandment to love one's fellow.⁶⁸
6. R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev,⁶⁹ "Levi of Bardizuv" is referred to in R. David Makov's *Breaking of Sinners*.⁷⁰ In his writings, R. Levi Isaac quotes what he heard from R. Yehiel Mikhel: "And this is what I heard from the holy rabbi, our teacher, R. Yehiel Mikhel, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing."⁷¹
7. R. Hanokh Henikh, in his prayer book, *Order of the Joyful Heart (Seder Lev Sameah)*.⁷²
8. R. Elimelekh of Lozansky, who includes the commandment in his listing of "human conduct": "And he should prevent himself from hating any Jew . . . and should, to the extent possible, judge them favorably. He is obligated to love [them] as he loves his own soul, with all his might, himself and his children, to fulfill 'Love your fellow as yourself.'"⁷³ "Melekh Lizansker" and his brother "Zishi Napaler" are included in the listing of *Breaking of Sinners*.⁷⁴ R. Meshullam Feibush Heller noted that R. Zusya's son was present at R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house in Brody: "And later, it was said by the son of the renowned *zaddik* our teacher R. Zusya, may his light glow, who was of the holy community

⁶⁵ *Order of Prayers for the Entire Year According to the Ashkenazi Custom* 71b.

⁶⁶ See *Light of Isaac*, Introduction.

⁶⁷ See above, pp. 72–77.

⁶⁸ See *Way to Life (Orah le-Hayyim)*, Portion *Noah* 14b.

⁶⁹ *Sanctity of Levi*, part 2, p. 414.

⁷⁰ Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 101.

⁷¹ See *Sanctity of Levi*, part 1, p. 256.

⁷² *Order of the Joyful Heart* 25b.

⁷³ *Pleasantness of Elimelekh* (Polonnaye 5564 [1804]), Conduct Guide 8. The listing of "conduct guides" does not appear in editions of *Pleasantness of Elimelekh* printed before 5564 (1804).

⁷⁴ Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 101.

of Annopol and who has a son in the holy community of Brody, may his Rock and Redeemer protect him, and he worships in the prayer group of the *Maggid*, may his memory be for a blessing.”⁷⁵ It is known as well that R. Elimelekh of Lozansky was a teacher of R. Jacob Isaac, “the Seer of Lublin,” who was a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel.

9. R. Reuben ha-Levi Horowitz, author of *Mandrakes in the Field* (*Duda'im ba-Sadeh*). In citing the practice, he uses the term “all-embracing *zaddik*,” with whom one links in prayer, and compares him to Moses: “And to that end, they instituted the recitation, before prayer, of one’s acceptance of the positive commandment to love one’s fellow; and one should link his prayer with the prayers of all the *zaddikim*, and especially with the prayer of the all-embracing *zaddik* of the generation, who has Moses’ quality, and the all-embracing *zaddik* certainly links himself with all Israel, for he has the quality of Moses, who gave his life for Israel; and in that way, his prayer will ascend, for it is united [with all Israel] before the one, true Creator, may He be blessed.”⁷⁶
10. R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady and the *Habad* tradition. “Zalman Laznir” is mentioned in R. David Makov’s *Breaking of Sinners* listing.⁷⁷
11. R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, the leader of the Hasidic emigration to the Land of Israel. In his letters to his colleagues who stayed behind, he mentions the commandment to love one’s fellow and to envision the image of the members of the group: “In order that they will know with certainty that their love is embedded in our hearts and that their souls are intertwined with ours, one and all. It will be as if their images are perpetually before us, so we may mention them with favor whenever we may turn to the Lord God, with great and everlasting love, calling forth on them a wealth of blessing and success.”⁷⁸ It is particularly important that this terminology is included in a letter from the year 5542 (1782), written only a few months after R. Yehiel Mikhel’s death. The letter was sent from the Land of Israel to the Hasidim remaining in the Diaspora, and it is the

⁷⁵ *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 117a.

⁷⁶ *Mandrakes in the Field* 37a.

⁷⁷ *Gleaned Statements—Tanya* 41b, Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 101.

⁷⁸ Barnai 1980, letter 18, p. 92.

first in a series of letters in which R. Menahem Mendel implores his colleagues to maintain their congregation as a united group under common leadership. In reiterating the linkage formula but replacing the image of the *zaddik* with the images of the members of the group—"as if their images are perpetually before us"—R. Menahem Mendel may have intended to remind them that the shared oath survived the death of their leader in full force.

12. R. Abraham of Kolyshki, who immigrated to the Land of Israel in 5537 (1777) with the group led by R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and died there in 5570 (1810). R. Abraham refers to the mystical aspect of the commandment to love one's fellow, emphasizing the bonding of the group's members with one another.⁷⁹ In a letter apparently written in 5565 (1805), R. Abraham of Kolyshki mentions R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, "who was greatly esteemed in the eyes of my teacher and master, light of the world, the rabbi and *Maggid*, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing in the life of the world to come."⁸⁰ Since the letter was addressed to R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev, a prominent disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel, it is fair to assume that the term "the rabbi and *Maggid*" refers to R. Yehiel Mikhel and that R. Abraham of Kolyshki also was his disciple. The term "light of the world" likewise appears to refer to R. Yehiel Mikhel, analogously to the term "light of Israel" used by R. Eliezer Horowitz in referring to him.
13. R. Aaron (II) of Karlin, father-in-law of R. Mordecai of Kremenets, a son of R. Yehiel Mikhel. The author of *House of Aaron* (*Beit Aharon*), R. Aaron was the owner of the Stolin archive, in which were found the linkage document of the Ari's disciples and the manuscript of *Book of Zoref* by the Sabbatean kabbalist R. Heschel Zoref.⁸¹
14. The Lurianic prayer book of R. Shabbetai of Vad Rashkov, which was influenced by the liturgy of the Sabbatean kabbalist R. Jacob Kopel Lifschitz of Mezhirichi.⁸² R. Shabbetai of Vad

⁷⁹ See Granetstein 1982, p. 291; Gries 1984, pp. 117, 139–143.

⁸⁰ Barnai 1980, letter 72, p. 268.

⁸¹ See *House of Aaron* 4a; Rabinowitz 1940.

⁸² *Order of Prayer for the Entire Year with the Kavanot of the Ari* 49a.

Rashkov was the first to claim that the writings of the Sabbatean kabbalist R. Heschel Zoref were acceptable to the Besht and regarded by him as a reliable tradition.⁸³ In so doing, he was also among the first to grant legitimacy to Sabbatean writings and to assimilate them into Hasidism on the basis of a tradition going back to the Besht.

15. R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl and his son, R. Mordecai, founders of the Chernobyl dynasty—one of the earliest Hasidic lines. Two portions of the linkage formulation appear clearly in R. Menahem Nahum's writings—linkage to the *zaddikim* and recitation of "Love your fellow as yourself" before prayer: "Then one should link oneself with the *zaddikim* and love them as he loves his own soul. Thereby it will be possible for his words to be elevated through theirs; and that is why it became established to recite, before prayer, 'I hereby accept upon myself the positive commandment of "Love your fellow as yourself."'"⁸⁴ It may be noted as well that "Nahum Zarnobler" and "Mottel Zarnobler" are included in R. David Makov's *Breaking of Sinners* listing.⁸⁵ Moreover, the manuscripts of the Sabbatean kabbalist R. Heschel Zoref were in the possession of R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, who had copied them from R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy. Thus, R. Shabbetai of Vad Rashkov, R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy, and R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl formed an important link in the assimilation of kabbalistic traditions into Hasidism.
16. The prayer book of R. Elazar Shapira of Munkacz, who worshipped in accord with the Lurianic prayer book of R. Shabbetai of Vad Rashkov.⁸⁶

⁸³ See Rabinowitz 1940, p. 129.

⁸⁴ *Illumination of the Eye and Let the Heart Rejoice (Me'or Einayim im Yismah Lev)*, p. 298.

⁸⁵ Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 101.

⁸⁶ See Halamish 1978, p. 551, n. 82.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IYYAR 5541 (APRIL–MAY 1781)—THE DISSEMINATION OF THE TORAH’S MYSTERIES AND THE DEATH OF R. YEHI¹EL MIKHEL*

The Campaign to Print and Publish Kabbalistic Texts

The next step in the messianic program of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his loyalists was begun in 5538 (1778), a few months after the linkage ceremony celebrated on Shavuot of 5537 (1777). While the members of the group who had been sent on ahead to the Land of Israel were dealing with anticipated and unanticipated difficulties, those who had stayed behind in Korets were converting that town into a center for the printing of kabbalistic books, some of them now printed for the first time. Behind the drive to print kabbalistic manuscripts stood the belief of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples in the need to disseminate the mysteries hidden away in those writings.

Embedded in the kabbalistic tradition is the notion that the redemptive process includes, as a necessary step, the propagation of the Torah’s secrets. Many kabbalists believed, and believe to this day, that through heavenly illumination there was revealed to them the hidden meaning of the Torah, destined to be revealed to the nation as a whole only in the time of the redemption. Accordingly, they termed Kabbalah “the Torah of secrecy,” and they referred to themselves as “knowers of the hidden wisdom” (*yodé’ei hēn*).¹ It comes as no surprise, therefore, that a prominent characteristic of a messianist association of kabbalists is the impulse to reveal these mysteries, thereby issuing, in effect, a statement of intent and declaring that the redemption is imminent. And so, for example, R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto claimed that the mysteries of the Kabbalah had been revealed to him by a heavenly preacher, who had justified the rev-

* My thanks to Ms. Maya Levi, who found and collected many of the findings reported in this chapter.

¹ “*Hēn*,” which means “grace,” is used here as an acronym for “*hokhmat ha-nistar*,”—“the hidden wisdom.”—*translator’s note*.

elations on the basis of a need to extirpate heresy and improper conduct, lest they forestall the approaching redemption.² This accounts as well for the opposition of rabbis and communal leaders to the study and propagation of Kabbalah, particularly Lurianic Kabbalah with its messianic aspect. This was the struggle of a conservative establishment, suspicious of messianic groups that might inflame the community's imagination with vain hopes and arouse a false messianism that would ultimately undermine the community and bring catastrophe upon it.

The plan of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples to disseminate the kabbalistic mysteries should be seen in this light. In order to circumvent the Brody excommunication of 5516 (1756), which forbade the study of Kabbalah from manuscripts and permitted only the use of printed books,³ two of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples, R. Solomon Lutsker and his partner, R. Simeon b. Judah Leib Ashkenazi, set out to overcome the lack of such books by arranging for the printing of key kabbalistic works. It is no coincidence that they chose a printing house in Korets, for R. Solomon Lutsker then lived in Korets⁴ and worked under the auspices of R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen, chief judge of the Korets court and a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel. R. Isaac Eisik was close with R. Solomon Lutsker⁵ and their children were married to each other; his son, Abraham, was R. Solomon Lutsker's son-in-law and his partner in the printing business in the ensuing years as well.⁶

² See *Hidden Treasures of Ramhal* (*Ginzei Ramhal*), p. 91: "And I hereby reveal before you extremely great, wondrous, and profound mysteries, which would be very deserving of silence, as the wise one admonished (Prov. 25:2): 'It is the glory of God to conceal a matter.' But from the elders I perceive that 'it is the time to act for God, for they have voided your Law' [Ps. 119:126], and may the good God grant atonement for this, for it is a crisis measure."

³ In the wording of the ban: "only on condition that they be printed, not [hand] written." See *Treasury of Wisdom*, vol. 1, p. 27.

⁴ His signature on the introduction to *He Imparts His Words to Jacob*, (Korets 5541 [1781]) so attests: "Solomon the son of our teacher and rabbi R. Abraham of Lutsk, now residing here in the holy community of Korets." On the printing houses of Korets, see Tauber 1924–1925; Tauber 1932; Gries 1992, pp. 53–65.

⁵ R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen wrote about R. Solomon Lutsker in his approbation for *Book of Kanah* (*Sefer ha-Kanah*) (Parichi 5546 [1786]): "My dear, beloved friend, the rabbi eminent in Torah and fear [of God], the wise, perfect, venerable and pious one, our teacher and rabbi, R. Solomon Lutsker, accomplished in deeds, of Qabze'el."

⁶ On the printing business of R. Solomon Lutsker and his son-in-law, Abraham b. R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets, see also below, pp. 246–257.

Before long, a series of important kabbalistic works had been printed in Korets:⁷ *Zohar* (*Book of Splendor*), in 5538 (1778); *Book of Creation, With the Commentary “Secret Rose”* (*Sefer Yesira im Peirush Shoshan Sodot*) in 5539 (1779); *Repairs of the Zohar* (*Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*) in 5540 (1780); *An Orchard of Pomegranates* (*Pardes Rimmonim*), in 5541 (1781); and, in 5542 (1781), *Book of Kanah* (*Sefer ha-Kanah*) and the Lurianic kabbalistic works *Tree of Life* (*Ez Hayyim*), and *Fruit of the Tree of Life* (*Peri Ez Hayyim*).

It became clear after the fact that at least some of the manuscripts came from the study hall in the town of Mezhirichi, near Korets, where R. Zevi Hirsch Margaliot, son-in-law of R. Isaac Eisik of Korets, served as rabbi. These details can be gleaned from the book *Booklet of the Holy* (*Mahberet ha-Qodesh*), also printed from Lurianic kabbalistic manuscripts in Korets in 5543 (1783). Appended to the book was an “approbation and ban [on misappropriation] by the learned ones, the rabbis, the Torah scholars of the study hall in the holy community of greater Mezhirichi.” An “approbation” (*haskamah*) (is an endorsement of the book’s author and of the book itself by a reliable authority, declaring it worthy of being disseminated and read. Approbations are set forth at the beginning of most books of Torah scholarship, and they are of considerable importance in showing the relationship of the endorsing authority to the author and content of the book. The approbation by the scholars of the Mezhirichi study hall stated as well that the kabbalistic manuscripts, including those of the Lurianic texts, had been in the study hall “from time immemorial.”⁸ The approbation goes on to declare that R. Solomon Lutsker had come to Mezhirichi in search of manuscripts to print, and that the scholars of the study hall had urged him to print the writings in their possession “because the time of love, when this great light will be revealed to the Jews, may have arrived.” The first to sign the approbation was R. Zevi Hirsch Margaliot, rabbi of Mezhirichi

⁷ Two printing houses operated in Korets. From 5536 (1776) to the end of 5541 (1781), the printing house of Zevi Hirsch Margaliot and his son-in-law Samuel b. Issakhar Ber Segal was in operation. In 5542 (1782), the printing house of John Anton Krieger, a Polish gentile, began to function. See Tauber 1924–1925, p. 302.

⁸ *Booklet of the Holy* (Korets 5543 [1783]), approbation page. To similar effect, see Gries 1992, pp. 59–60. The study hall in Mezhirichi also included a stash of writings by the Sabbatean kabbalist R. Jacob Kopel Lifschitz of Mezhirichi, who had taught there.

and son-in-law of R. Isaac Eisik of Korets.⁹ These family ties show that R. Solomon Lutsker's arrival in Mezhirichi was no mere coincidence and that the scholars of the study hall supported the printing of Lurianic Kabbalah, for they, too, believed the messianic era—"the time of love"¹⁰—was at hand.

In printing the kabbalistic works, the printers did not identify themselves by name or place. They worked clandestinely and drew a veil of secrecy over themselves, striving to blur their identities and the connection between them. Only when they began to publish Hasidic works was R. Solomon Lutsker's identity disclosed. In 5540 (1780), *Biography of Jacob Joseph* (*Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*), by the Besht's disciple R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, was published in Korets. The frontispiece bears the names of R. Solomon Lutsker and R. Simeon Ashkenazi as the partners who, "through enterprise and exertion" brought the book to print.¹¹ The year 5541 (1781) saw the printing of *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (*Maggid Devarav le-Ya'akov*), by R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi, a book that incorporated numerous borrowings from the Besht. R. Solomon Lutsker, who supplied the introduction to the book, there revealed his involvement in the printing of kabbalistic works: "But after I perceived the help of God among the mighty ones, in the power of the books of Torah printed by us, after completing the printing of the *Zohar* (*Book of Splendor*) and *Repairs of the Zohar* (*Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*) and *Book of Creation, With the Commentary "Secret Rose,"* written by a student of Nahmanides, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, which is *Biography of Jacob Joseph*, and *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* with the *Holy Epistle* (*Iggeret ha-Qodesh*) of the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world-to-come."¹² Even here, the disclosure is

⁹ See *Booklet of the Holy*, approbation page: "The statement of the insignificant one, Zevi Hirsch, residing here in the foregoing holy community [i.e., Mezhirichi], may her rock and redeemer protect her"; Heschel 1948–1952, p. 217.

¹⁰ Cf. Ezek. 16:8—"When I passed by you and saw you and your time of love had arrived, I spread my wing over you and covered your nakedness and swore to you and entered into a covenant with you, said the Lord God, and you became mine."

¹¹ See *Biography of Jacob Joseph* (Korets 5540 [1780]), frontispiece. The verse used to designate the year of publication (through the numerical value of specified letters in it) was "You shall arise and go to the place" (Deut. 17:8). Words from that verse, with its messianic allusion, were used as well on R. Yehiel Mikhel's gravestone to designate the year of his death. See below, p. 143.

¹² *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (Korets 5541 [1781]), introduction by R. Solomon

only partial, and R. Solomon Lutsker's wording remains vague; he begins in the singular—"after I perceived"—but moves to the plural, referring to the "books . . . printed by us," thereby implying that he worked with partners rather than on his own.

The wave of publication reached its crest in the month of Iyyar, 5541 (April–May 1781), which saw the first printing of the Besht's *Holy Epistle*, incorporating the hidden secrets of redemption revealed to him by the Messiah. The Epistle was printed as an appendix to *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* by R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye. On the last page, immediately following the Besht's Epistle, the printers took pains to specify the exact date of publication—Tuesday, 20 Iyyar, 5541 (May 15, 1781).¹³ Aryeh Morgenstern, who found the inscription, discovered that the date was not random; rather, it was the time of the redemption according the End-reckonings of Immanuel Hai Ricchi. The version of the Epistle selected for printing likewise attests to the publishers' intention: they printed the second version, which includes only the latter part of the Messiah's response to the Besht and omits the first part—"his lofty response was that it could not be divulged." That choice shows that the members of the group read this version of the Messiah's response literally, that is, that the Messiah would come when what he had taught the Besht becomes widely known and his springs disperse abroad. They apparently believed that by disseminating the secrets of redemption at precisely that time, they would be able to associate the time identified by Immanuel Hai Ricchi for the appearance of the Messiah—Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781)—with the fulfillment of the condition established by the Messiah for his advent, that is, dissemination of the secrets of redemption that he had revealed to the Besht. By printing the *Besht's Holy Epistle* and disseminating his teachings, as embedded in *Biography of Jacob Joseph* and *He Imparts His Words to Jacob*, they hoped

Lutsker. It should be noted that even books published after 5541 (1781) do not always include all the details, and, most often, only one of the partners is mentioned.

¹³ See Morgenstern 1999, p. 198, n. 51. Morgenstern points to the inscription on the final page of *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* (Korets 5541 [1781]): "And the labor was completed by those faithfully pursuing their holy craft on the day on which 'it is good' is doubled [Tuesday; cf. Gen. 1:10, 12], thirty-five in the Israelites' counting, in the portion of *Be-Har Sinai laimor*." Thirty-five in the Israelites' counting refers to the thirty-fifth day of the counting of the *omer*, between Passover and Shavuot, i.e., 20 Iyyar. The weekly Torah reading was *Be-Har Sinai* (Lev. 25). The numerical value of the highlighted letters—(סנלאר) *s, n, l, a, r*—comes to 541, designating the year with the usual omission of the thousands figure.

to satisfy that condition and complete the messianic program they had been pursuing since 5532 (1772). And if R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye also supported the printing of the Besht's Epistle,¹⁴ his involvement would show that the members of R. Yehiel Mikhel's circle did not operate in a vacuum. Rather, they continued the messianic project that had begun with the Besht's activities in 5500 (1740) but had been set aside with his failure in 5507 (1746).

Hand-in-hand with their dissemination of the secrets of the Messiah as revealed to the Besht, the members of the group planned to print the mysteries of the Torah according to the Kabbalah of Safed. One of the works they chose was *Orchard of Pomegranates* (*Pardes Rimmonim*) by R. Moses Cordovero, an important sixteenth-century Safed kabbalist. *Orchard of Pomegranates*, to be sure, had previously been printed,¹⁵ but nearly two hundred years had passed since that printing, and copies were very rare. In this edition, the publishers plainly disclosed their identities on the frontispiece, which makes it clear that the book was printed by the sons-in-law of R. Simeon Ashkenazi,¹⁶ partner of R. Solomon Lutsker. The frontispiece lists the year 5540 (1780), but the final page of the book contains an inscription similar to that at the end of *Joseph is a Fruitful Son*, which specifies the date on which printing was completed—Tuesday, 2 Adar, 5541 (February 27, 1781).¹⁷

¹⁴ R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye was still alive when *Biography of Jacob Joseph* and *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* were printed, but it is not clear how involved he was in the printing of his works. The frontispiece of *Biography of Jacob Joseph*, (Korets 5540 [1780]) mentions R. Abraham Samson Katz of Vad Rashkov and R. Abraham Dov of Chmelnik, the son and son-in-law of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, and states that the book was published through "the enterprise and exertion" of R. Simeon b. Judah Leib Ashkenazi and R. Solomon Lutsker. Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye himself, however, is not mentioned. On this issue see also Nigal 1989, pp. 10–12; Gries 1992, pp. 54–56; Morgenstern 1999, pp. 194–199.

¹⁵ It had been printed in Salonika in 5344 (1584) and in Krakow in 5352 (1592). See Friedberg 1954, p. 845.

¹⁶ See *Orchard of Pomegranates* (Korets 5540–5541 [1780–1781]), frontispiece: "Printed by the rabbi, our teacher, Solomon Zalman, son of the venerable, our teacher, Yehiel Mikhel Katz and his brother-in-law the rabbi, our teacher, Eliezer Lieberman, son of our teacher Israel, sons-in-law of the elderly and venerable one, our teacher, Simeon Ashkenazi."

¹⁷ The frontispiece of *Orchard of Pomegranates* lists the date as "*shelahayikh pardes rimmonim* [your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates; Song of Songs 4:13], in the small enumeration [of years, omitting the thousands figure]." The highlighted letters—*שמ* (*sh-r-m*)—have a numerical value of 540, designating the year 5540 (1780). In contrast, the final page (186b) has the inscription "And the labor, the sacred labor, was completed by the arrangers of the letters, faithfully pursuing their craft on the day on which "it is good" is doubled, of the weekly portion 'speak to

Apparently, the book was readied for print in 5540 (1780), but publication was deferred to the following year in anticipation of the messianic date in the month of Iyyar.

The intended culmination of the project was to be the printing of kabbalistic mysteries from the Ari's study hall. It was set for Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781), and the members of the group seem to have hoped that the dissemination of Lurianic Kabbalah on that date would generate the final impetus for the Messiah's coming. That plan confirms their messianic aim, for the restrictions imposed in the preceding years on the study and dissemination of Lurianic Kabbalah afforded it a special status and made it the ultimate secret, whose revelation would herald the time of redemption.

At that point more than two hundred years had passed since the Ari's death, but only a few efforts had been made to issue kabbalistic mysteries from his study hall in print. In 5444 (1684), in Frankfurt, R. David b. Nathan Greenhut printed *Book of Reincarnations* (*Sefer ha-Gilgulim*) from a manuscript of R. Hayyim Vital, the Ari's disciple. The book deals with the most esoteric matters in Lurianic Kabbalah, and it is devoted primarily to midrashim that include the mysteries of transmigration, conception, and levirate marriage of souls. Two years earlier, the rabbis of Frankfurt had objected to the book being printed, and R. David Greenhut left the city and published the work while he was rabbi in the community of Adestein. Their objection may account for the book's not having been printed in its entirety and for part of one chapter having been deliberately omitted.¹⁸

In 5532 (1772), the two hundredth anniversary of the Ari's death, *Book of Reincarnations* was again printed, this time in Zolkow, apparently following the version printed by R. David Greenhut. The book included supplementary comment by R. Hayyim of Tzanz,¹⁹ father-in-law of one of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye's children and one

the children of Israel and they will take for me an offering (*terumah*),⁷ in the small enumeration. The Hebrew letters of the highlighted word have a numerical value of 541, that is, the year 5541 (1781), and Tuesday of the week in which *Terumah* was read in that year fell on 2 Adar, equivalent to February 27, 1781.

¹⁸ See *Book of Reincarnations* (Frankfurt 5444 [1684]) and the notes by Gershom Scholem in the catalogue of the Gershom Scholem Collection. An additional work of the Ari—*Gates of Holiness* (*Sha'arei Qedushah*)—was printed in Koshtandina (5494 [1734]), Amsterdam (5505 [1745]), and Zalsbach (5518 [1758]).

¹⁹ See *Book of Reincarnations* (Zolkow 5532 [1772]), chap. 35 (unpaginated), comment “by the renowned, pious, modest rabbi, the kabbalist, an elder, resident of the academy, whose glory resides in the holy community of Brody, known at the

of the prominent kabbalists of the Brody *kloyz*. It is fair to assume that the book was printed from the copy in his possession and therefore included his comments as well. *Book of Reincarnations* was printed yet again in Zolkow in 5534 (1774) with the approbations of two rabbis: R. Zevi Hirsch Meizlish, father of R. Uziel Meizlish, who delivered the eulogy for R. Yehiel Mikhel, and R. Gedaliah of Zolkow, father of R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochev, also a prominent disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel.²⁰ R. Gedaliah served as chief judge in Zolochev when R. Zevi Hirsch's father, R. Samson Meizlish, was serving there as rabbi,²¹ and so the members of both families were acquainted with R. Yehiel Mikhel, who served in Zolochev as preacher. It is noteworthy that R. Gedaliah took the side of R. Jonathan Eibeschutz when the latter was suspected of inscribing amulets with the name of Shabbetai Zevi.²² In contrast, R. Hayyim of Tzanz was among R. Jonathan's opponents, and, in Elul of 5512 (1752), signed a ban imposed at the Brody *kloyz* on R. Jonathan Eibeschutz and his writings.²³ Nevertheless, during the years 5532–5534 (1772–1774), both men were engaged in printing works of Lurianic Kabbalah. Although there is no explicit evidence to that effect, those efforts may well have been tied to messianic aspirations that had been aroused in the bicentenary of the Ari's death.

A review of the printers of Lurianic Kabbalah in Eastern Europe thus reveals that important and prestigious rabbis in Galicia and Ukraine were involved both in the dissemination of this Kabbalah and in the associations of kabbalists who drew their inspiration from it. These kabbalistic circles grew up amidst the scholars who were centered in the important study halls and *kloyzen*, such as the Ostrog *kloyz*, then headed by R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets, a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel; the study hall of Mezhrichi, headed by R. Zevi Hirsch Margalioth, the son-in-law of R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen; and the Brody *kloyz*, some of whose sages—including its leader, R. Hayyim

gates by the name of our teacher and rabbi R. Hayyim of Tzanz, may his light glow.” In the edition of 5534 (1774), the comment appears at p. 32a. On R. Hayyim of Tzanz, see Gelber 1955, p. 63.

²⁰ See *Book of Reincarnations* (Zolkow 5534 [1774]), approbation page.

²¹ See Wunder 1978, p. 24.

²² See the signature of R. Gedaliah on the proclamation of support, printed in R. Jonathan Eibeschutz's book, *Tablets of Testimony* (*Luhot Eidut*), Altona 5515 (1755) 36b.

²³ See Gelber 1955, pp. 71–72.

Segal Landau—were allied with R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples. It is no coincidence that the members of R. Yehiel Mikhel's messianic association flourished in these kabbalistic circles, for when all was said and done, their forebears had been root and branch of such circles through the ages.²⁴

This open support may well explain why the messianic expectations of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples in the month of Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781) were not shrouded in secrecy but were identified in the books themselves. In the final days of the month, immediately after the printing of the Besht's Epistle, the members of the group readied themselves to publish *Tree of Life* and *Fruit of the Tree of Life*, which included the mystery teachings of "the divine, the holy light, our teacher and rabbi R. Isaac Luria Ashkenazi, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, who, in his holiness, spoke the true teaching that he had received from the mouth of Elijah, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come."²⁵ To that end, they obtained approbations from the most revered kabbalists of the Brody *kloyz*—R. Hayyim of Tzanz,²⁶ father-in-law of one of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye's children and involved in the printing of Lurianic kabbalistic writings back in 5532 (1772);²⁷ R. Moses b. Hillel Osterer, father-in-law of one of R. Gershon of Kutov's children;²⁸ and R. Abraham Mordecai,

²⁴ On the possibility that these circles were familiar as well with the writings of the messianic kabbalist R. Abraham Abulafia, see Idel 2001, p. 103.

²⁵ *Fruit of the Tree of Life* (Korets 5542 [1781]), frontispiece. Gershom Scholem has noted that they mistakenly printed the version that had been available to R. Nathan Shapira, called *Lights of Nathan*. Only in the second edition did they print *Fruit of the Tree of Life*.

²⁶ See *Tree of Life* and *Fruit of the Tree of Life* (Korets 5542 [1781]), approbation page: "Wherefore I, too, have affixed my signature, the fourth day [of the week; Wednesday], [the forty-second day of the counting of the Omer, expressed through the numerical value of certain letters in a phrase], [in the year] 541, the insignificant one, Hayyim of Tzanz. The forty-second day of the Omer is 27 Iyyar, which, in the year 5541 (1781), fell not on Wednesday, as specified, but on Tuesday. But 27 Iyyar can *never* fall on Wednesday; the calendar limits it to Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday. It follows that R. Hayyim of Tzanz's approbation is not a pre-existing one, copied from another book without adjusting for the year, but an authentic one, in which R. Hayyim erred with respect to the date or, perhaps, signed after sunset.

²⁷ See above, pp. 136–137.

²⁸ See *Tree of Life* and *Fruit of the Tree of Life* (Korets 5542 [1781]), approbation page. On the family ties among R. Hayyim of Tzanz, R. Moses Osterer, and the Besht's relatives, see Scholem 1956, p. 436, n. 16, and pp. 430–437.

son of the well-known kabbalist and End-reckoner R. Israel Harif Hailperin of Satanov.²⁹ R. Abraham Mordecai signed his approbation with the following sentence: “This day, 28 Iyyar 5541 [May 23, 1781], the words of one who writes quickly, the novice Abraham Mordecai, chief judge of the holy community of Zolkow.”³⁰ His haste expresses the tense anticipation that prevailed within these kabbalistic circles toward the end of Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781).

That the printing of *Tree of Life* and *Fruit of the Tree of Life* won the approbation of the residents of the *kloyz* shows that the leading kabbalists of Brody thought well of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his group and may have shared their aspirations. The approbations also cast light on why no ban was issued in Brody against R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples, even though they had fervent opponents in that town. But despite all that, the printing did not go forward on the designated day. The reasons for the delay are unclear, but one may suspect that it was caused by the general wave of excommunications and by the death of R. Yehiel Mikhel.

Still, in Nisan and Iyyar 5541 (March–May 1781), the members of the group could not know what would soon befall them, and their hopes soared. Their colleagues in the Land of Israel were likewise filled with hope. In Nisan 5541 (March–April 1781), R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, the leader of the group sent on ahead to the Land of Israel, wrote a letter in which he reported to his associates in Europe that R. Solomon Zalman ha-Kohen Vilner, a rabbinic emissary sent on a fund-raising mission to Brody and Vilnius, had returned safely to Tiberias. R. Menahem Mendel termed the mission “a miracle within a miracle,” for the emissary had returned “bearing letters and legal decisions from Your Honors, with the approbation of the *Gaon* (lit. “genius”; an honorific for a very prominent rabbi), the venerable rabbi; and the approbations of the collectors of funds for the Land of Israel in Brody to remedy the past by canceling the obligations of individuals and the congregation . . . and they spoke to the house of their distant servant to provide me my appropriate allotment of food from year to year.”³¹ “The *gaon*, the venerable rabbi” mentioned in the letter is R. Hayyim Segal Landau,

²⁹ That identification was made by Gelber 1955, pp. 76–77. On R. Israel Harif’s End-reckonings, see Tishby 1967, pp. 10–15.

³⁰ *Tree of Life* and *Fruit of the Tree of Life* (Korets 5542 [1781]), approbation page.

³¹ Barnai 1980, letter 15, p. 85.

head of the Brody *kloyz* and also the collector of funds to support the Jews living in the Land of Israel. He agreed to cover the obligations incurred by the *Hasidim* since their arrival in the Land of Israel in 5537 (1777) and to allot a yearly stipend to R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk. That was a positive omen, for R. Hayyim was the cousin of R. Ezekiel Landau, whose hostility to the Zolochov dynasty went back many years, to the conflict between his relative, R. Isaac ha-Levi Horowitz Hamburger, and R. Isaac of Drogobych, father of R. Yehiel Mikhel. And as Brody went, so went Vilnius: the two fund-raisers for the Land of Israel—R. Eliezer b. R. Hayyim Shabtels and his brother, R. Samuel, the son-in-law of R. Hayyim Segal Landau—also wrote letters in support of the *Hasidim* who had emigrated to the Land of Israel.

In addition, several members of the group decided around that time to immigrate to the Land of Israel as soon as the Messiah appeared. R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk reacted by urging patience and promised that he would not delay in conveying “the message” to them, so they might emigrate and join him in the Land of Israel. In so doing, he reminded them how much he longed “for my beloved brothers and friends to come to the Holy Land, so we may assemble together in happiness, joy, and trembling to worship Him, may He be blessed . . . and, if God wills, after [receiving] the message, I will inform you.”³²

The Death of R. Yehiel Mikhel

The month of Iyyar came and went—and, alas, no redemption. Still, the tense expectation of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples neither perished on its own nor faded into silence. Instead, the campaign against the group, which had subsided after the Brody ban of 5532 (1772), was renewed with greater intensity. The attackers focused on R. Yehiel Mikhel: he was not mentioned by name in the books that had been printed, but R. David Makov, author of the defamatory *Breaking of Sinners*, knew enough to refer explicitly by name to “the man Mikhel of Zolochov” and “their sect” as the ones responsible for the dissemination of kabbalistic secrets:

³² Barnai 1980, letter 15, p. 86; Morgenstern 1999, p. 202.

And they imagine in their minds that the man Mikhel of Zolochov is a reincarnation of the prophet Habakkuk . . . and they say of every member of their sect that he is the spark of some Sage. Woe to the ears that hear such, for in our day, such have arisen, and they reject the *Talmud* and the *Tosafot* and study the *Zohar*; and all the kabbalists' books, which were closed and unprinted lest they bring about, God forbid, some error—they print them, such as the book *Tree of Life* and *Book of Kanah*.³³

R. David Makov notes in particular the printing of *Tree of Life* and *Book of Kanah*, neither of which had previously appeared in print, and expresses concern that the reader might understand them improperly and be led to error. He fails to specify that error, but it may fairly be understood as referring to the spread of false messianism in the manner of the Sabbatean movement. The Sabbateans, after all, had operated under the powerful influence of messianic Kabbalah, particularly of the Lurianic variety. That explains as well his application of the term “sect”—a derogatory reference to believers in Shabbetai Zevi—to R. Yehiel Mikhel and his group.³⁴

The campaign against R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples quickly produced practical effects. About two months after the printing of the Besht's Epistle, during Av and Elul 5541 (July–September 1781), excommunication decrees against of *Hasidim* began to spread like wildfire. The first, in the month of Av, was issued in Vilnius, a powerful and leading community in Eastern Europe. Similar bans were issued on the first of Elul at the Zolvo fair by the community leaders of Grodno, Pinsk, Brest, and Slutsk.

The Vilnius proclamation declared that the *Hasidim* were drawn to a lie of the sort that had already claimed many wounded, “to the point that they abandoned their worth, children, wives, and riches, and set out to wander after futility, as their falseness and ignominy are revealed and publicized in their new book.”³⁵ That the lie “had already claimed many wounded” alludes to the believers in Shabbetai Zevi, who had abandoned all and set out after their false

³³ Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 170. These remarks were written after 5542 (1781), that is, after the death of R. Yehiel Mikhel and the publication of *Tree of Life* and *Book of Kanah*. That does not call their reliability into question, however, for they reflect the information gathered by the author about the printers and their leaders in the preceding years.

³⁴ See also above, p. 107.

³⁵ From the Vilnius Ban, Menahem Av, 5541 (1781). See Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 103.

messiah, to the point of converting to Islam. The *Hasidim*, it is implied, are following in the Sabbateans' path, and the proof can be found in "their new book," wherein their ignominy is revealed. Timing suggests that the "new book" is *Joseph is a Fruitful Son*, which was printed about three months before imposition of the ban and included the Besht's *Holy Epistle*.³⁶ The excommunicators apparently regarded the printing of the Besht's Epistle in Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781), known to be a date of messianic significance, as a blunt and open statement of intent; and that accounts for their disparaging references to the messianic illusion that had claimed many victims in the time of Shabbetai Zevi and to which members of the Hasidic sect were now falling prey.

The persecution of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples reached its peak in Brody, where the group was centered. Several *Mitnaggedim* gathered before R. Yehiel Mikhel's house in that town and burned copies of the writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, including *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* with its reproduction of the Besht's Epistle.³⁷ Soon after, on Saturday, 25 Elul, 5541 (September 15, 1781), R. Yehiel Mikhel departed this world. His sudden death may have resulted from his despair at the Messiah's failure to appear at the expected time; he may literally have been disappointed to death, losing all taste for life and wishing to die. But we cannot be certain, and it is possible as well that his adversaries' persecutions were the decisive factor.

The family tradition about the day of R. Yehiel Mikhel's passing creates a sense of a death out of choice. It was the Sabbath, the twenty-fifth of Elul. The Torah reading in the synagogue that day comprised the *Portions* of *Nizavim* and *Vayelekh* (Deut. 29:9–31:30), describing Moses' final days. R. Yehiel Mikhel was called to the Torah for the sixth *Aliyyah*;³⁸ according to the *Zohar*, the biblical

³⁶ See also Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 103, n. 16. Wilensky cites as well the version in *Breaking of Sinners*, which refers to the books in plural: "in the new books, recently arrived." (The turn of phrase echoes a derogatory characterization of the false gods after which the Israelites go astray; see Deut. 32:17.) R. David Makov may have been referring there as well to the printing of the Ari's *Tree of Life* and *Fruit of the Tree of Life*, which had been planned for Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781) but was not carried out until the following year and was, accordingly, unknown to the authors of the decree.

³⁷ See *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 214.

³⁸ At the Sabbath morning service, seven men are called upon to recite the blessings over the Torah reading; an eighth is then called who also reads the passage

Joseph (known as the *zaddik*), was called for the sixth *Aliyyah*, and that *aliyyah*, representing the *sefirah* of foundation, is associated with the *zaddik*. The *Zohar* teaches as well that the *zaddik* loses all fear of the Angel of Death and that he will never be harmed.³⁹ R. Simḥah of Zalozhtsy cites a Safed tradition that the Ari “once called the patriarchs of the world, peace be upon them, to the Torah: Aaron for the priest’s [the first] *aliyyah*, Moses for the Levite’s [the second] *aliyyah*, Abraham for the third, Isaac for the fourth, Jacob for the fifth, Joseph for the sixth, and so forth, as is known.”⁴⁰ On the Sabbath in question, the sixth *aliyyah* included the verse “God said to Moses, ‘Behold, the day of your death draws near’” (Deut. 31:14), and R. Yehiel Mikhel understood the verse as a message directed to him: the numerical value of the word “behold (*h-n ḥ*)” is fifty-five, his age at the time, and the final two words of the Hebrew text (*y-m-y-kh l-m-w-t לְמוֹת יָמַי*) form an anagram of “Y. Mikhel—Die! (*y m-y-kh-l m-w-t מוֹת י.מ.כ.ל*).” And so it was: “toward evening, at the third Sabbath meal, the great luminary departed, in accord with the supernal Will.”⁴¹

R. Yehiel Mikhel was buried in the town of Yampol, where he served as preacher at the end of his life. His gravestone does not explicitly state the year of his death; rather, it bears the inscription “in the year ‘you shall arise [*v-q-m-t וְקַמְתָּ*] and go up to the place” (cf. Deut. 17:8). The obscurity of the inscription may have been deliberate, and it generated uncertainty with respect to the year of his death.⁴²

from the Prophets. The term *aliyyah* (lit. “going up”) refers to that calling, as well as to the textual passage read by or for each of those called.—**translator’s note.**

³⁹ See *Zohar with the Commentary of “the Ladder”* (*Zohar im Peirush ha-Sulam*) (*Shelah Lekha*), 7 sec. 139, p. 49.

⁴⁰ Ya’ari 1946, p. 400. See also, *Gate of Kavanot* in *Collected Writings of the Ari.*, vol. 9, p. 92.

⁴¹ *Great Waters* (Genealogical Table), at the end of the book, p. 2. On the death of King David on the Sabbath, see *Shabbat* 71b.

⁴² The inscription at first glance seems to allude to the year 5546 (1786), for the numerical value of *v-q-m-t* (*v-q-m-t*) is 6 + 100 + 40 + 400 = 546. But R. Yehiel Mikhel died on Saturday, 25 Elul, and in 5546 (1786), Saturday was the 23rd of Elul; the twenty-fifth was Monday. Moreover, R. Uziel Meizlish, who eulogized R. Yehiel Mikhel, died on 28 Kislev 5546 (November 30, 1785) and obviously could not have eulogized someone who died later. Accordingly, R. Nathan Neta of Kolbiel concluded that R. Yehiel Mikhel died in 5541 (1781), a year in which the Sabbath on which *Nizavim-Vayeilekh* was read in fact fell on 25 Elul. By his reckoning, the inscription should be read as identifying the date with the inclusion of its thousands figure (*perat gadol*): the *w* represents not “six,” as it usually does, but “five [thousand]” and

What the gravestone conceals is revealed by a story, preserved in *In Praise of the Besht*, that divulges the connection between R. Yehiel Mikhel's death and the book burning near his house in Brody. The story tells that R. Yehiel Mikhel, then living in Yampol, was informed "that in some province they mean to burn the holy books of the rabbi, our teacher, Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye."⁴³ He therefore set out to travel there, leaving his eldest son, R. Joseph of Yampol, "very gravely ill." The son passed out on his couch, and the household was convinced he had died. But while he was unconscious, R. Joseph of Yampol experienced an ascent of the soul: his soul separated from his body and went up to the heavens, and he found himself on trial before the heavenly court. At the court, he encountered his father, who had been summoned heavenward to prevent the burning of the books and was engaged in having the decree cancelled. R. Joseph heard R. Yehiel Mikhel pleading: "Is it not revealed and known to Him Who spoke and the world was created that I am not acting for my own glory, God forbid, but for the glory of God, may He be blessed, and His Torah?" It is difficult to interpret R. Yehiel Mikhel's words and actions as related to anything other than his responsibility for the printing of *Joseph is a Fruitful Son*, including the Besht's Epistle, for he was followed into the heavenly court by other interested parties—the Besht, author of the Epistle, and R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, author of *Joseph is a Fruitful Son*.

As it turned out, R. Joseph of Yampol avoided a death sentence through the merit of the Besht, who happened to be in court in connection with the books, "and asked the court to send the lad off in peace." He was saved as well through the merit of his father, R. Yehiel Mikhel, who had instructed his family, before he left Yampol, "that if God forbid his son were to die, they would delay the burial until his return home." The family accordingly waited and did not bury R. Joseph even though they thought him dead, and that delay saved him: when he awakened, he told them that his soul had had to re-enter his body, which had already been turned into "a decaying corpse cast on the waste-heap."

"one," and the value indicated by the letters is $5,000 + 1 + 100 + 40 + 400 = 5541$. See *Great Waters*, p. 134, and the Genealogical Table at the end of the book, pp. 1–2.

⁴³ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 214. The story may use the term "some province" to refer to Brody because the route from Yampol to Brody involved crossing the border between the Russian Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The trial to which R. Joseph of Yampol was summoned shows that his life was endangered by his father's revelation of the mysteries of Kabbalah. Traditions preserved about the Ari's life similarly incorporate dread over a son being punished for his father's offense in revealing kabbalistic secrets and thereby desecrating God's honor: the Ari's son died in childhood, and his death was understood as punishment for his father's disclosure of the secrets of the Kabbalah. The analogy may account for R. Joseph of Yampol being referred to as "the child" or "his young son" even though he was about twenty-one years old at the time of the episode.⁴⁴

All that said, the main point of the story still appears only between the lines. R. Joseph of Yampol saw his father in the supernal realms, which are reached only by one who has died. R. Yehiel Mikhel's trip to Brody to rescue the writings from burning was transformed in his ill son's hallucination into a trip to the heavenly court, a trip from which the father did not return. R. Yehiel Mikhel's death can be interpreted as giving himself up in order to save the printed works from burning, or in exchange for *Tree of Life* and *Fruit of the Tree of Life*, which were to be published in 5542 (1781), a short time after his death. In other words, R. Joseph, during his soul's ascent, foresaw his father dying as a martyr, in exchange for disseminating the mysteries of the Torah needed to bring about the redemption. In that sense, the story in *In Praise of the Besht* reinforces the link between R. Yehiel Mikhel and the printing of kabbalistic books, the Besht's Epistle, and works of Lurianic Kabbalah, and it supports the interpretation that sees R. Yehiel Mikhel's death as a martyrdom for the sake of the world's redemption.

The Death of the Redeemer and the Redemption of the World

The circumstances of R. Yehiel Mikhel's death epitomize the notion that the process of redemption requires revealing the secrets of the Torah but that the cost of doing so is extremely high: revealing the mysteries is forbidden, and the redeemer must be punished by yielding his life on their account.

⁴⁴ On the dating of R. Joseph of Yampol's birth, see below, pp. 218–220.

The redeemer's task of repairing the sins of the generation and his tragic end make up part of his messianic mission. The concept that the redeemer's soul is to be given in exchange for the redemption of the world is alluded to in the Talmud's messianic discussions, which note that the Messiah son of Joseph is destined to be killed in the war of Gog and Magog.⁴⁵ A variant of the idea recurs in the story of the ten murdered scholars who suffered martyrdom during the Hadrianic persecutions. The tradition that developed around their death understands it to have constituted expiation for a sin in the nation's past—the selling of Joseph by his brothers, which had not previously been expiated.⁴⁶

These ideas, not necessarily related to each other, jelled in medieval kabbalistic tradition into a nearly fixed literary structure into which were inserted details about the lives of messianic figures and about the practices of secret associations. The *Zohar*, composed in Christian Spain in the thirteenth century, tells that Moses, who redeemed the nation from Egyptian bondage, was denied the right to enter the Land of Israel because he had failed in his attempt to sanctify the mixed multitude of people who accompanied the Israelites when they left Egypt.⁴⁷ R. Simeon b. Yoḥai, the leader of the group in the *Zohar*, is presented as Moses' reincarnation, and it is said of him that the repair of the world can be completed only if he dies in its course.⁴⁸ The Ari likewise hoped to repair the sins of others, placing himself and his son in mortal danger. His disciples portrayed his death as punishment for the sins of others, evidence of his failure to fulfill his mission.⁴⁹

R. Yehiel Mikhel likewise saw himself as one who had come into the world with a mission of repair (*tiqqun*). His son, R. Isaac of Radvil, said of his father "that he is truly the *zaddik* of the generation, knowing the truth that he came into this world not to indulge in pleasures but to repair himself or the people of his generation,

⁴⁵ See *Sukkah* 52a; *Ta'anit* 22b.

⁴⁶ See Urbach 1978, p. 462; Dan 1980.

⁴⁷ Cf. Exod. 12:38—"and a mixed multitude went up with them." See also Tishby 1961, pp. 686–692.

⁴⁸ See Liebes 1982/1.

⁴⁹ On the Ari's death as punishment for revealing the secrets of the Kabbalah and as a consequence of the sins of his generation, see Benayahu 1967, pp. 247–251; Tamar 1970, pp. 119–120; Tamar 1981; Meroz 1988, pp. 355–359; Liebes 1992; Pachter 1994, pp. 52–55.

as it is said, the *zaddik* is called the pillar of the world for the world rests on the *zaddik*.⁵⁰ The thoughts of death that afflicted R. Yehiel Mikhel at some points in his life are similarly tied to his efforts to carry out in full his mission of *tiqqun*, his reason for having come into the world. R. Isaac of Radvil cites a story telling that his father “once was pacing to and fro in his study hall, thinking and saying to himself that he regarded this world as despicable and unworthy and that everything I was to repair in this world I have already repaired.”⁵¹ His tone was one of failure, not success.

A similar note is sharply struck in a discourse delivered by R. Yehiel Mikhel himself. The subject of the discourse is Moses imploring God to forgive the Israelites after the sin of the Golden Calf: “And now, if you forgive their sins [it is well], but if not, erase me from the book you have written” (Exod. 32:32). R. Yehiel Mikhel saw in Moses’ readiness to be erased from the Book of Life (“the book you have written”) a decree of fate obligating the *zaddik* to die so as not to witness the punishment of his contemporaries and so that their sins would be expiated through his death: “And my father the holy one [R. Yehiel Mikhel], may his memory be for a blessing, explicated in two ways the statement in the Talmud that the *zaddik* dies because of the wickedness—so that he does not witness the punishment of the generation, and also that the *zaddik* dies in order to atone for the generation through his death.”⁵² In his description of Moses’ death, accordingly, R. Yehiel Mikhel indirectly foretold his own death.

A similar feeling that an event foretells the end of days is conveyed in some allusions by R. Meshullam Feibush Heller in his second letter to his brother-in-law R. Joel and his colleagues in the Land of Israel. The letter was written between Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur in the year 5542 (1781),⁵³ a few weeks after R. Yehiel Mikhel’s death, and went through heavy censorship before being printed. Among other things, the letter’s opening was deleted, and it is fair to assume that it included explicit report of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s passing. In the body of the letter, R. Meshullam Feibush

⁵⁰ *Light of Isaac*, p. 25; cf. *Hagigah* 12b.

⁵¹ *Light of Isaac*, p. 25.

⁵² *Light of Isaac*, p. 159. Cf. *Bava Qamma* 60a; *Sanhedrin* 113b.

⁵³ The letter is undated. For its being dated to the month of Tishri, 5542 (1781), see below, pp. 279–283.

consoles his colleagues in the Land of Israel, assuring them that all had been for the best. He does not explicitly mention what has happened, but he endeavors to explain the events as “clarifying the sanctity that becomes clearer each day, until it becomes completely clear with the advent of the Messiah, speedily and in our days,”⁵⁴ that is, as the departure of the holy from the impure, in the wake of which the full redemption would arrive. In passing, he mentions a great awakening, subject to being ended at any minute with the arrival of the Messiah. Against this background, it is possible to comprehend the words of consolation, encouragement, and prodding that he addressed to his colleagues: “And now I have come to prod you [R. Joel] and the men who heed my voice⁵⁵ who are there that they should make great efforts in the worship of God, may He be blessed, each and every one in accordance with his strength . . . and now, this great awakening is certainly from God, and the Messiah’s arrival is certainly imminent, its time may He hasten,⁵⁶ and God, may He be blessed, will hurry it speedily in our days, Amen *Selah*.”⁵⁷ R. Meshullam Feibush does not detail the nature of the awakening, but the kabbalistic works he cites permit one to infer it, for they include *Uprightness of the Heart* (*Yosher Levav*) by Immanuel Hai Ricchi.⁵⁸ His reference to that work shows that the messianic date of Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781), mentioned therein as the date of the redemption, was the force behind the awakening and that the death of R. Yehiel Mikhel did not definitively lay those messianic aspirations to rest.

The sense that R. Yehiel Mikhel’s death was a sacrifice heralding the redemption is reinforced by R. Uziel Meizlish’s eulogy for R. Yehiel Mikhel. R. Uziel calls R. Yehiel Mikhel “the foregoing *zaddik*, who was in our generation as R. Simeon b. Yohai was in his.”⁵⁹ He thereby portrayed him in the image of R. Simeon b. Yohai, the leader of the circle of kabbalists in the *Zohar*, whose death

⁵⁴ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 26a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 131a.

⁵⁵ The Zolkow 5560 (1800) edition, 27a reads “your voice.”

⁵⁶ Cf. Isa. 60:22—“The smallest shall become a thousand and the youngest a mighty nation; I, the Lord, will hasten it in its time.” See also Isa. 13:22.

⁵⁷ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 26a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 131a. [“*Selah*” is a biblical word of uncertain meaning, probably indicating a musical direction to the singer of a psalm; it is sometimes appended to “amen” for added emphasis—**translator note**.]

⁵⁸ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 26a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 131a; Morgenstern 1999, pp. 186–187.

⁵⁹ *Glory of Uziel* 36b.

expiated the sins of his generation and was destined to rouse the people to repentance:

For the Holy One blessed be He takes the *zaddik* away so that the multitude will heed the fact that men of faith have been consumed and taken away on account of our sins, leaving us with no guide, no advocate, and no one on whom to rely other than our Father in Heaven, and [that will lead them to] reflect on repentance . . . When the multitude repent wholeheartedly and the gates of tears are not locked, so that the tears ascend on high, [reaching] to below the throne of glory—then the *zaddik* ascends to his prior place, which befit him except that he was kept from it because his generation was not worthy . . . And certainly, it is proper for every man who breathes to direct his attention to the possibility, God forbid, that it is he who prevents the *zaddik* from having the *shekhinah* rest on him. Woe to us on account of judgment day; woe to us on account of the day of reproof; woe for that calumny; and it is proper to weep and cry out bitterly and mightily over the *zaddik*'s departure from the world, [over] the bounty's departure and its diversion to idolaters.⁶⁰

It is hard to see R. Uziel Meizlish's words as routine praise of the sort normally included in eulogies, for he explicitly calls R. Yehiel Mikhel "the *zaddik*," suggesting he was the *zaddik* of the generation but that the generation was not worthy of his being revealed. This represents the first time in the history of Hasidism that the designation *zaddik* was applied to a specific person in defined circumstances, rather than being used as a vague, general term. Moreover, R. Uziel Meizlish quotes the prophet Isaiah—"The righteous one (*ha-zaddik*) perishes, yet none pays attention . . . yet because of evil, the righteous man was taken away" (Isa. 57:1)⁶¹—to clearly define the nature of the bond between the *zaddik* and the multitude: the tears of the masses, who fervently confess their sins and repent through the merit of R. Yehiel Mikhel, elevate his soul to its proper place in Paradise, next to the throne of glory. In this way, the masses depend on R. Yehiel Mikhel for the salvation of their souls, and he depends on them for his place in Paradise.⁶²

⁶⁰ *Glory of Uziel* 37a–b. The conclusion of the eulogy (38a) was deleted, and the text reads "remainder of the article is missing."

⁶¹ See also *Bava Qamma* 60a; *Sanhedrin* 113b. In the writings of R. Mordecai Datto, the verse in Isaiah is applied to the death of the Messiah son of Joseph, as expiation for the sins of Israel. See Jacobson 1996, p. 234.

⁶² See Idel 1998/1, p. 228. Idel defines the *zaddik* "not only as a perfect pipe but also as a pump," whose actions influence both directions: he elevates human

R. Uziel Meizlish's eulogy recalls the eulogy delivered by R. Samuel Ozida for the Ari, in which he interpreted the Ari's death as a consequence of the sins of the generation.⁶³ That eulogy, too, was censored, perhaps for a similar reason: in both instances, the eulogists and their colleagues were unwilling to commit to writing explicitly their messianic belief in the deceased leader.

Thus, the death of Hasidism's first *zaddik* was understood as martyrdom—the quid pro quo for revealing kabbalistic mysteries and the expiation for the sins of a generation that did not believe in the redemption, denied the redeemer and his mission, and denounced his disciples. That messianic mood, which attended R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples in the period immediately following his death, continued for some time: in Tishri 5542 (1781), and even later, they continued to hope that his death would move the heavens and open their gates. That may explain their printing, early in 5542 (1781), of *Tree of Life* and *Fruit of the Tree of Life*, which they had planned to print in Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781). In preparation for the printing, approbations were obtained from the leaders of the *kloyz* in Ostrog, first among them R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets: “the residents of the *kloyz* of the holy community of Ostrog” signed a joint approbation on “Tuesday, 4 Marheshvan, 5542 (October 23, 1781).”⁶⁴ One of them, R. Joseph b. Judah Leib, preacher of Ostrog, added to his approbation that the mysteries of Lurianic Kabbalah had been hidden and concealed since the days of R. Hayyim Vital, the Ari's disciple, just as the secrets of the *Zohar* had been revealed to R. Simeon b. Yohai and were destined to be disclosed to the rest of the world only in the time of the Messiah: “And just as our eyes behold that this awakening is from the Heavens . . . that this wisdom be revealed on the heels of the Messiah.” He concluded his approbation with the declaration that “and so I have said of this good deed, ‘Well done for the sake of the Torah!’”⁶⁵ showing thereby his

prayers to the upper world and brings down the divine influx in order to redeem the souls.

⁶³ See Pachter 1994, pp. 45–49.

⁶⁴ See *Tree of Life* and *Fruit of the Tree of Life* (Korets 5542 [1781]), approbation page: “The approbation of the Sage, perfect, rabbis, exalted and celebrated, crowned with modesty and piety, the learned kabbalists, the Sages of the holy community of Ostrog, the residents of the *kloyz*.”

⁶⁵ *Tree of Life* and *Fruit of the Tree of Life* (Korets 5542 [1781]), approbation page.

support for the dissemination of the secrets inasmuch as the time of the Messiah has arrived.

It may be that their belief in R. Yehiel Mikhel as the Messiah is what prevented his disciples from choosing a successor leader. Little by little, the group disbanded; some of the disciples set up their own courts and became *zaddikim* in their own right, leading their own bands of *Hasidim*. R. Yehiel Mikhel's teachings were incorporated into theirs, and thence into the practice of individuals and the customs of congregation and community.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SWEET FRUIT OF MESSIANISM

The Redemption of the Land of Israel

Messianic movements had always looked to the Land of Israel; Jewish history records no movement that sought the redemption of the nation without also seeking the redemption of the Land. It likewise records no movement that anticipated the imminent arrival of the Messiah without believing that he would reveal himself in the Land of Israel. The tie between the redemption of the nation and that of the Land is no coincidence; it is grounded in the simultaneous divine promise of the Land and of progeny: “On that day, God executed a covenant with Abram, saying ‘to your seed I have given this Land’” (Gen. 15:18). Israel’s existence as a nation is thus substantively tied to its residing in the Land of Israel, a tie that goes all the way back to the covenant with the nation’s patriarch.

At the focus of messianic expectation stands Jerusalem, a metonymy for the Land of Israel as a whole.¹ The metonymic use of Jerusalem originated with the Prophets, who depicted the city as a mother whose fate is determined by the actions of her children. In foretelling the destruction, the Prophets ascribe the sins of the children, who defile the sanctuary with their vile acts and their worship of other gods, to Jerusalem their mother. Isaiah, for example, depicts Jerusalem as a harlot, whose children are destined to be punished for her sins: “Alas, the faithful city has become a harlot; she that was filled with justice, righteousness dwelling within her, [is now filled] with murderers” (Isa. 1:21). The image recurs in the elegies over the destruction, in which Jerusalem is presented as a widow or a betrayed wife whose honor has been defiled and whose friends have abandoned her to sigh in solitude: “Alas, the once populous city now dwells alone; she has become as a widow. She that was

¹ Metonymy is a figure of speech that involves, in essence, substituting one word for another on the basis of conceptual proximity. For example, the part (Jerusalem) can be used to describe the whole (the Land of Israel).

great among nations, a princess among provinces, has become a tributary.” (Lam. 1:1.) Similarly, in the prophecies of consolation, the city is portrayed as a beloved wife, whose husband returns to abide in her bosom and whose children return from exile. Jeremiah employed the image of the matriarch Rachel to depict her: “A voice is heard in Ramah, wailing, bitter weeping—Rachel weeping for her children, declining to be comforted for her children, who are gone. Thus said the Lord: ‘Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your labor,’ declares the Lord; ‘they will return from the land of their enemies.’” (Jer. 31:14–15.)

The midrashic literature likewise personifies Jerusalem, portraying her as the nation’s mother. In kabbalistic literature, however, the human imagery undergoes a process of deification. The world of the Godhead is portrayed as an array of ten divine *sefirot*. The tenth *sefirah*, sovereignty (*malkhut*) is the *shekhinah*—the divine bride—and is also termed “the congregation of Israel (*keneset yisra’el*)” as well as “Jerusalem,” “Zion,” and “Rachel.” Thus, the *shekhinah* is a heavenly being embodying three different entities—the congregation of Israel, the Torah of Israel, and Jerusalem—all of which reflect one another and express different aspects of the covenant between Israel and its God. That covenant joins the theological and historical points of view in a single totality, in which Jewish history is construed as a series of inter-family relationships: it begins with the wedding covenant between the Holy One blessed be He and the *shekhinah*, expressed through God taking up residence in the Temple like a groom in his wedding canopy; it continues with Jerusalem’s treachery and its worship of other gods; and it concludes with punishment through the Temple’s destruction and the children’s exile. Envisioning the physical Jerusalem as an embodiment of the heavenly Jerusalem led to a connection between the earthly process of redeeming the city and the heavenly process of redeeming the *shekhinah*—just as the *shekhinah* has resided in exile since God’s abandonment and destruction of the Temple, so she is destined to be redeemed with Israel’s worldly redemption. Moreover, this imagery ties the redemption of Jerusalem to the redemption of the people of Israel as two aspects of the same process, for the mother’s fate is inextricably tied to the fate of her children: the children are redeemed from their exile and return to Jerusalem, and, by rebuilding of Jerusalem, they are redeemed.

The apotheosis of Jerusalem is tied to another of the city’s sobriquets: “Gate of Heaven.” The term originates in the dream of the

Patriarch Jacob, who envisioned a ladder extending from Earth to Heaven with angels ascending and descending on it: “And Jacob awakened from his sleep and said, ‘Indeed, the Lord is to be found in this place, yet I did not know.’ He was frightened, and he said, ‘How awesome is this place; this is nothing other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’” (Gen. 28:16–17.) Jacob was then encamped in Luz, and, after his dream, he changed the name of the place to Beth-El (House of God); but “place” as used in the verse was interpreted by the midrash as referring to Mount Moriah, on which Abraham had bound Isaac and on which the Temple was built.² The “Gate of Heaven”—i.e., the entrance to Garden of Eden—is thus concealed in the Temple’s innermost sanctum, the Holy of Holies, and it serves as the point of encounter between physical and spiritual, between the earthly Temple and the heavenly. On that site rests Jacob’s ladder (or one of the Temple’s pillars), the path on which prayers ascend heavenward, as Rashi explained,³ and on which prophetic overflow descends to Earth, as suggested by other commentators—Nahmanides,⁴ Gersonides,⁵ and Don Isaac Abarbanel.⁶

In kabbalistic literature, the image of Jerusalem as Gate of Heaven acquired a decidedly sexual aspect. The *Zohar* uses the sobriquet “Gate of Heaven” to designate the private parts of the *shekhinah*, the heavenly bride. The *shekhinah*’s womb is termed “Zion,” “Jerusalem,” and “Holy of Holies.”⁷ The sexual image blurs the distinctions between Jerusalem the mother and Jerusalem the beloved and between the earthly bridegroom and the heavenly bridegroom. The *Zohar* expresses

² See *Genesis Rabbah*, vol. 3 (*Vayezrei*), 68:9. See also *Hulin* 91b. The identification of “the place” as Mount Moriah is based on the story of the binding of Isaac: God commands Abraham to go to “the Land of Moriah” (Gen. 22:2), referred to in the ensuing verse as “the place.”

³ See Rashi on Gen. 28:17: “‘And this is the gate of heaven’—a place for prayer, so prayers may ascend heavenward.” See also *Midrash Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, chap. 35.

⁴ See Nahmanides, *Gate of Recompense* (*Sha’ar ha-Gemul*), p. 53: “For the Land of Israel and Jerusalem are special places, set aside for prophecy on account of their power, and even more so is the Temple, God’s throne, as it is said (Gen. 28:17), ‘How awesome is this place; this is nothing other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’ He [Jacob] attributed the prophecy that came upon him without prior intention to the merit of the place.” See also Nehorai 1991; Pedaya 1991.

⁵ *Torah Commentaries by R. Levi Gersonides (Ralbag)*, vol. 1, p. 179; Harvey 1998, p. 305.

⁶ Don Isaac Abarbanel, *Commentary on the Torah*, p. 318; Harvey 1998, p. 305.

⁷ See Liebes 1982/1, p. 194.

the sexual dimension of the kabbalists' relationship to Jerusalem and the Land of Israel⁸ by depicting the Land of Israel as the consort of the Patriarch Jacob, whose burial there was in the nature of a physical coupling. The Land is likewise portrayed as Moses' partner, with which Moses attained spiritual union even though he was not privileged to enter it.⁹ Similarly, Jerusalem is depicted in R. Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz's liturgical poem "*Come My Beloved (Lekha Dodi)*," as the wife of the redeemer—the Messiah of the House of David—who enters her gates like a bridegroom entering his wedding canopy. These descriptions resonated in the mind of Shabbetai Zevi, whose fantasies about a glorious entry into the Land Israel had a sexual aspect and who construed the conquest of the Land as a sexual triumph.¹⁰

Even the practice of facing Jerusalem, the Temple, and the Holy of Holies during prayer, a practice grounded in rabbinic tradition, is depicted in the Kabbalah as an act of coupling and fertilization. Just as the seed makes its way to the womb and fertilizes it, so do prayers ascend through the womb of the *shekhinah*, i.e., the Gate of Heaven, to the supernal realm. There, they bring about a coupling that results in the divine overflow descending to the face of the earth and the world becoming as if reborn.

The route taken by the prayers is sketched out in the writings of R. Isaiah Horowitz (Shelah), who describes how praying adjacent to Heaven's Gate brings about a process of union and coupling in the supernal realm, for prayer "arouses and brings about union of God's name on high . . . and the prayer becomes a diadem." In contrast, prayer outside the Land of Israel under the exterior angel, within whose jurisdiction the worshipper resides, causes division in the supernal realm and the involvement of Satan, who separates God from the *shekhinah*:

And so the best advice is to dispatch [one's] prayer to the Land of Israel, thence to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem to the Temple, and from the Temple to the Holy of Holies, and thence to the Gate of Heaven . . . for we were exiled from our Father's table as a result of our many sins. But still, the gates of tears are not sealed shut, and

⁸ On the sexual relationship between the kabbalists and the Land of Israel, see Idel 1991. See also Sack 1991; Halamish 1991; Pachter 1991/2.

⁹ See Liebes 1996, pp. 193–198.

¹⁰ See Elqayam 1998, pp. 140–147.

prayer breaks through and ascends via the Land of Israel, etc., taking the proper path heavenward.¹¹

In this way, Kabbalah transformed prayer, especially prayer under Heaven's Gate, into "an arousal below," which stimulates the desire for coupling in the supernal realm—"an arousal above"—and makes possible the redemption of the *shekhinah*. Redemption takes place on several levels: the symbolic, through the worshipper's bonding with the *shekhinah* (termed "coupling by a kiss"), and the historical, through the redemption of the Land of Israel and Jerusalem. And so it happened that the Kabbalah, for all its emphasis on the symbolic side of the *shekhinah*'s redemption, turned out as a practical matter to foster immigration to the Land of Israel as a manifestation of this process.

The Messianic Immigrations (Aliyyot)¹² to the Land of Israel

It was not mere happenstance that the idea of redemption took on a tangible form during the sixteenth century, within the generation following that of the Spanish expulsion. Paradoxically, the consciousness of sin gave rise to a belief in the real possibility of redemption: Jerusalem had been destroyed for the sins of her children; "on account of our sins we were exiled from our Land and distanced from our territory";¹³ and repentance for our sins will restore us to the Land. The ambiguity of the verb stem *sh-w-b* (ש.ו.ב)—signifying both repentance and returning¹⁴—was taken by kabbalistic tradition as indicating the nature of redemption, which entails accepting and discharging the punishments associated with the sins on account of

¹¹ *Two Tablets of the Covenant*, vol. 4, pp. 132–133. See also *Two Tablets of the Covenant*, vol. 1, p. 471; Elbaum 1998, p. 106.

¹² *Aliyyah* (lit. "ascent"; pl., *Aliyyot*) refers to immigration to the Land of Israel. The term connotes more than physical immigration; it incorporates, depending on context, various elements of individual and national redemption, reconstruction, and fulfillment. One who goes on *Aliyyah* is an *oleh* (pl., *olim*). To avoid awkward formulations, the verb "immigrate" will be used, but it should be understood that the term in Hebrew refers to spiritual ascent as well as physical relocation.—**translator's note.**

¹³ From the *Mussaf* service for festivals.

¹⁴ The ambiguity appears in the formulation of the prophet Zechariah. See Zech. 1:3—"Return to Me [i.e., repent], declares the Lord of Hosts, and I will return to you."

which Israel was exiled from its land. The destruction of the large, thriving Iberian communities at the end of the fifteenth century was taken as a severe punishment, in the wake of which the nation's sin would be discharged and the time of redemption would arrive.

The process of returning to Zion began amidst groups of messianic kabbalists, who sought to concretize immediately the prophecies of consolation and to return to the Promised Land. Among the first of the immigrants moved by messianic faith were R. Joseph Karo and R. Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz, who had vowed, during a *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* conducted in Salonika in 5293 (1533), to immigrate to the Land of Israel in order to redeem and be redeemed—to redeem the *shekhinah* from her exile and to be redeemed by her.¹⁵ In anticipation of the year 5300 (1540), determined by some End-reckoners to be the year of redemption, they fulfilled their oath: in 5296 (1536), they immigrated and settled in Safed, and in 5298 (1538), R. Joseph Karo became involved there in the effort of R. Jacob Birav to take a step toward redemption by renewing rabbinic ordination, which would imply renewal of the Sanhedrin.

The golden age of Kabbalah in Safed, as well as its economic efflorescence, continued through the sixteenth century. At its height, the city was home to more than 15,000 Jews. They supported themselves through the manufacture of textiles, exported via Salonika, as well as through agriculture and associated commerce and through hospitality for pilgrims coming to prostrate themselves at the graves of talmudic Sages. In 5323 (1563), the first printing house in the Near East was established at Safed. Large *Yeshivot* (religious academies) also functioned there, as did eight synagogues.

The seventeenth century saw the beginning of Safed's decline. The local textile industry was undermined by England's entry into Levantine commerce and the export to the Levant of English textiles. The town was struck by earthquakes and by deterioration in security; the Ottoman authorities expelled one thousand of Safed's Jews to Cyprus, and those who remained endured attacks by Druze and local farmers. The decline reflected the deterioration of the Jewish community in the Land of Israel as a whole and was tied as well to the spiritual crisis that ensued in the wake of Shabbetai Zevi's conversion to Islam in 5426 (1666) and the failure of the Sabbatean movement.

¹⁵ See *Epistle of Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz*, pp. 18–20.

For when all was said and done, the Jews of the Land of Israel had played an important part in the launching of that movement: the gospel of Shabbetai Zevi's messianism was proclaimed in the Land of Israel and spread from there to the Diaspora; and the first grouping of his followers took shape in the communities of Gaza and Hebron.¹⁶

The Sabbatean crisis notwithstanding, messianist immigration to the Land of Israel, conducted by organized groups, continued in the ensuing generations.¹⁷ Some were Sabbatean, such as R. Judah Hasid's group, which ascended to Jerusalem in 5460 (1700), and that of R. Abraham Revigo. In 5500 (1740), expected to be a year of redemption, R. Hayyim Abulafia returned from Izmir and renewed the Jewish settlement in Tiberias. That same year, in which the Besht also attempted to go on immigration, R. Hayyim b. Attar and his group arrived from North Africa, and R. Elazar Rokeiah, one of the kabbalists of the Brody *kloyz*, immigrated from Amsterdam. In 5503 (1743), R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (Ramhal) immigrated from Italy; in anticipation of the year 5508 (1747–1748), represented by letters שח"ר (*sh-h-r*) having the same numerical value as those in the word for "dawn" (שחר—*shahar*), R. Gershon of Kutov immigrated; and in 5525 (1764), R. Simhah of Zalozhtsy reached Tiberias. In his writings, R. Simhah hinted that his immigration to the Land of Israel was tied to the messianic significance of the year 5528 (1768); according to his calculations, it would be 1,700 years since the destruction of the Second Temple.¹⁸ On his way to the Land of Israel, he ran into R. Simhah amidst a group that included R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany and R. Nahman of Gordanko, who also settled in Tiberias. In 5532 (1772), the bicentenary of the Ari's death, R. Azriel of Shklov immigrated and attempted to renew the Ashkenazi community in Jerusalem. In 5537 (1777) a group of *Hasidim* led by R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and R. Abraham of Kolyshki immigrated and settled in Safed and Tiberias, where they were joined in the ensuing years by additional colleagues. Finally, also in 5537 (1777), an organized group emigrated from North Africa, apparently from Tunis.

¹⁶ See Scholem 1987, vol. 1, pp. 162–217.

¹⁷ See, more extensively, Dinur 1955, esp. pp. 26–32, 69–79; Benayahu 1959–1960.

¹⁸ See Ya'ari 1946, pp. 382–383.

Messianist immigrations continued throughout the nineteenth century, from the immigration of the *Perushim*¹⁹ at the start of the century²⁰ to the final messianist immigration, that of a group of Yemenite Jews. They immigrated to the Land of Israel at the beginning of 5642 (late 1881), only a few months before the first wave of Zionist immigrations.

Most of the messianic immigrations were tied to End-reckonings, taking place in anticipation of years thought to be destined for the redemption. Their participants came from throughout the Jewish world—Eastern and Western Europe, the Caucasus and Kurdistan, the Ottoman Empire, including the Balkans, North Africa (the Maghreb), and Yemen. The participants believed they were acting for the benefit of all Israel, and most of the groups continued to function as unified entities with a shared goal even after their arrival in the Land. But their most prominent shared feature was their motive for immigration, which reflected their activist approach to history; in the terms used by Ben-Zion Dinur, these were “*aliyyot* [climbings] on the wall.”²¹ The immigrants saw themselves as heralds of redemption, the vanguard in realizing the divine plan for proclaiming the end of exile. Some of them openly repudiated the Diaspora, considering it to be a sin that itself delayed redemption, and all of them adopted the goal of redeeming the Land of Israel and being redeemed by it.

The messianic hope bore fruit—a series of immigrations to the Land of Israel that continued for some 350 years and produced continuous settlement in the Land. The immigrants believed redemption could be brought about through spiritual means—praying at the Gate of Heaven, maintaining a pure and ascetic way of life, and separating oneself from bodily needs and the temporal world. One may regard that faith as naïveté or as foolishness, but the fact remains that these immigrations preceded those of the Zionists and even blazed a trail for them: the goal of the pioneering secular immigrants “to build and to be (re)built” echoes the hope of the messianic immigrants “to redeem and to be redeemed.”

¹⁹ The *Perushim* were disciples of R. Elijah of Vilnius, the “*Vilna Gaon*.”—*translator's note*.

²⁰ See Morgenstern 1985, pp. 66–93.

²¹ See Dinur 1955, p. 29.

Redemption Begins in the Galilee

Most members of the messianist groups settled in the Galilee; some in Jerusalem and Hebron. That they gathered in the north of the Land of Israel should come as no surprise, for the sacred sites—the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron—were the center of attention for a hard core of zealous Muslims, who manifested hostility toward Jewish settlement in those cities. The Galilee, in contrast, under the authority of the Ottoman pasha of Sidon, was relatively calm.

But such practical considerations played only a secondary role in the decisions of the immigrants, and the self-same mystical reasoning that had brought them to the Land of Israel was what attracted them specifically to the Galilee. In essence, this mystical reasoning relied on a tradition that held the geographic unfolding of the messianic era to be a reversal of the sequence of exile. Adversity had burst forth from the north;²² the northern kingdom of Israel fell earlier than the southern kingdom of Judah; and the inhabitants of the Galilee—among the ten lost tribes—were the first to be exiled. Accordingly, redemption also would begin in the Galilee, where the Messiah would be revealed and whence he would go up to Jerusalem.²³

That tradition was powerfully reinforced among the kabbalists. They assigned great importance to the figure of R. Simeon b. Yoḥai, protagonist of the *Zohar*, and wanted to live near his gravesite in the village of Meron. R. Simeon b. Yoḥai's grave, and those of other mishnaic Sages throughout the Galilee, were a powerful draw, and they made Safed into a major spiritual, social, and economic center.

Like Safed, Tiberias also was a focus of messianic aspirations, the product of a tradition that saw the reconstruction of Tiberias as one of the signs of redemption. That tradition rested as well on the events that followed the destruction of the Second Temple and the exile from Jerusalem of the prominent leaders of Israel and the Sages of the Sanhedrin. They moved from Jerusalem to Yavneh, to Usha, to Shefaram, to Beth She'arim, to Sepphoris. During the first third of the third century C.E., the seat of the Sanhedrin was moved from Sepphoris to Tiberias, and Tiberias became a center for the Sages

²² Cf. Jer. 1:14—*translator's note*.

²³ See Halamish 1991, pp. 229–230.

of the Land of Israel, creators of the Talmud Yerushalmi, as well as the fixed seat of the patriarchs of Israel until that office was abolished at the beginning of the fifth century. Accordingly, there arose the tradition that Tiberias, at which the Sanhedrin had been abolished, would be the place where redemption would begin: "And Tiberias is deeper than all of them . . . R. Yohanan said, 'and from there they are destined to be redeemed.'" ²⁴ That tradition was reinforced by Maimonides, who determined that the Sanhedrin would be reestablished in Tiberias:

Originally, when the Temple stood, the Sanhedrin convened in the Chamber of Hewn Stone . . . but when things went amiss, they were exiled from place to place—to a total of ten places and, ultimately, to Tiberias . . . and it is a received tradition that they will first return to Tiberias, and from there, they will move on to the Temple. ²⁵

Estori ha-Parhi, an erudite Jewish physician who immigrated to the Land of Israel early in the fourteenth century, ²⁶ took this tradition a step further, intertwining it with the resurrection of the dead. In his book, *Bud and Flower* (*Kaṭor va-Ferah*), he determined that "the resurrection of the dead will be advanced by forty years in Tiberias; blessed be He who knows the future." ²⁷

These traditions underlay the various efforts to establish a Jewish settlement in Tiberias. ²⁸ The first was undertaken at the initiative of Dona Gracia Miques-Nasi, the widow of Francisco Mendes (*Zemah Benvenisti*). ²⁹ Dona Gracia was a wealthy Jewess of Portuguese Marrano background, who returned openly to her Judaism and fled to Belgium, to Italy, and, ultimately, to Istanbul. Thanks to her commercial connections to the Sultan Suleiman the magnificent,

²⁴ *Rosh Ha-Shanah* 31b.

²⁵ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Sefer Shoṭetim*, *Hilkhot Sanhedrin* 14:12; Morgenstern 1999, p. 65.

²⁶ Estori ha-Parhi was born in Provence in 5040 (1280) to a family of Andalusian origin. After the expulsion of the Jews from France in 5066 (1306), he roamed through Europe and Egypt, ultimately settling in the Land of Israel. He engaged in topography and the identification of ancient settlements; he also researched ancient coins, medicinal plants, and archaeological sites. He died in the Land of Israel in 5115 (1355).

²⁷ *Bud and Flower*, chap. 7, 23a.

²⁸ For detailed studies concerning the Jewish community in the Land of Israel under the Ottoman Empire, see Heyd 1969; Cohen and Lewis 1978; Cohen 1984; Hacker 1984; David 1999.

²⁹ See Avishar 1973, pp. 97–108, 315–323.

she managed, in 5323 (1563), to lease the region of Tiberias for an annual fee of one thousand pieces of gold. She planned to build a new city and settle Jewish tradesmen and farmers there, planning for them to engage in the textile industry, particularly the manufacture of silk textiles. Rumors spread that her nephew and son-in-law, Don Joseph, intended to crown himself in Tiberias as king of the Jews.

Dona Gracia invested considerable funds in the building of houses and shops, in establishing a synagogue and bathhouse, and in completing a fortified wall for the residents' defense. But her plans did not come to fruition, and when she died in Istanbul in 5329 (1569), only a few Jews had joined the thirty-three families previously living in Tiberias. The grand palace that had been built for her remained empty. In the wake of that failure, the Jewish settlement in Tiberias declined even further. An earthquake in 5420 (1660) brought about the destruction of the community, and the few Jews who lived there abandoned it. In 5486 (1726), the Christian traveler Angelicus Miller wrote that in Tiberias he found "destruction and ruin, such that some thirty Moorish families and twelve Jewish families could scarcely sustain themselves."³⁰ Only in 5500 (1740), with the backing of the Galilee's ruler, Dahir al-ʿAmr, did R. Ḥayyim Abulafia return with his family from Izmir and settle in Tiberias.

The renewal of Jewish settlement in Tiberias gave expression to the messianic hopes that had arisen in Jewish communities in anticipation of the year 5500 (1740).³¹ The charismatic personality of R. Ḥayyim Abulafia, who by then was about 80 years old, along with his distinguished ancestry, made his role almost predestined. Born in Hebron but living in Izmir, R. Ḥayyim was the grandson of the last rabbi to serve in Tiberias before the destruction of its Jewish community. He was also a descendant of R. Jacob Birav, who had attempted in Safed, in 5298 (1538), to renew rabbinic ordination and establish a Sanhedrin. Moreover, Abulafia family tradition claimed descent from King David.³²

R. Ḥayyim Abulafia's patron and ally was Dahir al-ʿAmr, a Bedouin ruler of the Zidan tribe, which had originated in Hejaz.³³ Members

³⁰ Ish-Shalom 1979, p. 393.

³¹ See above, pp. 5–7; 24–28.

³² On R. Ḥayyim Abulafia and his messianic expectations, see Avishar 1973, pp. 104–108, 261–265; Barnai 1992, pp. 41–46, 260.

³³ See Heyd 1942.

of the tribe reached the Land of Israel in the seventeenth century and established their rule over the Lower Galilee. Their leaders became tax collectors for the pasha of Sidon, but they gradually extended their authority over a broader area, becoming its sole rulers. Dahir al-ʿAmr sought to develop the Galilee, and, to that end, he secured the highways and encouraged the immigration of Greek-Christian farmers from Cyprus and of Jewish tradesmen and craftsmen. His support was critical for the fulfillment of R. Hayyim Abulafia's plan to build a "Jews' Street"—a distinct quarter established on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and surrounded by a wall. The quarter contained houses and shops, a bathhouse, and an olive-press, and the efforts to attract Jewish settlers to it achieved a modest success, and the number of Jewish families residing in Tiberias increased.

Following R. Hayyim Abulafia's death in 5504 (1744), his sons continued his efforts to build up Tiberias. By that time, however, the Ottomans had begun their efforts to remove Dahir al-ʿAmr, who had become powerful enough to threaten Ottoman rule throughout the Land of Israel. These efforts gave rise to a series of rebellions, in which Dahir al-ʿAmr allied himself with Ali Bey, the rebellious ruler of Egypt, and was aided as well by naval ships from Russia, which was at war with the Ottoman Empire in the Crimea. Only after a peace accord with Russia was reached in 5534 (1774) were the Ottomans free to deal with Dahir al-ʿAmr, and they finally removed him in 5535 (1775). In his place, they appointed Ahmed Jazzar as pasha of Sidon and, eventually, of the entire Land of Israel. Jazzar "the Butcher" was a ruthless tyrant; under his rule, the Jews constantly struggled to protect their status—primarily by bribing the authorities to induce them to ease the tax burden and to provide defense against attacks by brigands, Bedouin, and local farmers. Nevertheless, Jazzar and his successors imposed onerous taxes for the support of their military ventures and neglected security in the city and on the highways, abandoning them to outlaws. Particularly oppressive was their decree forbidding expansion of the Jews' Street in Tiberias and heavily taxing new construction within the existing neighborhood. To avoid giving the Ottoman government a pretext to demand money, the rabbis forbade additional construction, and the residents of Tiberias were forced to remain cramped in their existing buildings, with no opportunity to expand their community or take in newcomers.

Despite these difficulties, the Jewish settlement in Tiberias grew and came to include the kernel of an Ashkenazi community. It began with the immigration of R. Elazar Rokeiah, a kabbalist of the Brody *kloyz*, who arrived from Amsterdam in 5500 (1740). He was followed by a group of immigrants from the community of Satanov. At the start of 5525 (1764), an additional group arrived—R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany, R. Nahman of Gorodonk, R. Fridel of Brody, and R. Uri Shapira of Vilnius—and settled in the Jews' Street. By 5528 (1768), about forty Ashkenazi Jews were living in Tiberias.

That year, R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany wrote to his brother, R. Zevi Hasid, a student of R. Yehiel Mikhel, the *Maggid* of Zolochev, urging him to come to the Land of Israel and join him:

And so, how long will you continue to live outside the Land of Israel, listening to those who slander the Holy Land, compared with which the entire world is considered as naught?³⁴

At the conclusion of his letter, he added greetings:

To the rabbi and preacher, *one who suitably discourses and suitably carries out*, the perpetual servant of God, our teacher, R. Yehiel Mikhel of the congregation of Zolochev. Greetings as well to his young and wise son, our teacher R. Joseph, and greetings to the pious rabbi our teacher R. Solomon Vilner. *And these matters pertain to them.*³⁵

The inclusion of “one who suitably discourses and suitably carries out” in addressing R. Yehiel Mikhel, and the addition of “And these matters pertain to them,” suggest that R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany’s reprimand to his brother is addressed as well to R. Yehiel Mikhel, R. Joseph of Yampol, and R. Solomon Zalman Vilner, and that he hoped for their arrival as well.

³⁴ Barnai 1980, letter 5, p. 53.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 53–54.

CHAPTER NINE

THE HASIDIC IMMIGRATION OF 5537 (1777)

The Fellowship of the Immigrants

An important chapter in the story of messianic immigrations between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries is that of the Hasidic immigration of 5537 (1777). The writer Benjamin Redler-Feldman (R. Benjamin), a participant in the Second immigration,¹ compared the Hasidic immigrants to the pilgrims who came to America aboard the Mayflower. That comparison is certainly exaggerated, but it provides historical perspective on the importance of this immigration:

Hundreds of years ago, on 5 August 1620, a ship called the “Mayflower” reached the shores of America and a band of English Puritans disembarked. They had left their native land, where they were targets of religious persecution, and came to America to live there in freedom. To this day, Americans revere the memory of that ship, and descendants of that band are regarded as having the highest pedigree.

Had we a profound sense of history, we would relate in the same manner to the Hasidic *aliyyah* of 5537 (1777), for the ship that brought them to the Land of Israel was our “Mayflower.”²

The group of immigrants comprised disciples and colleagues of R. Yehiel Mikhel, coming both from White Russia and from Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. Some researchers, emphasizing the White Russian origin of the group’s leaders—R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and R. Abraham of Kolyshki—infer that all of the immigrants came from that region. But there is in fact strong evidence that the group comprised *Hasidim* from both regions: the band embarked from Brody; fund raising efforts on its behalf were centralized in that city from the outset; and a schism later developed between immigrants from

¹ Historians of Zionism speak of five waves of resettlement of the Land of Israel (*Aliyyot*) preceding World War II. The Second immigration, 1904–1914, comprised primarily pioneers from Eastern Europe, many of whom had socialist and even communist tendencies.—*translator’s note*.

² Benjamin Redler, in *Ha-Aretz*, 22 May 1927, p. 3; Hailperin 1947, pp. 22–23.

the two regions. The continual contacts between the immigrants and the Hasidic-messianist group led by R. Yehiel Mikhel evidence a single group with a shared goal. These ties can be inferred from the actions of the two bands, the familial and social connections between them, and their common concealment of the mystical underpinnings of their enterprise.

The two epistles of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, a close disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel, are an important source of information about the immigration, for they are the only surviving letters sent from the Diaspora to the immigrants. But R. Meshullam Feibush's comments have been misinterpreted as the remarks of a casual observer of the enterprise. In fact, his use of the third person to refer to the immigrants does not indicate distance from them; rather, it reflects the constraints imposed by the group's commitment to writing cryptically. R. Meshullam Feibush Heller was the brother-in-law of one of the immigrants, R. Joel b. Moses (also a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel),³ and the letters sent to him were intended for all the group's members in the Land of Israel.

In contrast, we possess many of letters sent by the leaders of the immigrants to the group's members in the Diaspora, and their higher survival rate may be connected to the manner in which they were distributed. Some of the letters were sent via rabbinic emissaries, passing merchants, or pilgrims, while others were sent "by post"⁴—extremely expensive postal services. In order to save money and ensure that the letters would reach their destination, they would often send multiple copies and would even request the addressees to make copies and send them on to additional recipients. In that way, the circle of readers was broadened, and many of the letters made their way into print. Unfortunately, many of the letters underwent censorship or had invented passages inserted in them, so that their authors' full accounts became distorted beyond recognition.⁵ Still, the letters were written in the code used by all members of the group, and when they are read together with the epistles of R. Meshullam

³ By R. Meshullam Feibush's own account. See *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 117a: "And I know that you appreciate the words of the rabbi, the *Maggid*, may his light shine, and I appreciate them greatly . . . so I determined to write down for you the words he spoke on this matter."

⁴ Barnai 1980, letter 33, p. 149.

⁵ See Haran 1990; Haran 1991. Cf. Mondschein 1992/1. For a detailed research, see Karlinsky 1998.

Feibush Heller, their concealed content becomes clear. The available information shows the existence of a fully formed group with a messianic program whose implementation was to be accelerated by the immigration to the Land of Israel.

The messianic program was based on the holy place, the holy man, and the proper time; only their commingling could prepare the ground for the Messiah's advent and open the gates of redemption.⁶ According to the plan, the members of the group who immigrated to the Land of Israel represented the group as a whole. Their task was to sanctify themselves with the sanctity of the Land and prepare themselves to herald the redemption, which would begin in the Land of Israel in the month of Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781). In other words, the immigrants were emissaries. Their immigration to the Land of Israel was to serve as the “an arousal below” which had the potential to bring about “the arousal above” and stimulate the coupling in the supernal worlds.

The group of immigrants was headed, as already noted, by R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, then about thirty-nine years of age. R. Menahem Mendel was believed to be endowed with meta-rational knowledge grounded in higher inspiration, a sort of “prophetic mind” as defined by Moshe Halamish.⁷ That sort of consciousness precedes the existence of the mind and rational thought and differs fundamentally from them. It is sometimes referred to in Hasidic writings as “the mind's primordial condition (*qadmut ha-sekhel*),” and Gershom Scholem identified it with unconscious region of the soul or the “primordial soul,” which “is not passive and inert but active and creative.”⁸ It is the region that comes into contact with divine inspiration and is nourished by it, and it therefore mediates between divine wisdom and human cognition. One way in which the unconscious mediates is by translating divine knowledge into images that are received by rational consciousness and processed by it into simple, understandable truths expressed in words. Having that ability made it possible for R. Menahem Mendel to see in the form of a vision what

⁶ This contrasts with the Sabbatean movement, which gradually came to disregard the holy place and concentrate on the holy man—Shabbetai Zevi. See Elqayam 1998.

⁷ See Halamish 1998, p. 228. On the messianic element in the doctrines and actions of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, see Hailperin 1947, pp. 38–49, Halamish 1998, pp. 225–240; Morgenstern 1999, pp. 199–204.

⁸ Scholem 1976/1, vol. 2, p. 358.

the future concealed, as if foreseeing what was to be, and to infer the outcome of a matter from its origin: “Thus I will know the end of every object, its description, appearance, and size, and, with God’s help, I will not err in what I see.”⁹ R. Menahem Mendel denied he had the attribute of prophecy, writing that “I am not a prophet or a seer”; but he did not deny having been endowed with supernatural knowledge, grounded in “the Torah of truth and God’s counsel to know all the people He created.” His quality of seeing in a vision what human eyes normally cannot see, combined with his connection to his colleagues through strong bonds of love, enabled him to know them—“I know each of them from A to Z”—and to see them “as if their images stood before me, recognizing their appearances in the uncovering of their hearts, their essences, and their qualities.”¹⁰

Thus, the two leaders of the Hasidic-messianist group—R. Yehiel Mikhel, who remained in the Diaspora, and R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, who immigrated to the Land of Israel—were believed to attain the Holy Spirit in different but complementary manners: the one “heard” the divine voice through the entry of “understanding” into words of Torah or prayer,¹¹ while the other “saw” the truth in a vision. Both qualities were essential to the success of their program. According to the doctrine of linkage of souls, developed in R. Yehiel Mikhel’s study house, R. Yehiel Mikhel elevated the prayers of the group’s members and purified them of extraneous thoughts, while the members’ prayers elevated his image, the image of the *zaddik*, and perfected it. Meanwhile, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk was ready to portray the images of the members in his heart, to gather their prayers, and to send them on, via “the Gate of Heaven,” to the supernal sanctuaries. Using other imagery, they can be described as a human embodiment of Yakhin and Boaz, the two pillars of the Temple.

The members of the group thus translated into practical terms the advice of R. Isaiah Horowitz (the Shelah) to dispatch prayers to “the Gate of Heaven.” That translation gained expression in the linkage formulation preserved in the writings of R. Abraham of Zolochov, in which the route taken by the members’ prayers is sketched:

⁹ Barnai 1980, letter 39, p. 167.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 166–167.

¹¹ See above, pp. 93–100.

"I hereby dispatch my prayer from here to the Land of Israel, from the Land of Israel to Jerusalem; from Jerusalem to the Temple Mount; from the Temple Mount to the courtyard; from the courtyard to the hall; from the hall to the sanctuary; from the sanctuary to the holy of holies; and from the holy of holies to the sanctuary of the sapphire pavement, to the very place where my patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob prayed."¹² And this was no mere symbolic path; it is an actual path that the group of immigrants planned to follow at the proper time, with the opening of the Gates of Heaven in the month of Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781).

Following R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk in the leadership ranks of the immigrants was R. Abraham Katz (ר"א, an acronym for *kohen zedeq*, priest of righteousness) of Kolyshki. His position appears to have been no mere happenstance, for service in the Temple requires a priest, and that explains the frequent pairing of prophet and priest—after the model of Moses and Aaron—within messianist groups of kabbalists. R. Joseph Karo saw himself in the image of Moses, and his colleague R. Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz was in the image of Aaron the priest. R. Yehiel Mikhel also identified with the image of Moses, and it may not be a coincidence that of all his colleagues it was a Levite—R. Meshullam Feibush ha-Levi Heller—who was selected to write the epistles that were dispatched to the Land of Israel.

The immigrants were the elite of the group. R. Meshullam Feibush Heller referred to them as "the heads of the Israelites"—the term used for the twelve spies, representatives of the tribes, who had been dispatched to scout the Land of Canaan (Num. 13:3). Moreover, he explicitly noted that they were endowed with the Holy Spirit: "And the whole ones who went were very renowned, possessors of the Holy Spirit, great ones of the revealed and hidden Torah, and with them the heads of the Israelites,¹³ from the poor of the holy flock, the lamb of Israel's dispersion."¹⁴

¹² *Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life* 39a.

¹³ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]), 26a; (Mezirov 5554 [1794]), 27b—here use an acronym meaning the "heads of the Israelites" (ר"ב, *r-b-y* = *roshei benei yisra'el*). The third edition, Zolkow 5560 (1800), 27a, misreads it as an abbreviation for "many" (רבים—*rabbim*).

¹⁴ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 26a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 131a.

The expression “poor of the flock” that R. Meshullam Feibush uses to refer to the immigrants is borrowed from the prophet Zechariah: “And the poor of the flock that heed me will know that it was the word of the Lord” (Zech. 11:11). Rashi interprets the poor of the flock as “the righteous ones among them, who observe my rules,” while the author of *David’s Fortress*, relying on the shared verbal stem (ענה—*‘n-h*) of “poor” and “humble,” explains that the poor of the flock are “the humble and subjugated of Israel, who observe my word.”¹⁵ The reference, accordingly, is to the spiritually humble, the righteous who serve God with devotion and submission, and not to the literally poor, as some investigators have incorrectly understood it.¹⁶ Moreover, “poor” is the description applied to the Messiah by the prophet Zechariah (Zech. 9:9), and “the poor and the destitute” is a term applied to the Israelites returning from the lands of their exile.¹⁷

The messianic aspect of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller’s description of the immigrants is expressed as well in his application to them of the term “whole ones.” This implies they are perfect—flawless and lacking nothing. “Whole ones” are also those who, as Rashi interprets it, accepted the shared decision “that all would be equally committed to a single agreement.”¹⁸ That sobriquet shows that the decision to immigrate was a shared one, intended to fulfill a special, defined assignment. But the adjectives “whole” (*shalem*) and “perfect” (*tamim*) refer as well to sexual purity, and Scripture, as understood by various *midrashim* assigns them to one who has been circumcised.¹⁹

¹⁵ See R. David Altshuler, *David’s Fortress*, on Zech. 11:11. The connection between poor and humble gained expression in the idea of voluntary poverty, which developed among the Ebionites, a Jewish-Christian sect that existed until the end of the fourth century. The Ebionites stood for an ascetic way of life, circumcised their sons, and observed the Sabbath. They rejected the divinity of Jesus but believed in him as a spiritual redeemer. See *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 523.

¹⁶ Cf. Assaf 1996, p. 334. The connection between poverty and humbleness is expressed in the discourses of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk on self-abnegation and is described in the discourse on *Shabbat Nahamu*, the Sabbath of Consolation that follows the Fast of the Ninth of Av. In it, R. Menahem Mendel explains that the *shekhinah* is called “poor” because of her humbleness, for she has nothing of her own except the belief in truth. See *Fruit of the Land* (*Peri ha-Aretz*), (*Vaethanan*), 23b.

¹⁷ See the commentary of Radaq on Isa. 41:17—“The poor and the indigent—those who were exiled, when they leave exile to return to their Land.”

¹⁸ See Rashi on Nah. 1:12—“Thus says the Lord: If they are complete and many, they will likewise be cut down and pass away, and I will afflict you no more.”

¹⁹ See *Genesis Rabbah*, vol. 2 (*Lekh-Lekha*), 43:6—“The king of Shalem—R. Isaac of Babylonian said: He was born circumcised.” (The comment takes “*shalem*” as an

These designations show the importance assigned to the high ethical caliber and sexual purity of the immigrants, without which they would be unable to carry out the task for whose sake they had immigrated.

The connection between sexual purity and entry into the land goes back to the Bible. God promises Abraham that the Land of Canaan will be bequeathed to his descendants but sets as a precondition the covenant of circumcision, that is, removal of the foreskin:

And I will give to you, and to your seed after you, the land in which you sojourn, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God. And God said to Abraham, "But you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for all their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your seed after you: circumcise every male among you. And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. (Gen. 17:8–11.)

Similarly, Joshua circumcises the nation before they cross the Jordan to enter the Land of Israel,²⁰ and rabbinic midrash has him say to them, "Do you think you will enter the Land uncircumcised?"²¹ In kabbalistic tradition, removal of the foreskin symbolizes elimination of the forces of evil. In fulfilling the commandment of circumcision, a man is sanctified and transformed into a righteous person, fit to approach the *shekhinah* and enter the Land of Israel.²² Estori ha-Parhi likewise wrote: "one who comes and enters the Holy Land to dwell in it should enter holy in his wealth and holy in his body; he should be pure of hands, clean of palms, and a person of feeling . . . And if so, one who is a perfect offering will find the Land of Israel suited to him."²³

The sexual purity ascribed to the immigrants was attributed in Hasidic tradition to R. Yehiel Mikhel himself. It is possible that his obligation and that of his son, R. Joseph of Yampol, to immigrate

adjective describing the king rather than as the name of the city over which he reigned.—**translator's note**) See also *Midrash Tanhuma (Noah)* 6:48—"Noah was a righteous man, he was *tamim*' (Gen. 6:9)—He was born circumcised."

²⁰ Josh. 5:4.

²¹ *Genesis Rabbah*, vol. 2 (*Lekh-Lekha*), 46:9.

²² See Jacobson 1996, p. 340.

²³ *Bud and Flower*, chap. 42, 92a. See also Rashi on Gen. 26:2—"Do not go down to Egypt—for you are a perfect offering, and the world outside the Land of Israel is not suited to you."

to the Land of Israel may form the background for the plan to send some members of the group as a vanguard, as hinted at in the epistle of R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany.²⁴ It is not known why they failed to join the immigrants but, in any event, the immigrants did include the third person mentioned in the epistle, R. Yehiel Mikhel's relative R. Solomon Zalman Vilner.²⁵ Upon his arrival, he became one of the group's most active rabbinic emissaries. (Rabbinic emissaries were individuals dispatched to the Diaspora to raise funds and organize the support of the various communities for the residents of the Land of Israel.) R. Solomon Vilner was involved not only in monetary matters; he delivered letters and messages as well and served as a personal emissary from the leader of the immigrants, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, to the leaders of the Brody community. It is fair to assume that he also was the liaison between R. Yehiel Mikhel and R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk. Evidence to that effect can be found in the comments of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, whose letter of Tishri 5542 (1781) suggests that he met with R. Solomon Vilner.²⁶ It appears the meeting took place in Brody in 5541 (1781), before R. Solomon Vilner returned to the Land of Israel, and R. Yehiel Mikhel presumably was present as well.

The Journey to the Land of Israel and the Settlement in Safed and Tiberias

The immigrants and their families set out at the height of winter, in the month of Adar 5537 (1777), a few months before the *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* conducted in R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house in Brody.²⁷ The timing was deliberate, for in that year, "a rumor went out that the King Messiah was coming."²⁸ David Assaf has associated the rumor with the victories at that time of Russia against the Ottoman Empire that created rumors of a nearby Jewish redemption among

²⁴ See above, p. 164.

²⁵ On R. Solomon Zalman ha-Kohen Vilner, see below, pp. 293–294.

²⁶ See *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 25b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 129b.

²⁷ On the *tiqqun leil shavu'ot* conducted in Brody, see above, pp. 81–104. It should be noted that 5537 (1777) was a leap year, and it is not known if the immigrants set out in First or Second Adar. In any event, the time in question was February to April 5537 (1777).

²⁸ Assaf 1996, p. 328.

Christian millenarian circles, as well as the year's status as the centenary (two jubilee periods) of Shabbetai Zevi's death.²⁹ The rumor spread not only in Eastern Europe but through all quarters of the Jewish world, and it may have been the impetus for the immigration of a group from North Africa—"Sefardi people" from the community of "Tukos," apparently Tunis, whom the immigrants encountered in the Land of Israel. R. Israel of Polotsk reports in a letter that the North African group numbered thirty, while R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk tells of 130 souls.³⁰ The *Hasidim* saw the gathering of Jews from different parts of the Diaspora as a sign that the Messiah was coming. They wrote to their colleagues that the North Africans included "rich and poor alike, Sages and servants of God,"³¹ and they suggested the North Africans' motive for coming resembled their own: "they all entered into a pact last Purim to go to the Holy Land, and so they did. And they were able to do so."³² In effect, they depicted the immigrants from North Africa as a mirror image of themselves.³³

At that time, the usual route for immigration to the Land of Israel comprised four segments: southward, overland, via Ukraine and Podolia to the River Dneister, beyond which lay Wallachia, under Ottoman rule, and on to the city of Galati (now in Romania); from Galati, down the River Danube to the Black Sea estuary, a distance

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 329, 340.

³⁰ See Barnai 1980, letter 13, p. 75; cf. letter 12, p. 72.

³¹ Ibid., letter 12, p. 72.

³² Ibid., letter 13, p. 75. Similarly, Morgenstern 1999, pp. 183–184.

³³ So far, scholars did not trace the Tunisian group in any other testimonies but this Hasidic letter. Nevertheless, it is known that one of the Hasidic emigrants, the owner of *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979*, traveled in later years to Tunis and visited the Jewish community of Nabel, where he stayed in the inn of a family by the name of Hadad. These Jews could have been relatives of the 5537 (1777) Tunisian emigrants. Another interesting detail that may be connected with the arrival of the group is the desire to learn Kabbalah among Tunisian scholars. R. Hayyim Joseph David Azulai visited Tunis in 5533–5534 (1773–1774) and met a group of Kabbalists that owned manuscripts of practical Kabbalah and Lurianic Kabbalah. Their leader, R. Avraham ha-Kohen Tanugi, "said that he was a prophet and the spark of Jeremiah and Ezekiel." Although repeatedly asked, Azulai refused to share his esoteric knowledge with them in fear of R. Avraham's brother, R. Joshua ha-Kohen Tanugi, the chief Rabbi of Tunis that resented the group's activities and claimed that they were acting out of "vanity." See Azulai's diary *Good Circle (Ma'agal Tov)*, pp. 58, 63. It should be noted that R. Joshua ha-Kohen Tanugi immigrated in 5556 (1796) to the Land of Israel and died in Safed. I thank Yaron Zur for this information.

of about 150 kilometers; by ship on the Black Sea to Istanbul, a distance of about 450 kilometers; and from Istanbul, by ship on the Mediterranean to the shores of the Land of Israel, usually to the port of Acco, a distance of about 1,700 kilometers. The pilgrims' ships left Istanbul twice a year: in the month of Nisan, in anticipation of Passover, and at the start of the month of Elul, in anticipation of Rosh Ha-Shanah and the other holidays of Tishri. The entire journey, from the Polish border to the Land of Israel, took thirty or forty days, excluding delays and necessarily longer stays in one of the ports—in Galati, at the Black Sea estuary (apparently in the port of Solena), or in Istanbul—because of adverse weather conditions.³⁴

Istanbul was the center of Ottoman rule, and the Jewish community there excelled in the help and organized support it provided to pilgrims, immigrants and the inhabitants of the Land of Israel. On the first of Elul, the leaders of the community would hire a special ship called "the fund's ship," for the rabbinic emissaries, who would transport large sums of money to the Jews of the Land of Israel, and its time of departure would be announced in all the city's synagogues.³⁵ Most of the pilgrims and immigrants preferred to depart in advance of the Tishri holidays, generally awaited the organized departure in the month of Elul,³⁶ on a ship leased by the Jewish community they felt more secure vis-à-vis both the ship owners and the sailors, and they also were less fearful of being robbed by pirates or kidnapped into slavery—common occurrences in the Ottoman empire until the nineteenth century.

The group safely completed the overland portion of the journey as well as the trip down the Danube to the Black Sea estuary. There, apparently at the port of Solena, they made camp and waited until conditions permitted a comfortable and secure crossing of the Black Sea. But the original plan may have been to reach the Land of Israel in time for Shavuot in the year 5537 (1777), and some of them therefore hastened to depart at winter's end or the beginning of the spring. They encountered a storm on the Black Sea, and their

³⁴ See Ya'ari 1946, esp. p. 388; Hailperin 1947, p. 21.

³⁵ See Ya'ari 1946, p. 391. The support of the Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire was institutionalized with the establishment of "The Istanbul Committee of Officials for the Land of Israel" for the purpose of collecting money in the Diaspora and transporting it safely to the Land of Israel. See Hacker 1988; Barnai 1992, pp. 53–105.

³⁶ See Barnai 1980, letter 42, p. 174.

ship was wrecked and went down near the Crimean Peninsula. Of the eighty-three passengers, including women, children, and elderly, only thirty were rescued; the remaining fifty-three travelers drowned. Their bodies washed ashore the following week, and they were identified and buried. Some of the survivors saw the event as a test of their determination, and they decided to continue on to the Land of Israel. Others returned penniless to their places of origin. And so, for example, the Brody court in 5538 (1778) took the testimony of one of the survivors in order to confirm that one of the surviving women had in fact been widowed in the wreck and was free to remarry. The witness recounted how the woman's husband had bound himself with ropes to the mast and was probably thrown into the sea by the Ishmaelite (Muslim) sailors. The family's two daughters also drowned, though it is not clear which of the family members drowned first. The witness himself had managed to rescue a baby, whom he carried the entire time on his shoulders, and when he reached dry land, he sought out a campfire at which he could warm the infant.³⁷

The account of the wrecked ship, which cast a dark shadow over the entire journey, is wrapped in mystery. Climatic conditions in the Black Sea make it impossible for a ship setting out southward to Istanbul to be swept 270 kilometers eastward to the shores of Crimea; the prevailing winds and currents simply do not go in that direction.³⁸ Had the ship encountered a storm while sailing southward from the Black Sea estuary (Solena) toward Istanbul, it likely would have been swept southward or northward and wrecked on the coast of Rumania. We may infer, therefore, that it sailed not southward but eastward, toward the Crimean Peninsula. When it neared the rocky coast of Crimea, its sailors lost control of its rudder, the ship encountered a storm, and it broke up on the rocks near shore.

Why the ship sailed eastward rather than southward remains unknown. It is possible that the group of *Hasidim* unwittingly hired a pirate ship, whose masters sailed toward the Crimean Peninsula

³⁷ See, more broadly, Assaf 1996, pp. 322–331.

³⁸ Sixty percent of the time, the winds blow from north to south, and forty percent of the time from south to north. Similarly, the direction of the currents is usually from north to south along the entire western coast of the Black Sea, and sometimes from east to west. My thanks to Captain Immanuel Klemperer of Haifa for the nautical conditions and the analysis of the possible route of the ship.

intending to rob their naïve passengers in mid-ocean or to sell them into slavery. At that time, the Crimean Peninsula was under the rule of the Tatars, who traded in slaves taken in that way.³⁹ If so, the *Hasidim* and their families set sail without understanding their actual situation; they did not speak the sailors' language—apparently, Turkish—and were unaware that they had been kidnapped and were sailing eastward rather than southward.

The remainder of the immigrants stayed behind on the shores of the Black Sea and did not set sail for Istanbul until the approach of the month of Elul. From Istanbul, they sailed in two ships, one taking seven days and the other nine. R. Israel of Polotsk wrote to his colleagues, "Blessed is God, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to the Holy Land in peace on this fifth day of Elul 5537 (1777), not one of us lost."⁴⁰ The size of the group is unknown; R. Israel of Polotsk said it numbered "more than three hundred souls,"⁴¹ but that is certainly an overstatement, and he may have included in it those who were lost in the shipwreck as well as those who were rescued and returned home. Haya Stiman-Katz estimated that about twenty-five *Hasidim* arrived; with their wives and children, they numbered more than one hundred people.⁴²

Upon their arrival, the group headed to the Galilee, which was ruled by the Pasha Ahmed Jassar. Some settled in Pequi'in and in Kefar Yasif, where a few families of Jewish farmers lived, but most settled in Safed. In the late 1720s, few hundred Jews resided in Safed. But an epidemic broke out in 5502 (1742), and several earthquakes in 5520 (1760) led to the abandonment of many houses; overall, the number of Jews dwindled to about two hundred. Ahmed Jassar, who generally taxed the populace heavily, was gracious to the residents of Safed and eased their tax burden, aiming to repopulate it. R. Israel of Polotsk observes, "And we found in [Safed] many good, large, empty houses. We now worship in Beit Yosef. There are three intact synagogues here and many in ruins. And we are building a new synagogue for ourselves."⁴³ And so the immigrants

³⁹ It should be noted that the port of Sebastopol on the Crimean Peninsula, which included a Russian fortress and military base, was built only in 5544 (1784), seven years after the Hasidic immigration.

⁴⁰ Barnai 1980, letter 13, p. 76.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 74.

⁴² See Stiman-Katz 1986, p. 29; cf. Assaf 1996, p. 320.

⁴³ Barnai 1980, letter 13, p. 74.

resettled the abandoned houses, made the synagogue of R. Joseph Karo, *Beit Yosef*, their regular place of worship, and began to build an additional synagogue. They explored Safed and its surroundings, worshipping at the Ari's grave and at the graves of talmudic Sages and visiting the cave of R. Simeon b. Yoḥai in Meron. They also went down to Tiberias to immerse in its hot springs and visit its ancient sites. They wrote to their colleagues that the Sages of Jerusalem invited them to live amongst them and that the Sages of Tiberias likewise urged them to settle there.⁴⁴

The enthusiastic tone of the group's letters to the Diaspora could scarcely conceal the shock of their encounter with the Land of Israel. It was a backward land subject to a corrupt, arbitrary government whose tyranny produced a perpetual state of instability. The immigrants were subjected not only to the provocations of their Muslim neighbors and the insecurity of highways plagued by brigands, but also to the natural hardships of the Land—malaria, especially in the marshy areas surrounding the Sea of Galilee, plague, constantly short supplies of potable water, and locusts that would consume grain and cause severe famine. City dwellers were few, and earthquakes frequently claimed victims and emptied settlements overnight. Sources of income were very limited—primitive agriculture, light crafts, shepherding. The Ashkenazi Jews, unacquainted with the Arabic and Turkish vernaculars, suffered particular hardship. Years later, R. Abraham of Kolyshki described the reaction of one newly arrived in the Land of Israel, who is at first “driven literally insane, rendered mad with no respite, ascending heavenward and descending to the depths like a ship wrecked at sea.”⁴⁵ But the immigrants did not at the outset disclose these feelings, and R. Abraham of Kolyshki, writing in 5538 (1778), struck a hopeful tone: “Over time, people will learn one another's languages, and it will be possible to engage in many ways of making a living.”⁴⁶ Meanwhile, they lived off the funds they had brought with them and off loans that they did not know how to repay.

These external difficulties of the immigrants were compounded by power struggles and internal conflicts with the long-established Jewish residents of the Land of Israel. The small Jewish community,

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, letter 11, pp. 67–68.

⁴⁵ Hailperin 1947, pp. 26–27; Ya'ari 1971, p. 323.

⁴⁶ Barnai 1980, letter 11, p. 67.

divided between Ashkenazim and Sefardim, was concentrated in the four holy cities—Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias—as well as in Gaza, Acco, Shekhem, Jaffa and in the Galilee villages such as Shefaram and Peqi'in. According to Jacob Barnai's estimations, 3000 Jews lived in Jerusalem out of a total population of 15,000 people. In the other three holy cities—Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias—there were smaller communities, numbering hundreds each, altogether about 1500–2000 people. Several hundred Jews lived in the Galilee villages while in the other cities there were a few dozen Jews. During the eighteenth century there were thus some 6000–8000 Jews in the Land of Israel.⁴⁷ Most of the Jews lived off light labor, commerce, and allotments of the funds raised in the Diaspora. The dependence on charity generated conflict over how to distribute the funds among the various communities in a non-discriminatory fashion. Particularly intense was the conflict between the established residents and the new immigrants, whose arrival expanded the circle of recipients, thereby reducing the per-capita allocation. To make matters worse, the established residents would regularly bring into the conflicts the leaders of the donor communities, such as “the Istanbul Committee of Officials for the Land of Israel,” whose representatives in the Land of Israel doubled as the community's representatives vis-à-vis the Ottoman government.⁴⁸ As one would expect, the Jewish community was weakened by the involvement of the Diaspora leaders, whether in Istanbul, Eastern Europe, or Amsterdam, and by the tendency to involve Ottoman government officials and attempt to sway them one way or the other. Against this background, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and his colleagues found themselves in a power struggle with the established leadership of the Ashkenazi community in Safed and with the heads of the Sefardi community. The battles were accompanied by mutual attacks and by complaints to the communities in the Diaspora, such as R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk's charge that the Sefardim in Safed were “completely wicked, believers in Shabbetai

⁴⁷ See Barnai 1992, pp. 109–160, 170–177. For detailed studies about the Jewish community under the Ottoman Empire, see above, pp. 160–164.

⁴⁸ “The Istanbul Committee of Officials” was established after a long and severe economical crisis that befallen the Jewish communities of the Land of Israel. See Barnai 1992, pp. 71–73. Barnai points out that the same poor conditions led the Christian minorities in Palestine—the Catholics, the Greeks and the Armenians—to develop similar patterns of economical and political dependency on their communities abroad, which weakened the authority of local leaders.

Zevi, may his name be erased.”⁴⁹ The rivalries distressed and enervated him, and he ultimately decided to leave Safed and settle in Tiberias, where only a few Ashkenazim had previously lived.

R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk’s decision to move to Tiberias was made easier by the fact that, soon after arriving in the Land of Israel, he married off his son Moses to “*Señora Yokheved*,” daughter of a prominent Sefardi family, “of the worthy and elite of Jerusalem and of the Sefardim who are there,”⁵⁰ and related to the Sefardi rabbinic leader in Tiberias. These factors suggest a degree of substance to the nevertheless unproven tradition that the bride belonged to the Abulafia family. Behind the match lay practical considerations—the desire of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk to forge familial ties with the Sefardim and, especially, to gain a foothold in Tiberias.

In the month of Shevat 5539 (1779), R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk along with several members of the group, apparently including R. Abraham of Kolyshki, left Safed for Tiberias. Shortly before that, R. Solomon Chelmo, formerly rabbi of Lvov, had left Tiberias. The hostility between him and R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk can readily be seen in one of the latter’s letters;⁵¹ and when R. Solomon Chelmo left Tiberias, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk settled in his vacated residence.

R. Menahem Mendel was pleased at the warm reception he was afforded in Tiberias—which contrasted with the hostility that had been shown by the residents of Safed—but it did nothing to alleviate his deepening depression, for the Land of Israel had been afflicted by famine since his group’s arrival. The price of wheat soared, and the immigrants’ economic situation went from bad to worse. They consumed all their assets and carried a growing burden of interest on the loans they were forced to take. The bitter fights with the established Ashkenazi community and the leaders of the Sefardi community in Safed over the allocation of charitable funds to the immigrants were played out against that background. The conflicts led R. Menahem Mendel to decide that he had to organize a separate levy for the members of his group and give up dependence on the

⁴⁹ Ibid., letter 15, pp. 84–85.

⁵⁰ Ibid., letter 11, p. 68.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, letter 15, p. 87.

existing sources of charitable funds, administered by the established residents of the Land. To that end, three rabbinic emissaries were dispatched in 5538 (1778) or 5539 (1779). R. Israel of Polotsk and R. Elazar (Eliezer) Zussman were sent to Istanbul and thence to Holland, to the Ashkenazi communities of The Hague and Amsterdam, which were a regular source of support for the residents of the Land of Israel. R. Solomon Zalman Vilner was sent to Vilnius and to Brody.⁵² His mission, however, was not only to raise funds and organize a system of regular support; evidently, he was sent as well to meet face-to-face with R. Yehiel Mikhel and the rest of the group to coordinate with them the actions to be taken upon the appearance of the signs expected to be revealed in the Galilee in the month of Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781).

Nisan-Iyyar 5541 (March–May 1781)

R. Solomon Zalman Vilner's mission met with success. Shortly before the month of Nisan 5541 (March–April 1781), he returned to Tiberias “bearing letters and legal decisions from Your Honors, with the approbation of the *Gaon* (lit. ‘genius’; an honorific for a very prominent rabbi), the venerable rabbi; and the approbations of the collectors of funds for the Land of Israel in Brody to remedy the past by canceling the obligations of individuals and the congregation . . . But even that will be a small matter in the eyes of God and man, and they spoke to the house of their distant servant to provide me my appropriate allotment of food from year to year.”⁵³ Under the influence of the group's members in Brody, R. Hayyim Segal Landau, the fundraiser for the Land of Israel and head of the Brody *kloyz*, agreed to discharge all the debts accumulated by the immigrants since their arrival in the Land of Israel and to grant R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk an annual allocation. It is noteworthy that R. Hayyim Segal Landau was not the only kabbalist of the Brody *kloyz* to support the messianic program of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his colleagues; other prominent kabbalists in the *kloyz* provided approbations for the books of Lurianic kabbalah printed by R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples in Korets

⁵² See Stiman-Katz 1986, p. 98; Morgenstern 1999, pp. 241–252, 351–360.

⁵³ Barnai 1980, letter 15, p. 85.

around that time.⁵⁴ The fundraisers for the Land of Israel in the Vilnius community also joined in support; one of them—R. Samuel b. R. Hayyim Shabtels, a relative of R. Elijah, the *Gaon* of Vilnius—was R. Hayyim Segal Landau's son-in-law.⁵⁵

The encouraging news restored R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk's spirits; three and one-half years after arriving in the Land of Israel, he finally saw the enterprise bearing fruit. He expressed his heartfelt hopes for redemption in two coded letters that he wrote in the months of Nisan and Iyyar 5541 (March–May 1781). The first was headed “Epistles of Good Tidings from Our Holy Rabbis Who Are in the Land of Israel”;⁵⁶ in it, R. Menahem Mendel emphasizes that he was a herald of good tidings: “The praises of God I call out . . . I herald and say . . . the words of this epistle of good tidings.” One can discern in the letter's opening the writer's special relationship with the addressees, whom he speaks of in terms of affection and intimacy, such as “men of quality, men of renown, our dear friends. My beloved, my soul-friends engraved on my heart.” His words suggest that the great distance separating them physically does not vitiate their intimacy, which is built on a spiritual linkage that transcends space and time.

The letter exudes an air of readiness and anticipation, beginning with its poetic opening: “The praises of God I call out; I declare his name to my brethren. In the midst of a great assemblage I praise God with song and magnify with gratitude the house of God. Those who desire righteousness sing and rejoice; the pious ones exult in the glory of the Name that is magnified, sanctified and exalted by them.”⁵⁷ Immediately thereafter, R. Menahem Mendel turns to a detailed account of the group's experiences since arriving in the Land of Israel: “Until now, I did not want to distress my lovers and friends, but now it is my obligation to tell.” He emphasizes the miracles that took place: the departure of R. Solomon Chelmo, “who was expelled [from Tiberias] by Heaven, not by human intervention”; his becoming established in Tiberias where “God be blessed, all the Sefardim

⁵⁴ See above, pp. 130–140; 150–151.

⁵⁵ See Morgenstern 1999, pp. 241–252. In a letter written in 5547 (1787), the *Hasidim* in Tiberias thank R. Hayyim Landau of Brody and R. Samuel of Vilnius for their support. See Barnai 1980, letter 40, p. 171.

⁵⁶ Barnai 1980, letter 15, p. 84.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

surrendered to me”; and the success of R. Solomon Zalman Vilner in Vilnius and Brody, which R. Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk saw as “a miracle within a miracle” and “the beginning of redemption.” In passing, R. Menaḥem Mendel extols the commandment to go on immigration to the Land of Israel and describes the torments suffered by the immigrants as “the torments of the Land of Israel,” noting that “for one with true intentions, the Sages of blessed memory compared the Land of Israel to Torah and to the World to Come, which are impossible [to achieve] except through ordeals.” He was referring to the statement of R. Simeon b. Yoḥai: “The Holy One blessed be He gave Israel three good gifts, but they were given only through torments, and they are the Torah, the Land of Israel, and the World to Come.”⁵⁸

The immigration to the Land of Israel is thus depicted as the start of the redemption. Its torments are the ordeals that purify the immigrants and wipe away their sins, making them ready to greet the Messiah. R. Menaḥem Mendel sees these tribulations as atonement for the sins of all Israel, for “we suffered such torments that all who serve God were exempted through our torments.”⁵⁹ As for R. Menaḥem Mendel himself, the torments were intended to free him from his bodily chains and prepare him to receive the special “Message” about to be revealed in the Land of Israel:

And I am confident that, God willing, *we will have a message about it this year*. And therefore, everyone one of those who love me who has it in mind to approach the inner sanctum and settle in the Holy Land should write to me. And, *God willing, I will inform you clearly next year, God willing*. And were it not for the ordeals, how I would long for my friends, colleagues, brethren, and fellows to come to the Holy Land. We would assemble together in happiness and joy, trembling in His service, may He be blessed. But at the outset, one cannot be assured of withstanding the trials . . . though I will stand on my watch. For I have confidence in God that we have already spent the time needed to gain possession of the Holy Land. And the tribulations we have

⁵⁸ *Berakhot* 5a. See also *Fruit of the Land* by R. Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk, *Portion Shelah Lekha* 18a—“Even a fully righteous man cannot ascend except by means of renunciation [of the physical] and devotion and his entire body must certainly be wiped away, and this applies equally to Torah, the Land of Israel, and the World to Come, for there may not be the least bit of corporeality, even the size of a mustard seed, for all three are beyond [physical] attributes.” See also *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, p. 227; *Bud and Flower*, chap. 10, 36b; Sursky 2000, vol. 1, p. 455.

⁵⁹ Barnai 1980, letter 15, p. 86.

endured are sufficient for all those who wish to partake of God's patrimony in truth. *And, God willing, after [gaining] the message, I will inform you.*

R. Menahem Mendel saw himself as a messenger—"one dispatched by the provincial officers to the palace of the king"—standing watch in the Land of Israel, and he overlooked nothing related to "the repair (*tiqqun*) of the province, in all respects, physical and spiritual." He tied the "Message" that would be revealed to the desire of some colleagues in the Diaspora to go on immigration: "My beloved, brethren, and fellows, I have heard, with the help of God, may He be blessed, that R. Hayyim of Krasnow and several more God-fearing men wish to come. God forbid they should be compelled, but let them come in joy." Though encouraging his colleagues to join him, he requested them to be patient until the matter of the *tiqqun*—"the repair of the province" in matters of "the body" and "the soul," that is, *tiqqun* of the nation and its redemption in the Land of Israel—was revealed and clarified. In the course of doing so, he pledged that "I will stand on my watch," particularly with respect to all matters related to "my dear ones who love me, who in reality are with me always, engraved on my heart, both in my prayers and in my withdrawal in my house, in all their affairs."

Aryeh Morgenstern observed that the expression "I will stand on my watch" is borrowed from the words of the prophet Habakkuk, which were used by Immanuel Hai Ricchi in his End-reckonings: "I will stand on my watch . . . And God answered me, saying ' . . . for there is yet a vision for the appointed time, a witness to the end that will not lie. Though it tarry, await it; for it will surely come, it will not delay.'" (Hab. 2:1–3.) Morgenstern inferred from this that the unique "Message" anticipated by R. Menahem Mendel was notice of the revelation of the Messiah in the month of Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781), in accordance with Immanuel Hai Ricchi's reckonings.⁶⁰ But the expression "a vision for the appointed time" suggests that R. Menahem Mendel assured his colleagues that the *vision*—as distinct from the event itself—would come at the appointed time, that is, in Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781). The epistle, accordingly, provided tidings of the tidings.

⁶⁰ See Morgenstern 1999, pp. 199–204.

The vision indeed appeared on time. Evidence to that effect is provided by the ensuing letter, sent from Tiberias in Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781), during the week of Lag be-Omer.⁶¹ This letter, too, was written in code, interchanging singular and plural. For example, the letter was addressed to R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy, even though it was written to the entire group. Conversely, the rabbinic emissary who transported the letter is alternately referred to in singular and plural: “Our friends and associates, rabbinic emissaries from the Land of Israel, Sages, [God-] fearing and perfect men, who delivers this writing.”⁶²

As for substance, the letter is very short and its content obscure, but the occasion on which it was written affords it special meaning. On Lag be-Omer, the Ari had the practice of gathering with his disciples at the grave of R. Simeon b. Yohai in the Village of Meron and conducting the “nuptials (*hillula*) of R. Simeon b. Yohai,” a symbolic ritual representing the heavenly ascent of R. Simeon b. Yohai for a nuptial ceremony with the *shekhinah*. It is no coincidence that in the month of Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781)—the appointed time of redemption according to Immanuel Hai Ricchi’s calculations—and during the week of Lag be-Omer, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk received the “Message,” and a tone of fulfilled expectations emerges from between the lines of his letter:

My very essence and nature and the causes of God’s redeeming us will emerge explicitly from the mouth of our friends and associates, rabbinic emissaries from the Land of Israel, Sages, [God-]fearing and perfect men, who delivers this writing, to interpret and recount miracles and wonders. And God’s kindnesses are with us always, such that the mouth wearies of recounting them, but we have placed in their mouths all our needs and requests . . . and we must stand on the sacred watch to pray for him at the holy places; we are fortunate, praise be to the blessed God.

Despite the deliberate obscurity, it can be understood that R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk sent tidings to his colleagues that within himself—

⁶¹ The letter was first published by Abraham Joshua Heschel. See Heschel 1952, p. 123: “With the help of God, here in the holy city of Tiberias, may it be built and established speedily in our day, [the week of] *Be-Har-Be-Huqqotai* . . . in the year 541 (omitting the thousands figure).” The Torah portions of *Be-Har* and *Be-Huqqotai* were read the week of *Lag be-Omer*, 18 Iyyar, which fell on Sunday in 5541 (1781).

⁶² *Ibid.*, *ibid.*; Barnai 1980, letter 16, p. 89.

“my very essence and nature (*mahuti ve-eikhuti*)”⁶³—conditions were ripe for receiving the Message. He did not detail how it had come about, but chose his words carefully: “the causes of God’s redeeming us will emerge explicitly from the mouth of our friends,” that is, the rabbinic emissary sent to meet face to face with the members of the group. The emissary, R. Joseph b. Jacob,⁶⁴ was to detail the special instructions that had to be precisely followed.

Reading the two letters together, one can understand that the content of “the Message” is tied to completion of the *tiqqun* now assigned jointly to the group’s members both in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora. In the earlier letter, R. Menaḥem Mendel advised his colleagues that the tribulations of the Land of Israel were ordeals that had purified him and made him fit to receive “the Message”—to gather the images of the group’s members in the Diaspora as if they were standing before him and to serve as a conduit for the transmission of their prayers. And now he is telling them that he has received “the information” and that he is equipped to gather their prayers and transmit them via “the Gate of Heaven.” In effect, these matters were already hinted at between the lines of R. Abraham of Kolyshki’s supplement to the earlier letter: “And I requested [that you] pray to and entreat God on my behalf. And I will do the same. And the Master of Peace will bless them with the three-fold blessing. And he will give us the privilege of arising and going up to Beth-El and there we shall find him.”⁶⁵

Another way to understand what is encoded in the letter is to assume that “the information” deals with one step of the redemption, perhaps the resurrection of the dead. R. Menaḥem Mendel may have interpreted Estori ha-Parhi’s comment that “resurrection of the dead will be advanced by forty years in Tiberias” not in its simple sense but as referring to forty days, rather than forty years.⁶⁶ For that reason, he and his colleagues frequented the graves of the righteous and prayed near them, and at the start of the month of

⁶³ On the meaning of the term “*mahuti ve-eikhuti*” see also Barnai 1980, letter 39, p. 166: “As if their image stands before me to recognize their appearance through the revelation of their heart, their very essence and nature (*mahutam ve-eikhutam*).”

⁶⁴ The rabbinic emissary R. Joseph b. Jacob died during his mission and was buried in Ostrog in Sivan 5542 (1782). See Biber 1907, p. 186; Ya‘ari 1951, p. 612.

⁶⁵ Barnai 1980, letter 15, p. 88.

⁶⁶ See *Rosh Ha-Shanah* 2b—“For we say that one day in a year counts as the [entire] year.”

Nisan, forty days before Lag be-Omer, they began to await signs of resurrection. It is possible as well that he read Estori ha-Parhi's comment together with a tradition in the *Zohar* that the ingathering of the exiles will begin forty years before the resurrection of the dead. Blending the two traditions permits one to conclude that at Tiberias, the ingathering of the exiles and resurrection of the dead would occur at about the same time—according to R. Menahem Mendel's belief, the month of Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781). Either way, R. Menahem Mendel evidently saw in a vision that the resurrection of the dead was about to begin, and his letter heralded the event.

Alas, it was in vain. The dead were not resurrected, and the Messiah did not come. In the months of Av and Elul 5541 (July–September 1781), there began a series decrees banning R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples. Near his house in Brody, his opponents burned the book *Joseph is a Fruitful Son*, including the *Besht's Epistle*, and on 25 Elul 5541 (September 15, 1781), R. Yehiel Mikhel died. In the month of Tishri 5542 (1781), R. Meshullam Feibush Heller wrote to R. Joel and the other colleagues “who heed my voice⁶⁷ who are there that they should make great efforts in the worship of God, may He be blessed, each and every one in accordance with his strength.” He reported that the planned journey to the Land of Israel had not been cancelled, for the members of the group in the Diaspora believed that what had happened had been for the best, and that these were the tribulations that were to precede the coming of the Messiah:

But now, according to what appears and what is heard of the journey, many good people are journeying to the Holy Land . . . and it is certainly a great inquiry about Zion, of which none inquire, and it is inquire, inquire, return, come.⁶⁸ And now, this great awakening is certainly from God, and the Messiah's arrival is certainly imminent, its time may He hasten, and God, may He be blessed, will hurry it speedily in our days, Amen *Selah*. Of this, who knows what a day may bring and why should you be troubled by tomorrow's troubles and especially about the troubles of this world . . . for you already know according to what is written in the writings of the Ari of blessed memory

⁶⁷ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 26a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 131a. The Zolkow 5560 (1800) edition, 27a, reads “your voice.”

⁶⁸ Cf. Isa. 21:12—“If you inquire, inquire; return, come.” Rashi interpreted it to mean “If you seek your request to hasten the End, ‘return, come’—in repentance.”

regarding clarifying the sanctity that becomes clearer each day, until it becomes completely clear with the advent of the Messiah, speedily and in our days.

To all appearances, the letter encompasses as well a question posed to R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk with respect to prayer: should one pray as usual in the synagogue, or should the prayers be modified to conform to the Messianic era?

R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's letter was not enthusiastically received; the exalted, supremely confident tone so emphatically adopted in R. Menahem Mendel's earlier letters does not appear in the response he wrote in 5542 (1781). Instead, he struck a tone of disappointment and hopelessness, pleading with his colleagues not to "fold [their] tents and rush to come to the Holy Land. [In doing so], they actually try to extinguish fire with straw, for the burden of making a living here is very great." The few who can survive in the Land of Israel are independently wealthy, able to leave their assets "in some [other] community" and live off the return on their investments. He urged the other members of the group "for their own good to abandon this idea and to decide to remain where they are. And God, may He be blessed, will assist them." As an alternative, and as a source of spiritual support, he suggested concentration on learning, prayer, and communion with God. And he added: "In considering your question about how to act at this time in the synagogue, which is very pressing, it is impossible to extend [the discussion]. God willing, if some traveler happens to go from here to there, I will respond at length. But for now, I will be brief." Immediately thereafter, he detailed the spiritual response that is desirable "at this time"—"a set time each day for the study of ethical writings," and so forth.⁶⁹

We do not know why R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk responded so bitterly to the hope expressed in R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's

⁶⁹ Barnai 1980, letter 17, p. 90. Some versions of the letter underwent censorship and the words "in the synagogue" were deleted. It should be noted that the letter is undated, but in a letter written in 5543 (1783), R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and R. Abraham of Kolyshki reiterated their pleas. See Barnai 1980, letter 19, p. 96: "And this, too, as we wrote last year—no man should leave his place. Instead, brethren should help one another and say 'Be strong.'" They are referring here to immigration to the Land of Israel and not, as some have erroneously suggested, to journeys to visit various *zaddikim*. This letter shows that the directive was first given in 5542 (1782).

letter. It may be that the death of R. Yehiel Mikhel and the absence of any change in circumstances had led him to the simple conclusion that the time for redemption had been missed, and that he therefore responded in a thoroughly negative manner. Nevertheless, his ensuing letter shows that his despair was not absolute, and that he chose to leave a glimmer of hope. The letter begins by reiterating the meaning of the group's linkage via interchanging the image of the *zaddik* with that of the members:

They should have steadfast knowledge that love for them is rooted in our heart; and their souls, one and all, are tied to our soul. It is as if their image is perpetually before us, to recall them favorably whenever we turn to the Lord God, [and] with great and eternal love to call forth for them an overflow of blessing and success. And so, we stand on this high ground, here in the Holy Land, [striving] to draw toward Him, may He blessed, all who have the appetite and desire to go after the Lord our God.⁷⁰

In the body of the letter, R. Menahem Mendel urged his colleagues to maintain their community as a united group under common leadership. His reiteration of the linkage formula, with its interchanging of the image of the *zaddik* with that of the members, may have been intended to remind them that their common oath survived the death of R. Yehiel Mikhel. And so he added at the end of his letter:

And it is known to be a credit to your Torah that I have not despaired of the kindness to us of the Creator, may He be blessed, in bringing glory to the Holy Land. But I await and expect a time of grace, when it will be clear in my mind, with God's help, that the will of the Creator, may He be blessed, approves your coming [here], and I will let you know . . . and it will be when the time and season arrive. It will rise with wings like a dove, flying and running to arrive, God willing, to join in the portion of God in the land of the living.⁷¹

Epilogue

In the year 5544 (1784), R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and the members of his group in Tiberias leased a large court with spacious houses and established a synagogue in one of them.⁷² That tempo-

⁷⁰ Ibid., letter 18, p. 92.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 94.

⁷² See *ibid.*, letter 20, p. 99.

rary respite did not relieve their continuing hardship, however, and they seemed to have reached a dead end. To feed their families, they had to borrow against the charitable distribution funds, and if there were a delay in the rabbinic emissary's return, or if he returned with less funding than had been anticipated, their allocation would have to be used to pay the debt and once again they would be left with no means of support. Even the personal allotment of R. Menaḥem Mendel, which was not used by his family but was dedicated to communal needs, was of no avail. R. Solomon Zalman Vilner reported that "in the house of the rabbi, they live penuriously . . . and our lord, teacher, and rabbi, the *gaon*, may his lamp illuminate, finds it difficult to make any extra expenditure, for his eyes and actions [consider] only matters that affect Israel as a whole and the service of God."⁷³

Winter 5546 (1786) saw an outbreak of plague in Safed. The *Hasidim* who lived there abandoned their property and fled to Tiberias. When the epidemic reached Peqi'in, its Hasidic residents retreated to a cave, and their homes were plundered. By Purim 5546 (1786), the plague was rampant in Tiberias, and the members of the group withdrew to their court for about four months, with no one entering or leaving. Each Saturday toward evening, at the third meal of the Sabbath, they gathered and recounted the praises of the *zaddikim*. The stories crystallized into the kernel of *In Praise of the Besht*, stories that include traditions from the earliest days of Hasidism about the both the Besht himself and the Zolochov dynasty. The circumstances— isolation in the face of plague—recall the circumstances in which the stories in Boccaccio's *Decameron* were created.⁷⁴

With the onset of the plague, R. Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk began to go into decline. In 5547 (1787), he acknowledged to his colleagues how difficult it had become for him to write and explained why he had stopped writing himself:

My sons, it is as if I have fathered you . . . be with me in my situation; never will I forget your kind attentions, for with them you have preserved my life. Even in old age, no height or breadth or horse and chariot shall separate us, but my strength now is not like my strength

⁷³ Ibid., letter 28, p. 136.

⁷⁴ See *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubenstein), "Publisher's Introduction," pp. 23–26; Gries 1992, p. 105. On a related phenomenon, the similarity between the tales of the *Decameron* and a story told by the Besht, see Dan 1975/2, pp. 40–46.

then with respect to detailed letters, and confining my thought to [focus on] the act of writing is something I cannot bear.⁷⁵

Thereafter, he wrote no more, and the letters sent in his name were written by R. Abraham of Kolyshki. In the month of Av 5547 (1787), he took ill; the symptoms—attacks of shivering and fever—suggest he contracted malaria. On Yom Kippur of 5548 (September 22, 1787), he rose from his sickbed and managed to come to the synagogue. At the closing (*Né'ilah*) prayer, his colleagues heard him “cry out in a bitter voice”⁷⁶ the verse “Return, return from your evil ways; why should you die, O house of Israel” (Ezek. 33:11), and they understood that R. Menahem Mendel “recognizes himself marked for death.” Their sense was consistent with the tradition, cited by the printer of *In Praise of the Besht*, R. Israel Yaffee, that R. Menahem Mendel was punished for something that had occurred during the plague epidemic, when the members of the group had withdrawn to the court in Tiberias: “A certain elder was with him, a disciple of the Besht, and he would recite the Besht’s praises. Once, on the Sabbath, the rabbi, the *Maggid*, may the memory of the righteous and holy one be for a blessing, appeared in a dream to the foregoing rabbi [that is, to R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk] and said to him, ‘Are you not my disciple; why do you not recite my praises as well?’”⁷⁷ R. Menahem Mendel agreed, but when he attempted, at the conclusion of the Sabbath, to recite the praises of “the *Maggid*,” the elder began to recite the praises of the Besht, and R. Menahem Mendel fell silent. “Immediately, the rabbi [R. Menahem Mendel] recognized that he would certainly be punished.”

The key to these two traditions lies concealed in chapter 33 of Ezekiel, a verse from which, incorporated into the closing prayer, was shouted out by R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk on Yom Kippur. The chapter deals with the sins of the generation and portrays the prophet as a watchman assigned to alert the House of Israel to the punishments in store for them—death by sword or by plague. If the watchman becomes careless and fails to issue the alert,

⁷⁵ Barnai 1980, letter 39, p. 167. Cf. Ps. 2:7—“I will tell of the decree: the Lord said to me you are My son, this day have I fathered you.” (With respect to “never will I forget your attentions,” cf. Ps. 119:93, where “*piqudekha*,” here rendered “kind attentions,” refers to God’s precepts.—*translator’s note*).

⁷⁶ Ibid., letter 45, p. 182.

⁷⁷ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubenstein), “Publisher’s Introduction,” p. 24.

the sinner will die for his sin, "but I will hold the watchman to account for his blood" (Ezek. 33:6). R. Menaḥem Mendel saw himself as the watchman who had failed to carry out his assignment: he had stood watch in the Land of Israel but his letters to the Diaspora instilled in his associates a vain sense of hope instead of warning them that the time was not one of grace and that they were not on the threshold of redemption. His crying out reflected his sense that his prophecy had led the members of the group astray and brought about the death of R. Yehiel Mikhel, as well as his recognition that the sins of the generation had impeded the redemption.

On the festival of Purim, R. Menaḥem Mendel briefly regained his strength and came to the synagogue to hear the reading of the Book of Esther. But that was the last time he rose from his sick-bed, and his body "was so thin and his flesh so emaciated as to almost be inhuman."⁷⁸ Before dying, he made his colleagues swear to extend true kindness to him and see to the support of his family, so that his son would not have to leave the Land of Israel in pursuit of a living. He explicitly stated that if his son Moses were required to leave the Land of Israel, he would cease "advocating for them in the afterworld."⁷⁹

On the second day of the New Moon (the first day of the month) of Iyyar 5548 (May 6, 1788), R. Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk died. He had lived eleven years in the Land of Israel and died at the age of fifty. With his departure from the scene, disputes over R. Yehiel Mikhel's legacy broke out among his disciples, the members of the original court—among others, between R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady and Rabbi Abraham of Kolyshki, who wanted to exercise leadership from Tiberias over the group. The conflicts led to a schism within the branch of the group in the Land of Israel, between those originating from Reisen and those native to Volhynia-Galicia. After a lengthy period of disagreement, the two groups established separate fund-raising efforts in 5556–5557 (1796–1797). R. Yehiel Mikhel's eldest son, R. Joseph of Yampol,⁸⁰ together with R. Mordecai of Nesukhoyezhe,⁸¹ a prominent disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel, took on the task of raising funds in the Diaspora for the Volhynia-Galicia

⁷⁸ Barnai 1980, letter 43, p. 177.

⁷⁹ Ibid., letter 45, p. 182.

⁸⁰ See Heschel 1952, pp. 128, 130.

⁸¹ See Stiman-Katz 1986, pp. 109–110.

group. After R. Joseph's death, the role of fundraisers for the Land of Israel was assumed by R. Abraham Joshua Heschel of Opatow and R. Yehiel Mikhel's fifth son, R. Mordecai of Kremenets.⁸²

R. Abraham of Kolyshki died in 5570 (1810). During his twenty-two-year leadership of the *Hasidim* in Tiberias and Safed, only a few immigrants had joined the community, apparently members of R. Yehiel Mikhel's original group.⁸³

The year 5574 (1814) saw the first printing of *Fruit of the Land*, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk's book. The publisher was R. Israel Yaffee, known by the sobriquet "the Printer of Kapost."⁸⁴ A year later, he printed *In Praise of the Besht* for the first time. Around 5579 (1819), he immigrated to the Land of Israel with his wife Shprinza and their children. The Yaffees settled in Hebron and were among the founders of the *Habad* charitable organization that operated there until the community was ended by the riots of 5689 (1929).⁸⁵ They were joined in their immigration by the print shop workers and their families, who brought their printing machinery as well. When they disembarked at Acco, however, they were set upon by bandits who looted their property and destroyed the machines. R. Israel Yaffee's plan to establish a modern printing house in the Land of Israel was thus shattered, but family tradition tells that he was the first Jew to plant a vineyard in Hebron.

⁸² See Heschel 1952, pp. 130–131; Tanenbaum 1986, pp. 296–298.

⁸³ In 5555 (1795), R. Issakhar Ber of Zolochov, R. Issakhar Ber of Zaslov, and R. Jacob Samson of Shipitovka, together with his son and with his son-in-law, R. Israel Judah b. R. Hayyim of Krasnow, all immigrated. In doing so, R. Israel Judah carried out the wishes of his father. R. Ze'ev Wolf of Chernyy Ostrov, apparently related to R. Meshullam Feibush Heller by the marriage of their children, immigrated in 5558 (1798), and R. Hayyim Tirrer, another prominent disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel, immigrated in 5574 (1814). See Barnai 1980, letter 60, pp. 229–230; Stiman-Katz 1986, p. 47.

⁸⁴ See *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubenstein), "Introduction," pp. 9–16.

⁸⁵ See Avishar 1970, p. 215.

SUMMARY

FROM ESOTERIC GROUP TO MASS MOVEMENT

Hasidism's Messianic Roots

Hasidism's growth during the four decades between 5500 (1740) and 5541 (1781) has been portrayed in this study as a product of the messianic activity of its founders, who created the kernel of the Hasidic court as we know it today.

Gershom Scholem aptly spoke to that sort of connection at the beginning of his wide-ranging work *Sabbatai Sevi, the Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676*, where he defined the link between the history of Sabbateanism and its theology:

Understanding the Sabbatean movement requires, as far as I can tell, a successful effort to unite the earthly realm—i.e., the domain of history—with the heavenly realm, the domain of Kabbalah, and to interpret each with reference to the other. For “the earthly realm is similar to the heavenly realm,” and, truth be told, they are but a single realm and a single domain—the playing field of human existence, which is neither exclusively intellectual nor exclusively social. Rather, it is multi-faceted, and the same basic tendency appears in each and every facet.¹

Scholem did not apply that method in studying Hasidism, but his comments are well-suited to the conclusions reached in the present study: Hasidism is not a disembodied mind, a collection of ideas and systematic inquiries regarding metaphysical questions, concerned only with the relationship between the individual and his God. But neither is it a mindless body, a mere social movement, organized around dynasties of *zaddikim* that happened to arise in the late eighteenth century and after and that lacked any formulated intellectual underpinnings. The arbitrary distinction between intellectual history and material history, responsible for the artificial line drawn between Hasidism's history and its theology, is a distinction that collapses once the messianic aspect of the movement's origins is revealed.

¹ Scholem 1987, vol. 1, pp. 25–26.

The precursors to a reliable and accurate picture of Hasidism's beginnings were a series of studies whose authors called into question the earlier depictions of those beginnings, whether in Hasidic hagiography or in academic research. Isaiah Tishby and Mendel Piekarz rejected the arbitrary distinction between center and margins of Hasidic thought and broadened the range of personalities and groups, including the kabbalists of the Brody *kloyz*, whose ideas and actions provided fertile ground for Hasidism's growth.² They were joined by Esther Liebes, who emphasized the need "to complete the picture and portray matters differently . . . incorporating into the study of Hasidism's beginnings personalities who have been forgotten or incorrectly interwoven with the history of the movement."³ Similarly questionable is the arbitrary division of Hasidic chronology into generations; in the words of Ada Rapoport-Albert, "the accepted chronological division, which tends to identify three generation of Hasidic leadership—the generation of the Besht, the generation of the *Maggid* [of Mezhirichi], and the generation of his disciples—is arbitrary and somewhat misleading. The generations overlapped one another to a great degree."⁴ All of these were supplemented by the studies of Ra'aya Haran, which challenge the conventional Hasidic historiography—drawn from the hagiographic tradition of the *Habad* court.⁵ Moshe Idel challenged Scholem's assertion that Hasidism neutralized the messianic impulse,⁶ and Elliot Wolfson re-examined the ongoing messianic expressions "that instilled—and continues to instill—in the hearts and minds of pious an intense religious fervor . . . from a phenomenological, as opposed to a historical, point of view."⁷ Wolfson used the term "soteriological" to denote both individual and communal redemption, the latter of course being closely associated with messianism," stating that "although some of the early Hasidic masters do differentiate between individual redemption and that of the nation at large . . . I do not think that the two aspects are ever to be viewed as absolutely separate."⁸ Joseph Dan's study illuminated

² See Tishby 1967; Piekarz 1978.

³ Liebes 1997, p. 45.

⁴ Rapoport-Albert 1990, p. 205.

⁵ See, especially, Haran 1990; Haran 1991.

⁶ Idel 1998/1; Idel 2001.

⁷ Wolfson 1995, p. 228.

⁸ Ibid.

the concept of the Hasidic *zaddik* in its messianic context, using the term “post-messianic” to define the structure of current Hasidic courts,⁹ and Arthur Green, Naftali Loewenthal and Harris Lenowitz described the implicit messianic dimension of Hasidism vis-à-vis the spiritual and social function of the *zaddik* and his need to communicate esoteric truths.¹⁰

A unitary reconstruction of the beginnings of Hasidism would have been impossible without a series of important textual discoveries. Among them are the two versions of the Besht’s first *Holy Epistle*, discovered by Joshua Mondschein and Joseph Rozani, and the signature at the end of *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* discovered by Aryeh Morgenstern. The latter demonstrated the connection between the printing of the Besht’s Epistle and the kabbalist Immanuel Hai Ricchi’s prediction related to redemption in the month of Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781). These discoveries, interwoven with the discovery of the first messianic Hasidic court, led by the “*Maggid*” R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochov, have been presented here as an integrated whole.

*From Herald of Redemption to Redeemer: R. Israel Ba’al Shem Tov and
R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochov*

The book began with a glimpse at the world of R. Israel Ba’al Shem Tov, Hasidism’s legendary founder. The discussion centered on the messianic period of his life, the years 5500–5507 (1740–1746), and concluded that the ascent of the Besht’s soul on Rosh ha-Shanah 5507 (September 1746) represented the end of his messianic period, not its beginning. At the climax of that ascent, the Besht discovered that the Messiah would not come during his lifetime. From then until his death about thirteen years later, the Besht never again anticipated the Messiah’s advent.

That conclusion has considerable importance for the proper understanding of both the Besht’s life and the history of Hasidism. It implies that the Besht exercised his primary influence not during his lifetime but twenty-one years after his death, when the *Holy Epistle*, with its account of his soul’s ascent, was printed by followers

⁹ See Dan 1998/1, pp. 118–177; Dan 1999; Dan 2000; Dan 2001.

¹⁰ See Green 1987; Loewenthal 1990, pp. 6–14; Lenowitz 1998, pp. 199–225.

of R. Yehiel Mikhel, the *Maggid* of Zolochov. They printed the second, later, version of the Epistle, which included only that portion of the Messiah's response that they were able to carry out. It follows that the members of the group saw themselves as partners in the messianic effort that began in 5500 (1740) and was expected to reach its pinnacle in their days. The unexpected link between the printing of the Besht's Epistle and the esoteric band of kabbalists that took shape in Brody under R. Yehiel Mikhel's leadership highlights the place of that group as the first Hasidic court and establishes its leader as Hasidism's first *zaddik*.

The question of R. Yehiel Mikhel's position among the great Hasidic masters has yet to be exhaustively treated, in part because other personalities, such as R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye and the *Maggid* R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, have not yet been the subject of critical biographies, unencumbered by later hagiography. Nevertheless, and despite the "black holes" that remain in the history of Hasidism, the question can be considered afresh, taking account of the following facts:

1. R. Yehiel Mikhel was not a latter-day *zaddik*. He lived from 5486 to 5541 (1726–1781) and was a contemporary of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, the *Maggid* R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, and R. Pinhas of Korets.
2. R. Yehiel Mikhel was a student of the Besht during the years 5515–5520 (1755–1760); the Besht was then in his final years and R. Yehiel Mikhel was in his thirties. It is clear that those ties had a wide-ranging influence on the character of the first Hasidic court, founded by R. Yehiel Mikhel.
3. The linkage ceremony conducted by R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples in Brody on Shavuot of 5537 (1777) took place before the courts of the *zaddikim* and the institution of the Hasidic "*zaddik*" had crystallized into the fixed pattern known from the nineteenth century. It follows that R. Yehiel Mikhel did not act in accordance with some existing format; on the contrary, his character and practices were the source and the model for the doctrine of the Hasidic *zaddik* and for the courts of *zaddikim* in the ensuing generations.
4. The centrality of the esoteric court in Brody, its large number of disciples, and its connection to most of the prominent Hasidic personalities all attest to the decisive role played by R. Yehiel

Mikhel as a leader and guide. And the support lent by important bands of kabbalists—the heads of the Brody *kloyz*, the denizens of the study hall in Mezhirichi, and the kabbalists of the *kloyz* in Ostrog—to the printing of kabbalistic books shows that the messianic hopes in anticipation of the month of Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781) extended beyond R. Yehiel Mikhel and his small band of disciples and encompassed wider, ever-expanding, circles.

Uncovering the esoteric quality of the group led by R. Yehiel Mikhel opens a window through which basic questions can be considered afresh. One such question is whether this was the first such fellowship in the history of Hasidism or whether a group of Hasidic kabbalists may have been established before the years 5532–5541 (1772–1781). The Besht's Second Epistle refers, to be sure, to "my fellowship,"¹¹ and *In Praise of the Besht* tells of "the Besht's selected few of high stature,"¹² but it remains necessary to clarify the degree to which those descriptions can be said to refer to a characteristic band of kabbalists.

To all appearances, it would be wrong to identify "the Besht's selected few" described in *In Praise of the Besht* with the individuals who were close to the Besht, such as R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, R. Aryeh Leib the Rebuker of Polonnoye, and R. Gershon of Kutov. To establish beyond all doubt that the Besht established a typical association of messianic kabbalists, it is necessary to check for the presence of several characteristics that bond the members of the group, such as a linkage experience, a shared goal, a secret oath, a set of rules, and fixed rituals. Also significant is the identification of the leader with Moses and of the members with other persons of note, sometimes as their reincarnations.

Some of these components can in fact be found in reports about the Besht. His master and teacher, Ahijah of Shiloh, is a wondrous figure in the mystery literature, tied to the coming of the Messiah. In a sense, his appearance recalls the "*maggid*" of R. Joseph Karo; both of them are messengers from the supernal realms whose authority bridges a gap in the historical chain of transmission. Similarly, the ascents of the Besht's soul come to provide a response to an historical

¹¹ Besht's Epistle, in *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* 100a.

¹² *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubenstein), story 36.

tragedy, as modeled by the *Heikhalot* literature's framework story of the group's gathering, and thereby to answer the question of End-reckoners in all generations—"When will the Master come?"

On the other hand, the historical accounts of the Besht and his close circle lack decisive proof of the remaining characteristics. The Besht's Epistle shows that he saw himself as the herald of redemption, not the redeemer. And the belief that he was the reincarnation of R. Simeon b. Yohai is nowhere hinted at in the Epistle, nor is it to be found in the writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye. That belief is first mentioned in the "Writer's Introduction" to *In Praise of the Besht*, and it is fair to assume that its source is late and its roots hagiographic. Even the method of soul-repair used in the ascent of the Besht's soul to the supernal worlds evidences a personal-individualistic type of activity rather than activity in the context of a group. Two further elements prominently associated with the Besht in Hasidic conduct literature—a mystical set of rules and "speech of the *shekhinah*"—are not, in fact, part of his legacy, having originated in the study hall of R. Yehiel Mikhel. Moreover, the early layer of hagiography in *In Praise of the Besht* suggests that healing powers, a quality of charismatic leaders, are attributed to the Besht by reason of his professional skill as a "master of the name" rather than on account of his mystical standing. And an additional quality—the ability to discern the transgressions of others—is attributed in *In Praise of the Besht* specifically to R. Isaac of Drogo bych, the father of R. Yehiel Mikhel.

It thus appears that we cannot determine with any certainty that the Besht stood at the head of an association of kabbalists true to any known model. His "selected few" may have been members of a single association that was constituted for a defined purpose and whose members were united by a shared oath; but they may also have been a group that arose after the fact from a circle of acquaintances and that acquired the characteristics of an association of kabbalists only in the later literary treatment of *In Praise of the Besht*. Which perception is accurate is a question shrouded in obscurity and calling for further analysis.

Beyond that, the identity of the members of R. Yehiel Mikhel's association and of others reasonably believed to have numbered among them requires a fresh look at the widespread assumption that historical Hasidism began within a group of disciples centered, until the beginning of 5533 (1772), on R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi.

In particular, there is reason to question the portrayal of R. Dov Ber's position within the group of disciples, who were also disciples of R. Yehiel Mikhel. It should be emphasized that R. Dov Ber died on 19 Kislev 5533 (December 15, 1772), and there is no evidence of his involvement shortly before his death in any matters related to an independent prayer house, adoption of kabbalistic liturgical practices, or independent kosher slaughter—the factors that provoked the ban on *hasidim* issued in Brody in Sivan 5532 (June–July 1772). And, of course, R. Dov Ber could not have been involved in the activities that took place after his death and that shaped and established Hasidism as a movement: the immigration (*Aliyyah*) to the Land of Israel in 5537 (1777); the kabbalistic linkage event on the festival of Shavuot in that same year; and the spate of printing kabbalistic and Hasidic texts that began in 5538 (1778), immediately after the linkage event, and that generated the intense hostility that led to the bans imposed on the *hasidim* during the months of Av and Elul 5541 (July–September 1781).

Two traditions, to be sure, highlight the position of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi as master of the generation within Hasidism: R. Solomon Lutsker's introduction to *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (*Maggid Devarav le-Ya'akov*), printed in Korets in 5541 (1781), and the *Habad* tradition. But R. Solomon Lutsker's work is a literary introduction that does not necessarily reflect historical truth,¹³ and the *Habad* tradition's sources are hagiographic. Meanwhile, the present study has uncovered the systematic masking in Hasidic writings of the name and identity of the *Maggid* of Zolochew—at first for esoteric reasons and, later, out of simple ignorance. So, too, the sobriquet “the *Maggid*,” which is often understood in error to refer to “the *Maggid*” of Mezhirichi (and is sometimes even coupled with R. Dov Ber's name) when its intended object is “the *Maggid*” of Zolochew.

Accordingly, detailed elucidation of the positions of the two *Maggidim* is essential to any clarification of their roles in the origins of Hasidism. And that elucidation cannot be complete until our information about R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, as limited as it may be, is assembled and analyzed in a critical-historical study that distinguishes between hagiography and historical fact.

¹³ See below, pp. 316–320.

Finally, we must recall that Hasidism from the outset comprised not one written tradition, but two. The second was that of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye; and it, like the Zolochov tradition, was preserved not only in speculative writings but also in the stories of *In Praise of the Besht*.¹⁴ But in contrast to the Zolochov tradition, R. Jacob Joseph's was the fruit of one man's labor. Although he had students and supporters, they never founded a dynasty of *zaddikim* nor did they organize Hasidic courts. Moreover, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye's writings lack the messianic impulse that was the moving force behind the founding of R. Yehiel Mikhel's band.

R. Yehiel Mikhel's Circle and the Question of Hasidic Messianism

Whether there existed a messianic impulse in Hasidism is a question not necessarily connected to that of the historical link between Hasidism and Sabbateanism. Gershom Scholem took the view that Hasidism played down historical redemption and highlighted personal-spiritual redemption, and he regarded that process as a sort of antithesis to Sabbateanism and the crisis of heresy that it had brought about. But he never denied the possibility of an historical connection between the remaining Sabbateans in Eastern Europe and the early *hasidim* who lived in that region. On the contrary, it is entirely possible to hold the view that historical Hasidism was formed out of a messianic impulse, remaining tied to the canonical tradition of mystical messianic groups but not to messianic movements that had led to heresy.

Overall positions on such questions as messianism within Hasidism tend to be clarified when new light is shed on their underlying premises.¹⁵ Accordingly, when the study of Hasidism is enriched by new discoveries that reveal the movement's messianic roots, there is created an opportunity to reexamine how the movement is understood. It is particularly important to compare the first Hasidic court to the earlier messianic movements that appeared in Jewish history from the sixteenth century on:

¹⁴ See Reiner 1994.

¹⁵ In that regard, see Joseph Dan's comprehensive critique, Dan 1993/2.

1. *Messianic movements subordinate individual redemption to that of the community; the former will take place in the context of the latter.* On the basis of this criterion, Gershom Scholem determined that Hasidism at its inception was not a messianic movement, for the redemption of the individual's soul, through "communion" with God, took the place of national redemption and messianic repair (*tiqqun*).¹⁶ But that conclusion is of doubtful validity with respect to the messianic period in the Besht's life, when he strove to bring the Messiah for the benefit of all Israel, as his First Epistle suggests; and it is certainly inconsistent with the linkage of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples, which was directed to both the historical redemption of Israel and the repair of the entire world. These *tiqqunim* are carried out through an intense spiritual effort, in which the *zaddik* and his disciples take part; and the gathering of the disciples represents or symbolizes the congregation of Israel, whose redemption is the purpose of the exercise. It appears that the Besht's failure did not result in the messianic aspirations being suppressed; instead, it crystallized them and fashioned new mechanisms for further messianic activity. Thus, the hopes for redemption were developed within the consciousness of the ensuing generation, reaching their pinnacle in the activity of R. Yehiel Mikhel, the first Hasidic *zaddik*.

2. *A messianic movement characteristically focuses the yearning for redemption on a particular person, believed by himself and his disciples to be the embodiment or realization of the Messiah.* Gershom Scholem correctly held that the Besht's Epistle, measured against this criterion, could not be seen to express a classical messianic conception:¹⁷ the Besht, to be sure, wanted to be the herald of redemption; but the very fact that his Epistle describes his encounter with the Messiah shows that the Besht did not see himself in that role or as being the Messiah's soul, his reincarnation, or anything similar. Nor does the way in which the Besht understood himself to herald the redemption square with the image of the Messiah taken as an embodiment of divine power.¹⁸ Messianic theology portrays the Messiah in terms of the

¹⁶ See Scholem 1971, pp. 194–196.

¹⁷ See Scholem 1971, pp. 182–184; Scholem 1976/1, vol. 2, pp. 287–324.

¹⁸ In his Second Epistle, the Besht portrays the Messiah as an advocate pleading before the Throne of Glory on Israel's behalf and Satan as the prosecutor, accusing Israel. The two are presented as thesis and antithesis, a sort of Hebrew

world of the *sefirot*, as a sort of human embodiment of the *sefirah* of foundation or of splendor,¹⁹ and the Besht is never portrayed in that manner.

Still, the messianic element in early Hasidism gained expression through two figures—the Besht and R. Yehiel Mikhel, *Maggid* of Zolochov—and conclusions about one cannot be drawn from the other. R. Yehiel Mikhel's style, drastically different from the Besht's, follows the messianic mode, recognized since the sixteenth century, in which more than one kabbalist has connected himself to the figure of the Messiah as an embodiment of a divine *sefirah*. A clear indication of that is provided by R. Yehiel Mikhel's sobriquet "soul of *shaddai*" and his status as a flesh-and-blood embodiment of the *sefirah* of foundation, the *sefirah* of the *zaddik*.

3. *A messianic movement focuses the hope for redemption on the Land of Israel, the return to which is seen as a means both for hastening the redemption and for actively realizing it.* Scholem believed that Hasidism at its outset neutralized the messianic element and pursued redemption of the individual *within* the Diaspora, not *from* it.²⁰ His conclusion may be accurate with respect to the writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, though it is possible that even R. Jacob Joseph's doctrines took shape only after 5507 (1746), influenced by the Besht's failure to bring the Messiah. That being as it may, Scholem's conclusion is certainly wrong with respect to the messianic episode in the life of the Besht, which began with his effort to immigrate to the Land of Israel in 5500 (1740). He was not discouraged by his failure to do so, and he returned to the Diaspora to repair the sparks that had been left there from the days of Shabbetai Zevi. The immigration to Jerusalem of his brother-in-law, R. Gershon of Kutov, in anticipation of the year 5508 (1747–1748), shows that the two of them firmly believed that the Besht's effort at *tiqqun* would succeed this time and that the Messiah would arrive speedily. Only the information revealed to the Besht during the ascent of his soul put an end to their hope to be reunited in the Land of Israel.

version of Christ and Antichrist. That picture leaves no place for the additional figure of a redeemer, and certainly not a redeemer embodied in human form.

¹⁹ See Scholem 1987, vol. 2, "Messiah," index; Lenowitz 1998, "Soul of Messiah," index.

²⁰ See Scholem 1971, p. 195.

In 5537 (1777), R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples likewise dispatched an advance force, a group that immigrated to the Land of Israel to hasten the redemption and herald it to their brethren who remained behind in the Diaspora. This was an organized immigration with a defined goal—to redeem and be redeemed—and it represents an important link in the chain of messianic immigrations to the Land Israel that began in the sixteenth century, in the generation that followed the expulsion from Spain, and continued unbroken until the nineteenth.

4. *Messianic movements transform the yearnings for redemption from a utopian vision to a driving force that acts in within historical reality.*²¹ According to Scholem, Hasidism at its inception neutralized these aspirations and shifted them from history to the utopian sphere. But that assessment of the situation does not fit the Besht's spiritual activity up to 5507 (1746), and it certainly is at odds with the activities of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples, who functioned within their historical reality out of a belief that End-reckonings were accurate and that the redemptive process would indeed unfold at a known time, soon to come. In effect, their actions were intended to carry out the messianic program dictated from on high: their dispute over the Korets slaughter-house was intended to repair the souls of sinners in anticipation of the Last Day; their book-printing project was an attempt to reveal the mysteries of the Torah in anticipation of the redemption; and their immigration to the Land of Israel was intended to greet the Messiah, who was destined to reveal himself in the Land of Israel in the month of Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781).

Scholem suggests as well that the disparaging allusions to messianism in many Hasidic writings are directed against the historical Sabbatean movement.²² But here, too, he is wide of the mark. A more reasonable view is that the people alluded to, the targets of the criticism, are not the Sabbatean believers but the bearers of the messianic impulse within Hasidism itself. One should not be misled by the fact that such allusions appear even in writings by members of the "sect": with the death of R. Yehiel Mikhel, most members of the group seem to have become disenchanted with the messianic

²¹ See *ibid.*, p. 185.

²² See *ibid.*, p. 198.

hope they had placed in him. Their comments reflect the disillusionment of old age, masking by condemnation their youthful effort with its bitter lesson.

Zaddik, Messiah, and the Neutralization of the Messianic Element (A)

The Hasidic movement, as presented in this study, originated from a circle of messianic Kabbalists, led by a charismatic leader—R. Yehiel Mikhel—and motivated by a clear although esoteric vision of corporeal and celestial redemption. This classical form of messianism corresponds with the description of the Hasidic messianism as presented by Moshe Idel. Based on the diverse nature of Jewish messianism, Idel suggested adopting a broader point of view and legitimating individual and communal redemption as forms of messianism.²³ Criticizing Scholem, Dinur and Tishby, Idel argues that all three were unified by a common “proposition that messianism is solely a national, apocalyptic type of redemption,”²⁴ while debating only whether or not Hasidism followed this path: “the reduction of messianism to historical or external action, which unifies Scholem and Tishby reduces the equal importance of the inner life as a significant criterion for determining the acuteness of a given phenomenon.”²⁵

According to Idel’s analysis, Scholem did not find a mechanism with which Hasidism had neutralized the messianic impulse, but rather neutralized the messianic meaning of Hasidic texts. And although Idel agrees with Dinur and Tishby that Hasidism has messianic elements, he claims that those elements cannot be oversimplified into a sole model of historical redemption. Being a late stage in the development of Kabbalah, Hasidism is “a cumulative project”²⁶ that absorbed various models of mysticism and messianism and melted

²³ Idel 1998/1, p. 242.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 213.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 244. See also Scholem 1971, p. 1: “Judaism, in all of its forms and manifestations, has always maintained a concept of redemption as an event which takes place publicly, on the stage of history and within the community. It is an occurrence which takes place in the visible world and which cannot be conceived apart from such a visible appearance. In contrast, Christianity conceived of redemption as an event in the spiritual and unseen realm, an event which is reflected in the soul, in the private world of each individual, and which effects an inner transformation which need not correspond to anything outside.”

²⁶ Ibid., p. 225.

them into new forms. In particular, he underscores the complicated model of messianism as reflected in the image of the Hasidic *zaddik*, who ascends to celestial realms by mystical meditation—*devekut*—in the letters of the prayers, and there acquires magical knowledge and practices, which he transforms into powerful instruments used for the sake of messianic redemption. Hence, the *zaddik* is portrayed “not only as a perfect pipe but also as a pump,”²⁷ elevating human prayers to the upper world and bringing down the divine influx in order to redeem the souls. The attribution of supernatural knowledge to the Hasidic *zaddik* bears some similarity to the Renaissance’s Magus, both avoided witchcraft and performed *magia naturalis* or “sympathetic magic” that worked through interactions with supernatural powers based on previous connections and affinities.²⁸

Idel uses these observations to determine that the dialectic nature of the *zaddik*’s actions does not neutralize messianic hopes but materializes them, enabling his followers to experience the reality of individual salvation and communal redemption: “now the whole community by its spiritualization of ritual life becomes the means of transmission of the divine power as part of the messianic state of being,”²⁹ to the point that the Messiah is perceived as “the culmination of their ideal of leadership . . . the Messiah is the collective community of righteous, a more comprehensive and superior version of the ordinary leader of the Hasidic group, the *zaddik*.”³⁰

Offering this perspective on the messianic aspects of Hasidism, Idel does not ignore the historical and corporeal aspects of messianic movements.³¹ It is no coincidence therefore that his conclusions correspond with the major lines of this study. In fact, most of his quotations are based on the writings of the Zlotchover School, and he denotes the Besht and R. Yehiel Mikhel as the two Hasidic masters who used the magical technique of meditating on the divine names

²⁷ Ibid., p. 228.

²⁸ See Idel 2001, pp. 150–151; Idel 1989, pp. 103–104; Pickarz 1999, pp. 94–106, 192–194.

²⁹ Idel 1998/1, p. 242.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 227.

³¹ See Ibid., p. 265: “Despite my focusing on the inner aspects of messianism and my pointing out an overemphasis on the public, I do not assume that those public moments and movements are less important religious phenomena, but believe that a more balanced attitude should be adopted by scholars in order to mete justice to the complexity of the religious and historical events related to messianism.”

for messianic purposes, and thus portrays them as the earliest prototypes of the Hasidic *zaddik*.

Idel's conclusions should be appreciated in particular with regard to the interpretation of Hasidic texts: he relates to the word "Messiah" and to phrases such as "the stature of the Messiah"³² and an "aspect of the Messiah"³³ literally before metaphorically or symbolically. Avoiding an unconscious mistake of allowing presumptions to prevent an unbiased encounter with Hasidic texts, which failed some of his predecessors, Idel's attitude toward the literal level of the texts is essential to the understanding of these texts. Tracing the footprints of messianic mysteries, it seems that the most esoteric secrets sometimes surface . . .

However, the weaker aspect of this methodology is the relatively minor attention paid to the inner history of Hasidic texts. Although the texts reflect the opinions of the Hasidic writers regardless of their exact time or period, it is important to place them on the sequence of more than two centuries of Hasidic compositions. Differentiating early Hasidic stories with a core of authenticity from late hagiography, and identifying the different layers of the Hasidic contemplative and speculative literature, is essential to the reconstruction of the factual infrastructure of Hasidism, which enables the theoretical discussions. The synchronization of the external history of Hasidism with the inner development of ideas and texts allows the understanding of the ways, in which messianism was experienced and defied by various Hasidic generations.

Zaddik, Messiah, and the Neutralization of the Messianic Element (B)

The most significant aspect, in which Hasidism had not neutralized the messianic impulse but rather preserved it, is the doctrine of the Hasidic *zaddik*. That doctrine was crystallized in the court of R. Yehiel Mikhel—the first *Zaddik* of Hasidism—and was passed on to his disciples and their descendants, the founders of the first Hasidic courts. Ever since, these courts have been organized in accordance with a fixed plan, centered on the "*zaddik*," the leader of the flock,

³² Ibid., p. 221.

³³ Ibid., p. 231.

also called "*admor*"—an acronym for "our lord, master, and teacher" (אדמו"ר, מורנו ורבינו).

Joseph Dan recently suggested the term "post messianic" to define the nature of the Hasidic court.³⁴ Dan uses the term to denote that the external structure of the Hasidic courts reflects an inner spiritual post messianic structure. The earthly leadership of the *zaddik* reflects a hidden spiritual position, and his soul is a ladder connecting the souls of his flock to God. The *zaddik* is the soul of the congregation, and his position among his disciples corresponds to the soul's position within the human body. This relationship is evidenced by the mutual dependence between the *zaddik* and his disciples: he represents them before God and elevates their prayers before the Throne of Glory, but he is also dependent on them, for their faith in him fortifies his soul and elevates it to the supernal worlds. An additional aspect of their relationship pertains to repairing sins and purifying the soul: the sins of the *hasidim* are reflected in the *zaddik's* soul, and when they commune with him they gain atonement and their souls are purified; but if their sins so weighty that the *zaddik* stumbles in the course of repairing them, his soul may be given up in exchange for theirs.

At first blush, Dan says, the Hasidic "*zaddik*" seems antithetical to a "messiah," for the dynasties of *zaddikim* continue from father to son, rooted in history and promising continuity. The *zaddik* provides confidence and redemption for his disciples within historical existence, just as his father provided an anchor for their fathers and as his son will do for their sons. This implies sanctification of a conservative way of life and hostility to any change or revolution. The Messiah, on the other hand, puts an end to history, changes the ways of the world, and leaves no room for leaders other than him. To state it differently, when the Messiah comes, the salvation afforded by the *zaddik* to his disciples will no longer be needed.

But the contrast between *zaddik* and Messiah turns out to be only superficial, in Dan's words: "the world that surrounds the *zaddik* is in fact a redeemed world. The divine influx is deposited in the hands of the *zaddik* and his followers, if they are worthy of it . . . can enjoy

³⁴ See Dan 1998/1, p. 152; Dan 2000, p. 307. See also Dan 1996.

³⁵ Dan 2000, p. 307.

³⁶ Dan 1998/1, p. 175. See also Lenowitz 1998, p. 7: "Christianity in fact ceased to be a messianic movement and became instead a revitalization movement."

it for eternity.”³⁵ Moreover, the Hasidic doctrine of the *zaddik* “affords vitality and endurance to the fragments of the Sabbatean doctrine of the Messiah . . . When a distinguished personality emerges, concentrating around itself a force-field that transcends the limits of the ‘fragment’—that is, the narrow community—we see a tendency for the fragments to come together and for the figure of the Messiah in its Sabbatean mold—the apocalyptic Messiah, redeemer of the world and its fullness—to be reconstituted.”³⁶

The term “post messianic” uncovers the original status of the Hasidic *zaddik* as the nation’s redeemer that left its mark in the sobriquets “*zaddik* of the generation,” “the true *zaddik*,” or “the supernal *zaddik*” frequently used by *Hasidim* in various courts when speaking of “their” *zaddik*. So, for example, a prominent Hasidic *admor* of the nineteenth century, R. Israel of Ruzhin, glorified himself as “the *zaddik* of the generation.” That self-glorification is connected to the messianic pretension that was fostered in his court.³⁷ The disciples of R. Nahman of Bratslav, the Besht’s great-grandson, similarly referred to him as “the true *zaddik*,” and here, too, the designation was tied to a belief in his messianic nature.³⁸ And in our day, the *Habad Hasidim* claim that the Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Menahem Mendel Schneerson, is the “rebbe” of all Israel; for a Hasidic *admor*, when he reverts to his original role as Messiah, is not the Messiah for his community alone.

The doctrine of the Hasidic *zaddik* is a manifestation as well of the tradition regarding the origin of the Messiah’s soul. In the Talmud, the Messiah is termed “*bar naflei*”³⁹—“son of the *nefilim*,” who, according to Genesis, were heroes or men of renown born of quasi-divine fathers (*benei ha-elohim*) and human mothers.⁴⁰ In kabbalah, the idea of the Messiah’s divine origin developed into a hidden, highly potent mystery that was not to be expressed except through mystical symbols borrowed from the system of *sefirot*. Shabbetai Zevi, who drew messianic ideas from the Kabbalah, took a further step toward realizing the notion of the Messiah’s divine nature: he publicly and extravagantly lauded his own soul and claimed that it embodied the *sefirah* of splendor—the sixth in the array of divine *sefirot*, symbolizing the heart of the divinity. He therefore wore on his finger a ring

³⁷ See Assaf 1997, “Messiah,” index.

engraved with the Tetragrammaton and “*shaddai*,” the divine names that he ascribed to himself.

Similarly, R. Yehiel Mikhel, Hasidism’s first *zaddik*, referred to his soul as “the soul of *shaddai*” and saw in it an embodiment of the *sefirah* of foundation, the *zaddik*’s *sefirah*. This idea was preserved in the writings of his disciples, who founded the exoteric courts of the *zaddikim*, and it gains expression in their analytic considerations of the concept of the *zaddik*. To this day, when *Hasidim* of a particular court speak of their “*zaddik*,” they refer not only to his moral status but, even more, to his status as a potent divine being, a sort of earthly representative of the divinity, who mediates between them and God.⁴¹ The echo of this idea can also be found in the *zaddik*’s attributions “king,” “high priest,” and “prophet,” as Arthur Green pointed out.⁴²

It is therefore hardly surprising that with the outbreak of messianism in the *Habad* court, the belief in the *zaddik*-Messiah and his divine essence was given outward expression. R. David Berger has recently claimed that a faction within *Habad* has been propagating the following variant of the *Habad* slogan: “May our lord, master, and creator [instead of ‘teacher’] the King Messiah live forever.”⁴³ If his quotation is accurate, it can be said that the belief in “the *zaddik* of the generation” as an embodiment of divine essence, which was concealed in the court of R. Yehiel Mikhel and its successors, has been transformed within one faction of *Habad* into an open, public, recitation of “our creator.”

A similar progression can be seen in Hasidism’s attitude toward the Land of Israel. R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples saw the Land of Israel as the only place where redemption was possible, as evidenced by some of them embarking on immigration in 5537 (1777) as an advance force and others planning to do the same upon the

³⁸ See Weiss 1958; Piekarz 1972, pp. 56–82; Green 1981, esp. pp. 176–211.

³⁹ *Sanhedrin* 96b.

⁴⁰ See Gen. 6:1–4. The noun “*nefilim*” comes from the Hebrew verb “*N.F.L*” (נָפַל), literally means “to fall.” It is linguistically connected to two contradictory figures: “*Nefil*”—a giant, and “*Nefel*”—an embryo that did not survive in his mother’s womb. On the demonic nature attributed to the “*nefilim*,” see Liebes 2003/2, pp. 282–283.

⁴¹ See Dan 1998/1, p. 159.

⁴² See Green 1987.

⁴³ David Berger, “*Moreinu ve-rabbeinu, melekh ha-mashiah*,” in *Ha-Aretz*, 11 January 1998, p. B3.

Messiah revealing himself at the end of 5541 (1781). And despite the failure of that effort, the death of R. Yehiel Mikhel, and the eclipse of the Brody court, some of his disciples nevertheless immigrated to the Land of Israel. The special interest in the Land was expressed as well through support for its residents: two of R. Yehiel Mikhel's sons—R. Joseph of Yampol and R. Mordecai of Kremenets—were named chiefs of “the Volhynia Fund for the Land of Israel”; and, with the development of the disciples' courts and those of their descendants, the support of the Diaspora *zaddikim* for the residents of the Land of Israel became an important part of their role as spiritual leaders. Moreover, throughout the nineteenth century, Hasidic *admorim* in the Diaspora took pains to establish their communities in the Land of Israel as well as in Europe. That process began with the *Habad* organization founded in Hebron in 5579 (1819) and included the group of disciples (including three of his grandchildren) dispatched by the *Admor* of Slonim to the Hasidic community in Tiberias.⁴⁴

The attitude of other Hasidic *admorim* to the Land of Israel, however, underwent a transformation. For them, the Land ceased to be an actual place, which one should actively strive to settle, and became instead a spiritual entity, symbolizing the future redemption.⁴⁵ This change progressed in tandem with the development of the *zaddik's* position as holy man, for the holy man became a surrogate for the holy place. In the nineteenth century, the *zaddik* was portrayed as a sanctuary, and his court came to be seen as a miniature Land of Israel, the focus of festival pilgrimages and the goal sought by his *hasidim*. That attitude reached its extreme expression during the Holocaust, when some *zaddikim* persuaded their disciples to stay put and not flee, for the *zaddik's* proximity would protect them from all ill.

This ambivalent view of the Land of Israel appears as well in the variegated attitudes of Hasidic *admorim* toward Zionist settlement. Most of them opposed Zionism, repelled by its secularism and suspicious of hastening the End, but some held high the sanctity of the Land of Israel and saw Zionism as a way to fulfill the hope of returning to it. Prominent within the latter group was R. Isaiah Shapira

⁴⁴ See Sursky 2000, vol. 1, pp. 266–284.

⁴⁵ See Jacobson 1978–1979; Idel 1998.

(5651–5705; 1891–1945), known as the “Pioneer Admor.”⁴⁶ Even though he was a scion of the *maggid* R. Israel of Kozienice and R. Jacob Isaac, “the Seer of Lublin,” he declined to serve as *admor* and in 5674 (1914) he immigrated to the Land of Israel as a pioneer of the Second Immigration. He was among the founders of “*Ha-Po‘el Ha-Mizrahi*,” a movement that promoted agricultural settlement by religious pioneers. In 5689 (1929) he participated in the founding of the Bayit ve-Gan neighborhood in Jerusalem, and in 5703 (1943), he settled in Kefar Pines. Meanwhile, during the 1920s, his friend, R. Judah Rozani (of the family of the Ventzhin dynasty) organized a group of *hasidim* that purchased properties in the Land of Israel and planned to settle on them. Following the Arab riots of 5689 (1929), he settled on abandoned Motza, most of whose residents had been murdered, and became a farmer. Additional groups of *hasidim* established Kefar Hasidim, Kefar *Habad*, and others.

The spread of messianic fervor among *Habad hasidim* at the end of the twentieth century is particularly instructive from this point of view as well, for it brings to the surface Hasidism’s original stance toward the Land of Israel as the only place in which redemption was possible. In R. Menahem Mendel Shneerson’s waning days, his disciples in Kefar *Habad* built a precise replica of his house in Brooklyn, believing that he was destined to immigrate speedily to the Land of Israel and be revealed there as the Messiah. Yet he could not immigrate until he was, in fact, revealed as the Messiah, lest he be disclosed in the Land of Israel to be one who, after all, is not the Messiah.

The contemporary messianic fervor among *Habad hasidim* thus appears to be simply an echo of the messianic impulse that was the moving force at Hasidism’s inception but was suppressed after R. Yehiel Mikhel’s death because of the messianic program’s failure and, at least as much, because of Hasidism’s rapid transition from esoteric group to mass movement. That transition took only a single generation; some of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s disciples, or their sons, established courts over which the *zaddik* held undisputed sway. The *zaddik* became a surrogate for the Messiah and he or one of his descendants would be revealed as Messiah only in the distant future. The demand for immediate redemption by and on account of the

⁴⁶ On R. Isaiah Shapira, see Don-Yihia 1961.

zaddik was secreted beneath the surface, breaking forth only at rare intervals and in unusual circumstances.⁴⁷

We thus can see the anachronism in the claim that the dynastic structure of Hasidism, which developed during the nineteenth century, shows that Hasidism from the outset neutralized the messianic element. It is as fallacious as the conclusion that the avarice of the medieval church demonstrates Jesus' positive attitude toward material wealth. It is the opposite, of course, that is true: Jesus abhorred the accumulation of wealth, saying, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19:24). Nevertheless, the church that bears his name was not deterred from accumulating vast wealth in medieval Europe.

An analogous historical and intellectual revolution took place within Hasidism. In its transition from a secretive movement to one more open, it suppressed the messianic impulse that beat within it at the outset and it became integrated into the Orthodox stream of Judaism. The assemblage of a secretive group, attested by various encoded writings, opened the door to a wide, popular, mass movement, divided into many sects. Except for a few disclosures, controversial even within Hasidism itself, it no longer sought to breach the boundary of history and move into the realm of messianic redemption.

⁴⁷ It appears that a confluence of circumstances contributed to the outburst of messianic belief within the contemporary *Habad* movement. First and foremost was the sense that the dynasty was terminating, for the Lubavitcher Rebbe was childless. The problem of continuity was resolved by recourse to the prophecy, attributed to *Habad's* founder, R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, that the Messiah would come in the days of the seventh *admor*, who was R. Menahem Mendel Shneerson. Similarly, the history of *Habad*—encompassing its nearly total destruction in Stalin's time and its rising from the ashes in the United States—echoes the fate of the Jewish people in our day, from the Holocaust to the establishment of the State of Israel. The resulting charged atmosphere generated a messianic outburst that responded to fears about the end of the dynasty by offering a national redeemer and general redemption, placing reliance on open miracles. See also Elior 1998.

PART TWO

ANTHOLOGY

DISCIPLES AND WRITINGS

This anthology compiles in a single place the various findings concerning the members of R. Yehiel Mikhel's school and their writings. For the reader's convenience, the anthology is arranged alphabetically by name of the person discussed; where appropriate, the names of his works are included as well. An exception is made for the five sons of R. Yehiel Mikhel, who are presented in the anthology's opening article.

R. Yehiel Mikhel, the *Maggid* of Zolochov, left no written works. His principal teachings were oral and can be studied through the writings of his disciples, who would quote him directly, showing thereby that they had heard his remarks directly from him. We have two listings of these disciples: one was included by R. Nathan Neta of Kolbiel in his book *Great Waters (Mayim Rabbim)*, published in Warsaw in 5659 (1899); the second formed part of Isaac Matityahu Tanenbaum's work *To'afot Harim—The Zolochov Dynasty*, published in Jerusalem in 5746 (1986). As a general rule, both writers counted as disciples of R. Yehiel Mikhel those individuals who quoted his words as statements they themselves had heard. That criterion is applied here as well, to include individuals who quoted R. Yehiel Mikhel at first-hand. Also included, however, are individuals whose ties with R. Yehiel Mikhel came to light in the course of the research here conducted but remain to be fully clarified.

The disciples' writings create a rich tapestry in which the Zolochov tradition in Hasidic literature is preserved. They are supplemented by the stories of the Zolochov dynasty included in *In Praise of the Besht (Shivhei ha-Besht)*, which recount the family's history over three or even four generations. This unprecedented wealth of material must be compared to the paucity of historical information about the origins and family backgrounds of other figures regarded as the progenitors of Hasidism, such as the Besht himself and R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi. My research is grounded in this abundance of material, and, had it not been preserved, it is doubtful that so many disciples could have been represented in this anthology or those that preceded it.

When the writings of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples are examined as part of an historical totality whose components illuminate one another, two findings stand out. First, R. Yehiel Mikhel's powerful presence in the compositions themselves stands in stark contrast to the nearly total absence of his name from their title pages—where other figures, such as the Besht and R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, are named as the authors' teachers—and from the approbations written by the disciples for one another's books. A conspiracy of silence seems to have surrounded the relationship between master and disciples, to the point of deliberately concealing his identity and referring to other individuals in his place. This may reflect the vow of secrecy taken by the members of a messianic association, who are obligated to hasten the End by publicizing their leaders' teachings as a revelation of the Torah's mysteries, while at the same time concealing his holy name, for revealing it is a capital offense.

The second finding relates to the disciples' identities. R. Yehiel Mikhel's circle of followers forms the backbone of the Hasidic movement, from which the first dynasties of *zaddikim* arose. We do not know for how long after R. Yehiel Mikhel's death their joint activity endured and when the process of divergence, with the founding of distinct Hasidic courts, began. In the 1780s and 1790s, at any rate, they were still operating as a single group, especially with respect to fundraising for their colleagues in the Land of Israel. It is possible that the power struggles over the collection and distribution of funds, which led to the split between the White Russian members of the group and those from Volynhia-Galicia, centered in Brody, also represent the initial development of the first courts centered on *zaddikim*. Ra'aya Haran dates the turning point to those years; in her account, "the first Hasidic 'court,' of a centralized-dynastic character,"¹ was established in 5558 (1798), when R. Mordecai b. R. Nahum of Chernobyl took the place of his father, who had died that year, as leader of the community. It thus appears that the natural process by which the denizens of the original court grew old and died enabled the first dynasties of *zaddikim* to emerge. In any event, this transitional period has not yet been fully researched, and much work remains to be done.

Let me conclude by noting that preparing a comprehensive sketch of the written Zolochov tradition is a daunting task, not completed

¹ Haran 1993, p. 358.

with the publication of a single book. Accordingly, I have included here primarily the texts used in my research, among them editions of Hasidic conduct literature and independent compositions by some of the disciples. I used a similar approach with respect to the disciples themselves: from among the many, I concentrated on those whose quotations of R. Yehiel Mikhel's words were incorporated in the book.

The individuals not mentioned include Nahum of Chernobyl and his son Mordecai; Pinhas Horowitz and his brother, Samuel Shmulky of Nikolsburg; Elimelekh of Lozansky and his brother Zusya of Annopol; Aaron Leib of Peremyshlyany; Zevi Aryeh Landau of Olik, and Zevi Hirsch of Ziditchov. Some of them cite words of Torah that they heard from R. Yehiel Mikhel and others are included in the compilations of his disciples. Their ties to the Zolochov dynasty, like their connections to other disciples, warrant separate examination. The present compilation begins the process but does not end it.

Five Sons: "The Five Books of the Torah"

R. Yehiel Mikhel and his wife Yenta-Rechel had five sons and one daughter, Miriam, who married R. David ha-Levi of Stepin. The first two sons—R. Joseph of Yampol and R. Isaac of Radvil—are known to have achieved ascents of the soul and knowledge from the supernal worlds, but only the fourth son, Moses of Zvihil, founded a Hasidic court.

R. Yehiel Mikhel's attitude toward his sons and the continuation of the dynasty is conveyed by the following remarks reported in his name by his son, Isaac:

I brought into God's world five sons corresponding to the five books of the Torah. My [i.e., Isaac's] holy brother R. Yossele of Yampol, the eldest, of whom he said he is my might and the first fruits of my strength, and he took the double portion [of the first-born]. And my holy brother R. Wolf of Zbarazh [the third son]; he is the holy of holies, corresponding to the Book of Leviticus. My brother R. Moshele of Zvihil [the fourth], corresponding to the Book of Numbers. My brother R. Mordekhle of Kremenets [the fifth], corresponding to the Book of Deuteronomy, and he called him viceroy.² And of me [Isaac

² "Viceroy" in Hebrew is *mishneh la-melekh*, a play on *Mishneh Torah*, the Hebrew name for Deuteronomy.—*translator's note*.

of Radvil, the second son], he said that I correspond to the Book of Exodus, and your [i.e., Isaac's] life will be spent in continual exile from place to place and in controversy, for the Book of Exodus treats the exile in Egypt, but the Torah will be within you, for the Torah was given in that book.³

Joseph of Yampol

R. Joseph, eldest son of R. Yehiel Mikhel, was born prior to 5520 (1760) in the town of Kolki, where his father was serving as *Maggid* (preacher), and died in 5572 (1812). A tradition reported in *In Praise of the Besht* describes the circumstances of his birth, recounting that R. Yehiel Mikhel was staying at the Besht's home in Medzhibozh at the time his wife was giving birth to his eldest son at their home in Kolki. The Besht urged R. Yehiel Mikhel to return home, but R. Yehiel Mikhel declined. When he was finally persuaded to go, the Besht told him, as he was leaving, "Go to your home in peace, and you will find your wife having difficulty delivering. You will find many women there [with her], and you shall send them out of your house and shall whisper in [your wife's] ear what he taught him [i.e., what I told you], and you will have a male child with good fortune; and so it was."⁴

The incantation provided by the Besht to ensure that R. Yehiel Mikhel's wife gave birth successfully may have generated the Besht's paternal feelings toward the young child. Those feelings are conveyed in the account of the book burning (which included the *Besht's Epistle*) in front of R. Yehiel Mikhel's house in Brody during the summer of 5541 (1781). R. Joseph at that time experienced an ascent of the soul, during which he stood on trial before the heavenly court. His soul was saved through the intervention of the Besht, who had come to heaven to deal with the matter of the books, and "the rabbi requested the court to discharge the lad in peace."⁵ Eventually, descendants of the two families came to be related by marriage: R. Joseph of Yampol's son, R. Isaac of Kalus, married Hannah, the daughter of R. Barukh of Medzhibozh and great-granddaughter of the Besht. An allusion to the match is preserved in *In Praise of the*

³ *Light of Isaac*, p. 97.

⁴ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 168.

⁵ *Ibid.*, story 214. See also above, pp. 144–145.

Besht, which tells of a meeting between the fathers of the bride and groom, during which R. Joseph of Yampol recalled that “the Besht [like the patriarch Jacob] is preceded by angels walking on his right and by demons on his left, but the Besht did not want to make use of the angels, because they are holy, nor of the demons, because they are liars.”⁶

The relationship between R. Joseph of Yampol and his father was a particularly complex one. At the time of the book burning, in the summer of 5541 (1781), R. Joseph of Yampol was at least twenty-one years old, for he had been born before the Besht’s death in 5520 (1760). Nevertheless, the story refers to him as “the child” and “his young son.”⁷ These designations highlight the story’s mystical layer, involving the punishment of the son for the father’s sin of revealing divine secrets.⁸

Taken together, the circumstances of R. Joseph of Yampol’s birth and the story of the book burning illuminate R. Yehiel Mikhel’s highly charged attitude toward his eldest son, who corresponded in his schema to the Book of Genesis and of whom he said “he is my might and the first fruits of my strength, and he took the double portion [of the first-born].”⁹ The designation “Genesis” (*bereshit*) alludes to Jacob’s blessing to Reuben, his firstborn: “Reuben, you are my first born, my might and the first fruits (*reshit*) of my strength, exceeding in dignity and exceeding in power. Unstable as water, you excel no longer, for when you mounted your father’s bed, you brought disgrace; my couch he mounted.” (Gen. 49:3–4.) According to a midrash, the expression “my might and the first fruits of my strength” signifies that Jacob had never before emitted semen¹⁰ and that Reuben was born from the first drop of his seed. That interpretation became intertwined with the Hasidic tradition according to which R. Yehiel Mikhel had similarly never in his life emitted semen.¹¹ Yet Reuben lost his birthright after he defiled his father’s couch by lying with Bilhah, Jacob’s concubine.¹² R. Yehiel Mikhel’s blessing for his firstborn

⁶ Ibid., story 160.

⁷ Ibid., story 214.

⁸ See above, pp. 112–113.

⁹ *Light of Isaac*, p. 97.

¹⁰ See *Yevamot* 76a.

¹¹ See below, p. 371.

¹² See Gen. 35:22—“And Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father’s concubine; and Israel heard of it.”

reflects both the father's sexual purity and his primeval fear of the power of the firstborn son, who defiles his father's honor. These feelings call to mind the concerns of the divine father figure about his son, the Messiah, who competes with Him. The mortal danger in which R. Joseph of Yampol was placed on account of R. Yehiel Mikhel's activities paradoxically intensifies the father's feelings of jealousy, for it emphasizes the special status of the firstborn, who belongs to God and whose closeness to God precedes and exceeds his closeness to his father.¹³ R. Yehiel Mikhel's willingness to sacrifice his son can also be explained in a way by reference to history. In the process of choosing Israel, God passed over the eldest and preferred the younger sons, choosing Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, young David over his elder brothers, and so forth. Because the firstborn are consecrated to God, they cannot carry out the Patriarchs' earthly mission—to concern themselves with national survival.

But the story of the book burning also shows the father's love for his son, for R. Yehiel Mikhel saved R. Joseph from death by directing that the son's burial await his return. After the court discharged the lad in peace on account of the *Besht*, R. Joseph was directed to return to his home, "and two angels immediately came and took him and accompanied him until they found a rotting carcass on a garbage heap. They told him to enter the carcass but he did not wish to and he cried and pleaded with them, but they struck him and forced him to enter it against his will, and when he entered the carcass, he began to move."¹⁴

Isaac of Radvil, Light of Isaac (Or Yizhaq)

The year of R. Isaac of Radvil's birth is unknown nor is the year of his death known with certainty; it was either 5585 (1825) or 5595 (1835).¹⁵

Of his second son, R. Yehiel Mikhel said "that I [i.e., R. Isaac, the son] correspond to the Book of Exodus, and your [i.e., R. Isaac's]

¹³ See Exod. 13:2—"Consecrate to Me every firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man of and of beast, it is Mine." See also Liebes 1994/2.

¹⁴ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 214.

¹⁵ See Tanenbaum 1986, p. 244.

life will be spent in continual exile from place to place and in controversy, for the Book of Exodus treats the exile in Egypt, but the Torah will be within you, for the Torah was given in that book.”¹⁶ By that statement, R. Yehiel Mikhel may have meant to determine that his son’s fate would resemble his own. But R. Isaac of Radvil was endowed with a prophetic style, grounded in his profound sense of identity with his father. His discourses suggest that he saw himself as a messenger, obliged to publicize his father’s teachings. He appears to have felt that his remarks were worthy of attention on account of his father’s authoritativeness: “My brethren, it is not I who reveal [matters] to you, for I am lowly and contemptible and not worthy of it, but the holy soul instilled in me by my holy father is what reveals [them] to you, and [hints are] sufficient for the wise.”¹⁷

R. Isaac of Radvil’s composition, *Light of Isaac*, comprises public discourses that were later written down. Its language preserves the style of an oral discourse, replete with comments directed to the congregation: “my brethren and friends,”¹⁸ “my beloved brethren, I have already told you [of this] but now I will cause you to understand more.”¹⁹ It likewise contains colloquial phrases, such as “woe unto us, woe unto us.”²⁰ R. Isaac cites in his discourses secrets revealed to him in dreams: “And I will reveal to you a great and wondrous mystery that my holy father, may his memory be for a blessing, revealed to me in a dream.”²¹ He likewise cites words of Torah revealed to him from the heavens: “My brethren, I will reveal a wondrous secret that I learned last night in the supernal Garden of Eden [Paradise] in a dream.”²² He occasionally reconstructs discourses that he delivered in Garden of Eden during an ascent of his soul: “And I delivered this discourse in the supernal Garden of Eden during an ascent of my soul, on a certain platform.”²³

R. Isaac’s of Radvil’s inclination to heavenly experiences was shaped under the influence of his father, from whom he learned to annul his independent existence in order to attain divine inspiration.

¹⁶ *Light of Isaac*, p. 97.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, p. 197.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

That inspiration appeared in the form of automatic speech, freed of the constraints of consciousness. That condition, which R. Yehiel Mikhel called “speech of the *shekhinah*,” is known as well as speech without “mental composure” (*yishuv ha-da’at*):

My beloved brethren, believe that I truly do not know what I am saying, for my holy father, may his memory be for a blessing, commanded me in these words: “My son, know this, that you will discourse publicly, but never let it enter your mind in a composed manner that you want to say something novel with respect to any subject or in any manner. Rather, at the beginning of the discourse you should open your mouth without any mental composure, and God, may He be blessed, will arrange make ready for you whatever needs to be arranged.” And that is what I mean when I say to you that I know nothing except for what God, may He be blessed, arranges for me every Sabbath, without any mental composure [on my part].²⁴

R. Isaac’s claim of spiritual authority, based on the gift of divine inspiration, as well as his ecstatic style, call to mind the manner of R. Jacob Isaac, “the Seer of Lublin,” who was related to R. Isaac.²⁵

Light of Isaac opens an important window on the Zolochov tradition, for it discloses more than a little about R. Yehiel Mikhel’s esoteric teachings. Rivka Schatz has noted the messianic kernel concealed within R. Isaac of Radvil’s understanding of the Sabbath as a sort of fleeting redemption within this world. As she puts it, “The Sabbath is the prototype of the eschatological moment made contemporary . . . There is no doubt that R. Isaac’s principal teaching was based on negating the fulfillment of the commandments in the corporeal world, and it appears that, as a practical matter, they were fulfilled in his view in a symbolic manner only on the Sabbath.”²⁶

R. Isaac of Radvil went a step further and articulated a comprehensive doctrine centered on the image of the *zaddik* as a human embodiment of the Sabbath. This intertwining of the *zaddik* and the Sabbath reveals the connection between the personal aspect of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s remarks and his teachings about the *zaddik*,

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 96–97. On R. Yehiel Mikhel’s “speech of the *shekhinah*,” see above, pp. 93–100.

²⁵ See *Light of Isaac*, p. 67: “It is told of the holy rabbi R. Itzikil (Isaac), may his memory be for a blessing, in the City of Lublin.” On the concept of the charismatic *zaddik* in “the Seer of Lublin’s” teachings, see Elior 1994/2, pp. 184–192.

²⁶ Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 69.

which formed a well-ordered doctrine with roots in kabbalistic tradition. In that way, R. Isaac of Radvil laid an analytical foundation for depicting R. Yehiel Mikhel's image and mission in accordance with the Kabbalah's criteria.

There is as yet no study of R. Isaac of Radvil's contribution to the systematic formulation of his father's teachings and the role of his oral discourses in shaping the doctrine of the *zaddik* and the structure of the Hasidic court at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. A comprehensive study will help clarify the progression of Hasidism from an esoteric circle to a mass movement, which transformed the *zaddik*—the charismatic leader—into a family position and a dynastic role, transmitted by inheritance.

Light of Isaac was first printed in 5721 (1961) by the *El he-Harim* publishing house associated with the Zvihil Hasidic Institutions Center in Jerusalem. The title page states that the book was printed from a manuscript that had been in the possession of R. Nahum Duber of Sadgura, great-grandson of R. Isaac of Radvil. R. Nahum Duber was the second son of Blumah Reizel, daughter of R. Dan b. R. Isaac of Radvil, and R. Shalom Joseph of Sadgura, eldest son of R. Israel of Ruzhin; he was known as a collector of rare manuscripts and old books.²⁷ It appears that he acquired the manuscript from the archive of R. Isaiah Mushkat, chief judge of the Jewish court in Prague and R. Isaac of Radvil's son-in-law, who also wrote the introduction to the book.

The manuscript of *Light of Isaac* is now in the possession of the dynasty of Zvihil *zaddikim*, which originated with R. Yehiel Mikhel's fourth son. It is not known why the Zvihil *Hasidim* decided to publish the manuscript, but the fact is that it had been hidden for more than 130 years before being printed. The printed version shows evidence of internal censorship, in the form of deletions from the body of the text and the inclusion of notes such as "missing here in the manuscript."²⁸ That censorship shows the esoteric nature of the Zolochev tradition, whose adherents conceal its secrets to this day.

²⁷ See Assaf 1992, pp. 250–252.

²⁸ *Light of Isaac*, pp. 2–3, 190.

Ze'vi Ze'ev of Zbarazh, Glory of Ze'vi Ze'ev (Tif'eret Ze'vi Ze'ev)

R. Ze'vi Ze'ev [Wolf] of Zbarazh was R. Yehiel Mikhel's third son. His father saw him as corresponding to the Torah's third book, Leviticus: "Wolf of Zbarazh is holy of holies, corresponding to the Book of Leviticus."²⁹ His book, *Glory of Ze'vi Ze'ev*, printed in Lemberg in 5656 (1896), is a collection of discourses. Some of them are brought "in my own name" and some "in the name of my father," that is, R. Yehiel Mikhel.

Moses of Zvihil

The only one of R. Yehiel Mikhel's five sons to found a Hasidic court was the fourth, Moses of Zvihil, corresponding in his father's schema to the Book of Numbers.

The *admorim* of the Zvihil dynasty (the Goldman family), centered in Jerusalem, are known to this day as "guardians of the sacred covenant," that is, those who preserve the purity of the organ on which the covenant of circumcision is performed. That sobriquet recalls a tradition ascribing to the Zolochev *zaddikim* the ability to repair the sexual transgressions of others, such as spilling seed in vain—a transgression regarded by Lurianic Kabbalah as one that would be repaired by the Messiah. Accordingly, referring to the *admorim* of the Zolochev dynasty as "guardians of the sacred covenant" alludes to the unique status, similar to that of the Messiah, attributed for more than two hundred years to the descendants of the house of Zolochev.

The esoteric and inward-looking character of the Zvihil *Hasidim* is conveyed by the way of life of their congregation in Jerusalem. It is a small, closed community, disinclined to expand or to absorb new *Hasidim*. Descendants of the old Jewish settlement in Jerusalem tell that the Zvihil *Hasidim* maintain a low profile and remain inconspicuous among the various Hasidic courts; they see themselves as lowlier than the others, for they are the root.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 97.

Mordecai of Kremenets

R. Yehiel Mikhel's fifth son, corresponding in his father's schema to the Book of Deuteronomy—"corresponding to the Book of Deuteronomy [*mishneh torah*], and he called him viceroy [*mishneh la-melekh*]"³⁰—was appointed in 5572 (1812) to be the president of the "Volynhia Fund for the Land of Israel."³¹ The position was a powerful one, carrying responsibility for both the collection of the funds and their distribution to beneficiaries in the Land of Israel.

R. Mordecai of Kremenets was the father-in-law of R. Aaron (the second) of Karlin, author of *House of Aaron* (*Beit Aharon*) and owner of the Stolin archive; the latter married R. Mordecai's daughter Havah in 5575 (1815).³² R. Mordecai's students included R. Me'ir b. Aaron of Peremyshlyany and R. Moses Elyakum Berieh, son of the *Maggid* R. Israel of Kozienice; the latter delivered his eulogy.³³

Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov

R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov³⁴ was the son of R. Gedaliah b. R. Benjamin Ze'ev Wolf of Zolkow, who had supported R. Jonathan Eibeschutz when the latter was excommunicated as an alleged secret Sabbatean.³⁵ R. Gedaliah served as chief judge of the Jewish court in Zolochov during the time of R. Naftali Hertz Segal Horowitz and R. Samson Meizlish, grandfather of R. Uziel Meizlish. It is fair to assume that during his stay in Zolochov, he and his son introduced themselves to R. Yehiel Mikhel, who was the local preacher.

R. Gedaliah of Zolkow was the grandson of R. Mordecai Leibush of Zolkow and a cousin of R. Ephraim Zalman Margaliot (5521–5588 [1760–1828]), a wealthy resident of Brody. Though learned,

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ See Tanenbaum 1986, pp. 296–297.

³² On R. Aaron (the second) of Karlin, see Rabinowitz 1961, Index.

³³ See Tanenbaum 1986, p. 309.

³⁴ On R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov, see *Great Waters*, p. 136; Wunder 1978, pp. 23–25; Tanenbaum 1986, p. 166.

³⁵ R. Gedaliah's signature—"witness, the lowly Gedaliah, son of our master Benjamin Wolf, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing, of Zolkow"—appears on the declaration of support for R. Jonathan Eibeschutz. See *Tablets of Testimony* (Altona 5515 [1755]) 36b.

R. Ephraim Zalman declined to serve in the rabbinate and instead became an expert coral merchant, with commercial establishments in Brody and Vienna. He taught Torah at a study hall that he established at his home in Brody, and he was an active member of the renowned kabbalists' *kloyz*. He wrote books on Jewish Law (Halakhah), corresponded with the great halakhic authorities of the age, and issued responsa on practical halakhic questions. Among other things, he campaigned against the communal leaders' practice of exempting themselves and their families from paying taxes by increasing the burden borne by others. R. Ephraim determined that the *Book of Zoref* by R. Heschel Zoref was heretical, containing allusions to Shabbetai Zevi,³⁶ but he nevertheless wrote an approbation for *Gates of Garden of Eden* (*Sha'arei Gan Eden*), by the Sabbatean kabbalist R. Jacob Kopel Lifschitz of Mezhirichi.³⁷ He likewise wrote introductions to Hasidic works, including *Way to Life* (*Orah le-Hayyim*) by R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov and *Covenant of Eternal Priesthood* (*Berit Kehunat Olam*) by R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets; both authors were related to him.

Opinions differ on when R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov was born; Me'ir Wunder suggests it was 5485 (1725), while Isaac Matityahu Tanenbaum favors 5510 (1750). R. Abraham Hayyim's first marriage was to the daughter of R. Pinhas Horowitz, chief judge of the Jewish court in Frankfurt and brother of R. Samuel Shmulke of Nikolsburg. It seems that his first wife never gave birth, and he later married the daughter of R. Issakhar Ber of Zolochov. That union as well produced no children, but R. Abraham Hayyim adopted his second wife's son by her earlier marriage, and the latter published his books. In addition, R. Abraham Hayyim was related to R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev through the marriage of their children.

R. Abraham Hayyim served as chief judge in the town of Zborov, and when his father-in-law, R. Issakhar Ber, immigrated to the Land of Israel in 5555 (1795),³⁸ he replaced him as chief judge in Zolochov. It is noteworthy that both R. Issakhar Ber and R. Abraham Hayyim wrote approbations for the first edition of *Precious Gleanings* (*Liqqutim Yeqarim*), printed in Lemberg in 5552 (1792) from the writings of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller.

³⁶ See Gelber 1955, pp. 65–66.

³⁷ See Tishby 1982/1, p. 205.

³⁸ See Stiman-Katz 1986, pp. 29–31.

R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochew died in 5576 (1816). About one year later, in 5577 (1817), his book *Way to Life* was printed in Berdichev. The book's approbations, written before his death, are by five individuals associated with the Zolochew dynasty:

1. *R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev*, who terms R. Abraham Hayyim "my soul mate."³⁹ The two writers cite each other in their works: R. Abraham Hayyim writes that "I heard from the great and renowned rabbi and *gaon*, our master R. Levi Isaac, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, chief judge of the holy congregation of Berdichev."⁴⁰ Again, he says, "For I heard from my son's father-in-law, the rabbi and *gaon*, our master Levi Isaac, chief judge of the holy congregation of Berdichev."⁴¹ Similarly, R. Levi Isaac cites the words of "the pious rabbi, our master R. Abraham Hayyim, may his lamp illuminate, of the holy congregation of Zolochew."⁴²
2. *R. Israel b. Shabbetai*, "the preacher of the holy congregation of Kozienice,"⁴³ known as the *Maggid* of Kozienice.
3. "*R. Jacob Joseph, son of our late master R. Eliezer ha-Levi Horowitz*, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, of Lancut, now residing in the holy congregation of Lublin,"⁴⁴ that is, "the Seer of Lublin."
4. "*R. Abraham Joshua Heschel, chief judge of the holy congregation of Opatow, now in the holy congregation of Medzhibozh*."⁴⁵ It is noteworthy that R. Abraham Joshua Heschel of Opatow is included in the list of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples that appears in *Great Waters*.⁴⁶ His daughter Yokheved was married to R. Dan, the son of R. Isaac of Radvil and grandson of R. Yehiel Mikhel.

³⁹ *Way to Life*, approbation page.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, *Portion Ki Tissa*, 53b.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, *Portion Be-Shalah*, 27b; *Portion Vayeshev*, 43b.

⁴² *Sanctity of Levi*, Part 1, p. 169.

⁴³ *Way to Life*, approbation page. On the ties between R. Israel of Kozienice and R. Yehiel Mikhel, see below, pp. 262–263.

⁴⁴ *Way to Life*, approbation page.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ See *Great Waters*, p. 136

5. *R. Mordecai of Kremenets*, fifth son of R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochov.

The introduction to *Way to Life* was written by R. Ephraim Zalman Margaliot of Brody, “[kosher] slaughterer and inspector to the honorable rabbi, the author, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing in the life of the world to come,”⁴⁷ and also the author’s second cousin.⁴⁸ In the introduction, written after R. Abraham Hayyim’s death, R. Ephraim Zalman Margaliot mentions that R. Abraham Hayyim was a student of R. Pinhas Horowitz and his brother, R. Samuel Shmulke of Nikolsburg. He later states that R. Abraham Hayyim was a student of R. Samuel Shmulke of Nikolsburg, of R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev, and of R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi.⁴⁹ But he makes no mention at all of R. Yehiel Mikhel as one of R. Abraham Hayyim’s teachers, even though R. Abraham Hayyim frequently cites R. Yehiel Mikhel in *Way to Life*.

R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov also wrote a commentary on the mishnaic tractate *Avot*, entitled *Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life* and printed in Lvov in 5633 (1873). Its approbations were copied from *Way to Life*, with an additional one by the *admor* of Sadgura, R. Abraham Jacob b. R. Israel of Ruzhin. Like R. Ephraim Zalman Margaliot before him, the *admor* of Sadgura notes that R. Abraham Hayyim was a student of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi but makes no mention of R. Yehiel Mikhel.

The absence of references to R. Yehiel Mikhel in the title pages and approbations of R. Abraham Hayyim’s books contrasts starkly with the works themselves, in which R. Abraham Hayyim frequently quotes statements by R. Yehiel Mikhel. He refers to him as “the holy luminary”⁵⁰ and presents the quotations as material he heard at first-hand: “As I heard in this manner from the mouth of the great rabbi, the holy luminary, our master the rabbi R. Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory be for the world to come”⁵¹; “I heard from the holy rabbi, the *maggid*, our master Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory be for a blessing”;⁵² and “the holy rabbi, the *maggid*, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come.”⁵³

⁴⁷ See *Way to Life*, Introduction, 3a.

⁴⁸ See *ibid.* 7b.

⁴⁹ See *ibid.* 8b; Cf. the approbation of R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev, in which he refers to R. Abraham Hayyim as “my soul mate,” and not as “my student.”

⁵⁰ *Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life*, 11b.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Way to Life, Portion Noah*, 18a.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

The absence of R. Yehiel Mikhel's name from these title pages and approbations is difficult to explain but clearly reinforces the impression that R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov was a pre-eminent student of R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi. And that, in turn, may explain why copyists and publishers of the manuscripts understood R. Abraham Hayyim's unspecified references to a *Maggid*—"as said the *maggid*, may his memory be for the life of the world to come"⁵⁴ or "the holy rabbi, the *maggid*, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come"⁵⁵—as indicating the "*Maggid*" R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi. On the basis of that understanding, they routinely added R. Dov Ber's name to those frequent unspecified references.

In at least one instance, however, it can be proven that the term "the *Maggid*" refers to R. Yehiel Mikhel and that R. Dov Ber's name was inserted improperly. R. Abraham Hayyim cites an interpretation of the verse "you shall make a light for the ark . . . and the door of the ark you shall set in its side" (Gen. 6:16) in the following manner: "I heard from the holy rabbi, the *maggid*, our master Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory be for a blessing . . . and the holy rabbi, the *maggid*, said in the name of the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come."⁵⁶ Elsewhere in the work, R. Abraham Hayyim reiterates the interpretation: "And so, as I wrote in *Portion Noah*, interpreting the verse 'and the door of the ark you shall set in its side,' I wrote there in the name of the holy rabbi, the holy luminary our master Dov Ber, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, who said in the name of the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come."⁵⁷ A comparison of the two texts suggests that, in *Portion Noah*, R. Abraham Hayyim first wrote "I heard from the holy rabbi, the *maggid*, our master R. Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory be for a blessing" and then repeated the designation "the holy rabbi, the *maggid*," without specifying the name, clearly implying, from context, that he was referring there to the same *maggid*, R. Yehiel Mikhel. Later, when directing the reader's attention to those remarks in *Portion Noah*, he wrote "And so, as I wrote in *Portion Noah*, interpreting the verse 'and the door of the ark you shall set in its side,' I wrote there in the name of the holy rabbi, the holy luminary our master, who

⁵⁴ Ibid., *Portion Shemot*, 6a.

⁵⁵ Ibid., *Portion Bo*, 16b.

⁵⁶ Ibid., *Portion Noah*, 18a.

⁵⁷ Ibid., *Portion Vayehi*, 52b.

said in the name of the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come.” Someone there inserted, following “our master,” the words “Dov Ber, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come,” and that formulation, implying that R. Dov Ber was the *Maggid* who reported the Besht’s comments, gained acceptance. It seems likely that this is not the only incident of its kind and that the text elsewhere was “corrected” so as to create the impression that R. Abraham Hayyim was quoting R. Dov Ber even though the quoted “*Maggid*” was, in fact, R. Yehiel Mikhel.

This hypothesis draws support from R. Abraham Hayyim’s wording when he is, in fact, referring to R. Dov Ber. In those instances, he omits the term “*Maggid*” and says, for example, “I heard in the name of the holy rabbi, the holy luminary, our master the rabbi R. Dov Ber, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come.”⁵⁸ Moreover, R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov was acquainted with R. Abraham, the son of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, and directly cited his words: “I heard from the rabbi, the holy luminary, our master the rabbi R. Abraham son of the great and holy rabbi, the renowned holy luminary, our master the rabbi R. Dov Ber, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come.”⁵⁹ The discourses attributed to R. Dov Ber may well have reached R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov via R. Dov Ber’s son, R. Abraham. In contrast, there is no doubt that R. Abraham Hayyim heard first-hand the discourses of the “*Maggid*,” R. Yehiel Mikhel.

Abraham Joshua Heschel of Opatow

R. Abraham Joshua Heschel of Opatow and Medzhibozh was one of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s pre-eminent disciples; he is included in the list of disciples in *Great Waters*.⁶⁰ In his works, he cites material that he heard directly from R. Yehiel Mikhel, such as “in accordance with what I heard from the preacher of the holy congregation of Zolochov.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ibid., *Portion Vayezrei*, 38a.

⁵⁹ Ibid., *Portion Noah*, 17b.

⁶⁰ See *Great Waters*, p. 136; Tanenbaum 1986, pp. 167–168.

⁶¹ *Lover of Israel (Ohev Yisra’el ha-Shalem)*, p. 312.

After R. Joseph of Yampol's death, R. Abraham Joshua Heschel and R. Mordecai of Kremenets, fifth son of R. Yehiel Mikhel, assumed the obligation to serve as treasurers for the land of Israel, responsible for the collection of money for the Volynhia-Galicia fund in the Land of Israel.⁶² It may be noted as well that Yokheved, R. Abraham Joshua Heschel's daughter, was married to Dan, son of R. Isaac of Radvil.

Eliezer Horowitz, Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah
(No'am Megadim u-Khevod ha-Torah)

R. Eliezer b. R. Jacob ha-Levi, a man of Horowitz, was a scion of R. Isaiah Horowitz, author of *Two Tablets of the Covenant* (*Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*). He served as chief judge of the Jewish court in Tarnograd.⁶³ His work *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah* was printed for the first time in Lemberg in 5567 (1807). R. Eliezer is mentioned in the list of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples in *Great Waters*,⁶⁴ and he quotes R. Yehiel Mikhel and refers to him as "the holy mouth": "in the words of the holy mouth, the *maggid*, our master the rabbi R. Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory be for a blessing."⁶⁵ He likewise explicitly cites his writings: "as we have seen from the writings of the rabbi, the *maggid*, our master the rabbi R. Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory be for a blessing,"⁶⁶ and "as the holy *gaon*, our master the rabbi R. Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory be for a blessing, wrote on that matter."⁶⁷ We may here have evidence that certain works were known to be the writings of R. Yehiel Mikhel, even though they were printed under other names.

R. Eliezer Horowitz's work, *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah*, is replete with quotations from the *Hasidim* of Galicia. They include R. Elimelekh of Lozansky ("in accordance with what I heard

⁶² See Heschel 1952, pp. 130–131.

⁶³ See Nigal 1973/2; Piekarz 1999, pp. 174–178.

⁶⁴ See *Great Waters*, p. 136.

⁶⁵ *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah, Portion Shelah Lekha*, 12b. See also 16b: "And with respect to this matter, I heard from the holy mouth, my lord, master and teacher, may his memory be for a blessing"; he apparently refers here to R. Yehiel Mikhel.

⁶⁶ Ibid., *Portion Mishpatim*, 35a.

⁶⁷ Ibid., *Portion Ki Tissa*, 45a.

from the holy mouth, the rabbi, our master the rabbi R. Elimelekh, may his memory be for a blessing”),⁶⁸ his brother, R. Zusya of Annopol (“as stated by the holy rabbi, our master, the rabbi R. Zusil, may his memory be for a blessing”),⁶⁹ R. Meshullam Feibush Heller (“and the holy rabbi, our master, the rabbi R. Meshullam, may his lamp illuminate, said”),⁷⁰ and R. Jacob Isaac, “the Seer of Lublin” (“and so I heard from the pious and holy rabbi, the holy luminary, our master, the rabbi R. Isaac ha-Levi Horowitz, may his lamp illuminate”).⁷¹

It can be inferred from R. Eliezer’s book that he never heard teachings directly from the mouth of the Besht but that he received an oral tradition that he rounded out with written sources. This is evident in how he quotes the Besht’s statements: “in the name of the light of Israel, master of the good name, our master, the rabbi R. Israel, may his memory be for a blessing, and this seems to me already to have been mentioned in books dealing with Torah novel-lae.”⁷² Nor did he hear teachings directly from R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, instead quoting what he had heard in his name: “and so we heard an interpretation in the name of the holy luminary, our master, the rabbi R. Dov Ber, may his memory be for a blessing, preacher to the holy congregation of Mezhirichi.”⁷³ It should be noted that the quotations from *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (*Maggid Devarav le-Yā‘aqov*) are usually accompanied by a note such as “and see regarding this in the book *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* printed in the name of the holy luminary, our master, the rabbi R. Dov Ber, may his memory be for a blessing.”⁷⁴ But it is not clear what R. Eliezer meant when he added “printed in his name” when he mentioned *He Imparts His Words to Jacob*.

⁶⁸ Ibid., *Portion Yitro*, 27a.

⁶⁹ Ibid., *Portion Qorah*, 24b.

⁷⁰ Ibid., *Portion Mishpatim*, 33a.

⁷¹ Ibid., 34b.

⁷² Ibid., *Portion Emor*, 79a.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., *Portion Tezaveh*, 40b. See also Gershom Scholem’s comment on the binding of the copy of *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah* in the Scholem library: “He always adds ‘printed in his name’ when he refers to *He Imparts His Words to Jacob*.”

Benjamin of Zalozhtsy

R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy was born in 5480 (1720) or 5500 (1740).⁷⁵ He died in 5552 (1792), as implied by the approbations for his book, *Intense Loving* (*Ahavat Dodim*), printed in Lemberg in 5553 (1793), the year following his death.

His principal books are:

Intense Loving —The book was begun during the lifetime of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, who is referred to as still alive: “and I heard it said in the name of the venerable rabbi, the man of God, our master Joseph, chief judge of the holy congregation of Polonnoye.”⁷⁶ It was published through the efforts of the author’s son, R. Asher Zelig, shortly after R. Benjamin’s death. The approbations were written by pre-eminent disciples of R. Yehiel Mikhel: R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev, who was then living in Lvov; “R. Issakhar Berish of the family Zevi, chief judge of the holy congregation of Zolochew,” who immigrated two years later to the land of Israel; and Rabbi Eliezer ha-Levi, man of Horowitz, who shows particular closeness to R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy: “And while he was alive, my soul was literally tied to his.”⁷⁷

Benjamin’s Portion (*Helqat Binyamin*)—A commentary on the Passover *Haggadah*, printed in Lvov in 5554 (1794).

Benjamin’s Sack (*Amtahat Binyamin*)—Published in Minkvits in 5556 (1796). The writer S. Y. Agnon relates an interesting anecdote regarding the book: His uncle, Azriel Jacob, who lived in the town of Zalozhtsy, told Agnon, “You have more disciples than the *rebbe* of Czortkov, apparently because you are the grandson of the [author of] *Benjamin’s Sack*, may his memory be for a blessing. That’s too bad; with your head you could have been a great rabbi.”⁷⁸

Golden Doves (*Torei Zahav*)—Printed in Mohluv in 5576 (1816). According to Rivka Schatz, the composition was begun in 5528 (1768).⁷⁹ It follows that R. Benjamin was one of the first Hasidic

⁷⁵ See Wunder 1978, pp. 519–522.

⁷⁶ *Intense Loving* 35b.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, approbation page.

⁷⁸ *My Dear Esterlein*, p. 264, n. 1. The *rebbe* of Czortkov, mentioned here, is a renowned Hasidic *admor*, R. Moses David (5587–5663 [1827–1903]), son of R. Israel of Ruzhin.

⁷⁹ See Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 83, n. 16.

writers who did not content himself with copying manuscripts of discourses and practices; instead, he reduced his own discourses to writing as early as the end of the 1760s. He likewise managed to edit *Golden Doves* for printing and secure approbations for it as early as 5544–5545 (1784–1785).

In Hasidic historiography—*Order of the Generations* (*Seder ha-Dorot he-Hadash*)—R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy is described as having learned directly from the mouths of the Besht and of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi: “The rabbi, our master the rabbi Benjamin, holy and exalted, preacher of the holy congregation of Zalozhtsy . . . and he cites in his book several Torah novellae that he himself heard from the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing, and from the holy *Maggid* of Mezhirichi, may his memory be for a blessing.”⁸⁰ But R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy’s writings offer no unambiguous proof that he himself heard material directly from the Besht, and that conclusion may have been inspired by the books’ approbations. R. Benjamin cites the Besht in the following terms: “as I heard from our holy rabbi, R. Israel Ba’al Shem, may his memory be for a blessing.”⁸¹ It is hard to tell if this means he heard the comments directly from the Besht’s mouth or that he relied on a tradition attributed to the Besht that had reached him via some other teacher.

The uncertainty is even greater with respect to R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi. R. Benjamin attributes various statements to him, without saying that he heard them directly from his mouth: “and the pious, pre-eminent rabbi, a man of God, our master Dov Ber, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, of the holy congregation of Mezhirichi interpreted”;⁸² “according to what I have heard said in the name of the venerable and pious one, our master the rabbi Duber [Dov Ber], preacher of the holy congregation of Mezhirichi”;⁸³ and so forth. Gershom Scholem noted on the binding of the copy of *Intense Loving* in the Scholem Collection that R. Benjamin refers to “R. Duber of Mezhirichi not as his own teacher!” That comment gets to the root of the matter, for R. Benjamin did not see R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi as his pre-eminent teacher.

⁸⁰ *Order of the Generations*, sec. 10.

⁸¹ *Golden Doves* 6a.

⁸² *Intense Loving* 37b.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 64b.

The situation recurs as well with respect to R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany, a contemporary of the Besht also regarded as one of the fathers of Hasidism. In citing him, R. Benjamin uses wording such as “as I have heard in the name of the pre-eminent and pious one, our master the rabbi Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany.”⁸⁴ It is doubtful that R. Benjamin in fact studied directly with Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany; more likely, he encountered traditions reported in his name.⁸⁵

The only one of the founding fathers of Hasidism whom R. Benjamin quotes at first hand and refers to as “my master” is R. Yehiel Mikhel. In citing him, R. Benjamin uses such terminology as “I heard from my venerable and pious teacher, a man of God, our master Yehiel Mikhel, preacher of the holy congregation of Kolki, peace be on him, may his memory be for a blessing.”⁸⁶ R. Benjamin heard teaching directly from the mouth of R. Yehiel Mikhel when the latter was preacher in Kolki, around the year 5520 (1760), when R. Yehiel Mikhel was still living there.⁸⁷ It follows that R. Benjamin was among R. Yehiel Mikhel’s first disciples, and the possibility should not be ruled out that the traditions he cites in the names of the Besht, R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany, and R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi were transmitted to him by R. Yehiel Mikhel, his pre-eminent teacher.

And yet, not one of the approbation writers for *Intense Loving* noted R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy’s special relationship to R. Yehiel Mikhel, even though they themselves—R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev, R. Issakhar Ber of Zolochov, and R. Eliezer Horowitz—were among R. Yehiel Mikhel’s disciples. Rather, they identified such individuals as the Besht and R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi as R. Benjamin’s pre-eminent teachers, even though it is doubtful that he ever learned from them directly. This disregard for the facts can be seen as well in approbations for books by other authors, such as R. Abraham Hayyim of

⁸⁴ *Golden Doves* 34a.

⁸⁵ It may not be mere coincidence that a discourse cited in R. Benjamin’s *Golden Doves* in the name of R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany is attributed to R. Yehiel Mikhel in *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah* by R. Eliezer Horowitz. See *Golden Doves* 30a–31b, 108b; *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah, Portion Mishpatim*, 35a.

⁸⁶ *Intense Loving* 16a.

⁸⁷ See above, p. 46.

Zolochev and R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir, and it demands explanation; we cannot simply assume that the colleagues of R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy were unaware of the identity of their common teacher.

That notwithstanding, R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy is, in fact, included in the list of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples in *Great Waters*.⁸⁸ Some recent writers also note that R. Yehiel Mikhel was R. Benjamin's pre-eminent teacher: Benjamin Mintz does so in his edition of *In Praise of the Besht*;⁸⁹ and Jonathan Ze'ev Landau, in his introduction to *Golden Doves*, points out that R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy applies the term "my master" only to the *Maggid* of Zolochev.⁹⁰

Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir, The Light That Illuminates (Or ha-Me'ir)

We do not know the year of R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir's birth, but he is known to have died before 5558 (1798): in an approbation for his *The Light That Illuminates*, printed that year in Korets, R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev refers to the book's author as deceased.⁹¹

"Wolf Zhitomir" is included in *Breaking of Sinners (Shever Posh'eim)* the list of Hasidic activists compiled by R. David Makov.⁹² Manuscript sources collected by Abraham Joshua Heschel regarding R. Pinhas of Korets and his conflict with "the *Maggid*" include numerous stories about R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir, including one taken from notes by R. Solomon, the son of R. Abraham Jacob, the *admor* of Sadgura. According to that tradition, R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir had "a friend who was a great *zaddik* who died in his youth."⁹³ Once when the two of them returned from the home of "the *Maggid*," they got down from the wagon and immediately became so absorbed in reviewing the words of their teacher that they neglected to recite not only the afternoon and evening prayers but even the morning prayer the next day. Heschel, who published the story, noted certain reasons for doubting that the friend was R. Yehiel Mikhel,

⁸⁸ *Great Waters*, p. 136.

⁸⁹ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Mintz), p. 35.

⁹⁰ See Introduction of Jonathan Ze'ev Landau to his edition of *Golden Doves* (Jerusalem 5749 [1989]).

⁹¹ See *The Light That Illuminates*, approbation page. See also Tauber 1932, pp. 36–39, 52.

⁹² See Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 101.

⁹³ Heschel 1948–1952, p. 241, n. 142.

the *Maggid* of Zolochov, even though he was mentioned earlier in the story. But if this is a reliable tradition rather than mere hagiography, it appears not only that R. Yehiel Mikhel was indeed not the friend; in fact, he was “the *maggid*” from whose home the two had returned. The friend, who died in his youth, may have been R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets, who passed on at the age of thirty-five and whose widow R. Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir went on to marry.⁹⁴

In Hasidic tradition, R. Ze’ev Wolf is known as “greatly holy and awesome,” as in “the rabbi, our master the rabbi Wolf of Zhitomir, may his memory be for a blessing, greatly holy and awesome, author of *The Light That Illuminates*, a greatly holy and wondrous composition that will inflame the hearts of the children of Israel to worship [God], may His name be blessed.”⁹⁵

The Light That Illuminates was first printed in Korets in 5558 (1798) in two editions differing in frontispiece design and pagination.⁹⁶ The publisher was R. Dov Ber of Slovita, who had obtained the consent of R. Ze’ev Wolf’s sons to the printing of their father’s work. The work was printed soon after the author’s death, apparently without having undergone editing or censorship.

R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev provided a long and detailed approbation for *The Light That Illuminates* and included the unusual detail that R. Ze’ev Wolf had been graced by an appearance of the holy spirit in his study hall: “The righteous rabbi, the man of God, our late, renowned master Ze’ev Wolf, may the memory of the righteous and holy be for a blessing, through whose light we see light for the upright, the land, and its inhabitants, of whom it is already known that while the late *zaddik*, may his memory be for a blessing, was still alive, the holy spirit appeared in his study hall, a study hall for the pious.”⁹⁷ In contrast to R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev’s enthusiastic approbation are the reservations expressed by a Hasidic thinker of the following generation, R. Isaac Judah Yehiel Saffrin of Komarno. He claimed that *The Light That Illuminates* had been written by “some slaughterer,” a simple man who missed R. Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir’s meaning.⁹⁸ Isaiah Tishby has shown that the slaughterer was R. Eliezer

⁹⁴ See Biber 1907, p. 221, n. 2.

⁹⁵ *Order of the Generations*, sec. 14.

⁹⁶ Citations here follow the edition identified in the Scholem Library as R 3204/2.

⁹⁷ *The Light That Illuminates*, approbation page.

⁹⁸ *Path of Your Commandments* (*Netiv Mizvotekha*), part *ha-Torah*, chap. 1, 30b.

of Zhitomir, R. Ze'ev Wolf's student and the author of "*Pirquei ha-Ne'ezar*," which includes the laws of kosher slaughter in accordance with mystical doctrine. Tishby mentioned other reservations about the book, including one in the name of R. Aaron ha-Levi of Starsulia, a student of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, the founder of *Habad*.⁹⁹ It should be noted that R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev's approbation contains no suggestion that the book was written by a student and expresses no doubt that R. Ze'ev Wolf, in whose study hall the holy spirit had appeared, was the author.

An examination of the book's nature and content makes clear why later Hasidic writers sought to distance themselves from the book and even claimed it was written not by R. Ze'ev Wolf himself but by an unworthy student. According to Tishby, *The Light That Illuminates* is "‘reparative (*tiqquni*)’-messianic from start to finish, with no camouflage or reservations whatsoever."¹⁰⁰ Tishby noted in particular a prominent group of *tiqqunim* necessary "with respect to the coming of the redeemer"; these include the "repair (*tiqqun*) of the *shekhinah*'s stature" and the "construction of the *shekhinah*'s stature." He therefore saw in *The Light That Illuminates* a pre-eminent and extreme example of the messianic tendency within Hasidism, based on the doctrine of raising the sparks in order to remedy and redeem evil.

Ascertaining the source of the messianic bent in *The Light That Illuminates* requires identifying R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir's teachers. *Order of the Generations* says only that R. Ze'ev Wolf actually heard material directly from the Besht's mouth.¹⁰¹ An examination of *The Light That Illuminates* suggests, however, that though R. Ze'ev Wolf cited words of Torah in the name of the Besht, it is doubtful that he heard them directly from the Besht himself; he uses such locutions as "and thus I heard in the name of the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come."¹⁰²

Eliezer Steinman took the view that R. Ze'ev Wolf "was a disciple of the *Maggid* [of Mezhirichi], and R. Yehiel Mikhel was his secondary teacher."¹⁰³ R. Nathan Neta of Kolbiel omits him from the list of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples, and Isaac Matityahu Tanenbaum

⁹⁹ Tishby 1967, p. 41, n. 180.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁰¹ *Order of the Generations*, sec. 14.

¹⁰² *The Light That Illuminates* 240a.

¹⁰³ Steinman 1957, p. 126.

briefly notes him among the “denizens of [R. Yehiel Mikhel’s] sanctuary” who were not his pre-eminent students.¹⁰⁴ Even Isaiah Tishby, who assigned R. Ze’ev Wolf a prominent place in his study of Hasidic messianism, took it for granted that he was a disciple of R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi, and never questioned the place of *The Light That Illuminates* within the Hasidic literature originating in R. Dov Ber’s study hall. That judgment and others like it are apparently based on the premise that “the rabbi the *maggid*,” mentioned dozens of times in *The Light That Illuminates*, is none other than R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi.

But that premise is unsupported by the text of the work itself. Although it contains dozens of references, on the first page and throughout the body of book, to words of “the *maggid*, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come,” “the great rabbi, the *maggid*, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come,”¹⁰⁵ and so forth, in not one of them does it mention the name of R. Dov Ber. In contrast, R. Yehiel Mikhel is mentioned both by name and as “the *Maggid*,” and R. Ze’ev Wolf reports his words first-hand: “and once I heard the master R. Mikhel, the *Maggid* of the holy congregation of Zolochov, discourse in public, and he said ‘please listen to my words’ . . . and once I heard the *Maggid*, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come say to us explicitly, ‘I will instruct you in the best way to say words of Torah. One should not sense himself at all, but should be only an ear that hears what the world of speech says in him, but he is not speaking himself’”¹⁰⁶ Reading the passage as a whole leaves no doubt that it is speaking of a single *Maggid* and that “the *Maggid*, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come” is none other than “the rabbi R. Mikhel, *Maggid* of the holy congregation Zolochov,” referred to at the beginning of the passage. It therefore is reasonable to assume that the other references to the *Maggid* in *The Light That Illuminates* similarly point to R. Yehiel Mikhel.

In that light, one can understand a Korets tradition according to which R. Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir wanted to print *The Light That Illuminates* at the print shop of R. Moses Shapira, the son of R. Pinhas

¹⁰⁴ See Tanenbaum 1986, p. 195.

¹⁰⁵ *The Light That Illuminates*, 1a.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 81b–82a. See also above, pp. 96–100.

of Korets. After examining the manuscript all night, R. Moses declined to publish it, saying that “We know that you learned more from my father than from the *Maggid*, yet you mention the *Maggid* frequently but the name of my father is mentioned nowhere in the book.”¹⁰⁷ The story makes no sense at all if it refers to the *Maggid* R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, for he is not mentioned in *The Light That Illuminates*. Accordingly, this story as well may reflect the fact that an unspecified “*Maggid*” in manuscripts of the Korets tradition is R. Yehiel Mikhel.

Also worthy of inquiry is R. Ze’ev Wolf’s practice of concealing R. Yehiel Mikhel’s identity behind various sobriquets. In one instance, R. Yehiel Mikhel is termed the “the Wise One of the Generation,” and the discourse he delivered is framed as a narrative—a sort of dialogue between the Besht and “the Wise One of the Generation.” That format of a reconstructed dialogue, primarily a polemic between the Besht and some anonymous figure, is used an additional time in *The Light That Illuminates*; there, too, the polemic is presented as a matter bearing on the Besht’s rejection of pietistic practices in the following terms:

For our eyes have beheld that there exists a [type of] man who engages in self-mortifications and immersions, in frequent Torah study and prayer, and his primary intention and tendency is to attain the holy spirit or a revelation of Elijah, or something similar. And I heard that in the days of the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, there was such a man, who engaged in self-mortifications and went to the immersion pool so he might attain the holy spirit, but the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, said of him that in the world of [true] rewards, they are laughing about him, and the truth is so, for why should a man pursue such, when his heart is lacking the principal [factor]—bonding with God, which is the purpose of worship.¹⁰⁸

In contrast, Hasidic conduct literature gives prominence to the illuminations granted to the Besht specifically through of the merit of immersing.¹⁰⁹ The premise that the conduct literature was written in

¹⁰⁷ Heschel 1948–1952, p. 241, n. 142a. The story is told in the name of the *rebbe* of Menistrishitz.

¹⁰⁸ *The Light That Illuminates*, 37a. The Besht’s opposition to “fasting more than is obligatory or needed” can be discerned clearly in another of his letters, portions of which are preserved in *In Praise of the Besht*. See Rosman 2000, p. 150.

¹⁰⁹ See *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 178, *Light of Torah (Or Torah)*, 89a. For additional practices exalting self-mortification and fasting, see *Precious Gleanings* sec. 198, practice 3; *Testament of R. Israel Ba’al Shem (Zava’at ha-Ribash)*, 3a, 7a–b, 10a; *Ways of the Just*

R. Yehiel Mikhel's study hall suggests that R. Ze'ev Wolf's comment about "such a man, who engaged in self-mortifications and went to the immersion pool so he might attain the holy spirit" was intended to refer to R. Yehiel Mikhel.

In sum, the fact that "the *Maggid*" in *The Light That Illuminates* was none other than R. Yehiel Mikhel reinforces Isaiah Tishby's observations with respect to R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir's messianic notions and ties them to the messianic doctrine of R. Yehiel Mikhel. Still, the study of *The Light That Illuminates* remains in its infancy, and the question of why R. Yehiel Mikhel's name was camouflaged at various points in the work remains open.

Hayyim Tirrer of Chernovtsy

R. Hayyim Tirrer was born near the town of Buchach in Galicia.¹¹⁰ He served as rabbi of Chernovtsy and district rabbi of Bukovina, but he was removed from his post by the Austrian authorities in the wake of his communal efforts to protect the Galician Jews who had immigrated to Bukovina. He immigrated to the Land of Israel in 5574 (1814) and died a few years later in Safed.

Before his immigration (*Aliyyah*), R. Hayyim Tirrer published his *Sabbath Prayer Book* (*Sidduro shel Shabbat*), incorporating discourses on the Sabbath commandments and its sanctity as a vehicle for repairing the worlds. One of the discourses defends the practice of reciting, before the performance of any commandment, the formula "in order to unite the Holy One, blessed be He, with His *shekhinah*." This was in reaction to the attack by R. Ezekiel Landau, author of *Known in Judah*, against the *Hasidim* who had adopted that custom.¹¹¹

R. Hayyim Tirrer was known as a rabbi and a preacher, a halakhist and a kabbalist. He was included in the listing of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples in *Great Waters*¹¹² and cited some of R. Yehiel Mikhel's

(*Darkhei Yesharim*), 6b–8a. The texts include formulations of the *kavvanah* of the fast, a sort of prayer recited by one assuming an obligation to fast, and of the *kavvanah* of the immersion pool, recited upon immersing.

¹¹⁰ For R. Hayyim Tirrer's biography, see Frumkin-Rivlin 1929, pp. 43–44, 78; Glicksburg 1940, pp. 332–334; Friedberg 1951, pp. 117–118; Feldman 1971, Bartal 1985, p. 25; Stiman-Katz 1986, pp. 9, 23.

¹¹¹ See Pickarz 1999, pp. 115–123.

¹¹² See *Great Waters*, p. 136.

comments first-hand: “I heard from the holy mouth, my lord, master, and teacher, the pious, divine, and renowned rabbi, the exalted holy one, our master, the rabbi R. Yehiel Mikhel, may the memory of the righteous and holy be for a blessing, may his memory defend us and all Israel.”¹¹³ In his books *Sabbath Prayer Book* and *Spring of Living Water* (*Be’er Mayim Hayyim*), he cites many words of Torah that he heard directly from R. Yehiel Mikhel and he refers to him in exaggerated terms: “what I heard concerning this matter from the mouth of my lord, master, and teacher, the holy rabbi, the man of God, the paragon of the generation and its wonder, our master, the rabbi R. Yehiel Mikhel, may the memory of the righteous and holy be for a blessing, may his memory protect us and all Israel, the preacher of the holy congregation of Zolochew.”¹¹⁴ The publication of *Spring of Living Water* was supported by R. Mordecai of Kremenets, the youngest son of R. Yehiel Mikhel, who wrote in his approbation that “especially because of what I saw and knew of the pleasantness and friendly affection with which my honorable father, my lord, master, and teacher, the holy, pious, and world-renowned rabbi, my master R. Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, regarded him, for he loved him greatly—like the pupil of the eye was he to him, and with an eternal love he loved him—I took upon myself the burden of this effort.”¹¹⁵

Jacob Isaac ha-Levi Horowitz, “The Seer of Lublin”

R. Jacob Isaac b. R. Abraham Eliezer ha-Levi Horowitz, of the *Shelah*’s family, was known as “the Seer (*ha-ḥozeh*) of Lublin.” He occupied an exalted place among the *Hasidim* of Galicia and Poland, and many were drawn to his charismatic personality. His sobriquet “the Seer” shows the ecstatic nature of his revelations, cast in the mold of divine inspiration.

R. Jacob Isaac was born in 5505 (1745) or 5507 (1747) in Lukov, near Tarnograd in the Lublin region. From the end of the 1770s,

¹¹³ *Sabbath Prayer Book*, vol. 2, first discourse, 2b; *Great Waters*, p. 92.

¹¹⁴ *Sabbath Prayer Book*, vol. 2, second discourse, 11a.

¹¹⁵ Approbation of R. Mordecai of Kremenets, in *Spring of Living Water*, approbation page. R. Mordecai also supported publication of *Gate of Prayer* (*Sha’ar ha-Tefillah*), a manuscript of which had been sent from the Land of Israel.

he lived in Lozansky and Lancut; Rachel Elior has noted that his two principal books, *This Is a Remembrance* (*Ẓot Ẓikkaron*) and *In Memory of This* (*Ẓikhron Ẓot*), were written while he was living in Lancut.¹¹⁶ “Itsik Lancut” is included in the list of banned Hasidic *zaddikim* in *Breaking of Sinners*¹¹⁷ and that list may contain an echo of his activity there. But most of his fame came his way while he was living in Lublin, where he died in 5575 (1815).

“The Seer of Lublin” was a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel, a fact clearly reflected in his written references to R. Yehiel Mikhel as “my master.” The Seer began to write in 5538 (1778), while R. Yehiel Mikhel was still alive: “for I have heard from the rabbi, the *Maggid* of Zolochew, may he live [long].”¹¹⁸ Other statements were written after R. Yehiel Mikhel’s death: “as I heard from my master, the rabbi, the *Maggid* of Zolochew, may his memory be for a blessing.”¹¹⁹ “The Seer of Lublin” is mentioned as well in a work by R. Yehiel Mikhel’s son R. Isaac of Radvil, who cites “an incident involving the holy rabbi R. Itsikil, may his memory be for a blessing, in the city of Lublin.”¹²⁰ He is likewise included in a list of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s disciples that appears in *Great Waters*.¹²¹ In contrast, a biographical note in *In Memory of This*¹²² makes no mention at all of R. Yehiel Mikhel as one of his teachers, even though R. Jacob Isaac explicitly reports that in his books. The omission of R. Yehiel Mikhel may follow from the hagiographic nature of the note, which suffers from a lack of historical and textual criticism and reflects later hagiographic notions to the point that it becomes of doubtful reliability as an historical source.

An important tradition attributed to R. Yehiel Mikhel and cited by “the Seer of Lublin” relates to the utterance of names during prayer. According to this tradition, a person’s name contains his soul, and a worshipper who mentions a person’s name can provide the person strength and vitality: “For I have heard from the rabbi, the *Maggid* of Zolochew, may he live [long], that the name of every

¹¹⁶ See Elior 1994/2, p. 173.

¹¹⁷ See Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 101.

¹¹⁸ *This Is a Remembrance*, p. 118.

¹¹⁹ *Words of Truth (Divrei Emet)*, pp. 77–78; Elior 1994/2, pp. 170–174.

¹²⁰ *Light of Isaac*, p. 67.

¹²¹ See *Great Waters*, p. 136; Tanenbaum 1986, p. 179.

¹²² *In Memory of This*, pp. 162–168.

person is a garment for his vitality. Therefore, when praying for a person who is located elsewhere than where the worshipper is located, we mention only his name in the healing formula, using the letters of the healing formula, which are the garment of the light of healing, and the healing is brought to the patient, bringing new vitality to his name.”¹²³

Immediately following that quote, “the Seer of Lublin” cites the doctrine of linkage of souls to the soul of the *zaddik*: “For you will be the blessing, as we have explained in connection with ‘may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing.’ As soon as he mentions [the *zaddik*] and thinks of his name and bonds with him, he is blessed by the Blessed One, Who is Blessed, for the *zaddik* is like a conduit, through which bounty is constantly being drawn from Him, may He be blessed.”¹²⁴

“The Seer of Lublin’s” remarks imply that it is proper to mention the *zaddik*’s name and think of it in order to obtain strength and vitality via the *zaddik*, for the *zaddik* is the conduit that transmits the divine bounty to his disciples. That interpretation follows the quotation from R. Yehiel Mikhel, and there clearly is a link between the teacher’s remarks and the student’s interpretation. R. Yehiel Mikhel described the role of the *zaddik*, who mentions his disciples’ names during his prayers, and the Seer described the actions of the disciple, who mentions the *zaddik*’s name and connects with him in his prayer. Both of them refer to mentioning the name for the purpose of linking souls during prayer, and their remarks are comple-

¹²³ *This Is a Remembrance*, p. 118. See also R. Hayyim Tirrer’s book *Spring of Living Water, Portion Bereshit*, 45a: “And with respect to that I heard from the mouth of my lord, master, and teacher, crown of Israel and its holiness, the renowned light of the world, our master R. Yehiel Mikhel, may the memory of the righteous and holy be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, who said to me explicitly that we should not change the name of the ill person, for while he is merely a human, almost all his acts are with the holy spirit. For the name given a person when he is born is mostly if not entirely prepared by the Holy One blessed be He, for it is his name on high, and it is a person’s vitality all the days that he lives on the face of the Earth.”

¹²⁴ *This Is a Remembrance*, p. 118. Knowledge of the holy names is attributed to R. Yehiel Mikhel at additional points in “the Seer of Lublin’s” writings. See *Words of Truth*, p. 59: “And so I heard from the rabbi, the *Maggid* of Zolochew, may his memory be for a blessing, that through the letters of the story, one arouses the root of miracles, for all is in the letters.” Similarly, p. 49: “And it is known that I heard from the rabbi, the *Maggid* of Zolochew, peace be upon him, that the name is the vitality’s garment.” For a detailed discussion, see Idel 1989, pp. 100–106.

mentary. It may be noted as well that R. Yehiel Mikhel is quoted with the blessing for one still alive, showing that the comments were written during his lifetime—presumably close to Shavuot 5537 (1777), when R. Yehiel Mikhel and the members of his circle agreed on the manner of linkage among them. The extract from R. Yehiel Mikhel's comments, to be sure, is formulated as a general statement, lacking any personal dimension; but the personal dimension reappears in the words “for you will be the blessing,” invoking the name of the *zaddik*.

In spite of the curtain of esoterism, these authentic teachings indicate that R. Yehiel Mikhel used the magical technique of healing with divine names. Moreover, his own name—the *zaddik*'s name—was transformed to a divine name with healing powers. As Moshe Idel pointed out, this magical technique, which turned the *zaddik* into a Renaissance-like Magus, is dedicated in early Hasidism only to two schools—that of the Besht and the school of Zlotchov.¹²⁵

A further tradition cited by R. Jacob Isaac in the name of his teacher—“and thus I heard from my teacher, may he live [long]”—relates to the figure of the *zaddik*, who even on a weekday is called “sabbath.”¹²⁶ This identification of the *zaddik* with the Sabbath appears as well in R. Uziel Meizlish's eulogy for R. Yehiel Mikhel: “And it is known that the scholars and the righteous ones (*zaddikim*) of the generation are also called sabbath, and they, too, are like a soul for us intermediate ones; and just as the soul animates the body, so do the scholars and *zaddikim* of each generation animate the generation.”¹²⁷ Moreover, the identification of the *zaddik* with the Sabbath became the heart of the doctrine of the *zaddik* in the writings of R. Yehiel Mikhel's son, R. Isaac of Radvil. Accordingly, it is possible that the expression “my teacher, may he live [long],” refers in this instance as well to R. Yehiel Mikhel, and it appears that he is referred to, in the writings of “the Seer of Lublin,” simply as “my teacher.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ See Idel 1989.

¹²⁶ *This Is a Remembrance*, p. 118.

¹²⁷ *Glory of Uziel (Tiferet Uziel)* 36a.

¹²⁸ Cf. Elier 1994/2, p. 174, n. 22. According to Elier, “my teacher” or “my master” in the writings of “the Seer of Lublin” always refers to R. Elimelekh of Lozansky.

*Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets, His Son Abraham, and His Son's
Father-in-law, R. Solomon Lutsker*

R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen b. Joel was the scion of two distinguished families of scholars. One was that of R. Naftali Katz,¹²⁹ who was a rabbi in Posen and Frankfurt, Germany, and, later, in Lublin and Ostrog; he died in 5479 (1719) in Istanbul, en route to the Land of Israel. The other was the family of R. Samuel Shmelka Zack,¹³⁰ a descendant of the Maharal of Prague, who served on the Council of the Four Lands around 5430 (1670). R. Samuel Shmelka was the first rabbi appointed in Ostrog after the destruction that befell the community during the Chmielnitski rebellion and the pogroms of 5408–5409 (1648–1649). The great yeshiva in Ostrog was destroyed during those pogroms, and R. Samuel Shmelka decided to establish a *kloyz* where it had stood. He appointed his son-in-law, R. Naftali Katz (married to his daughter, Esther Sheindel) to head the *kloyz* and determined that his descendants should retain that position permanently.¹³¹

R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen was born in 5513 (1753). From his youth, he was considered a talmudic prodigy. In 5526 (1766), at the age of thirteen, he married the daughter of R. Zevi Hirsch Margaliot, rabbi of the town of Mezhirichi,¹³² and a year later, he was appointed chief judge of Korets. About the same time, he was appointed head of the *kloyz* in Ostrog, which his family had founded. He continued to reside in Korets but had to travel to Ostrog three times a year to discourse and adjudicate. He died in 5548 (1788), at the age of thirty-five; thereafter, his widow married R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir.¹³³

R. Isaac Eisik's book *Covenant of Eternal Priesthood* was first printed in Lvov in 5556 (1796) with an introduction by the author's brother, R. Meshullam ha-Kohen, chief judge of Lvov. The second printing, in 5608 (1848), was supplemented by an introduction by R. Ephraim Zalman Margaliot of Brody, a relative of the author's father-in-law, R. Zevi Hirsch Margaliot.

¹²⁹ "Katz" (ק"צ) is an acronym (*k-z*) for *kohen zedek*, priest of righteousness—**translator's note**.

¹³⁰ "Zack" (צ"ק) is an acronym (*z-q*) for *zera qodesh*, holy seed—**translator's note**.

¹³¹ See the introduction of R. Ephraim Zalman Margaliot in *Covenant of Eternal Priesthood* (Lemberg 5608 [1848]). See also Biber 1907, pp. 58–60, 63–69, 217–221.

¹³² See Biber 1907, p. 218; Heschel 1948–1952, p. 217.

¹³³ See Biber 1907, p. 221.

Hasidic tradition considers R. Isaac Eisik one of the pre-eminent students of R. Yehiel Mikhel: “the rabbi, our master the rabbi Isaac Eisik, may his memory be for a blessing, of Korets—the great *gaon* of the priesthood, the divine kabbalist, a student of the holy *Maggid* of Mezhirichi and a pre-eminent student of the holy one, our master, the rabbi R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochev; author of the book *Covenant of Eternal Priesthood*, [comprising] very profound discourses on kabbalah.”¹³⁴

R. Isaac Eisik’s closeness to R. Yehiel Mikhel is confirmed by sources dealing with the dispute over the Korets slaughterhouse. The dispute over the local arrangements for kosher slaughter seems to have broken out in 5532 (1772) and pitted R. Pinhas Shapira and his son Moses, in charge of the taxes on kosher slaughter in Korets, against the *Maggid* R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples. R. Isaac Eisik took R. Yehiel Mikhel’s side in the dispute, and, under the influence of R. Isaac Eisik’s powerful position, R. Pinhas was compelled to leave Korets and move to Ostrog.¹³⁵

The account of the Korets dispute encompasses as well the story of how R. Isaac Eisik came to be associated with R. Yehiel Mikhel and his student, R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy. During the course of the conflict, R. Isaiah was sent to Korets to appease R. Pinhas and to arrange a meeting between him and R. Yehiel Mikhel. He was hosted for the Sabbath at the home of R. Pinhas, his former teacher, and the events of that Friday night were recorded by an anonymous author in the name of R. Isaac b. R. Solomon Gleizor of Korets, referred by the writer as “the Elder.” “The Elder” was related both to R. Pinhas and to R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen, the chief judge of Korets:

Once R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy spent a Sabbath with the rabbi [R. Pinhas] and the aforesaid Elder [R. Isaac b. R. Solomon Gleizor] heard from him after the Friday night meal that he spoke of the rabbi in the following terms [recorded in the Yiddish]: “God grant him long days; we, too, met a bit with the Holy One blessed be He.” And after the second Sabbath meal, during the day, he saw that he was very pleased with the rabbi, and said there was none like him . . . After *havdalah* [at the end of the Sabbath on Saturday night] R. Isaiah said to the group,

¹³⁴ *Order of the Generations*, sec. 24. See also Biber 1907, pp. 217–221; Tanenbaum 1986, p. 180.

¹³⁵ See above, pp. 51–56.

“who will accompany me to R. Eisikle, the rabbi of Korets, whom I would like to meet?” The aforementioned Elder said “I will accompany you,” and he went with him to R. Eisikle’s home. R. Eisikle had already removed his clothes to retire for the night and, very frightened, said “Rabbi, where are you going?” R. Isaiah responded, “To you, for I want to meet you. They told me [at the Sabbath meal today] what you had said.” He [R. Isaac Eisik] demurred strongly, for he was embarrassed to recount his comments for him, and he said [recorded in the Yiddish], “It’s not important.” But then he [R. Isaac Eisik] told him many *gematriot* [numerological interpretations], and he [R. Isaiah] said to him [recorded in the Yiddish], “Put that aside; it isn’t useful for the service of God, may He be blessed. I used to deal with that myself, but I saw that it wasn’t useful for the service of God, and I abandoned it. Only what you at first said wasn’t important is important.”¹³⁶

Because the text is corrupt and censored, the identity of the characters and the sequence and nature of the events can be ascertained only through rigorous examination of the account. It is clear that some of the events have been concealed, albeit in a manner that causes the reader to sense that passages are missing. For example, the criticism of R. Pinḥas recounted at the Sabbath meal fits in only if it was uttered not by R. Isaiah but by a third party, not present at the meal. Apparently, R. Isaiah was a guest at R. Pinḥas’s home and heard “the Elder” tell R. Pinḥas what “the rabbi” had said about him: “God grant him long days; we, too, met a bit with the Holy One blessed be He.” These words angered R. Pinḥas, but they made R. Isaiah eager to meet “the rabbi.” The Elder recounts that after the second meal, on the day of the Sabbath, “he [the Elder] saw that he [R. Isaiah] was very pleased with the rabbi [who had criticized R. Pinḥas] and said there was none like him.” That explains why R. Isaiah went to meet “the rabbi” on Saturday night, with the Elder as his guide. It turns out that the additional “rabbi” mentioned in the story is none other than R. Isaac Eisik, chief judge

¹³⁶ Ms. *Cincinnati* 62 46a, in Heschel 1948–1952, p. 242, n. 156. Cf. Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, pp. 140–141. A comparison of the two texts shows that the version in Ms. *Jerusalem* 8 3759, from which Rivka Schatz quoted, is corrupt and censored; passages seem to have been removed in a manner that makes the text incoherent. Particularly confused in that version is the identity of “the Rabbi,” but important events are missing as well, such that only the conclusion remains: “so that some people left the Rabbi [R. Pinḥas] with objections.” Those deletions make it difficult to follow the chain of events as well as the reason for being angry with R. Pinḥas of Korets.

of Korets, whom R. Isaiah went to meet. The content of their conversation suggests that R. Isaiah wanted to assess R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen's character, implying that this was their first meeting. The two began to talk words of Torah, during the course of which R. Isaiah asked R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen what he had against R. Pinḥas. R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen demurred, declining to detail the root of the matter. As the conversation continued, R. Isaac Eisik began to offer numerological interpretations of Scriptural verses, and R. Isaiah advised him to "put that [the numerological interpretations] aside; it isn't useful for the service of God, may He be blessed. I used to deal with that myself, but I saw that it wasn't useful for the service of God, and I abandoned it. Only what you at first said wasn't important is [in fact] important."

If we connect R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy's comments to his reaction at the Sabbath meal, we can see that he endorsed R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen's words of criticism: "God grant him [R. Pinḥas] long days; [but] we, too, met a bit with the Holy One blessed be He." In other words, R. Pinḥas is not the only one who knows how to serve God; we, too, know something of that. R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen's criticism can be seen as a response to R. Pinḥas of Korets's attack on R. Yeḥiel Mikhel, as recounted in an earlier part of the story.¹³⁷ It turns out that R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets supported the *Maggid* R. Yeḥiel Mikhel of Zolochov in the face of R. Pinḥas of Korets's anger, and that is why R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy was eager to meet him. In connection with their meeting and conversation, we learn that after becoming a disciple of R. Yeḥiel Mikhel, R. Isaiah gave up numerological interpretations, no longer finding them necessary.

The upshot of the story is that a major dispute had erupted in Korets. R. Pinḥas cast out several of "the *Maggid*'s men"¹³⁸ from his house, which may imply that he expelled R. Isaiah, who had been his guest, and publicly declared that his path and that of "the *Maggid*" had no common ground.

The story implies that R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets had not yet met R. Yeḥiel Mikhel in the year 5532 (1772) and that he came independently to oppose R. Pinḥas, on the basis of his own analysis

¹³⁷ See above, p. 54.

¹³⁸ *Ms. Cincinnati* 62 45a, in Heschel 1948–1952, p. 226.

of the situation. Moreover, in the absence of a prior connection, information about “the *Maggid*’s” innovations came to him via the criticism of R. Pinḥas of Korets. Thus, it was the meeting with R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy that afforded R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen the opportunity to get to know R. Yehiel Mikhel well.

By 5538 (1778), R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen had drawn close to R. Yehiel Mikhel and had become involved in the effort to print kabbalistic and Hasidic books as a way of both heralding the Messiah’s arrival in Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781) and ensuring it by disseminating the mysteries concealed in those books. The involvement of R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets in two key initiatives of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s circle—the dispute related to the kosher slaughterhouse in Korets and the printing there of works of kabbalah and Hasidism—portrays him as an activist scholar, not hesitant to do battle for principles of morality and justice. That image is fully consistent with the uncompromising nature of his pre-eminent teacher, R. Yehiel Mikhel. Moreover, the two incidents in which R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen was involved are a key to understanding the growth of Hasidism during the 1770s and 1780s, its decisive formative years.

One prominent player in the printing enterprise was R. Solomon b. Abraham Lutsker, related to R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen by the marriage of their children.¹³⁹ Not by chance did R. Solomon Lutsker and his partner, R. Simeon b. Judah Leib Ashkenazi, choose to work in Korets,¹⁴⁰ for R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen was chief judge there and lorded it over the town.

The printing project began in 5538 (1778) and was intended to reach its peak in Iyyar 5541 (April–May 1781) with the arrival of the Messiah. It produced printed editions of the following works: *Zohar* (*Book of Splendor*), in 5538 (1778); *Book of Creation, With the Commentary “Secret Rose”* (*Sefer Yesira im Peirush Shoshan Sodot*) in 5539 (1779); *Repairs of the Zohar* (*Sefer Tikkunei ha-Zohar*) in 5540 (1780); *Orchard of Pomegranates* (*Pardes Rimmonim*), in 5541 (1781) Also printed

¹³⁹ On R. Solomon Lutsker and the Korets printing business, see Biber 1907, p. 211; Tauber 1924–1925, pp. 303–304; Tauber 1932, pp. 19–44; Ya’ari 1943–1944; Heschel 1948–1952, p. 239, n. 127, p. 240, n. 130; Ta-Shema 1979; Gries 1992, pp. 47–67, 129.

¹⁴⁰ R. Solomon Lutsker resided in Korets at that time. See the signature to his introduction to *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (Korets 5541 [1781]): “Solomon son of our master the rabbi Abraham of Lutsk, now residing here in the holy congregation of Korets.”

were the first Hasidic books: *Biography of Jacob Joseph* (*Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*) by R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye in 5540 (1780) and *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (*Maggid Devarav le-Ya'akov*), in 5541 (1781). In Iyyar 5541 (1781), they printed R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye's *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* (*Ben Porat Yosef*), to which was appended the Besht's *Holy Epistle*.

While they were printing kabbalistic books, the publishers were not identified by name or location. Only with the publication of *Biography of Jacob Joseph* in 5540 (1780) did the frontispiece disclose that the book had been brought to press by R. Abraham Samson Katz, chief judge of Vad Rashkov and son of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, and by his brother-in-law R. Abraham Dov, chief judge of Chmelnik, and through the efforts of R. Simeon b. Judah Leib Ashkenazi and R. Solomon b. Abraham of Lutsk.¹⁴¹ R. Solomon Lutsker's involvement in the publication of *Biography of Jacob Joseph* is confirmed as well by the title page of *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* as well as by his introduction to that book, according to which *Biography of Jacob Joseph* is among the works "printed by us."¹⁴² In that same introduction, he reveals that he was involved as well in the publication of *Joseph is a Fruitful Son*, though his name is not mentioned there. It is clear, then, that the organizers of the printing project sought to obscure their identities and association to the greatest extent possible. Accordingly, they were not identified at all at the outset, and when they were identified, only one of them would usually be mentioned.

The wave of printing continued even after R. Yehiel Mikhel's death on 25 Elul 5541 (September 15, 1781). In 5542 (1782), *Book of Kanah* (*Sefer ha-Kanah*), treating the laws of kosher slaughter from a kabbalistic point of view, was published in Korets. Also printed that year were *Tree of Life* (*Ez Hayyim*) and *Fruit of the Tree of Life* (*Peri Ez Hayyim*), by R. Hayyim Vital, the Ari's disciple; their publication had been planned for Iyyar 5541 (1781) but was deferred.¹⁴³ In 5543 (1783) two additional manuscripts of Lurianic Kabbalah—*Booklet of the Holy* (*Mahberet ha-Qodesh*), and *Entry to the Gates* (*Mevu*

¹⁴¹ See *Biography of Jacob Joseph* (Korets 5540 [1780]), title page; Dan 1966, p. 182.

¹⁴² *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (Korets 5541 [1781]), "Introduction to the Book." The frontispiece mentions only R. Solomon Lutsker, but his introduction refers as well to his partner, R. Simeon Ashkenazi.

¹⁴³ See above, pp. 138–140, 150.

She'arim)—were printed. The approbations accompanying *Booklet of the Holy* state explicitly that R. Solomon Lutsker was the publisher, though he is mentioned without his partner, R. Simeon Ashkenazi. *Entry to the Gates*, meanwhile, lacks approbations and its title page makes no mention of its publishers, stating only that “and knowledge of the holy ones will be found through the editing by the comrades from the dwelling places of lions, the mountains of leopards . . . for good is the fruit of their endeavors.”¹⁴⁴ That formula resembles that on the title page of *Booklet of the Holy*, which reads “and it is a book of *kavvanot* for Sabbaths and New Moons and precious times. Added to them are all the details of the *kavvanot* not mentioned in the book *Fruit of the Tree of Life* and referred to only with great brevity in the book *Teaching of the Pious*. Here, everything may be found fully explicated. From the dwelling places of lions, the mountains of leopards, the words of the living God, of the fruit of the tree of life which is in the Garden, planted firmly . . . with additions from the collections of the comrades.”¹⁴⁵ The similarity between the two title pages shows that R. Solomon Lutsker and his partners were behind the printing of *Entry to the Gates*.

R. Isaac Eisik's involvement in the publication of kabbalistic works also was camouflaged and can be confirmed only after the fact, through the approbations that accompany later editions of the books. In 5544 (1784), *Book of Kanah* and *Tree of Life* were again printed in Korets, and the approbations for that edition of *Book of Kanah* mention the name of the printer—R. Solomon Lutsker's partner, R. Simeon Ashkenazi.¹⁴⁶ *Book of Kavvanot* also was printed that year in Korets, including in it *Gate of Holiness* (*Sha'ar ha-Qedushah*)—both of them works of Lurianic Kabbalah—and its title page mentions that the book “was brought to press by the learned one, our master, the rabbi R. Abraham, son of the noble one, our master, the rabbi R. Isaac Eisik, may his rock and redeemer protect him.”¹⁴⁷ In 5545 (1785), *Fruit of the Tree of Life* was reprinted in Korets with corrections based on a manuscript in the possession of R. Shabbetai of Vad

¹⁴⁴ *Entry to the Gates*, title page.

¹⁴⁵ *Booklet of the Holy*, title page.

¹⁴⁶ See *Book of Kanah* (Korets 5544 [1784]), approbation page.

¹⁴⁷ *Book of Kavvanot* (Korets 5544 [1784]), title page. The earlier edition of *Gates of Holiness* (*Sha'arei ha-Qedushah*) had been printed in Zolkow in 5540 (1780) together with novellae by the kabbalist R. Samson of Ostropolya, but without approbations or publication details. It is possible that members of the group were responsible for that printing as well.

Rashkov.¹⁴⁸ *Tree of Life* likewise was printed with the approbation of R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen, “chief judge and head of the yeshiva of this community of Korets and chief judge and head of the yeshiva of the holy community of Ostrog.”¹⁴⁹ In his approbation, R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen mentions the printers—R. Solomon Lutsker’s partner R. Simeon Ashkenazi and his sons-in-law.

In 5546 (1786), another edition of *Fruit of the Tree of Life* was printed in Korets with an approbation by R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen taken from the previous year’s edition of *Tree of Life*.¹⁵⁰ That same year, R. Solomon Lutsker and his son-in-law left Korets and opened their own print shop in the town of Parichi,¹⁵¹ where they printed another edition of *Book of Kanah*. R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen provided an approbation for that edition, in which he justified the printing of the book, with its kabbalistic secrets, on the grounds that the book had already been printed and its secrets accordingly revealed. He signed the approbation “the insignificant one, Isaac Eisik, temporarily here in the holy community of Korets, may its rock and redeemer protect it, permanently established in the *kloyz*, and head of the yeshiva, in the holy community of Ostrog.”¹⁵² It seems reasonable that the approbations by R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen were not included in the earlier editions of the books because of the surreptitious nature of the project and the mantle of secrecy that the publishers imposed on themselves.

The 5546 (1786) Parichi edition of *Book of Kanah* also makes clear the special relationship between R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets and R. Solomon Lutsker. In his approbation, R. Isaac Eisik describes R. Solomon Lutsker as “my dear, beloved friend, the rabbi eminent in Torah and fear [of God], the wise, perfect, venerable and pious one, our teacher and rabbi, R. Solomon Lutsker, accomplished in deeds of Qabze’el.” (קבצאל)¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ See *Fruit of the Tree of Life* (Korets 5545 [1785]), approbation page: “And we here add the results of our labors, through which we found the book *Fruit of the Tree of Life*, well edited and copied from a manuscript of the late, pious rabbi and kabbalist, our master R. Shabbetai Rashkover, may his memory be for a blessing, all of whose writings are presumed properly corrected, and whose name is known and firmly established and whose renown needs no proof.”

¹⁴⁹ See *Tree of Life* (Korets 5545 [1785]), approbation page.

¹⁵⁰ See *Fruit of the Tree of Life* (Korets 5546 [1786]), approbation page.

¹⁵¹ On the print shops of Parichi, see Ya’ari 1943–1944.

¹⁵² See *Book of Kanah* (Parichi 5546 [1786]), approbation page.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

It also makes plain that the two were related through the marriage of their children, for R. Isaac Eisik's son Abraham was R. Solomon Lutsker's son-in-law. That fact as well is disclosed in *Book of Kanah*, whose title page declares that the book was printed by "the rabbinic scholar great in learning, fear of God, and piety, the noble one, our master Solomon, may the Merciful One protect and save him, son of the late noble one our master Abraham of Lutsk, may his Rock and Redeemer protect him . . . and the young and wondrous Torah scholar, the honorable, our master the rabbi R. Abraham, son of the noble one, our master the rabbi R. Isaac Eisik, may the Merciful One protect and save him, of Korets, now residing in the holy congregation of Parichi, *being the son-in-law* of the pious one, our aforementioned master Solomon [Lutsker]."¹⁵⁴

Abraham b. R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets, R. Solomon Lutsker's son-in-law, continued in the printing business. In 5553 (1793), he opened a print shop in Ostrog and returned to open one in Korets as well.¹⁵⁵ At Ostrog in 5594 (1794), six years after his father's death, he reprinted *Fruit of the Tree of Life* with the original version of the approbation by R. Isaac Eisik that had accompanied the 5545 (1785) printing of *Tree of Life*; only the date was changed. Israel Ta-Shema has noted that the illuminated border on the frontispiece "was the very same border used by the printer Krieger in the Korets 5546 [1786] printing of *Fruit of the Tree of Life* and had already been used for that purpose in Krieger's first printings of the works of R. Hayyim Vital in Korets in 5542 [1782]. Krieger left the city of Korets around 5550 (1790), and the border somehow came into the possession of the printer R. Abraham b. Isaac, who put it to use (temporarily?) in the new enterprise he established in Ostrog. The workers named at the end of this book also worked previously in Korets . . . these workers at that point had about thirty years of experience in printing."¹⁵⁶ But all this was no coincidence, and it is clear that the border did not come into R. Abraham's possession via some mysterious process; rather, it was in the possession of his father and father-in-law from the time they first printed *Tree of Life* and *Fruit of the Tree of Life* in Korets in 5542 (1782). So, too,

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., title page (emphasis supplied).

¹⁵⁵ See Ta-Shema 1979.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 210.

the print-shop workers, who moved with R. Solomon Lutsker and his son-in-law from Korets to Parichi and thence to Ostrog.

It thus appears that R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets, his son Abraham, his son's father-in-law R. Solomon Lutsker, and their partner, Rabbi Simeon Ashkenazi were the first organized association to engage in the printing and dissemination of previously suppressed manuscripts of Lurianic Kabbalah, only a few of which had seen light. In so doing, they transformed Lurianic kabbalah from an esoteric doctrine, known only to a very few, into a printed and accessible tradition, easily disseminated and available for study by all.

Similarly, one may note their unique contribution to the printing of early Hasidic works, a contribution that continued even after 5541 (1781). Among other things, they were responsible for the printing of *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* (*Ṭava'at ha-Ribash*), a short version of Hasidic conduct literature, apparently first printed in 5553 (1793).¹⁵⁷ The book was produced in a small, inexpensive format, and quickly gained wide currency. It also attracted the attention of the *Mitnaggedim*, the opponents of Hasidism, perhaps because they took it to be the last will and testament of the Besht, the founder of Hasidism. In Vilnius, copies of *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* were burned,¹⁵⁸ and, in 5558 (1798), the work was banned, along with *Precious Gleanings*, by decree apparently issued in Krakow.¹⁵⁹ Practices included in the book were cited in the complaint lodged in 5560 (1800) by R. Avigdor of Pinsk with Czar Paul, in which he accused the *Hasidim* of organizing underground and promoting anarchy and disobedience to the authorities.¹⁶⁰ The pamphlet "Reliable Reports on a New Sect in Poland, Known as *Hasidim*," by Rabbi Israel Lubel, is likewise replete with citations from *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem*, said to justify the author's negative opinion of the *Hasidim*.¹⁶¹ Starting with the first printings of *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem*, an effort was made to conceal the place and date of the printing as well as the printers' identities. To this day, their identity cannot be confirmed.

¹⁵⁷ On the various printings of *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem*, see Haberman 1960; Gries 1990, pp. 149–181.

¹⁵⁸ See Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 182.

¹⁵⁹ See Dubnow 1960, pp. 455–456; Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, pp. 92–93; Gries 1990, pp. 149, 173–174.

¹⁶⁰ See Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 252.

¹⁶¹ See *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 326–338.

It seems likely, though, that the anonymous printers of *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* were R. Solomon Lutsker and his son-in-law Abraham. That possibility is raised by the second or third edition of the book, printed in 5554 (1794) with no place of publication identified. That edition included the composition *Alphabet, Enlightening Letters* (*Alfa Beta Otiyot Mahkimot*), later separately printed under the name of R. Zevi Hirsch of Nadvorno, a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel and related to him through the marriage of their children.¹⁶² The title page of this edition presents for the first time some previously unknown details, namely, that the book was printed from a manuscript in the possession of R. Isaiah, preacher to the congregation of Yanuv, whom Abraham Joshua Heschel believed to be R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy, a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel.¹⁶³ And though here, too, there is no mention of the publisher, the printer, and the place of publication, their identity is hinted at on the internal title page that precedes *Alphabet, Enlightening Letters*: "This pamphlet, Enlightening Letters, was prepared and arranged by a man who is valiant and accomplished in deeds of Qabze'el."¹⁶⁴

The sobriquet "valiant and accomplished in deeds of Qabze'el" was originally applied (2 Sam. 23:20) to Benayahu b. Yehoyada, a mighty warrior of King David whom the mystery literature transformed into a mystical figure. Here, it is associated as well with the verbal stem *q-b-z*, (קבץ—gather) as an allusion to the work of a compiler. Coincidentally or not, R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets described R. Solomon Lutsker, in his approbation for *Book of Kanah* (Parichi 5546 [1786]), as "my dear, beloved friend, the rabbi eminent in Torah and fear [of God], the wise, perfect, venerable and pious one, our teacher and rabbi, R. Solomon Lutsker, accomplished in deeds of Qabze'el."¹⁶⁵

It thus appears that "accomplished in deeds of Qabze'el" was the term used by R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets to refer to his son's father-in-law, R. Solomon Lutsker. It is reasonable as well to assume that the "accomplished in deeds of Qabze'el" mentioned on the frontispiece of *Alphabet, Enlightening Letters* included in *Testament of R. Israel*

¹⁶² See below, p. 287.

¹⁶³ See below, pp. 258–262.

¹⁶⁴ See *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* (publication place lacking, 1794), internal frontispiece of *Alphabet, Enlightening Letters*.

¹⁶⁵ *Book of Kanah* (Parichi 5546 [1786]), approbation page.

Ba'al Shem alludes to R. Solomon Lutsker. And if R. Solomon Lutsker was involved in printing the 5554 (1794) edition, it stands to reason that he had a hand in printing the earlier editions as well.

That conclusion is consistent with Israel Ta-Shema's premise that the first copies of *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* were printed in Ostrog.¹⁶⁶ Abraham, son of R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets and son-in-law of R. Solomon Lutsker, operated a print shop there at that time, and it was there that the first editions of *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* were printed, with the encouragement and involvement of R. Solomon Lutsker.

Issakhar Ber of Zolochov, Herald of Righteousness (Mevasser Zedeq)

R. Issakhar Ber was chief judge in Zolochov. Late in life, in the month of Shevat 5595 (1795), he immigrated to the Land of Israel with a small group that joined up with the *Hasidim* already living there. Only a few months later, in Av of that year, he died and was buried in Safed.¹⁶⁷ His son-in-law, R. Abraham Hayyim, succeeded him in the Zolochov rabbinate.

R. Issakhar Ber was a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel, whom he cites in his book *Herald of Righteousness*, printed in Berdichev in 5577 (1817): "I have already written for you in the name of the holy rabbi, our master, our late master Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory endure in the life of the world to come."¹⁶⁸ He also provided approbations for *Precious Gleanings* by R. Meshullam Feibush Heller,¹⁶⁹ for *Intense Loving* by R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy,¹⁷⁰ and for *Pleasantness of Elimelekh (No'am Elimelekh)* by R. Elimelekh of Lozansky.¹⁷¹

It should be noted that R. Meshullam Feibush Heller mentions R. Issakhar Ber in his second epistle: "And I heard a worthy parable on this subject from the late *zaddik*, our master, the rabbi R. Issakhar Ber, may his memory be for a blessing, of our congregation, who told it in the name of his teacher, R. Mendel."¹⁷² "Late *zaddik*" apparently

¹⁶⁶ See Ta-Shema 1979, pp. 209–210.

¹⁶⁷ See Stiman-Katz 1986, pp. 29–30.

¹⁶⁸ *Herald of Righteousness, Portion Va'ethanan*, 46a. Similarly, *Great Waters*, pp. 117–118.

¹⁶⁹ See below, p. 276.

¹⁷⁰ See above, p. 233.

¹⁷¹ See *Pleasantness of Elimelekh*, approbation page.

¹⁷² *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 25b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 130a.

pertains here to R. Mendel; the reference may be to R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany, and it is not inconceivable that R. Issakhar Ber was his student as well.

*Isaiah ha-Levi of Dunayevtsy, Light of Torah (Or Torah);
Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem (Zava'at ha-Ribash)(?)*

R. Isaiah ha-Levi of Dunayevtsy was a student of R. Pinhas of Korets but later became associated with R. Yehiel Mikhel, the *Maggid* of Zolochov. In 5532 (1772), he attempted to mediate between the opposing sides in the Korets slaughterhouse dispute. His involvement in the episode led to his total break with R. Pinhas, who hinted obliquely, in a letter to his now-former student, that R. Isaiah had changed “and had turned to a warped path, thinking in a wayward manner.”¹⁷³ The hints suggest that R. Isaiah’s leanings toward the “*Maggid*” of Zolochov were regarded by R. Pinhas as treachery against him and his values and as heresy of a familiar form. It may also be noted that “Isaiah Donetzer” is mentioned in the list of Hasidic *zaddikim* in *Breaking of Sinners*.¹⁷⁴

Light of Torah was published in Korets in 5564 (1804); it constitutes a version of Hasidic conduct literature printed from a manuscript in the possession of R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy.¹⁷⁵ The book includes discourse in the name of R. Yehiel Mikhel; one of the discourses has a parallel in *Precious Gleanings*, introduced by “And the rabbi, our master the rabbi Mikhel, may the Merciful One protect and save him, deduced from the text.”¹⁷⁶ A second discourse, introduced by “The rabbi, our master the rabbi Yehiel Mikhel, may the Merciful One protect and save him, explained [the seeming difficulty],”¹⁷⁷ lacks any parallel in other versions of the conduct literature. A third discourse, also lacking parallels, is introduced as a first-hand account: “For I and He cannot dwell in the same space (I heard from my master R. Yehiel Mikhel, may the Merciful One protect and save him, . . . If a man regards himself as ‘I,’ that is, as

¹⁷³ *Kindness to Abraham (Hesed le-Avraham)*, Jerusalem 5714 (1954) 40b.

¹⁷⁴ See Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 101.

¹⁷⁵ On *Light of Torah*, see Gries 1990, index.

¹⁷⁶ *Light of Torah* 155b; *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 105.

¹⁷⁷ *Light of Torah* 147a.

something with existence, he cannot dwell with the Holy One blessed be He, who is called 'He' . . . for it is impossible for a man to be bonded to Him, may He be blessed, unless he regards himself as 'nothing'.¹⁷⁸ Thus far from our master R. Yehiel Mikhel, may God protect and save him."¹⁷⁹ The existence of this discourse is particularly important, for it shows that R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy reported R. Yehiel Mikhel's discourses directly, rather than copying them from secondary or tertiary sources. Since R. Yehiel Mikhel is mentioned with the blessing "may the Merciful One protect and save him," we see that the material was committed to writing during his lifetime.

But even though the discourses in *Light of Torah* and the manuscripts regarding the Korets episode attest to the link between R. Isaiah and R. Yehiel Mikhel, the latter's name does not appear on the title page of *Light of Torah*. Instead, the frontispiece declares that the book includes the discourses of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, preserved in the possession of his student, R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy:

The splendid book *Light of Torah*, see, it encompasses precious gleanings more precious than gold, which had been hidden and concealed from all eyes, by the great, divine rabbi, our late master, the rabbi R. Dov Ber, may his memory endure to the life of the world to come . . . and some of his words have already appeared in print in the book *Gleaned Statements (Liqqutei Amarim)*, and the Earth glowed with the glory of his teachings. And now we merit once again the light of his remarks, which were kept hidden under the king's seal. Who is the king? My masters, it is the renowned rabbi, the holy luminary, our master the rabbi R. Isaiah, preacher of the holy congregation of Dunayevtsy.¹⁸⁰

Light of Torah was printed after R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy's death, and the content of its title page suggests that its printers did not formulate it on the basis of information in their possession. It may be that the text was composed under the influence of similar title pages, perhaps that of *He Imparts His Words to Jacob*, mentioned here by its subtitle, *Gleaned Statements*.

The frontispiece of *Order of the Generations* similarly listed R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy among the disciples of the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ The Hebrew for "nothing" (יֵשׁ—א-י-נ) is shown as an anagram of the Hebrew for "I" (אִנּוּ—א-נ-י)—*translator's note*.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 82a; Cf. *Sotah* 5a.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., title page.

¹⁸¹ *Order of the Generations*, sec. 18.

Still, this concealment of R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy's link to R. Yehiel Mikhel may reflect not the later publisher's or printer's lack of information as much as R. Isaiah's deliberate choice, like that of other disciples of R. Yehiel Mikhel, to conceal their ties to him.

A further finding that may be related to R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy pertains to a different formulation of the Hasidic conduct literature—*Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem*. The book apparently was first printed in 5553 (1793), and an effort was made in its early printings to conceal the place and date of printing and the identity of the printers.¹⁸² The title page of *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* states "the testament of *Ribash* [our master R. Israel Ba'al Shem] and correct practices, found in the stash of the pious, austere man of God, our master, the rabbi R. Isaiah, who was preacher in the holy community of Yanuv."¹⁸³ Abraham Joshua Heschel surmised that R. Isaiah of Yanuv was R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy.¹⁸⁴ If he was right, then two versions of the conduct literature of R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochov had been printed from manuscripts in the possession of R. Isaiah, both of them attributing the practices to other figures.

R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy's name comes up yet again in connection with the mystery surrounding the source of the writings, found in the Stolin archive, by the Sabbatean kabbalist R. Joshua Heschel Zoref of Vilnius, born in 5393 (1633). Shortly after Shabbetai Zevi's revelation, R. Heschel Zoref began to experience frequent visions regarding his messianism, and he became renowned as a kabbalist and Sabbatean prophet. R. Heschel wrote five major works, but most of that material has been lost.

In 5700 (1940) or somewhat earlier, the researcher Ze'ev Rabinowitz discovered in the town of Stolin, on the Russian-Polish border, an archive of kabbalistic and Hasidic manuscripts. The archive had belonged to R. Aaron (the second) of the Karlin line of *zaddikim*; R. Aaron was the son-in-law of R. Mordecai of Kremenets, the fifth son of R. Yehiel Mikhel.¹⁸⁵ The archive included some unique items, including the linkage document of the Ari's disciples, signed at Safed in 5335 (1575), and a manuscript of *Book of Zoref* by R. Heschel

¹⁸² On the possibility that the printers of *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* were R. Solomon Lutsker and his son-in-law Abraham, see above, pp. 255–257.

¹⁸³ *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem*, title page.

¹⁸⁴ See Heschel 1952, p. 122.

¹⁸⁵ See above, p. 225.

Zoref, copied from an earlier copy. The two copyists added introductions, which indicate that the manuscript had been in the possession of R. Naḥum of Chernobyl, founder of the Chernobyl line of *zaddikim*, who had copied it “from the very book he found written in the home of the *zaddik* R. Isaiah ha-Levi of Dunayevtsy.”¹⁸⁶ His grandsons claimed that the texts had been in the possession of the Besht, reaching R. Isaiah via the Besht’s son and grandson. The copyists added as well remarks in the name of R. Shabbetai of Vad Rashkov, who maintained that the writings of R. Heschel Zoref were accepted by the Besht, who regarded them as a reliable tradition.

Gershom Scholem believed that R. Heschel Zoref’s writings were those attributed in *In Praise of the Besht* to the legendary R. Adam, who turned them over to the Besht, and that R. Adam’s name was used, deliberately and from the outset, to mask that of R. Heschel.¹⁸⁷ Hannah Shmeruk refuted Scholem’s view on the grounds that *In Praise of the Besht* belonged to “that naïve literary genre whose aim is to abound in revelations, wondrous attributions, and stories of magical ability rather than to serve as a source for hidden identities.”¹⁸⁸ According to Shmeruk, the attribution of the writings to R. Adam in *In Praise of the Besht* was inspired by *Book of Razi’el*, the introduction to which tells that the book was given to the primeval Adam by the angel Razi’el; and folk legend may have identified *Book of Razi’el* with Primeval Adam’s book. But the motif in *Book of Razi’el* is not a folk motif, and it appears as well in R. Solomon Lutsker’s introduction to *He Imparts His Words to Jacob*, which is not a folk source. R. Solomon Lutsker states in his introduction that his teacher showed him a copy of *Book of Razi’el*: “And he also showed me in *Book of Razi’el* the letters and script of angels and said that the Besht had taught him all this, for each angel has his own distinct form of the letters of the alphabet . . . and he showed me several names of angels in the aforementioned book and said to me, in reality, that by means of these names, the Besht knew, in the month of Nisan in each year, the functionary put in charge of the world [for that year] so as to know how to behave with him and through him.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Rabinowitz 1940, p. 130.

¹⁸⁷ See *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 3; Scholem 1941; Dan 1975/2, pp. 81–83; Rubinstein 1979.

¹⁸⁸ Shmeruk 1963, p. 100.

¹⁸⁹ *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (Korets 5541 [1781]), introduction by Solomon Lutsker.

If all these traditions are interconnected and flow from a common source, it is possible that R. Solomon Lutsker's comments may cast light as well on the source of the versions in the Stolin archive and in *In Praise of the Besht*, for in both of them, *Book of Zoref* is camouflaged under the name of the legendary R. Adam or of the Besht. It appears that the Besht's name was interpolated into the Stolin archive and into *In Praise of the Besht* not in order to reveal the source of R. Heschel Zoref's writings but to disguise it.

Some questions remain unanswered: How did the manuscript of *Book of Zoref* come into the possession of R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy? Is the manuscript's eventual arrival in the Stolin archive connected to the fact that R. Aaron of Karlin was the son-in-law of R. Mordecai of Kremenets, the son of R. Yehiel Mikhel? Finally, did the Besht himself approve *Book of Zoref* (and, if so, to what degree) or do we have here an effort to legitimate Sabbatean writings and assimilate them into Hasidism on the basis of a tradition going back to the Besht?

Israel of Kozienice, Holy Writings (Kitvei Qodesh)

The name of Rabbi Israel, the *Maggid* of Kozienice, is included in a list of disciples of R. Yehiel Mikhel incorporated into *Great Waters*.¹⁹⁰ His book *Praises of Israel* (*Tehillot Yisra'el*) cites statements in the name of R. Yehiel Mikhel: "I heard in the name of the man of God, our master the rabbi Yehiel Mikhel."¹⁹¹ R. Israel's son, Moses Elyakum Berieh, likewise cites statements in the name of R. Yehiel Mikhel: "As the holy rabbi, our master the rabbi Yehiel Mikhel, may the memory of the righteous endure to the life of the world to come, said to my lord, father, master, and teacher, may the memory of the righteous endure to the life of the world to come."¹⁹² The "*Maggid of Kozienice*" is mentioned in the list of Hasidic *zaddikim* in *Breaking of Sinners*.¹⁹³

Holy Writings is a version of the Hasidic conduct literature, printed in Lemberg in 5622 (1862) from a manuscript that had been in the

¹⁹⁰ See *Great Waters*, p. 136. See also Piekarz 1999, pp. 179–181.

¹⁹¹ The quotation is included in the commentary on Ps. 92:5. See *Praises of Israel* 11b; *Great Waters*, p. 120.

¹⁹² *Knowledge of Moses* (*Da'at Moshe*), *Portion Be-Midbar* 87a; *Great Waters*, p. 95.

¹⁹³ See Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 101.

possession of the *maggid* R. Israel of Kozienice. On the title page, the practices in the book are attributed to the Besht, to R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, to R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev, and to the *Maggid* of Kozienice himself; the style calls to mind “the four who walked well” at the opening of *Precious Gleanings*.

Levi Isaac of Berdichev

R. Levi Isaac b. Me’ir of Berdichev was regarded as a prodigy from his youngest days. He was appointed to succeed R. Samuel Shmulky of Nikolsburg as rabbi of the town of Ritschevel in Galicia and was later rabbi in Zelihavu, Pinsk, and, ultimately, Berdichev, where he served until his death in 5570 (1810).¹⁹⁴ “Levi of Bardizuv” is included in the listing of banned Hasidic *zaddikim* in *Breaking of Sinners*.¹⁹⁵

R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev was known as “Israel’s Defender.” Folk tradition tells of his devotion to finding some righteous aspect in all of Israel’s actions and of his practice of praying for Jews and arguing in their defense in the supernal worlds. That tradition inspired the poet Uri Zevi Greenberg who, in his Hebrew poem “At the End of the Roads Stands Rabbi Levi Isaac of Berdichev, Demanding an Answer in Blood,” described how R. Levi Isaac takes God to court for having abandoned His people in time of trouble.¹⁹⁶

R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev was a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel, as appears from the quotations he cites in his writings: “And this is what I heard from the holy rabbi, our master the rabbi Yehiel Mikhel, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing.”¹⁹⁷ Elsewhere he uses the wording, “And I heard as well in the name of the *zaddik*, our master Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory be for a blessing,”¹⁹⁸ but it is possible that a later editor changed the original version. R. Levi Isaac also wrote approbations for book by other

¹⁹⁴ See “Life of our Teacher, the Author, May His Memory Protect Us,” in *Sanctity of Levi*, part 3, pp. 534–544. It should be noted, however, that the list is based on Hasidic hagiography, which fails to distinguish between historical fact and hagiographic stories.

¹⁹⁵ See Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 101.

¹⁹⁶ See *Streets of the River, The Book of Might and Power* (*Rehovot ha-Nahar, Sefer ha-Ilyut ve-ha-Koah*), pp. 271–275.

¹⁹⁷ *Sanctity of Levi*, part 1, p. 256.

¹⁹⁸ *Sanctity of Levi*, part 1, p. 92.

disciples of the House of Zolochov, including R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy,¹⁹⁹ R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir—of whom he wrote “the holy spirit appeared in his study hall, a study hall for the pious”²⁰⁰—and R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov, whom he termed “my soul mate.”²⁰¹ It appears the two were related as well through the marriage of their children, for R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov quotes R. Levi Isaac in the following terms: “For I heard from my child’s father-in-law, the rabbi, the *gaon*, our master, the rabbi R. Levi Isaac, chief judge of holy congregation of Berdichev.”²⁰² Similarly, R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev and R. Ephraim Zalman Margaliot, a cousin of R. Abraham Hayyim, were among the approbation writers for the book *Gates of Garden of Eden* by the Sabbatean kabbalist R. Jacob Kopel Lifschitz of Mezhrichi.²⁰³ In none of these approbations did R. Levi Isaac mention R. Yehiel Mikhel, the teacher-in-common; in contrast, he cited extensively to the comments of “my lord, master, and teacher, our master the rabbi Dov Ber, may his memory be for a blessing.”²⁰⁴ And there lies the problem: in the absence of a critical-historical study of his life, we cannot tell how close R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev was to each of the two “*Maggidim*.” It should be noted as well that R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev possessed manuscripts of Hasidic conduct literature stemming from the House of Zolochov. The practices, which he had stored away, were first printed only in the twentieth century and were attributed to R. Levi Isaac himself. But the researcher Ze’ev Gries pointed out that these same versions had been printed in other books in the name of R. Yehiel Mikhel.²⁰⁵

Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and Israel Yaffee (“The Printer of Kapost”)

R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, in White Russia (Belarus), led the band of *Hasidim* who immigrated to the Land of Israel in 5537 (1777) and settled in Safed and Tiberias. There is no reliable information about his life before his immigration (*Aliyyah*). Some believe he came to

¹⁹⁹ See above, p. 233.

²⁰⁰ *The Light That Illuminates*, approbation page.

²⁰¹ *Way to Life*, approbation page.

²⁰² See above, p. 227.

²⁰³ See Tishby 1982/1, p. 205.

²⁰⁴ *Sanctity of Levi*, part 1, p. 169.

²⁰⁵ See Gries 1990, p. 117, n. 60; p. 284.

Vilnius in 5532 (1772) together with R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady to meet with R. Elijah, the *Gaon* of Vilnius, and that the *Gaon* declined to receive them; but even that view is hazy. It is based on a groundless identification of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk with one “Mendel Taldesheiner,”²⁰⁶ who went from Minsk to Vilnius and provoked a controversy there. The identification is supplemented by stories said to verify the episode, but those stories are derived from *Habad* hagiography.

R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk lived eleven years in the Land of Israel; he died on the second day of the New Moon (the first day of the month) of Iyyar 5548 (May 6, 1788) and was buried in Tiberias. According to Hasidic tradition, he was fifty years old when he died. His book *Fruit of the Land* includes discourses that he delivered in the Land of Israel as well as Hasidic practices. The book was first printed by R. Israel b. Isaac Yaffee, “the Printer of Kapost,” who began to print it on the first of Iyyar 5574 (1814), the twenty-sixth anniversary of the author’s death, and completed the job two months later, on the thirtieth of Sivan (the first day of the New Moon of Tammuz).²⁰⁷

R. Israel b. Isaac Yaffee, “the Printer of Kapost,” came from a family of scholars and rabbis; his grandfather, Israel Yaffee, was the chief judge of Shklov and author of the book *Light of Israel* (*Or Yisra’el*). R. Israel b. Isaac was also an experienced printer: in 5544 (1784), he printed *Book of Brightness* (*Sefer ha-Bahir*) at the Shklov print shop owned by the partners R. Zevi Hirsch Margaliot and his son-in-law, R. Samuel.²⁰⁸ In 5564 (1804), he opened his own print shop in the town of Kapost,²⁰⁹ and in 5569–5571 (1809–1811), he took in as a

²⁰⁶ Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 64.

²⁰⁷ The book was accompanied by an approbation by “the rabbi, the great luminary, honor is his name, our master the rabbi R. Moses [b. Israel], the righteous teacher of our congregation, may its Rock and Redeemer protect it,” who also provided an approbation for the *Tanya* by R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, printed in Shklov in 5566 (1806). See *Fruit of the Land* (Kapost 5574 [1814]), title page. Also included in the volume was material by R. Abraham “the Angel,” son of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi: “And we have combined with this what we have found to be the holy words of the holy, renowned rabbi, our master Abraham, son of the holy, renowned rabbi, rabbi of all the Diaspora, our master Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, extending from the portion of *Bereshit* to the *kavvanah* of the immersion pool, for the small one is lost.”

²⁰⁸ *Book of Brightness* (Shklov 5544 [1784]). It may have been they who printed the kabbalistic works in Korets.

²⁰⁹ See Friedberg 1950, pp. 135–136.

partner R. Mordecai b. R. Samuel Horowitz.²¹⁰ A year after the printing of *Fruit of the Land*, in 5575 (1815), he produced the first printing of *In Praise of the Besht*, and he may have seen the printing of the two works as a completing his life's work in the Diaspora.

In 5579 (1819) or 5581 (1821), Israel and Shprinza Yaffee immigrated to the Land of Israel together with their family, the employees of the Kapost print shop, and all their families.²¹¹ Family tradition tells that they took the printing machinery with them, intending to establish a print shop at their destination. En route from the port of Acco to Hebron, however, the machinery was destroyed by brigands, and their plan was set aside. The Yaffee family settled in Hebron, and R. Israel was the first director of the *Habad* fund in Hebron, which functioned there until the city's Jewish community was ended by the Arab riots of 5689 (1929). Three of his sons—Ephraim, Mordecai, and Moses—assumed that role after him.²¹²

As noted, R. Israel Yaffee produced the first printing of the writings of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk. On the title page of *Fruit of the Land* he provided a sort of introduction:

The book *Fruit of the Land*, by the honorable, my lord, master, and teacher, the *gaon*, glory of Israel, the pious and austere holy luminary, the pillar of light, a light that illuminates the world and all realms, the honor of his holy name, our master Menahem Mendel, son of the rabbi, our master the rabbi R. Moses, may the memory of the righteous and holy be for a blessing, whose dwelling place was in the holy city of Tiberias, may it be built and established speedily in our day; and they are his holy remarks on each and every Sabbath to those gathered in his shelter, the shelter of wisdom. They were collected by the rabbi, great in Torah and fear [of God], the pious one, our master Elazar Zussman, may his memory endure to the life of the world to come, scribe and judge of the holy land, may it be built and established speedily in our days, amen. We received them from him, and our eyes were illuminated by this small sample; and so that his words might be made famous in the world . . . it turned out that on the day on which the holy ark was taken and the light came up to its root, we commenced the printing of his holy words, whose least light will illuminate the entire world. . . . And may the merit of the holy rabbis

²¹⁰ See Ya'ari 1945–1946, p. 52.

²¹¹ R. Israel Yaffee's print shop in Kapost continued to function until 5581 (1821). See Lieberman 1984, pp. 20–23. That tends to support the view that his immigration was in that year rather than earlier.

²¹² See Avishar 1970, p. 131.

protect us and be steadfast for us and reveal our righteous Messiah speedily in our days, amen.²¹³

R. Israel Yaffee writes in his introduction that the manuscript of *Fruit of the Land* had been in the possession of R. Elazar (Eliezer) Zussman, a member of the Hasidic group in Tiberias who on several occasions had gone back to the Diaspora as a rabbinic emissary. But the immersion *kavvanah* printed in the book itself contains an added note: "Thus far we found in the holy words of the afore-said rabbi, our master, the rabbi R. Elazar."²¹⁴ It is not clear from this note whether R. Elazar (Eliezer) Zussman transferred the manuscript to R. Israel Yaffee, or whether a manuscript of R. Elazar (Eliezer) Zussman, recording discourses by R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk along with additional words of Torah, reached R. Israel Yaffee from some other source.

Moreover, R. Israel Yaffee terms R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk "my lord, master, and teacher." His connections with R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and the *Hasidim* of the Land of Israel are expressed as well in *In Praise of the Besht*, which he printed in 5575 (1815); he refers there to R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk as "the holy rabbi, our master Menahem Mendel, may the memory of the righteous and holy one be for a blessing." Later, he mentions "my lord, master, and teacher, his soul stored away on high."²¹⁵ Abraham Rubinstein has pointed out that the reference is to the same person, and that, in *In Praise of the Besht* as well, the sobriquet "my lord, master, and teacher" designates R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, Rubinstein inferred from the statements' style that R. Israel Yaffee had not heard them directly from R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk but through intermediaries who had heard them first-hand.²¹⁷

Accordingly, the manuscripts of *Fruit of the Land* and *In Praise of the Besht* may well have reached R. Israel Yaffee via R. Elazar (Eliezer) Zussman. And it is possible as well that he obtained them from his son, R. David Yaffee, who was involved in the Tiberias Hasidic community even before his father's immigration. In 5566 (1806),

²¹³ *Fruit of the Land*, title page.

²¹⁴ Ibid., Introduction (p. 2) in *Portion Lekh-Lekha*. On R. Elazar (Eliezer) Zussman, see also above, p. 180.

²¹⁵ See *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), "Printer's Introduction," pp. 23, 25.

²¹⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 25, n. 23.

²¹⁷ See *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), p. 35, n. 6.

the court of the Ashkenazi community in Tiberias appointed R. David Yaffee a rabbinic emissary and dispatched him to administer the legacy of R. Jacob ha-Levi Segal, a Tiberian Hasid, who had died in the city of Azvira, Morocco.²¹⁸ It follows that R. David was in Tiberias before 5566 (1806), and he may have been the conduit transmitting both oral traditions and manuscripts to his father. Moreover, it is possible that R. David Yaffee was among the immigrants of 5537 (1777), but there is no unambiguous proof for that surmise.²¹⁹

The lack of clarity regarding the connection between R. Israel Yaffee and R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk extends as well to the identity of their pre-eminent teacher. Hasidic historiography treats R. Menahem Mendel as a disciple of the *Maggid* R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi.²²⁰ But that tradition is nowhere supported by *Fruit of the Land*, in which R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk makes no mention of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi. It is not at all clear whom he had in mind when he wrote “during the life of the rabbi, [the] Besht, and during the lifetime of *my master the rabbi*, their souls hidden away on high.”²²¹

Meanwhile, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk’s connections to R. Yehiel Mikhel go unmentioned in the usual Hasidic historiography, but they are implied by the account of the immigration to the Land of Israel that was part of the messianic program of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his associates. These connections are hinted at as well in the story of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk’s death, cited by R. Israel Yaffee in his introduction to *In Praise of the Besht*. The story tells that R. Menahem Mendel was punished for some event related to the death of his master and teacher, referred to in the story as “the rabbi the *maggid*.” The event occurred in 5546 (1786), when the members of the Hasidic group in Tiberias were in isolation because of the plague epidemic. Among them was an elder who would regularly recount the praises of the Besht: “Once, on the

²¹⁸ See Sursky 2000, vol. 1, pp. 122–123.

²¹⁹ R. David Yaffee cannot be identified as R. David b. Israel, signatory of letters and receipts of the Hasidic group in Tiberias, for the signatory was David b. Israel b. Jacob, while David Yaffee was David b. Israel b. Isaac. See Mondschein 1992/2, pp. 288, 298.

²²⁰ See *Order of the Generations*, sec. 2; Alfasi 1997, pp. 483–488.

²²¹ *Fruit of the Land* (*Portion Ki Tavo*) 31b.

Sabbath, *the rabbi the maggid*, may the memory of the righteous and holy be for a blessing, appeared in a dream to the aforesaid rabbi [R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk] and said to him, ‘Are you not my student? Why do you not recount my praises as well?’²²² At the conclusion of the Sabbath, when R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk wanted to recount the praises of “the rabbi the *maggid*,” the elder began to recount the praises of the Besht, and R. Menahem Mendel fell silent: “and immediately the rabbi [R. Menahem Mendel] understood that he would certainly be punished.” From that time on, R. Menahem Mendel went into a steady decline, eventually succumbing to malaria and dying.

The story is difficult to understand if “the *Maggid*” is R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, but it makes much better sense if R. Menahem Mendel’s master and teacher was “the *Maggid*” R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochev, for the circumstances of his death generated feelings of guilt in R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk. Letters by the members of the Hasidic group in the Land of Israel make it evident that R. Menahem Mendel was tormented over his role in the failure of the messianic enterprise of Iyyar 5541 (1781), a failure that led soon after to R. Yehiel Mikhel’s death.²²³

R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk’s will, signed in Elul 5537 (1777) upon his arrival in the Land of Israel, can be understood in a similar light. Among other things, the will includes a request that “at the time my eyes are closed with a pottery shard and at the time forks are placed in my hands,²²⁴ let them mention the holy name of our master the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing, and the holy name of my lord, master, and teacher, *the rabbi the maggid*, may his memory be for a blessing.”²²⁵ If he was referring to “the rabbi, the *maggid*” R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochev, it may be assumed that the notation “may his memory be for a blessing” was added later, apparently when the book was printed.

²²² *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), “Printer’s Introduction,” p. 24 (emphasis supplied).

²²³ See above, pp. 188–192.

²²⁴ There is a custom to place metal forks in the hands of the dead, so the fingers do not close. See *Qizzur Shulhan Arukh*, sec. 197, par. 5.

²²⁵ *Fruit of the Land* (Jerusalem 5749 [1989]), p. 237 (emphasis supplied).

Mordecai of Nesukhoyezhe

R. Mordecai was rabbi of the city of Nesukhoyezhe in northern Volynhia and active in the affairs of the *Hasidim* of the Land of Israel. In 5556 (1796), he was appointed “collector of funds for the Holy Land,” responsible for fund raising on behalf of the Volynhia-Galicia *Hasidim* who had settled in Tiberias and Safed.²²⁶ His appointment was connected to a dispute that had arisen between the Hasidic *olim* from Volynhia-Galicia and those from White Russia with respect to fundraising in the Diaspora and distribution of the funds. The controversy was not resolved, and the group eventually split into two fund raising operations, whose supporters in the Diaspora collected funds through separate efforts.

“The rabbi of Sakhoyiz” is mentioned in the listing in *Breaking of Sinners*²²⁷ and that may well be an echo of R. Mordecai’s activity in communal affairs.

R. Mordecai of Nesukhoyezhe is considered a pre-eminent disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel. His son, R. Isaac of Nesukhoyezhe, wrote that his father “had no other rabbi, only our holy rabbi the *Maggid* of Zolochov.”²²⁸ There were also marital bonds between the two families: Bluma, R. Mordecai’s granddaughter via his son, R. Joseph of Ostila, married R. Samuel Yehiel of Botushan—a son of R. Dan, grandson of R. Isaac of Radvil, and great-grandson of R. Yehiel Mikhel.²²⁹

R. Mordecai’s composition, *Sparks of Fire* (*Rishfei Esh*), was first printed at the end of *book of Rav Yeivi* in Brody in 5634 (1874). R. Yehiel Mikhel is referred in the work simply as “my teacher.”²³⁰ Hasidic practices in the name of R. Yehiel Mikhel are printed at the beginning of *Sparks of Fire*.²³¹

²²⁶ See Stiman-Katz 1986, pp. 55, 110–113.

²²⁷ See Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 101.

²²⁸ *Great Waters*, p. 136. See also Piekarz 1999, p. 178.

²²⁹ See Tanenbaum 1986, pp. 184–185.

²³⁰ See *Sparks of Fire*, in *book of Rav Yeivi* 131a, letter. 19; 133b, letters. 120, 121.

²³¹ See *ibid.*, 130b; Gries 1990, p. 283.

Moses Shoham of Dolina

R. Moses b. Dan Shoham was born, as far as we can tell, in 5490 (1730). In 5540 (1780), he was appointed to the post of chief judge in Dolina, under the authority of R. Abraham Noah ha-Levi Heller, brother of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller.²³² R. Moses died in 5580 (1820), at about ninety years of age.²³³

His book, *Words of Moses (Divrei Moshe)*, printed in 5561 (1801) at an unidentified locale, was published by his son, Samuel. R. Abraham Joshua Heschel of Opatow, a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel, wrote in his approbation that “I know [R. Moses] attended the great ones of the generation; moreover, he is wise and understanding on his own.”²³⁴ R. Moses’ son-in-law, R. Isaac of Radvil, wrote in his approbation “that [in] all Moses’ words that he uttered, the *shekhinah* was speaking from within his throat.”²³⁵ Another of his books, *Nectar of the Fruit of the Tree of Life (Seraf Peri Ez Hayyim)*, was printed in Chernovtsy in 5626 (1866), and comprises discourses on R. Hayyim Vital’s *Tree of Life*.

R. Moses Shoham cites the Besht in his book, referring to him as “my master, the divine pious one”: “And behold, I heard from the holy mouth of my master, the divine pious one, the rabbi the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing . . . and he said in the name of his brother-in-law, the pious rabbi, our master Gershon Kutver, may his memory be for a blessing.”²³⁶ His date of birth makes it possible that he heard material directly from the mouth of the Besht, for he was about thirty years old when the Besht died.

R. Moses Shoham was the father-in-law of R. Isaac of Radvil in his first marriage, thus related to R. Yehiel Mikhel through the marriage of their children. R. Moses often cited statements in R. Yehiel Mikhel’s name and noted the familial relationship: “And behold, I have heard from the mouth of my son-in-law’s father our master, the pious rabbi, the renowned holy luminary, our master Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory endure to the life of the world to come, preacher to the holy congregation of Zolochov.”²³⁷ He enjoyed a

²³² On R. Abraham Noah Heller, see Pickarz 1978, pp. 39–42.

²³³ See Wunder 1997, p. 42.

²³⁴ *Words of Moses*, approbation page.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid., *Portion Bo*, 42a; see also *Portion Lekh-Lekha*, 9a; *Portion Vayera*, 10a.

²³⁷ Ibid., *Portion Be-Shalah* 45b.

special status in the eyes of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples, perhaps because of his extraordinary age and his closeness to the Besht and to R. Yehiel Mikhel. R. Meshullam Feibush Heller termed him the venerable one ("ha-vatiq") and even copied into his letters, from "the prayer book of the venerable one, our master the rabbi Moses, may his lamp shine brightly," the immersion *kavvanah* attributed to the Besht.²³⁸

*Meshullam Feibush Heller, Precious Gleanings (Liqqutim Yeqarim);
Honest Words of Truth and Faith (Yosher Divrei Emet)*

R. Meshullam Feibush Heller was born in 5502 (1742) or earlier and died on 20 Kislev 5555 (December 12, 1794). His was a prominent family that included halakhists and rabbis well known in Galicia.²³⁹ On his father's side, he was a great-grandson of the grandson of R. Yom Tov Lipman Heller, author of the *Tosefot Yom Tov* commentary on the Mishnah²⁴⁰ and a grandson of the kabbalist R. Samson of Ostropolya, from whom R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye also was descended.²⁴¹ R. Meshullam Feibush's father, R. Aaron Moses, was chief judge in Sanyotin, and his paternal uncle, R. Judah ha-Levi Heller of Olkasnits, attended the Brody *kloyz*. His older brother, R. Abraham Noah ha-Levi Heller (died 5546 [1786]), chief judge of Dolina, was among the kabbalists of the Brody *kloyz* who did not join with the Hasidism.

R. Meshullam Feibush Heller wed twice. His second wife, Yentel, was the daughter of R. Abraham Hayyim Schor. R. Meshullam Feibush also mentions his child's father-in-law in the community of Chernyy-Ostrov,²⁴² referring apparently to R. Ze'ev Wolf of Chernyy-Ostrov

²³⁸ *Precious Gleanings* (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 134a.

²³⁹ On the history of the Heller line, see Genealogical Table in *Honest Words of Truth and Faith* (Munkacz 5665 [1905]); *Abraham's Swiftness* (*Zerizuta de-Avraham*), Lvov 5660 (1900); Gelber 1955, p. 64; Piekarz 1978, pp. 39–41; Krassen 1990, pp. 52–65.

²⁴⁰ On R. Yom Tov Lipman Heller, see Elbaum 1990, index.

²⁴¹ On R. Samson of Ostropolya, see Liebes 1983/2. R. Samson had been martyred during the 5408–5409 (1647–1648) pogroms. His effort to defeat Christianity by magical means might have inspired the Besht's attempts to defend Jews from blood libels.

²⁴² See *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 27b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 136a.

an activist in the controversy over independent Hasidic slaughter. R. Ze'ev Wolf immigrated to the Land of Israel in 5558 (1798) and joined the community of *Hasidim* in Tiberias, where he died in 5583 (1823).²⁴³

Most of R. Meshullam Feibush's life was spent in Zbarazh, a town near Brody in eastern Galicia.²⁴⁴ We know few details of that life beyond those already noted, perhaps because R. Meshullam Feibush he served in no official position, not even in his hometown. The significant event of his life seems to have been his joining and chronicling the Hasidic group. Gershom Scholem had good reason to regard R. Meshullam Feibush Heller as "one of the superior writers of Hasidism."²⁴⁵

R. Meshullam Feibush Heller documented the history of the first Hasidic court, gathered around R. Yehiel Mikhel, in two epistles sent to his brother-in-law, R. Joel, in the Land of Israel. His first letter begins with a particularly instructive Hasidic profile, portraying his contemporaries, who reached intellectual maturity during the 1770s and 1780s. Of the figures R. Meshullam Feibush presents as his Hasidic teachers, only R. Yehiel Mikhel was someone he knew well. His comments, framed as documentation, reflect the gap between the historical process by which Hasidism took shape and the later image of the movement's origins:²⁴⁶

I write for the love of my true friend, with whom I have forever grown in God's Torah and fear of God in accordance with the limits of our minds; but a mountain arose between us, and when he departed from [me], he asked me to write down the honest words of truth and faith heard from the mouths of the wise ones of the generation, exemplary men, possessed of the holy spirit, whose eyes, not others', saw.²⁴⁷ As an angel of God's was their fear and reverence, and all of them drank from the same spring, that is, the divine R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come. But I merited to see only his divine student, R. Dov Ber, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, and then²⁴⁸

²⁴³ See Shmeruk 1955, pp. 59, 65; Stiman-Katz 1986, p. 31.

²⁴⁴ On the community of Zbarazh, see Horowitz 1978, p. 298.

²⁴⁵ Scholem 1976/1, vol. 2, p. 303.

²⁴⁶ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 19b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 110a (emphasis supplied).

²⁴⁷ In the Zolkow 5560 (1800) edition, 20a: "whom my eyes, not others', saw."

²⁴⁸ Ibid.: "and after that."

there came to me holy writings from his holy words that inflame the heart of the devout to the worship of God, may He be blessed. And I several times came before the great scholar R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany, peace be on him, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, may his merit protect us, and *most of all*, to distinguish between the dead and the living, what I heard from the holy mouth, son of holy ones, a righteous man son of a righteous man, the remarkable rabbi, the man of God, our master Yehiel Mikhel, may his lamp illuminate.

R. Meshullam Feibush was too young to have met face-to-face with the Besht, who died in 5520 (1760), and his ongoing account tells that he had the privilege of seeing R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi, only once: “And I heard from the mouth of the holy of holies, the divine R. Dov Ber, may his memory be for a blessing, when I said [on that?] Sabbath that I spent with him during his lifetime.”²⁴⁹ He likewise notes that he was privileged to be in the presence of R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany “several times,” but he quotes him directly only once.”²⁵⁰ In any event, R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany immigrated to the Land of Israel in 5524 (1764), and his influence on R. Meshullam Feibush and his contemporaries could not have been decisive.

R. Meshullam Feibush’s pre-eminent teacher was R. Yehiel Mikhel; he was also the only one of those mentioned who was still alive in 5537 (1777), when the book was written. R. Meshullam Feibush’s terminology emphasizes R. Yehiel Mikhel’s role as pre-eminent teacher: “and *most of all*, to distinguish between the dead and the living, what I heard from the holy mouth, son of holy ones, a righteous man son of a righteous man, the remarkable rabbi, the man of God, our master Yehiel Mikhel, may his lamp illuminate.” In the letter itself, R. Meshullam Feibush reports numerous matters that he heard from R. Yehiel Mikhel, and Rivka Schatz has pointed out that he refers to him as “the *Maggid*.”²⁵¹ This identification of R. Yehiel Mikhel as

²⁴⁹ *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 21b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 114b. This passage was omitted from the first printing of Lemberg 5552 (1792).

²⁵⁰ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 22a: “And regarding this matter, the holy man of God, our master R. Menahem Mendel, may his memory endure to the life of the world to come, spoke; and I heard this from his holy mouth, may his merit protect us, which he told me in the name of the Besht, may his memory endure to the life of the world to come.” In the Jerusalem 5734 (1974) edition, the passage is at 120b.

²⁵¹ See Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 71, n. 61.

the unspecified “*Maggid*” is particularly important; for it recurs in the writings of other disciples not previously regarded as pre-eminent students of R. Yehiel Mikhel, as well as in the writings of disciples whose status as his students had been known but not considered significant.

Precious Gleanings, first printed in Lemberg in 5552 (1792), is a version of Hasidic conduct literature printed from a manuscript that had been in R. Meshullam Feibush Heller’s possession. The book includes as well R. Meshullam Feibush’s two epistles, printed anonymously even though—or, perhaps, because—he was still alive at the time. The title page states that *Precious Gleanings* is a collection of statements by four individuals:

The book *Precious Gleanings*, the blessing left behind them by the holy ones in the land, they being four who walked well in the ways of God and his holy Torah, by whose mouths we live. First among them is the divine rabbi, the holy luminary, pious and austere, our honorable master Israel Ba‘al Shem Tov, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, whose good name goes from one end of the earth to the other. After him, the words of his disciples will illuminate, they who became covered with the dust of his feet and thirstily imbibed his words; that is, the great, acute, rabbi, erudite in both revealed and hidden [wisdom], the *gaon* and glory of Israel, the divine, pious, and austere, our master Dov Ber, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, preacher of the congregation of Mezhirichi. . . . And the third among the holy, is it not the great and renowned rabbi, his name known in Israel, the pious and austere one, our master the rabbi R. Menaḥem Mendel, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, of the holy congregation of Peremyshlyany, who traveled to the Holy Land, may it be built and established speedily in our days. And a gift of precious words from the rabbi, the *Maggid*, the pious and renowned holy luminary, our master Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, who was preacher in several holy congregations and, at the end of his days, was accepted by the holy congregation of Yampol. May their merit and the merit of their Torah protect us; amen.²⁵²

The names of the “four who walked well” are taken from R. Meshullam Feibush’s first epistle, in which he presents his Hasidic teachers, yet R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi and Rabbi Menaḥem Mendel of Peremyshlyany are not mentioned at all in the collection of discourses

²⁵² *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]), title page.

and practices into which the epistles were inserted. In contrast, the Besht is mentioned several times, in wording such as “our master R. Israel Ba’al Shem,” “R. Israel Ba’al Shem said,” and “R. Israel Ba’al Shem, peace be upon him, said.”²⁵³ R. Yehiel Mikhel is likewise mentioned, and three discourses are cited in his name.²⁵⁴

The book’s three approbations, written in 5552 (1792), are by R. Issakhar Ber, a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel mentioned in R. Meshullam Feibush’s letters,²⁵⁵ who immigrated to the Land of Israel in 5555 (1795); R. Issakhar Ber’s son-in-law, R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochew, also a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel, who was still serving as chief judge in Zborov; and R. Joseph of Zamosht, who granted an approbation to a book dealing with kabbalah “even though I have no dealings with the such mysteries.”²⁵⁶

The writers of the approbations attributed *Precious Gleanings* to R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, even noting that some of the discourses and practices had already been printed in *He Imparts His Words to Jacob*, which they called *Gleaned Statements*. They thus differed with the attribution of the work, expressed on its title page, to the “four who walked well,” and they did not attribute the material to the Besht, to R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany, or to R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochew. They also failed to mention the name of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, even though they were familiar with the epistles and knew who had written them.

Two of the approbation writers note the excisions from in *Precious Gleanings*, referring to the omission of important passages in the text of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller’s letters. R. Issakhar Ber writes: “And even though in some places the copyist deliberately abridged, and it appears to the reader that some of his words are obscure.” R. Abraham Hayyim treats the matter more expansively, writing that the deletions were deliberate, made on account of censorship:

²⁵³ Ibid., 1b, 2b, 14b; in the Jerusalem 5734 (1974) edition, secs. 3, 12, 167.

²⁵⁴ See *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 4b, 14b, 16b; in the Jerusalem 5734 (1974) edition, secs. 105, 165, 205.

²⁵⁵ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 23a, 25b; in the Jerusalem 5734 (1974) edition, 123a, 130a. On R. Issakhar Ber, see above, pp. 257–258.

²⁵⁶ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]), approbation page. R. Joseph of Zamosht, along with the kabbalists of the Brody *kloyz*, also provided an approbation for *Soul of David* (*Nefesh David*) by R. David ha-Kohen (Lvov 5559 [1790]). His grandson, R. Mordecai Lipman, was a *maggid* in Brody and a member of the *kloyz*. See Gelber 1955, p. 73.

“And even though in some places they deliberately abridged and in some places they abridged their words because of the depth of the concept and the shallowness of the [reader’s] understanding; and for one who never saw [the old], the new would be a closed book in his eyes.”²⁵⁷ The approbations imply that R. Issakhar Ber and R. Abraham Hayyim were familiar with “the old” version, that is, R. Meshullam Feibush Heller’s original manuscript letters.

The censored excisions from the first edition consist primarily of material in R. Meshullam Feibush’s letters. They include the names of the writer and the addressee, the date on which each of the letters was written, and important passages in the text. One of these passages includes “the long discourse” delivered by R. Yehiel Mikhel on Shavuot 5537 (1777). Also deleted were the end of the first epistle and the beginning of the second, and the contrived conclusion for the first, as well as the lack of any opening for the second, are striking. It can be assumed that the news of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s death at the end of 5541 (1781) was included in the opening of the second epistle, and that may be why it was deleted.²⁵⁸

Only in the third edition of *Precious Gleanings*, printed in Zolkow in 5560 (1800)—five years after the death of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller—was his name finally mentioned; it was added to the list of four teachers on the title page. And the beginning of the first epistle states: “From the writings of the *zaddik*, our master the rabbi Feibush of Zbarazh.”²⁵⁹

In 5665 (1905), one hundred thirteen years after their first printing, R. Meshullam Feibush’s epistles were printed by themselves, unaccompanied by the collection of discourses and practices included in *Precious Gleanings*. The publisher was Samson ha-Levi Heller of Kolimaya, a descendant of R. Meshullam Feibush. He called the letters *Honest Words of Truth and Faith*, a name taken from the opening of the first epistle.²⁶⁰ It is evident that he had a more complete version of his grandfather’s letters along with supplements not previously printed. These include the date of the first epistle—“Tuesday, 19 Sivan 5537” (June 24, 1777),—and the name of the addressee,

²⁵⁷ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) approbation page. The word “the old” (“*ha-yashan*”) was deleted from the approbation.

²⁵⁸ See, more broadly, Altshuler 1995, pp. 8–19.

²⁵⁹ *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 20a.

²⁶⁰ See *Honest Words of Truth and Faith* (Munkacz 5665 [1905]).

“my friend and colleague, is it not my brother-in-law, the scholar, our master Joel, may his lamp illuminate.”²⁶¹ But even here, the epistles were not printed in their entirety, and some of the censored passages appear to be lost forever.

At the start of the first epistle, R. Meshullam Feibush attributes its writing to his separation from a friend of his youth:²⁶²

I write for the love of my true friend²⁶³ with whom I have forever grown in God’s Torah and in fear of God to the extent of the limits of our minds, but a mountain arose between us; and when he departed from [me], he asked me to write down the honest words of truth and faith heard from the mouths of the wise ones of the generation, exemplary men, possessed of the holy spirit, whose eyes, not others’, saw. As an angel of God’s was their fear and reverence.

Despite this address to the friend, the name of the letter’s recipient goes unmentioned in the first two editions of *Precious Gleanings*.²⁶⁴ In the third edition, some information is added in the opening: “And as for me, my heart has always been bound to faith in these sages, and my friends hearts are similarly bound to their faith; happy is he who chose their truth and their word.”²⁶⁵ The *Honest Words of Truth and Faith* edition includes an expanded version of the opening, encompassing the name of one of the friends: “And as for me, my heart has always been bound to the faith of these Sages, and my friend and colleague, is he not my brother-in-law, the scholar, our master Joel, may his lamp illuminate, his heart is similarly bound to their faith. Happy are they who cling to their faith and their words; woe to those wicked ones who cast off the yoke of Torah and fear of God, may He be blessed.”²⁶⁶ Since the letter begins by addressing “my true friend,” it stands to reason that the friend to whom it was written is the one mentioned later—R. Joel, brother-in-law of R. Meshullam Feibush.

R. Meshullam Feibush notes that the letters were written at the friend’s request: “and when he departed from [me], he asked me to write down the honest words of truth and faith heard from the

²⁶¹ *Honest Words of Truth and Faith* 10b.

²⁶² *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 19b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 110a.

²⁶³ In the Zolkow 5560 (1800) edition, 20a: “my colleague and friend.” (The two Hebrew versions differ by a single letter, א (*alef*) or ע (*ayin*).—*translator’s note*).

²⁶⁴ See *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 19b, (Mezirov 5554 [1794]) 21b.

²⁶⁵ *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 20a.

²⁶⁶ *Honest Words of Truth and Faith* 10b.

mouths of the wise ones of the generation.” That wording, and the comment that “a mountain arose between us,” suggest that the two were separated by a considerable distance. But the limited information in the opening does not permit definitively identifying the individual, his destination, or the reason for his departure, details that can be ascertained only in the second epistle.

The second epistle did not follow immediately on the heels of the first; the first was written in Sivan 5537 (1777), and the second was not written until some time later, in Tishri. That fact appears explicitly in the letter, for R. Meshullam refers to the High Holidays of Tishri in the present tense—“and similarly now, during the Days of Awe.”²⁶⁷ According to Joseph Weiss, these are the Days of Awe of 5538 (1777), that is, the start of the following year, a few months after the first epistle was written. He rests that conclusion on R. Meshullam’s present-tense reference to the Hasidic immigration to the Land of Israel in Adar 5537 (1777).²⁶⁸ In contrast, Miles Krassen avoided any firm conclusion and believed that part of the second epistle might have been written after R. Yehiel Mikhel’s death on 25 Elul 5541 (September 15, 1781), for he is mentioned in its opening with the blessing for one who is deceased: “and in truth, I heard from the holy mouth, the divine rabbi, our master the rabbi R. Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory endure to life of the world to come.”²⁶⁹ But even that does not permit a definitive conclusion, for in the Zolkow 5560 (1800) edition of *Precious Gleanings*, R. Yehiel Mikhel is referred to as deceased even in the first epistle, in the course of the writer’s quoting comments that he had made only about two weeks earlier: “the words of the *Maggid* [R. Yehiel Mikhel] of blessed memory,²⁷⁰ which I heard from his holy mouth on the festival of Shavuot this year, 5537.”²⁷¹ A similar phenomenon can be found in quotations from R. Isakhar Ber of Zolochov, showing that the use of the blessing for the living or for the dead cannot be a criterion for determining when the letters were written.

²⁶⁷ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 29b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 140b.

²⁶⁸ See Weiss 1985, pp. 122–123, n. 57.

²⁶⁹ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 25b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 129a; Krassen 1990, p. 70, n. 165.

²⁷⁰ The inapposite “of blessed memory”—R. Yehiel Mikhel was still alive—appears to have been inserted when the letter was printed, in 5560 (1800).

²⁷¹ *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22b.

Dating the second epistle is made even more complicated by the uncertainty over where the first epistle ends and the second begins, for none of the printed editions include the opening of the second letter. Still, it can be determined that the core of the second epistle was written after R. Yehiel Mikhel's death in 5541 (1781). Evidence for that is found later in the document, where R. Meshullam Feibush makes recommendations to R. Joel regarding the study of Kabbalah: "And before Kabbalah, you should recite the prayer printed in the *tiqqunim* of the Ari, may his memory be blessed."²⁷² He is referring here to the book *Repairs of the Zohar*, printed in Korets in 5540 (1780); it was one of the works printed by R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples in order to hasten the redemption. It follows that the text of the second epistle was written after 5540 (1780), that is, no earlier than 5541 (1781). But R. Yehiel Mikhel died on 25 Elul 5541 (September 15, 1781), and R. Meshullam Feibush's second epistle was written during the High Holidays. Accordingly, it is fair to assume that it was written during the month of Tishri 5542 (1781), a few weeks after R. Yehiel Mikhel's death.

That conclusion is consistent with the date of the Hasidic immigration to the Land of Israel, as mentioned in the second epistle.²⁷³

And now I have come to prod you [R. Joel] and the men who heed my voice²⁷⁴ who are there that they should make great efforts in the worship of God, may He be blessed, each and every one in accordance with his strength . . . But now, according to what appears and what is heard of the journey, many good people are journeying to the Holy Land, many and of full strength; and also those who were cut down and passed on.²⁷⁵ And the whole ones who went were very renowned, possessors of the Holy Spirit, great ones of the revealed and hidden Torah, and with them the heads of the Israelites,²⁷⁶ from the poor of the holy flock,²⁷⁷ the lamb of Israel's dispersion and it is certainly a great inquiry about Zion, of which none inquire, and it is inquire, inquire, return, come.²⁷⁸ And now, this great awakening is

²⁷² *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 26b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 132b.

²⁷³ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 26a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 131a.

²⁷⁴ In the Zolkow 5560 (1800) edition, 27a: "your voice."

²⁷⁵ Cf. Nahum 1:12.

²⁷⁶ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]), 26a; (Mezirov 5554 [1794]), 27b—here use an acronym meaning the "heads of the Israelites" (רָבֵי, *r-b-y* = *roshei benei yisra'el*). The third edition, Zolkow 5560 (1800), 27a, misreads it as an abbreviation for "many" (רַבִּים—*rabbim*).

²⁷⁷ Cf. Zech. 11:7, 11.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Isa. 21:12—"If you inquire, inquire; return, come." Rashi interpreted it to mean "If you seek your request to hasten the End, 'return, come'—in repentance."

certainly from God, and the Messiah's arrival is certainly imminent, its time may He hasten,²⁷⁹ and God, may He be blessed, will hurry it speedily in our days, Amen *Selah*. Of this, who knows what a day may bring and why should you be troubled by tomorrow's troubles and especially about the troubles of this world—how to fill the seventy years of our lives with wealth and to marry off our daughters in the manner of the multitude of the world. It is better for you to limit your involvement in worldly affairs as much as possible and to engage in Torah and [divine] service, and the essence of service is prayer; and there is no need to remind you of this, for you already know according to what is written in the writings of the Ari of blessed memory regarding clarifying the sanctity that becomes clearer each day, until it becomes completely clear with the advent of the Messiah, speedily and in our days.

R. Meshullam Feibush refers to R. Joel in Tishri 5542 (1781) as one who is already *there*, that is, in the Land of Israel, together with the other “men [there] who heed my voice” (or “your voice”). He goes on to comment on a similar contemporary awakening: “But now, according to what appears and what is heard of the journey, many good people are journeying to the Holy Land, many and of full strength.” That journey calls to his mind the earlier experience, when those of full strength and of renown were roused to immigrate to the Land of Israel, and he refers to them as those who “were cut down and passed on. And the whole ones who went were very renowned, possessors of the Holy Spirit, great ones of the revealed and hidden Torah, and with them the heads of the Israelites, from the poor of the holy flock, the lamb of Israel's dispersion.” R. Meshullam Feibush thus mentions two groups of immigrants—an earlier larger one, and a smaller, contemporary one. The larger group, referred to in past tense, comprises the “men of great renown, possessors of the Holy Spirit, great ones of the revealed and hidden Torah, and with them the heads of the Israelites,”—that is, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, R. Abraham of Kolyshki, and their associates, who immigrated to the Land of Israel in Adar 5537 (1777). The smaller group is the contemporary one—“many and of full strength”—preparing to immigrate to the Land of Israel as the letter was being written, at the beginning of 5542 (1781). This is the group whose members had hoped to immigrate to the Land of Israel as soon as the Messiah appeared in Iyyar 5541 (1781). The group is mentioned as well in

²⁷⁹ Cf. Isa. 60:22.

a letter written by R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk in Nisan 5541 (1781), one month before the estimated time of the Messiah's advent. R. Menahem Mendel writes, "God forbid they should be compelled, but let them come in joy." But he implores his colleagues to be patient and promises that he will not delay conveying the "Message" to them once it is revealed, so they can immigrate and join him in the Land of Israel. Apropos that, he reiterates the extent of his longing "for my friends, colleagues, brethren, and fellows to come to the Holy Land . . . And, God willing, after [gaining] the Message, I will inform you."²⁸⁰

As we know, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk was never able to provide his colleagues in the Diaspora "the Message" about the appearance of the Messiah in the Land of Israel. Still, R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's letter suggests that despite the setback of Iyyar 5541 (1781), the members of the group continued to believe, in Tishri 5542 (1781), that R. Yehiel Mikhel's death would open the gates of heaven and bring the redemption. Accordingly, R. Meshullam Feibush reports to the members of the group in the Land of Israel on the preparations for immigration.

Additional proof of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's links to the *Hasidim* who immigrated to the Land of Israel is provided by his quotation from R. Solomon Zalman Vilner, the group's rabbinic emissary: "And the sign for this I have heard from the righteous one, R. Solomon Vilner, the author, who said in the name of R. Moses Hagiz, may his memory endure to the life of the world to come."²⁸¹ A relative of R. Yehiel Mikhel,²⁸² R. Solomon Vilner was among those who immigrated to the Land of Israel in 5537 (1777). From 5539 to 5541 (1779 to 1781), he returned to Brody and spent time in other places as well on a mission for R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk. During that mission, he met with R. Meshullam Feibush, as shown by the quotation that the latter attributes directly to him. Moreover, R. Solomon Vilner is mentioned in the second epistle,

²⁸⁰ Barnai 1980, letter 15, p. 86; Morgenstern 1999, p. 202 (emphasis supplied).

²⁸¹ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 25b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 129b. R. Moses Hagiz, grandson of R. Moses Galanti lived in the eighteenth century. Born in the Land of Israel, he lived in the Diaspora for about fifty years, serving, among other things, as a rabbinic emissary. He died at about the age of ninety and was buried in Safed. See *Record of Great Men*, (*Shem ha-Gedolim ha-Shalem*), vol. 1, letter. 123, p. 144.

²⁸² See below, pp. 293–294.

providing additional proof that the letter was written after the spring of 5541 (1781); for in his letter of Nisan 5541, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk reports that R. Solomon Vilner has already returned to the Land of Israel.²⁸³

R. Joel, brother-in-law of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller and addressee of his letters, appears to have been R. Joel b. Moses of Kobrin, whose high standing among the *olim* is evident in his having been the third to sign, immediately after R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and R. Abraham of Kolyshki, a letter sent from Tiberias in 5546 (1786).²⁸⁴ On another letter, R. Joel's signature appears immediately following those of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk's son and son-in-law. Moreover, according to the testimony of R. Samuel Heller of Safed, the grandson of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, R. Moses of Kobrin was in fact the brother of R. Aaron "the great" of Karlin and that his wife, R. Joel's mother, was the daughter of R. Hayyim Haika of Amdur.²⁸⁵ His testimony sheds light on Karlin's Hasidic tradition that R. Jacob, the son of R. Aaron "the great," was among the 1777 emigrants to the Land of Israel because it seems logical to assume that the two cousins arrived together. These family connections strengthen the assumption that R. Jacob was R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk's son-in-law, and the group was actually constructed of relatives and close friends.

R. Joel left the Land of Israel in 5549 (1789) as a rabbinic emissary on behalf of the group and to raise money to discharge his personal debts. In the Diaspora, R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady provided a letter of recommendation for his effort, calling R. Joel "beloved of God, remarkable in Torah and with fear of God as his treasure, a true and perfect servant of God, acute and erudite, a pure and righteous soul."²⁸⁶ In Nisan 5551 (1791), R. Joel returned to the Land of Israel, and R. Abraham of Kolyshki told in a letter to the Diaspora of the return of "our beloved one, our remarkable master the rabbi Joel, the rabbinic emissary, together with our beloved,

²⁸³ See above, p. 180.

²⁸⁴ See Barnai 1980, letter 30, p. 144. David Assaf believes that R. Joel is not to be identified with R. Joel b. Moses of Smolian, a leading figure in the Hasidic community in Tiberias, but he does not explain that view. See Assaf 1992, p. 334, n. 81.

²⁸⁵ I thank Mr. Ehud Cain (Haikin), descendant of R. Hayyim Haika of Amdur, for this information.

²⁸⁶ Sursky 2000, vol. 1, p. 118.

the wondrous and venerable scholar our master the rabbi Jeremiah, may his lamp shine,” who brought with them “holy writings and the shekels of the sanctuary.”²⁸⁷

From an historical point of view, therefore, R. Meshullam Feibush Heller’s two epistles form part of the Hasidic correspondence to and from the Land of Israel. Dating the letters and determining that they are addressed to the Land of Israel makes it possible to clarify the circumstances in which they were written. The first letter was written on 19 Sivan 5537 (June 24, 1777), a short while after the *tiqqun leil shavu’ot* conducted in R. Yehiel Mikhel’s prayer house in Brody. In it, R. Meshullam Feibush Heller reported to the members of the group who had journeyed to the Land of Israel on the events that transpired on that occasion in their absence. The second letter was written between Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur of 5542 (1781), a few weeks after R. Yehiel Mikhel’s death. One may reasonably assume that the news of his death was explicitly stated at the letter’s opening, which is why it was excised and never printed. Against that background, one can understand the expressions of consolation, encouragement, and arousal that are included in the letter. Finally, it should be noted that the letter refers to Immanuel Hai Ricchi’s book *Uprightness of the Heart* (*Yosher Levav*),²⁸⁸ which refers to the messianic date of Iyyar 5541 (1781).

*Uziel Meizlish, Glory of Uziel, Called the Good Tree of
Knowledge (Tif’eret Uziel ha-Niqra be-Shem Ez ha-Da’at Tov)*

R. Uziel Meizlish, chief judge in Ritchvol and Ostrovtsy, was born to a renowned family of rabbis and halakhists in Poland; he was a descendant of R. Moses Isserles (the Rema) and R. Me’ir b. Gedaliah (the Maharam of Lublin).²⁸⁹ His father, R. Zevi Hirsch Meizlish, together with R. Gedaliah of Zolkow, the father of R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochew, provided an approbation for *Book of Reincarnations* (*Sefer ha-Gilgulim*) by R. Hayyim Vital.²⁹⁰ His grandfather, R. Samson

²⁸⁷ Barnai 1980, letter 57, p. 217; Ya’ari 1977, pp. 620–621.

²⁸⁸ See *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 26a; (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 131a.

²⁸⁹ R. Uziel cites the Rema in his book. See *Glory of Uziel* 22b: “As my ancestor the Rema wrote.” On Moses Isserles (the Rema) and R. Me’ir b. R. Gedaliah (the Maharam of Lublin), see Elbaum 1990, index.

²⁹⁰ See *Book of Reincarnations* (Zolkow 5534 [1774]), approbation page.

Meizlish, served as rabbi in Zolochov while R. Gedaliah was serving as chief judge,²⁹¹ and the members of both families knew R. Yehiel Mikhel, who was then serving there as preacher.

The year of R. Uziel's birth is unknown, but his relative, R. Nathan Neta of Kolbiel, reports that he died on 28 Kislev 5546 (November 30, 1785) and was buried in Ir Hadash: "And the rabbi R. Yehiel Isaiah, righteous teacher of the city of Ir Hadash, wrote to me that my relative, the holy *gaon*, possessed of the tree of life, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, died on 28 Kislev 5546, and his honored resting place is there."²⁹² In his approbation for *Glory of Uziel*, R. Joseph Saul Nathanson, chief judge in Lvov, mentions the author's death at a young age—"who was desired by God at half his lifetime"²⁹³—and one may infer that R. Uziel was born in the 1740s; according to Gershom Scholem, the year was 5504 (1744). At all events, he was of the generation of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov, R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir, and their associates.

R. Uziel dealt with Kabbalah as well as Jewish Law (Halakhah). His kabbalistic discourses were collected in his book, *Glory of Uziel*, printed in Warsaw in 5622 (1863), seventy-seven years after his death. The book was published from the legacy of R. Uziel's son-in-law and nephew, R. Nathan Me'ir b. Isaac Meizlish. R. Nathan Me'ir wrote an introduction, in which he presented R. Uziel as a "pre-eminent student of our teacher, the *gaon*, the divine Sage, our master Dov Ber, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, preacher of the holy congregation of Rovno and the holy congregation of Mezhirichi" and as a colleague of his generation's great Torah scholars—R. Pin^has Horowitz, his brother R. Samuel Shmulky of Nikolsburg, and R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev.²⁹⁴ In presenting R. Uziel as a disciple of R. Dov Ber, R. Nathan Me'ir Meizlish was following in the footsteps of R. Uziel himself, who wrote, for example: "Thus I received from my master and teacher, the holy *gaon* and kabbalist, our master the rabbi Dov

²⁹¹ See Wunder 1978, p. 24.

²⁹² *Great Waters* (Genealogical Table), at the end of the book, p. 2.

²⁹³ See *Glory of Uziel*, approbation page. The Zolochov tradition tells that R. Joseph Saul Nathanson, chief judge of Lvov, was not himself a *Hasid* but nevertheless enjoyed a special relationship with R. Mordecai of Kremenets, fifth son of R. Yehiel Mikhel. See Tanenbaum 1986, pp. 292–294.

²⁹⁴ See *Glory of Uziel*, "Introduction by the Gatherer and Collector."

Ber.”²⁹⁵ R. Uziel also frequently cited his contemporaries in statements such as “Thus I heard from the mouth of the holy man, renowned for piety in our generation, our master the rabbi Elimelekh of Lozansky”;²⁹⁶ or “I heard from his honor, the rabbi and *gaon*, our master the rabbi Levi Isaac.”²⁹⁷

Some material cited by R. Uziel is attributed to people whom he is unlikely, because of his relative youth, to have heard first-hand as a genuine student. He says, for example, “I heard this alluded to from the mouth of the holy and pure man, R. Naḥman Kosover, may his memory be for a blessing.”²⁹⁸ Ben-Zion Dinur sought to conclude, on the basis of that statement, that R. Uziel was a member of R. Naḥman of Kosov’s circle in the town of Opatow.²⁹⁹ But Gershom Scholem noted, in the margin of Dinur’s article: “It is impossible on account of timing . . . R. Uziel was born in 1744 and R. Naḥman died then.”³⁰⁰ Scholem, to be sure, cited no source for the dating R. Uziel’s birth; but his calculation is consistent with the known fact that R. Uziel died in 5546 (1786) at a rather young age.

Another of the instances in which R. Uziel cites material in the name of an individual unlikely to have been his teacher involves R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany: “And in this manner I have heard from the mouth of the holy man, our master the rabbi Mendel Peremyshlyanyer.”³⁰¹ In yet another case he writes: “In the manner in which I have heard from the mouth of the holy and pure man, R. Israel Ba’al Shem Tov, may his memory be for a blessing.”³⁰² The Besht died in 5520 (1760); according to Gershom Scholem’s calculation, R. Uziel was then sixteen.

Despite this abundance of quotations from his contemporaries and predecessors, R. Uziel cited nothing from or in the name of R. Yehiel Mikhel. But the absence of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s name from *Glory of Uziel* should not be taken as proving that the two had no ties, for the Meizlish family resided in Zolochev while R. Yehiel Mikhel was

²⁹⁵ *Glory of Uziel* 25b.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 22b.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 24b.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 24a.

²⁹⁹ See Dinur 1955, p. 161, n. 9. See also Piekarz 1978, pp. 21–34.

³⁰⁰ Annotation of Gershom Scholem in the margin of the copy of Dinur’s article in the Scholem Collection; exclamation points in the original.

³⁰¹ *Glory of Uziel* 22b.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

serving there. Moreover, R. Uziel eulogized R. Yehiel Mikhel, speaking of him as the *zaddik* of the generation and comparing him to R. Simeon b. Yohai.³⁰³ Yet, even the eulogy is cited in the book only in abbreviated form, and its conclusion is replaced by the statement, “remainder of the article is missing.”³⁰⁴ It is therefore reasonable to assume that the absence of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s name from *Tif’eret Uziel* and the censoring of the eulogy are tied to the oath of secrecy taken by the members of the group and to the mysteriousness that surrounds its history and the story of its leader’s life and death.

Zevi Hirsch of Nodvorno

R. Zevi Hirsch was preacher in Dolina and later in Nodvorno. He was related to R. Yehiel Mikhel through the marriage of their children; his daughter was R. Isaac of Radvil’s second wife.

Alphabet, Enlightening Letters (*Alfa Beta Otiyot Mahkimot*), a formulation of Hasidic practices arranged alphabetically, was first printed, together with *Testament of R. Israel Ba’al Shem* (*Zava’at ha-Ribash*), in 5554 (1794); the place of publication was not identified. The printers appear to have been R. Solomon Lutsker and his son-in-law, Abraham b. R. Isaac Eisik of Korets.³⁰⁵ Only from the introduction to a relatively late edition—printed in Berdichev in 5577 (1817)—do we learn that the book had been printed from a manuscript in the possession of R. Zevi Hirsch of Nodvorno, a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel. Some later printings of the work attribute the practices included in it to R. Yehiel Mikhel.³⁰⁶

Zevi Hasid, Light of Truth (Or ha-Emet)

Light of Truth is one of the versions of the Hasidic conduct literature. It was printed from a manuscript in the possession of “the righteous and holy rabbi, our master the rabbi Zevi Hasid, may the

³⁰³ See Ibid. 36a–38a. See also above, pp. 148–151.

³⁰⁴ See Ibid. 38a.

³⁰⁵ See above, pp. 256–257.

³⁰⁶ See Gries 1990, pp. 116–117, 120, 282–283, 288–289.

memory of the righteous be for a blessing, of Yampol”;³⁰⁷ he may be identified with R. Zevi “called by all R. Zevi Hasid of Zolochov,”³⁰⁸ the brother of R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany.

R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany, a contemporary of the Besht, is a very mysterious figure of whom little is known. He left no manuscript of any book or composition, and he wrote only one approbation, provided in 5520 (1760) for *Pillar of Service* (*Amud ha-Avodah*) by R. Barukh of Kosov.³⁰⁹ Because of the many statements cited in his name in Hasidic conduct literature, however, R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany is regarded as one of the founders of Hasidism. Early in 5525 (1764), he immigrated to the Land of Israel together with R. Nahman of Gorodonk. In a short letter to his brother who stayed behind, R. Menahem Mendel urges him not to be impressed by those who disparage the Land of Israel and tell of the difficulties of living there; rather, he should rouse himself and immigrate because of the sanctity of the Land and its closeness to God:

Peace to my scholarly and pious brother, our master the rabbi Zevi, called by all R. Zevi Hasid of Zolochov. And so, how long will you continue to live outside the Land of Israel, listening to those who slander the Holy Land, compared with which the entire world is considered as naught? It is necessary to pray many prayers to become used to its holiness, and then one will know and value in himself that he is walking with God. The words of your brother who entreats for you: The statement of Menahem Mendel, son of the noteworthy rabbi, our master the rabbi Eliezer, may his memory be for a blessing. And peace To the rabbi and preacher, one who suitably discourses and suitably carries out, the perpetual servant of God, our teacher, R. Yehiel Mikhel of the congregation of Zolochov. Greetings as well to his young and wise son, our teacher R. Joseph, and greetings to the pious rabbi our teacher R. Solomon Vilner. And these matters pertain to them. thus far.³¹⁰

The letter is undated. According to Abraham Ya‘ari, it was written after 5525 (1765);³¹¹ but it seems better dated to no earlier than 5528 (1768), for R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany refers to

³⁰⁷ *Light of Truth*, publisher’s introduction.

³⁰⁸ Barnai 1980, letter 5, p. 53.

³⁰⁹ See Liebes 2000, p. 75. He also signed, in 5528 (1768), a letter of recommendation from the Ashkenazim in Tiberias to the congregation of Micz.

³¹⁰ Barnai 1980, letter 5, pp. 53–54.

³¹¹ See Ya‘ari 1971, pp. 306–308.

R. Yehiel Mikhel as “the *Maggid* of Zolochew,” suggesting it was written when R. Yehiel Mikhel was already living there.³¹² The short addendum at the end reveals the connection between the two; his greeting to R. Yehiel Mikhel attests to the links forged between them before R. Menahem Mendel’s immigration to the Land of Israel.

The reference to R. Yehiel Mikhel as one “who suitably discourses and suitably carries out,” together with the concluding sentence, “And these matters pertain to them,” show that R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany’s plea that his brethren immigrate to the Land of Israel was directed to R. Yehiel Mikhel as well. Moreover, the addendum may well indicate that R. Yehiel Mikhel, his son R. Joseph of Yampol, and R. Solomon Zalman Vilner had taken it upon themselves to immigrate to the Land of Israel. If they in fact undertook such an obligation, only R. Solomon Zalman Vilner carried it out, for he participated in the Hasidic immigration of 5537 (1777).³¹³

The letter’s address to R. Zevi Hasid in Zolochew shows that R. Zevi was living in Zolochew at the same time as R. Yehiel Mikhel. Meanwhile, in the introduction to *Light of Truth*, R. Zevi is referred to as “Zevi Hasid, may his memory be for a blessing, of Yampol,” showing that he also resided in Yampol, as did R. Yehiel Mikhel at the end of his days. This may only be the hand of coincidence, but it is possible as well that R. Zevi Hasid was more than R. Yehiel Mikhel’s disciple. Although documentary proof is lacking, R. Zevi may have been R. Yehiel Mikhel’s companion and a member of his household, accompanying him on all his wanderings.

The ties that bound R. Zevi Hasid, R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany, and R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochew can shed some light on the mysterious relationship between R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples and R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany. It may be able to explain why writings in the Zolochew tradition cite many quotations in the name of R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany and why the essay *Ways of the Just* (*Darkhei Yeshtarim*), printed in Zhitomir in 5565 (1805), is attributed to him even though it is simply one version of the Hasidic conduct literature,³¹⁴ traceable to the House of Zolochew.

³¹² See above, p. 46.

³¹³ See above, pp. 164, 180 and below, pp. 293–294.

³¹⁴ See Gries 1990, pp. 156–157.

Light of Truth is a collection of Hasidic conduct literature, printed in Hosiutin in 5659 (1899) from the literary legacy of R. Zevi Hasid. The collection includes the long form of the practices, like that in *Precious Gleanings*, as well as the short form, similar to those in *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* and *Ways of the Just*.³¹⁵ The publisher of the manuscript was Moses Mordecai Levtoṽ of Dzigivko, the grandson of R. Zevi Hasid. It is important to keep in mind that the book was printed more than one hundred years after the printing of *Precious Gleanings* in 5552 (1792) and *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* in 5553 (1793).

The title page of *Or ha-Emet* states:

This book, *Light of Truth* . . . includes sayings of *zaddikim*, pure statements by the honored holy one of God, the wonder of the generation, whose glory is the crown of holiness, the teacher of the entire Diaspora, the light of the world, whose name is great among rabbis, our master the rabbi R. Dov Ber, may the memory of the righteous and holy be for a blessing, may his memory protect us, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi, which were committed to writing by his student, the *gaon*, light of Israel and its sanctity, the glory of the generation, our master the rabbi Levi Isaac, may the memory of the righteous and holy be for a blessing, author of the book *Sanctity of Levi*, chief judge of the congregation of Berdichev. [It contains as well] pleasant gleanings from the other righteous ones of the world, may their memory protect us and all Israel.³¹⁶

An introduction by the publisher—Moses Mordecai Levtoṽ, R. Zevi Hasid's grandson—accompanied the book. Levtoṽ reports that he decided to publish his grandfather's manuscript collection in 5575 (1815), after R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev and R. Hayyim of Krasnow, his grandfather's teachers, appeared to him in a dream.³¹⁷

The introduction by the grandson-publisher provided the basis for Rivka Schatz's determination that the notes taken by R. Isaac Levi of Berdichev on R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi's oral teachings formed the source for most of the Hasidic conduct literature.³¹⁸ Accordingly, the introduction should be read closely:

³¹⁵ See *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (ed. Schatz-Uffenheimer), pp. 15–16; Gries 1990, pp. 157, 178. Gries pointed out that the copy of *Light of Truth* is corrupt in several places, and the text contains numerous copyist errors.

³¹⁶ *Light of Truth*, title page.

³¹⁷ See *Ibid.*, publisher's introduction.

³¹⁸ See *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (ed. Schatz-Uffenheimer), pp. 15–16. Dubnow had earlier considered the originality of *Light of Truth* and concluded that it had been gleaned from previously printed books. See Dubnow 1960, p. 396.

1. The grandson claims that his grandfather, R. Zevi Hasid, was a disciple of R. Hayyim of Krasnow, after whose death he became a disciple of R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev.
2. The grandson claims that R. Isaac Levi of Berdichev reduced the teachings of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi to writing and permitted R. Zevi, his beloved disciple, to copy the manuscript.
3. R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev's original manuscript was destroyed in a fire at his home, leaving R. Zevi Hasid's copy the only surviving one.

Rivka Schatz noted the inaccuracy of the final claim, for additional copies of the conduct literature were in the possession of other people and had been printed, in such works as *Precious Gleanings* and *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem*, for more than one hundred years before the printing of *Light of Truth*.³¹⁹ Nevertheless, she uncritically accepted the grandson's report in all other respects.

Close examination of Moses Mordecai Levtoṽ's remarks, however, calls into question their ability to support general conclusions regarding the source of Hasidic conduct literature and the history of its transmission. Unfortunately, any such conclusions hang by the thinnest of threads, weakened both by what the texts say and what they leave unsaid. For example, the grandson fails to note that his grandfather was the brother of R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany. His silence may betoken ignorance of that fact, thereby calling into question how much he really knew about his grandfather. Alternatively, he may have been aware of the family relationship but chose, for reasons known only to him, not to mention it—in which case he may have done the same with respect to other facts about his grandfather. Either way, his disregard of the fact is surprising. It may be noted in this regard that Rivka Schatz and Ze'ev Gries (another student of the conduct literature) likewise make no mention of the family relationship between R. Zevi Hasid and R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany, nor do they take it into account in reaching their conclusions. R. Zevi Hasid's grandson fails as well to mention R. Yehiel Mikhel or to note any connection at all between his grandfather and the House of Zolochov. Here, too, one may wonder what the grandson knew about his grandfather, what he chose to include in the introduction, and what he chose to omit.

³¹⁹ See *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (ed. Schatz-Uffenheimer), p. 16.

Even if we accept uncritically the grandson's statement that his grandfather copied the material from R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev's manuscript, we still lack any proof of the texts' origins, for Levi Isaac of Berdichev was neither the first nor the only person to possess copies of the Hasidic conduct literature. Moreover, he also had ties to R. Yehiel Mikhel. Accordingly, there is good reason to doubt the chain of transmission posited by the grandson and to examine the text of *Light of Truth* itself with reference to the relationship between R. Zevi Hasid and R. Yehiel Mikhel.³²⁰

Among the interesting finds in *Light of Truth* are the marginal notes printed by the publisher from the manuscript. It is fair to assume that the notes were written by R. Zevi Hasid or copied together with the manuscript. At one point, the annotator remarks, "From this point on [the text] is not by our master."³²¹ He later again notes, "Thus far [the material] not by our master, may his memory be for a blessing."³²² Immediately after, on the next page, the following note appears: "[I found written] I heard from the rabbi R. Gershon Lutsker of Lipowitz who said he himself had heard from the mouth of the rabbi the *maggid* our master the rabbi Dov of Mezhirichi, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing."³²³ Ze'ev Gries regards this as a strange note by the copyist,³²⁴ but it appears to hint that in the view of the owner of the manuscript of *Light of Truth*, "our master" referred to someone other than "the rabbi the *maggid* our master the rabbi Dov of Mezhirichi, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing."³²⁵

³²⁰ Rivka Schatz considered these relationships indirectly when she raised the possibility that R. Meshullam Feibush Heller obtained a version of the Hasidic conduct literature "via R. Zevi of Yampol, for R. Meshullam's teacher was R. Mikhel of Zolochew, who lived in Yampol at the end of his life." See *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (ed. Schatz-Uffenheimer), p. 17.

³²¹ *Light of Truth* 106a.

³²² Ibid. 106b.

³²³ Ibid. 107a.

³²⁴ See Gries 1990, p. 176.

³²⁵ A similar annotation is printed in *Ways of the Just* 11b: "We have also presented here lovely words, pleasing discourses gathered from holy writings such that never before existed by the rabbi, the *Maggid* of the holy congregation of Mezhirichi." This annotation as well my hint that R. Dov Ber is not the author of the other practices, and the manuscript of *Ways of the Just* may have been copied from the manuscript of *Light of Truth*.

Samuel of Amdur, Ms. Jerusalem 8 3282

Samuel of Amdur was the son of R. Hayyim Haika of Amdur. *Ms. Jerusalem 8 3282*, which was in his possession, offers a more comprehensive parallel to the formulation of *Precious Gleanings*; it includes as well the abridged version of *Ways of the Just*.³²⁶ A discourse of R. Yehiel Mikhel on Psalm 107, paralleled in *Precious Gleanings* also was copied into the manuscript. R. Yehiel Mikhel is referred to in it as “the rabbi, the *maggid*”: “The rabbi, the *maggid*, our master Mikhel of Zolochov interpreted Psalm 107 with reference to four groupings of people, and I will copy the abridgment.”³²⁷

“Samuel Amdurer” is included in the list of Hasidic *zaddikim* in *Breaking of Sinners*.³²⁸ Mordekhai Wilensky, who publicized the list, expressed surprise at the inclusion of R. Samuel but not of his father, R. Hayyim Haika, a known figure. The answer may lie in the fact that the list comprises disciples of R. Yehiel Mikhel. Moreover, R. Hayyim Haika of Amdur wrote a letter to his son warning him against “acting as do the well-known fools who chose for themselves a new path, rejoicing dissolutely and saying they are wise and pious (*Hasidim*).”³²⁹ Rivka Schatz surmised that R. Hayyim Haika was directing his criticism to “a Hasidic address,”³³⁰ and it is fair to assume that R. Yehiel Mikhel and the members of his circle were that “address.”

Solomon Zalman ha-Kohen Vilner

R. Solomon Zalman ha-Kohen Vilner immigrated to the Land of Israel with the Hasidic immigration of 5537 (1777) and became a rabbinic emissary, dispatched to raise funds in Diaspora communities and to organize their support.³³¹

R. Solomon Vilner’s connections to R. Yehiel Mikhel go back to the years preceding his immigration, as shown by the letter from

³²⁶ See Zucker 1974, pp. 223–225; Gries 1990, pp. 157–158.

³²⁷ *Ms. Jerusalem 8 3282* 165a–b; *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 165.

³²⁸ See Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 101 and *Ibid.*, n. 25.

³²⁹ *Life and Kindness (Hayyim va-Hesed)* 77b.

³³⁰ Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 165.

³³¹ On R. Solomon Zalman ha-Kohen Vilner, see Stiman-Katz 1986, index, as well as Morgenstern 1999, pp. 241–252, 351–358.

R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany to his brother, R. Zevi Hasid. The letter, sent from the Land of Israel in 5528 (1768) or later, includes greetings from R. Menahem Mendel to R. Yehiel Mikhel and his son R. Joseph, “and greetings to the pious rabbi our teacher R. Solomon Vilner.”³³² This demonstrates the ties between R. Yehiel Mikhel and R. Solomon Zalman ha-Kohen Vilner in the period preceding the latter’s *aliyyah* to the Land of Israel. It should be noted as well that in his first mission as a rabbinic emissary, from 5539 to 5541 (1779 to 1781), R. Solomon Zalman ha-Kohen Vilner made his way to Brody and met with R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, as suggested by the latter’s epistle: “And the sign for this I have heard directly from the righteous one, R. Solomon Vilner.”³³³ It seems fair to assume that he met on that mission with R. Yehiel Mikhel as well, though the epistle does not explicitly say so.

Shneur Zalman of Lyady

R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady (5507–5573 [1747–1813]), the son of R. Barukh, founded one of the largest and most influential Hasidic courts—that of *Habad*—חבד, an acronym for *hokhmah*, *binah*, *daʿat* (wisdom, understanding, knowledge).

“Zalman Lozner” is included in the list of Hasidic activists in *Breaking of Sinners*.³³⁴ During his tumultuous life, he was twice incarcerated by the Russian authorities following accusations by Hasidism’s opponents, who portrayed his fund raising for the *Hasidim* in the Land of Israel as a transfer of funds to Turkey, a hostile power. They also alleged that he and his colleagues were undermining public order and were disloyal to the Czar’s authority.³³⁵

R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady was freed from his first imprisonment on 19 Kislev 5559 (November 27, 1798), a day that became and remains to this day a festival among *Habad Hasidim*. The manner in which they celebrate the liberation of the “Elder *admor*”—a symbolic liberation, expressing the triumph of the forces of good over the forces of evil—shows that the Hasidic belief in the *zaddik* as

³³² See above, p. 164.

³³³ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 25b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 129b.

³³⁴ See Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 101.

³³⁵ See *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 230 et seq.

Messiah originated not with the most recent *admor*, R. Menahem Mendel Shneerson, but with the founder of the dynasty.

Habad tradition highlights the tight bond between R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady and R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi: in his work *My Rebbe's House* Hayyim Me'ir Heilman tells that R. Dov Ber "sat him [R. Shneur Zalman] down to learn with his dear son, the rabbi R. Abraham ("the Angel"), may Eden be his resting place."³³⁶ Heilman adds that on the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi's command, R. Shneur Zalman came from Lyady to R. Yehiel Mikhel "and he was pleased with some words he then received from him."³³⁷ The reference is to three matters:

The matter of what is said in the prayer book, at the end of the immersion *kavvanah*—he received this from the holy rabbi R. Mikhel in a story that he told him. (The story is well known and famous and this is not its place.) He also received the well-known melodies from the rabbi R. Mikhel, who had received them from the Besht, may Eden be his resting place.³³⁸ And the matter of the signs he also received from the rabbi R. Mikhel. For our teacher [R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady] said that in the home of the rabbi the *Maggid* [of Mezhirichi] they drew the holy spirit with a *hin*-measure . . .³³⁹ And the signs were placed beneath the benches, and there was no time to bend down and pick them up. But when he sat on his holy throne, he saw that to be a *rebbe* he needed signs, and at that time, the rabbi R. Mikhel was still alive and vital, and he received it from him. (Thus was told by one of his grandsons, the rabbis, and he told another story about this but this is not its place.)³⁴⁰

Heilman suggests that the meeting between R. Yehiel Mikhel and R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady may have taken place during the summer of 5532 (1772), when R. Yehiel came to a gathering with R. Dov Ber in the town of Rovno. In recent years, however, the doubts about the *Habad* tradition—which arose with the start of scholarly research into Hasidism—have intensified. The difficulty of accepting *Habad* hagiography literally extends to everything from its presentation of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady's standing and importance among

³³⁶ Heilman 1903, 2b.

³³⁷ Ibid. 3a.

³³⁸ I heard from R. Eliezer Brod of Kefar *Habad* that the *Habad Hasidim* have the practice of singing a wordless melody that they call "the *Maggid* of Zolochov's melody."

³³⁹ A *hin* is a liquid measure.

³⁴⁰ Heilman 1903, 3a–b, n. 7.

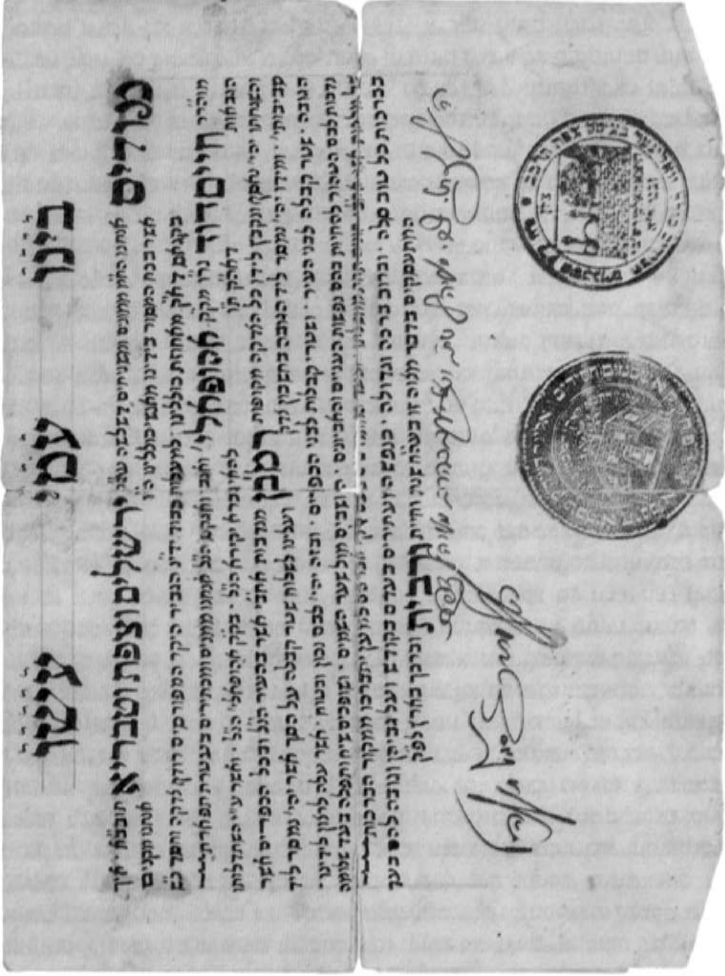
his colleagues and contemporaries to the question of when he began to head his own court.³⁴¹ Among other things, there is reason to doubt all the historical events that *Habad* literature presents as central to the history of Hasidism, such as the gathering in Rovno. It is entirely possible that such a conference was never held at all but was invented as part of the effort to highlight the standing of the *Maggid* R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi and to present R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady as his favored disciple, who inherited his place immediately upon R. Dov Ber's passing at the beginning of 5533 (1772).³⁴² It therefore is difficult to identify Shneur Zalman of Lyady's masters and teachers with any degree of certainty or to characterize the nature of his relationships with the two *Maggidim*—R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi and R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochov.

Accordingly, any reconstruction of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady's life story requires looking behind *Habad* hagiography rather than taking that tradition at face value. But no critical biography of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady has yet been written, and the popular essay *My Rebbe's House*, published in 5662 (1902), was written by a *Habad* Hasid, Hayyim Me'ir Heilman, and does not meet the need. Many questions remain to be researched and examined; they include, first and foremost, the identity of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady's masters and teachers and the nature of his position among the members of the first Hasidic-messianist court.

³⁴¹ See Haran 1990; Haran 1991. Cf. Mondschein 1992/1.

³⁴² See also above, p. 31.

PART THREE



A rabbinic emissary's appointment document, dated 5618 (1858) and authorizing its owner to collect funds for the Ramba'n Fund for the Poor of the Land of Israel. The certificate is signed by "administrators tending to the three holy cities of Jerusalem, Safed, and Tiberias" and is decorated with the seals of the communities of the Volhynia *hasidim* in Tiberias and in Safed. From the legacy of Haya Altshuler of the Epstein family. Courtesy of Herut Altshuler, Carmay Yoseph.

APPENDIX I

THE BESHT'S HOLY EPISTLE—EDITIONS AND VERSIONS

The Besht's First and Second Epistles

The Besht's ascent of the soul took place on Rosh ha-Shanah 5507 (September 1746). Soon after, the Besht dictated an account of the event to his scribe, R. Aryeh Leib of Polonnoye—"the scribe, rabbi, and rebuker of the holy congregation of Polonnoye"¹—and sent the letter off to this brother-in-law, R. Gershon of Kutov, in the Land of Israel. The letter never reached its destination, perhaps because of a plague epidemic and the ensuing quarantine; the same fate befell a letter sent by R. Gershon to the Besht, which was never received "because of the breakdown in governance, since the plague had spread on account of our many sins."²

At the Luka Fair of 5510 (1750), the Besht received a letter from R. Gershon from which he inferred that his first letter had not reached Jerusalem. Not long after, apparently in 5512 (1752),³ the Besht again dictated, this time to his son-in-law, the main elements of the story of his soul's ascent. He gave the letter to his disciple, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, who was about to depart for the Land of Israel. But by reason of "an impediment caused by God, may He be blessed,"⁴ R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye cancelled his planned journey, and the letter again failed to reach R. Gershon. There is no way to know why the second letter was not eventually sent in the usual manner, with an immigrant or a returning rabbinic emissary.

¹ The Besht so terms him in the Second Epistle, printed as an appendix to *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* (Ben Porat Yosef), Korets 5541 (1781). R. Aryeh Leib the Rebuker of Polonnoye, author of *Lion's Voice* (Qol Aryeh), Korets 5558 (1798), appears to have been among the first to be drawn to the Besht, even before 5498 (1738). See *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 125, n. 2.

² Besht's Epistle, in *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* 100a.

³ The time estimate reflects the date written at the beginning of the Frenkel-Bauminger version of the letter, a parallel to the Korets version. See below, p. 300.

⁴ Introduction to Besht's Epistle in *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* 100a.

The Second Epistle remained in the possession of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye and was printed as an appendix to his book, *Joseph is a Fruitful Son*, published at Korets in Iyyar 5541 (April-May 1781)—the expected time of redemption as foretold by Immanuel Hai Ricchi.⁵ It was printed again from a manuscript by David Frenkel in 5683 (1923);⁶ that Frenkel-Bauminger version paralleled the Korets version but was regarded with suspicion, for it was publicized together with documents from the forged “Harson Archive.” In 5732 (1971), Mordekhai Shraga Bauminger printed the epistle from a manuscript that he claimed to be the autograph that the Besht had dictated to his son-in-law,⁷ thereby renewing the controversy over the authenticity of the Frenkel-Bauminger version. One of the skeptics, Abraham Rubinstein, criticized Mordekhai Shraga Bauminger’s unwillingness, for mystical reasons related to oaths of secrecy, to publish a photographic facsimile of the manuscript.⁸ In any event, the important contribution of the Frenkel-Bauminger version is the date written at the letter’s start: “Written [the week of the Sabbath Torah reading] *Portion Terumah*, the year 5512 [1752], here in the congregation of Vad Rashkov.”⁹ If this is the original letter, we learn that the Besht’s Second Epistle was written the week of *Portion Terumah*, that is, in the month of Adar 5512 (February-March 1752), about four or five years after the First Epistle.

Meanwhile, the Besht’s First Epistle, written down by R. Aryeh Leib the Rebuker of Polonnoye, was suppressed and not printed at the time or place of its writing. It is not known who suppressed it and why. *In Praise of the Besht* relates how the Rebuker of Polonnoye traveled to see the Besht because he wanted “to learn the wisdom of the conversation of beasts and birds and the conversation of palm trees.”¹⁰ As an introduction, the Besht taught him the secrets of the holy supernal chariot and of the song of the holy animals, that is,

⁵ On the messianic significance of printing the Epistle at that time, see above, pp. 134–135.

⁶ See Frenkel 1923, pp. 1–5.

⁷ See Bauminger 1972.

⁸ See Rubinstein 1970; Bauminger 1971; Rubinstein 1973; Bauminger 1973; *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Mondschein), p. 233; Etkes 1997. For more on the dispute, see Rozani 1998, pp. 17–22.

⁹ Bauminger 1972, p. 257; *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Mondschein), p. 233.

¹⁰ The terminology resembles what is said about the wisdom of King Solomon, who knew how to speak about trees and beasts, about birds, and about creeping things and fish. See 1 Kings 5:13; *Sukkah* 28a.

the angels; in that context, he taught him as well passages in the *Zohar*. But when they reached town, “the Besht said to him, ‘Have you understood this wisdom well?’ He replied, ‘Yes.’ The Besht thereupon passed his hands over the Rebuker’s face, and the latter forgot all the details of this wisdom, remembering only the introduction.”¹¹ The Besht accounts for the forgetting on the grounds that the Rebuker had no need for the information for the sake of sacred service, wanting it only to satisfy his thirst. The story may be alluding to some esoteric knowledge possessed by the Rebuker of Polonnoye but hidden away, leaving only a dim recollection.

*The First Epistle—The Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979 Version
and the Kahana Version*

In recent years, more than two centuries after it was written, the Besht’s suppressed First Epistle has come to light. In 5740 (1980) Joshua Mondschein printed a version of the Epistle from *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979*, which had been donated to the National Library in Jerusalem by Miriam Lein of the Rothschild family.¹² The document is a Hasidic manuscript, whose first part includes passages from the Hasidic conduct literature in the manner of *Testament of R. Israel Ba’al Shem (Zava’at ha-Ribash)* and its parallels, as well as a partial copy of the will and testament of R. Aaron “the great” of Karlin and the *Besht’s Epistle*. A table of contents prepared by the copyist appears on the second page. The first part of the manuscript was copied during the month of Tammuz 5536 (June–July 1776); at its end, immediately after the *Besht’s Epistle*, it states “Done. Completed in the year 5536 on day 4 [?] of [?] Tammuz.”¹³ A blank page separates the second part of the manuscript from the first. The second part is not referred

¹¹ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 201. See also the introduction of Solomon Lutsker to *He Imparts His Words to Jacob (Maggid Devarav le-Ya’aqov)*, in which a similar transfer of information from the Besht is attributed to R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhrichi.

¹² See Mondschein 1980, pp. 119–126, and, more broadly, *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Mondschein), pp. 229–239; Etkes 1997, pp. 428–430; Rosman 2000, pp. 128–148.

¹³ *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979*, p. 90; *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Mondschein), pp. 229–230. The exact day and month are blurred in the manuscript and hence uncertain. Yet, the year is 5536 (1776).

to in the table of contents, and it is not known when it was written. It includes teachings of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, the leader of the Hasidic Immigration to the Land of Israel in 5537 (1777).

The proximity of the manuscript's date to the Hasidic Immigration and the dedication of the second part to Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk's teachings suggest that the owner of the manuscript may have been one of the immigrants who set out for the Land of Israel in Adar 5537 (February-April 1777). A few months earlier, in anticipation of the journey, the owner copied the *Besht's Epistle* and other Hasidic writings so he might take them with him.¹⁴ The owner of the manuscript continued to write in his notebook even after immigrating, copying the words of Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, leader of the immigrants.

Also informative is the address that appears on the first page of the manuscript, not forming part of the text. It is difficult to make out, and I have inserted question marks where the text is unclear:

The owner of my inn in Anabel Mordecai Hadad ben Gemara (?)
 His wife Ahiya (?) daughter [of?] Esther
 Her son Elijah, her daughter Esther
 His father's name Nisim son of Ephraim
 His brothers Judah and Abraham and Zemah
 His sisters Hannah and Rebecca and Gazal.

It is fair to assume that the owner of the manuscript wrote down the names of the Hadad family members in order to pray for them in the Land of Israel. The place—'Anabel' or 'Nabel'—is a town in Tunis with a well-known Jewish community, and the first names Nisim and Zemah as well as the family name 'Hadad' are typical to Tunisian Jews.¹⁵ In fact, it is known that Tiberian Hasidim traveled to North Africa, for example, R. Jacob ha-Levi Segal that died in the city of Azvira, Morocco.¹⁶ Altogether, these facts credence to the possibility that the owner of the manuscript was one of the 1777

¹⁴ The letter from R. Meshullam Feibush Heller to his brother-in-law R. Joel, one of the immigrants of 5537 (1777), attests to the Hasidic writings that were taken to the Land of Israel. R. Meshullam Feibush alludes to "a number of wondrous mysteries . . . some of them written in the writings at your encampment." See *Precious Gleanings (Liqqutim Yeqarim)*, Lemberg 5552 (1792) 25b; Jerusalem 5734 (1974) 130b.

¹⁵ I thank Prof. Joseph Tubby and his wife Zvia for clarifying the Tunisian context of the address.

¹⁶ See Sursky 2000, vol.1, pp. 122–123.

immigrants, or one of their descendants, who traveled to North Africa in later years. In Nabel, Tunis, he stayed in the inn of the Hadad family and promised them to pray on their behalf upon his returning to Land of Israel. Moreover, the Hadad family might have been related to the Tunisian families that had immigrated to the Land of Israel in 1777, as reported by the Hasidim.

Recently, Joseph Rozani found another version of the Besht's First Epistle, printed by Abraham Kahana in 5661 (1900).¹⁷ Kahana described the text's origin only as "according to a copy from the manuscript of R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy, a disciple of the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi, which I was able to view at an acquaintance's."¹⁸

R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy, a pre-eminent disciple of the *Maggid* R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochov, had in his possession several important Hasidic manuscripts. He likewise was one of the promoters and organizers of the effort to copy *Book of Zoref* by R. Heschel Zoref from a manuscript in the possession of the Besht's grandson, R. Aaron b. R. Zevi Hirsch,¹⁹ and the *Besht's Epistle* may have come to R. Isaiah via the same route. In any event, a copy of *Book of Zoref*, accompanied by additional kabbalistic and Hasidic material, eventually found its way to the Stolin archive. If Abraham Kahana in fact printed the *Besht's Epistle* from a manuscript originating in the Stolin archive, the date on which *Book of Zoref* was recopied into that archive—"Thursday [of the week of] *Portion Re'eh*, the 28th of the month of Menahem Av, of the year 5542"²⁰—becomes significant. It may be assumed on that basis that the *Besht's Epistle* likewise was copied in 5542 (1782) or thereabouts.

The two versions of the Besht's First Epistle—that in *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979* and the Kahana version—differ with respect to certain matters of style. In *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979*, the copyist substitutes an apostrophe for the final letter of many words, but most of those words are fully spelled out in the Kahana version. There is no way to know whether the *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979* copyist deleted the final letters or whether one of the Kahana version copyists—or Abraham Kahana himself, when he prepared the printed version—completed the words.

¹⁷ See Kahana 1900, pp. 100–102; Rozani 1998, pp. 12–15.

¹⁸ Kahana 1900, p. 100, n. 3.

¹⁹ See Rabinowitz 1940.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Nor are the two versions fully identical in their content.²¹ *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979* refers to “the pillar known to those who know the hidden wisdom,”²² through which souls ascend to Garden of Eden, but the Kahana version speaks of “the pillar known to you,” that is, R. Gershon.²³ That should be read together with what is said at the start of the letter regarding “my doing things known to you in connection with my soul’s ascent, as you know.”²⁴ It appears that according to the Kahana version, R. Gershon knew about earlier ascents of the Besht’s soul; were that not the case, he could not have known about the pillar by way of which souls ascend.²⁵

These differences provide no basis for concluding which version—the one in *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979* or the one printed by Kahana—is closer to the original. The versions may have been copied from the same original, or from the original and a copy, or from two copies.²⁶ In any case, it is clear that at least one original and two copies of the Besht’s First Epistle were in the possession of various individuals in the Hasidic milieu at the end of the eighteenth century.

Additional information relates to Ahiyah of Shiloh, the Besht’s heavenly teacher. The Second Epistle, printed as an appendix to *Joseph is a Fruitful Son*, states “And I asked my master and teacher to accompany me.”²⁷ The First Epistle, in the *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979* version, states “And also my teacher whom you know was with me always.”²⁸ The Kahana version reads: “But my teacher whom you know was always with me, and he, too, gave me no answer.”²⁹

²¹ For a complete and detailed comparison of the two versions, see Rozani 1998, pp. 38–82; Altshuler 1999, pp. 56–60.

²² *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Mondschein), p. 234. (The word translated “hidden wisdom” is חֵן (*hen*), an acronym for *hokhmah nisteret* that also means “grace.”—*translator’s note*)

²³ Kahana 1900, p. 101.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ If the Besht conducted any ascents of the soul before the one on Rosh ha-Shanah 5507 (September 1746), there is no written reference to them other than these allusions directed to R. Gershon. But we know of two ascents of his soul subsequent to that of 5507 (1746). See above, pp. 29–31. See also Idel 1993, p. 111.

²⁶ It is not clear how we are to understand Kahana’s comment that he printed the epistle “according to a copy from [or: according to copying from] the manuscript of R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy.” Did he print from R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy’s manuscript or from a copy made from R. Isaiah’s manuscript? In other words, it is not clear how many copies had been made before Kahana arranged for the Epistle’s printing.

²⁷ Besht’s Epistle, in *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* 100a.

²⁸ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Mondschein), p. 230.

²⁹ Kahana 1900, p. 101.

Thus, the Kahana version supports the *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979* version, according to which Ahiyah of Shiloh, the heavenly teacher, agreed to accompany the Besht in his journey to the supernal realms.³⁰

Thus, two versions of the Besht's First Epistle are now available to researchers—the *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979* version and the Kahana version. Likewise, two versions of the Second Epistle are available—the Korets version and the Frenkel-Bauminger version. This inventory provides no basis for firmly determining which version of each letter is truer to the original, but it enables us to describe the differences between the two epistles.

The Differences between the First Epistle and the Second Epistle

The differences between the Besht's two epistles—the first, written shortly after the Rosh ha-Shanah 5507 (September 1746) ascent of the soul, and the second, written in 5512 (1752)—involve both material missing from the First Epistle and material that appears only in it. The changes shed light on obscure passages in the letter and clarify its purpose. Lacking in the First Epistle, for example, are an opening or a signature; accordingly it contains no salutation to the addressee, R. Gershon, and no additional information to identify the writer, the date, or the letter's circumstances. Also missing is any account of the Besht's second ascent of the soul, which he conducted on Rosh ha-Shanah 5510 (September 1749) and which is described in the Second Epistle.³¹ That is explained, of course, by the fact that the First Epistle was written before 5510.

The epistles differ as well in the space they devote to the apostasy decrees issued against the communities of Zaslov, Sivtuvka (Shpatuvka) and Dunayevtsy. The years 5507–5508 (1747–1748) saw the fabrication of blood libels in those regions, whose Jewish victims were subjected to horrific tortures and ultimately died sanctifying God's name. In one instance, in Zaslov, a few of the victims converted to Christianity but were nevertheless put to death.³² These

³⁰ On Ahiyah of Shiloh as a heavenly teacher, see Dinur 1955, p. 82; Nigal 1972; Liebes 1982/1, p. 113 and sources in n. 114; Alfasi 1997, p. 78.

³¹ See Besht's Epistle in *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* 100a: "And on Rosh ha-Shanah of the year 5510 I performed an ascent of the soul, as is known, and I saw a great denunciation . . ."

³² On the blood libels of 5507–5508 (1747–1748), see Balaban 1934, pp. 100–101; Dubnow 1960, pp. 60–62; Rosman 2000, p. 146.

events occupy a central place in the Besht's Second Epistle, and it appears that his heavenly ascent on Rosh ha-Shanah 5507 (September 1746) was intended from the outset to annul the evil of the apostasy decree or at least find an explanation for it. The First Epistle, in contrast, refers only marginally and briefly to the matter of the apostasy decree and the effort to annul it.

Three matters that do not appear at all in the Second Epistle form the focus of the First. To begin, there is the Besht's distress over the prospect of his dying outside the Land of Israel: "And it therefore may be proper to do so, but enough said. My soul grieved for myself and for my comrades at my dying outside the Holy Land."³³ Second, there is the interpretation given by the Besht to the happiness in the supernal realms: "And it occurred to me to ask him whether this happiness and joy was in preparation for his good arrival."³⁴ Finally, there is the first part of the Messiah's answer to the Besht's question: "'When will the master come?' His lofty response was that it could not be divulged"³⁵

The Besht himself attributes the changes to fading memory. At the start of the Second Epistle, he acknowledges that the First Epistle included some information omitted from the Second: "Those novel-lae and mysteries concerning which I wrote to you via the scribe, the rabbi-rebuke of the holy congregation of Polonnoye, did not reach you and that also caused me great sorrow, for it certainly would have been a great pleasure to you had they reached you. By now I have forgotten some of them, but what I remember of their details I will very briefly write to you."³⁶ But it is hard to see these excisions as mere happenstance, for it is the purportedly forgotten matters that contain the letter's messianic punch. Their omission from the Second Epistle, published in 5541 (1781), blurs the Besht's messianic exploit and the nature of his journey to the Messiah's palace, all of which are detailed in the suppressed First Epistle.

³³ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Mondschein), pp. 234–235.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 235. The Kahana version reads "my good arrival," applying the sentence to the Besht himself rather than the Messiah and thereby severing the link between this sentence and the address to the Messiah in the ensuing sentence.

³⁵ *Ibid.* In the Kahana version, the word "lofty" (*ha-ramah*) is fully spelled out; in the *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5979* version, as is typical, the final letter is replaced by an apostrophe.

³⁶ Besht's Epistle in *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* 100a.

APPENDIX II
HASIDIC CONDUCT LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

The Association's Codex

Submission to a binding set of regulations is an important step in the development of associations of kabbalists. Among the first instances of the phenomenon is the set of regulations accepted by R. Joseph Karo and his associates at the conclusion of their linkage ceremony. The event is described in R. Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz's epistle (*Iggeret Shelomo ha-Levi Elqabetz*): "And then [R. Joseph Karo] said 'I am your servant.' And all of them responded 'We will do and we will obey,' and they instituted many regulations."¹ These rules, adopted on Shavuot night 5293 (1533), were regarded as part of the heavenly revelation granted to R. Joseph Karo on that occasion; accordingly, they were afforded special weight, similar to that of the commandments given at Sinai. The link to the encounter at Sinai is expressed in Elqabetz's use of the wording "We will do and we will obey" (Exod. 24:7), harking back to the oath that Moses enjoined on the Israelites.

The regulations of R. Joseph Karo and his associates were printed in the introduction to *Preacher of Righteousness* (*Maggid Mesharim*) under the heading "Admonitions, Regulations, and Restrictions."² They served as the model for similar collections composed by the Safed kabbalists for the kabbalistic associations founded there. The groups' regulations are closely tied to the growth of kabbalistic ethical literature during the sixteenth century. Mordechai Pachter, in his wide-ranging inquiry into the subject, found that the roots of the kabbalistic ethical works composed in Safed, on the model of *Beginning of Wisdom* (*Reshit Hokhmah*) and *Book of the God-Fearing* (*Sefer Haredim*), could be

¹ *Epistle of Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz*, pp. 19–20.

² *Preacher of Righteousness*, p. 1.

traced to the customs of kabbalistic associations that were founded and flourished in that city.³

The organization of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples into an association of kabbalists likewise entailed the composition of a set of binding regulations. The kabbalistic associations of Safed, with their ascetic practices, served as their inspiration: R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples sought to recreate the Safed kabbalists' code of conduct in order to attain their stature. To that end, they composed a rule book in the form of practices—that is, instructions—that bound the members to conduct themselves in a particular manner, primarily taking upon themselves prohibitions and stringencies beyond what Jewish Law (Halakhah) imposes on all Jews.⁴ These practices were assigned headings, such as “And this a great rule in the service of the Creator”;⁵ “Another great rule”; “And all I have written are great rules, more pleasing than much gold; each and every item is a great rule.”⁶ The expression “rule” (*kelal*) is a halakhic term, used in the *Mishnah* to designate a law or a statute, and the expression “a great (major) rule” (*kelal gadol*) means a primary, important rule.⁷ The terminology emphasizes the importance of the practices and the special status assigned to them as statutes binding in all matters.

The common thread that runs through the various practices of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples is their connection to the customs of “the early pious ones” (*hasidim rishonim*.) The designation “*hasid*” appears in the Bible, particularly in the Psalms, some of which refer specifically to God’s pious ones: “Sing praise unto the Lord, O ye His godly ones (*hasidav*), and give thanks to His holy name” (Ps. 30:5).⁸ Whether the reference is to one who performs acts of graciousness (*hesed*) or one who merits God’s grace, it is clear that the term *hasid* is connected to the divine attribute of grace.

In the *Mishnah* and other talmudic literature, the term “*hasid*” is applied to an individual who dedicates his life to the observance of the commandments with fervor and extreme punctiliousness, beyond the stringency of the law and sometimes even contrary to the broader

³ See Pachter 1987; Pachter 1991/1, pp. 24–69.

⁴ On the term “practice” (*hanhagah*) as referring as well to a magical act, see Idel 2001, p. 147.

⁵ *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 23.

⁶ *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* 7a.

⁷ E.g., *Shabbat* 7:3—“A great rule was said with reference to the Sabbath.”

⁸ Translation per OJPS, which elsewhere renders *hasidim* as “saints” (Ps. 145:10); NJPS renders *hasidav* as “faithful of the Lord.”—*translator’s note*.

law. Samuel Safrai has pointed out that the pious one is characterized by absolute faith in God and has no concern about risking his life, so confident is he in God's providence and redemption.⁹ Gershom Scholem, meanwhile, emphasized the anarchic aspect of the pious one's conduct. According to Scholem, the pious one is "the radical Jew, who becomes an extremist in the pursuit of his calling . . . Within this extremism, which is never weighed or measured, lies an anarchic element. The pious one's way of life contains something fundamentally 'non-bourgeois,' and the stories that the *Talmud* tells about such pious ones usually contain something that is absurd, and sometimes even repugnant, to the spirit of a proper bourgeois . . . Sooner or later, the way [of the pious one] will bring him into conflict with the demands of society."¹⁰ Scholem's conclusion is well exemplified in the story of the Sage who recited before Rava b. R. Huna: "One who kills serpents and scorpions on the Sabbath is not pleasing to pious ones. He said to him: But such pious ones are not pleasing to the sages."¹¹

This "anarchic element" features prominently in the practices of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples, who tried to live their lives in accordance with the ideal of the pious one,¹² in the sense of austerity and asceticism intended to purify the soul of its dross, along with the element of extreme nonconformity embodied in that personality. It is no coincidence that R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel, mentions R. Joseph Karo in the course of defining a pious one as one who disdains worldly desires.¹³ One should not underestimate the importance of *Preacher of Righteousness* to R. Yehiel Mikhel and his circle, who saw R. Joseph Karo as the perfect exemplar of the ideal of the pious one-kabbalist, graced with the gift of the holy spirit.

R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples' rule book was thus written under the influence of the collection of practices at the opening of

⁹ See Safrai 1984, pp. 144–160.

¹⁰ Scholem 1976/2, pp. 214–215.

¹¹ *Shabbat* 121b.

¹² The term "*hasid*" was used by R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples as an adjective (pious). Only later, with the formation of the courts of various *zaddikim*, did the term become a noun (followers), connoting affiliation with one or another court—the *hasidim* (followers) of Gur, the *hasidim* (followers) of Vishnitz, the *hasidim* (followers) of *Habad*, and so forth.

¹³ See *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 22b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 117b. It should be noted that in the *Epistle of Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz*, R. Joseph Karo is referred to not by name but as "the *hasid*."

Preacher of Righteousness,¹⁴ to which were added customs from the kabbalistic ethical literature of Safed, such as *Beginning of Wisdom* by R. Elijah de Vidash, *Book of the God-Fearing* by R. Elazar Azkari, *Tree of Life* (*Ez Hayyim*) by R. Hayyim Vital (the Ari's disciple), *Two Tablets of the Covenant* (*Shenei Lulhot ha-Berit*) by R. Isaiah Horowitz (the Shelah), and *Teaching of the Pious* (*Mishnat Hasidim*) by Immanuel Hai Ricchi. The rule book prominently displays the tendency of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples to walk a fine line and adopt customs of the pious ones that sometimes seem to disparage Jewish Law and the established order. Among them is the practice of equanimity (*hishtavut*), considered a quality of the pious one by R. Bahya ibn Paquda, the author of *Duties of the Heart* (*Hovot ha-Levavot*): "And it has been said of one of the pious ones who said to his fellow: Have you attained equanimity? He said to him: With respect to which matter? He said to him: Are praise and dishonor equated in your eyes? He said to him: No. He said to him: In that case, you haven't yet attained [it]; make an effort and you may be able to attain that level, for it is the highest level of the pious ones and the highest desideratum."¹⁵ Other such practices are those of solitude (*hitbodedut*), austerity (*perishut*), and communion (*devequt*)—the three highest values, which, according to *Book of the God-Fearing*, were practiced by the pious ones of Israel.¹⁶

Although they were printed, the collected practices of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples were not intended for all Israel. Originally, they were intended for the members of the group, whose actions represented all Israel, and some were intended only for the *zaddik*. Only after they were disseminated were the practices—especially *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* (*Zava'at ha-Ribash*), which was printed in a small, inexpensive format—transformed into popular and acces-

¹⁴ See Gries 1990, esp. pp. 182–230. Hasidic conduct literature was certainly influenced by *Preacher of Righteousness* but some of its practices run counter to R. Joseph Karo's rules. For example, Rule 12 of *Preacher of Righteousness* calls on one "to place all your sins constantly before you and be concerned about them." In contrast *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* 6b states: "One should not be excessively punctilious about everything he does, for it is the intention of the evil impulse to cause a man to fear lest he has not fulfilled [his obligation] with respect to a particular matter, thereby bringing him to sadness, and sadness is a great obstacle to service of the Creator, may He be blessed." See also parallels in *Ways of the Just* 5a; *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 23.

¹⁵ *Duties of the Heart*, vol. 2, 12a.

¹⁶ See *Book of the God-Fearing* 66a.

sible reading matter that helped spread the gospel of Hasidism and strengthened its impact. It is thus necessary to distinguish between original intent and after-the-fact consequence: Printing the collected practices of R. Yehiel Mikhel and the members of his group initially served the purpose of spreading the secrets of the Kabbalah. But the after-the-fact effect of the printing was to popularize the customs encompassed in the books, leading to their wide acceptance.

Printing the Conduct Literature

Collections of practices were in the possession of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples by the early 1770s and began to be printed in 5541 (1781). The first collection, *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (*Maggid Devarav le-Ya'akov*), was printed that year in Korets by R. Solomon Lutsker and his partners as part of their effort to disseminate kabbalistic secrets in anticipation of the redemption in Iyyar 5541 (April-May 1781). The work, which encompasses discourses and practices, is attributed to R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi, who had died on 19 Kislev 5533 (December 15, 1772); it should be noted that R. Yehiel Mikhel was still alive when the book was printed. Other collections of practices were similarly attributed to individuals who had died by the time the work was printed:

Precious Gleanings (*Liqqutim Ye'qarim*), the second version of the group's practices, was published in Lemberg in 5552 (1792) from a manuscript in the possession of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel. R. Meshullam Feibush's two epistles to the *Hasidim* in the Land of Israel, sent in 5537 (1777) and 5542 (1781), were incorporated into the work without any mention of his name. The title page attributes the work to "four who walked well"—the Besht, R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany, and R. Yehiel Mikhel, who by that time had already died.

Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem (5553? [1793]?), the third version of the practices, was printed without identification of the printers or their location. Its title page states that the book includes the words of the Besht as well as "correct practices of the man of God, the holy luminary, our master Dov Ber, who was preacher in the holy congregation of Mezhirichi."¹⁷ The work was printed from a manuscript

¹⁷ *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem*, title page.

owned by R. Isaiah of Yanuv, whom Abraham Joshua Heschel identified as R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy, a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel.¹⁸ Similarly, it is reasonable to assume that the printers were R. Solomon Lutsker and his son-in-law Abraham, the son of R. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets.

Ways of Righteousness (Darkhei Zedeq), Lvov 5556 (1796), was printed under the name of R. Zechariah Mendel of Yaroslav. The collection of practices at the end of the book is cited in the name of R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochev.

During the nineteenth century, several additional versions of the literature were brought to press;¹⁹ they include:

Light of Torah (Or Torah), Korets 5564 (1804), printed from a manuscript owned by R. Isaiah of Dunayevtsy. This work, like *He Imparts His Words to Jacob*, was attributed to R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi.

Ways of the Just (Darkhei Yesharim), Zhitomir 5565 (1805). On its title page, the work is attributed to R. Menahem Mendel of Pere-myshlyany, to the Besht, and to R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi.

Holy Writings (Kitvei Qodesh), Warsaw 5644 (1884), printed from a manuscript owned by R. Israel, the *Maggid* of Kozenice. It was brought to press by his son-in-law, Moses ha-Kohen; the latter claimed in his introduction that the book included material by the Besht, R. Dov Ber, R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev, and R. Israel of Kozenice himself.

Light of Truth (Or ha-Emet), Husyotin 5659 (1899), printed from a manuscript owned by R. Zevi Hasid, a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel. The title page states that the work includes words of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, transcribed by R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev.

Additional collections, not yet printed, exist in manuscript. Among them is *Ms. Jerusalem 8 3282*, which had been owned by R. Samuel b. Hayyim Haika of Amdur and contains a more complete parallel to the version in *Precious Gleanings*.

The Mysterious Source of the Hasidic Conduct Literature

The Hasidic conduct literature is not pseudepigraphical in the usual sense; that is, it involves no attribution of later works to an earlier

¹⁸ See Heschel 1952, p. 122.

¹⁹ For the complete list, see Gries 1990, p. 152.

writer. So, for example, the version printed in *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* incorporates such comments as: "and I heard from *Ribash* [R. Israel Ba'al Shem], peace be upon him,"²⁰ "and *Ribash* [R. Israel Ba'al Shem], peace be upon him, also said,"²¹ and so forth. These comments show that the writer was not the Besht, nor did he pretend to be the Besht; rather, he cited traditions in the Besht's name. But the work offers no answer to the question of who cited those traditions.

R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady was one of the few individuals in the Hasidic milieu to consider the conduct literature's provenance. His words, however, conceal more than they disclose. Though hinting at a connection between the Besht and the writings attributed to him, they leave the nature of that connection obscure:

What is written in the book called *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* is not in fact his will, and he left no will before he died. Rather, they are gleanings of his pure statements, successively gleaned; but they did not know how to arrange the wording in its proper pattern . . . And the gleaner wrote about not knowing how to relate the words in proper grammar because the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing, would say words of Torah in the language of Ashkenaz [Yiddish], not in the holy language [Hebrew].²²

R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady alleges the existence of a "gleaner," who was less than precise in translating the words of the Besht or explicating them. R. Meshullam Feibush Heller likewise hints at such an intermediary; his epistle of 5537 (1777) contains the first report within the Hasidic milieu of the existence of writings in the name of the Besht.²³

honest words of truth and faith heard from themouths of the wise ones of the generation, exemplary men, possessed of the holy spirit, whose eyes, not others', saw.²⁴ As an angel of God's was their fear and reverence, and all of them drank from the same spring, that is, the divine R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come. But I merited to see only his divine student, R. Dov Ber, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world

²⁰ *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* 17b.

²¹ *Ibid.* 15a.

²² *Holy Epistle in Gleaned Statements—Tanya (Liqqutei Amarim Tanya)* 138a–b; 141a.

²³ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 19b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 110a.

²⁴ In the Zolkow 5560 (1800) edition, 20a: "whom my eyes, not others', saw."

to come, and then²⁵ there came to me holy writings from his holy words that inflame the heart of the devout to the worship of God, may He be blessed. And I several times came before the great scholar R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany, peace be on him, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, may his merit protect us, and most of all, to distinguish between the dead and the living, what I heard from the holy mouth, son of holy ones, a righteous man son of a righteous man, the remarkable rabbi, the man of God, our master Yehiel Mikhel, may his lamp illuminate.

The statement “and then there came to me holy writings from his holy words that inflame the heart of the devout to the worship of God, may He be blessed” can be taken to mean that the holy writings are the writings of the disciple, R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi. But a close reading of the text suggests that the sentence about R. Dov Ber was a parenthetical apropos the sentence about the Besht and was not intended to specify the source of the writings. “Holy writings from his holy words” is a clause directed at the Besht, and it denotes manuscripts of the Hasidic conduct literature attributed to the Besht, who is referred to in it as “ba‘al shem tov,” *Ribash* [R. Israel Ba‘al Shem],” or “the teacher (*ha-rav*).”²⁶ These writings, which include homilies as well, were termed by R. Meshullam Feibush Heller “the new writings,”²⁷ to distinguish them from the old writings, “the writings of the Ari, may his memory be for a blessing,” which also were in his possession.²⁸ R. Meshullam Feibush says nothing about how he acquired the writings, employing instead an obscure locution about how these writings “came” to him. Elsewhere he speaks of writings that “were revealed”: “Only because these writings of the holy one were revealed . . . to some people.”²⁹ That wording strengthens the impression that writings attributed to the Besht appeared mysteriously a little more than a decade after his death in 5520 (1760).

²⁵ Ibid.: “And after this.”

²⁶ For example: *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 21b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 120a: “And as the teacher, may his memory be for a blessing, wrote in new writings in my hand.” See also *Light of Truth* 45b: “And the teacher also said.” The editor there noted in parenthesis “He means R. Israel Ba‘al Shem Tov.”

²⁷ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 27a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 134a.

²⁸ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 22b, 24a, 28b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 122b, 126b, 138a.

²⁹ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 21a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 118b. R. Dov Ber’s name, mentioned here, was added later.

R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's view of "the new writings" was ambiguous: on the one hand, he puts them on the level of the Ari's writings; on the other hand, he draws back from the literal application of the practices included in them. In his view, the practices in these writings are intended for *zaddikim* only and are forbidden to their disciples.³⁰ In that spirit, he interprets the practices related to prayer, Torah study, elevating intrusive thoughts, and casting off corporeality.

The origin of Hasidic conduct literature has occupied the attention of academic scholars as well. Some accepted the attribution of *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* to the Besht; others took the position that the work was a collection of statements by various individuals.³¹ Joseph Weiss assumed that *Ways of the Just* is a pamphlet containing the practices of R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany,³² while Gershom Scholem determined that the Hasidic conduct literature was an anthology of teachings of R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi. Scholem did not base his conclusion on a comprehensive inquiry, but rested content with a parenthetical comment on the source of the version in *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem*: "(The 'Testament' is merely a gleaning from the words of R. Ber and reflects his language)." That note appears in his article on communion (*devequt*) in early Hasidism, accompanied by neither explanation nor source.³³ He may have been influenced by the title pages, by the publishers' introductions, and by the approbations, most of which attribute the practices to R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi. Later Hasidic hagiography also relied on these title pages and approbations and listed most members of the second and third Hasidic generations as pre-eminent disciples of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi. Scholars accordingly succumbed to the mistaken premise that "the *Maggid*" mentioned in the writings of that generation was R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi, and that it was his teachings that were written down and reworked in the format of practices.

Rivka Schatz followed in Gershom Scholem's footsteps as she considered the various versions of Hasidic conduct literature.³⁴ In the

³⁰ See *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 21b–22a, 22b, 27b–28a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 120a, 122a, 136a; Krassen 1990, pp. 188–319.

³¹ See Haberman 1960; Rubinstein 1974, p. 69; Nigal 1973/1.

³² Weiss 1985, pp. 170–182.

³³ See Scholem 1976/1, vol. 2, p. 344.

³⁴ See *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (ed. Schatz-Uffenheimer), pp. 14–23.

introduction to the critical edition of *He Imparts His Words to Jacob*, Schatz treated as established fact, beyond further inquiry, Scholem's determination regarding the link between R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi and the Hasidic conduct literature.

A similar tack was taken by Ze'ev Gries, who conducted a wide and detailed inquiry into Hasidic conduct literature. His starting point was the identity of the various versions of the conduct literature; he observed that *Ways of the Just* was not an independent text written by R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany but simply a version of the practices printed under R. Menahem Mendel's name.³⁵ Gries proved that the other versions of the Hasidic conduct literature were likewise only variations on a single collection of practices, printed under various names. Some of the collections were in the names of the Besht, R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany, R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, or R. Yehiel Mikhel; others were in the names of their disciples, who kept copies. The problem, however, is that Gries confined his research from the outset to the evolution of manuscripts and printed copies of the conduct literature. Regarding the origin of the practices, he wrote only that "It is well known today that *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* is a pamphlet taken from discourses of the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi."³⁶ As support, he referred readers to Gershom Scholem's parenthetical note in his article on communion.

And so, the premise that the Hasidic conduct literature originated in the teachings of the *Maggid* R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi has been accepted until now as established fact, in need of no proof. No account has been taken of the possibility that some versions of the literature were attributed to R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi in an effort to obscure and mask their true sources, just as *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* and *Ways of the Just* were respectively attributed to the Besht and to R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany.

The Conduct Literature and R. Yehiel Mikhel, the Maggid of Zolochov

In contrast to the view of Hasidic hagiography and of the researchers influenced by it, my conclusion, reached on the basis of the present

³⁵ See Gries 1990, pp. 156–157.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 151.

study, is that Hasidic conduct literature finds its source in the teachings of R. Yehiel Mikhel, the *Maggid* of Zolochov. The conclusion is based not on late data, tied to the printing of collections of the practices, but on their content: Hasidic works written in the 1770s and thereafter contain homilies showing that material set forth in the practices anonymously had elsewhere been said by R. Yehiel Mikhel and was tied to his overall doctrine. The existence of these homilies, which clearly establish the nexus between R. Yehiel Mikhel and the conduct literature, contrasts sharply to the lack of independent sources that could provide a basis for some connection between the practices and R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi. Moreover, these discourses account for the title *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem*, which derives from R. Yehiel Mikhel's reworking of traditions from the Besht into his own doctrine.

These traditions, along with collections of practices, were in the possession of individuals who had been disciples of R. Yehiel Mikhel. In a sort of hide-and-seek game, bits of both reliable information and misleading details were woven into the manuscripts and printed texts: the practices were attributed to various individuals, and the approbations conceal more than they reveal. Even the term "the *Maggid*," which originally referred to R. Yehiel Mikhel, was sometimes joined to the name of R. Dov Ber, so as to create the impression that "the *Maggid*" whose oral remarks were written down in the texts was the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi.

Similarly misleading is *In Praise of the Besht*, where reliable traditions can be found side-by-side with hagiographic stories. Next to the authentic tradition about the history of the Zolochov dynasty, for example, *In Praise of the Besht* cites words in the name of R. Yehiel Mikhel "who was commanded from Heaven to accept the Besht as his teacher and he went to study with him and was shown wellsprings of wisdom that flowed to him. And when the Besht died, he was commanded to take the great *maggid* R. Dov as teacher, and he was shown that the same wellsprings of wisdom that had flowed to the Besht flowed to the rabbi the *maggid*, may his memory be for a blessing."³⁷ This story is atypical in *In Praise of the Besht*, which contains no other acknowledgements by individuals purportedly accepting R. Dov Ber as leader. The story may have been intended to

³⁷ *In Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 132.

exalt R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi and present him as the Besht's heir in a pseudo-reliable tradition, coming from the mouth of R. Yehiel Mikhel.

An additional text that reveals a bit while concealing more is R. Solomon Lutsker's introduction to *He Imparts His Words to Jacob*, printed in Korets in 5541 (1781). It is a literary introduction, not necessarily reflecting historical truth; the characteristics that R. Solomon Lutsker attributes to the Besht are cast in the mold of *In Praise of the Ari* (*Shivhei ha-Ari*), which tends to exaggerate the Ari's greatness. R. Solomon Lutsker likewise draws an analogy to the members of the Ari's group, and he compares his introduction to the introduction in *Tree of Life* by R. Hayyim Vital: "for it comprises but an outline, as one peering through the lattice-work, revealing a handbreadth yet covering two thousand cubits."³⁸

This analogy to the Ari recurs in the epistles of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, who compares the *Maggid* of Zolochov's circle of disciples to the disciples of the Ari; and other motifs found in R. Solomon Lutsker's introduction appear in those epistles as well. Among them is the expression "which our eyes saw, and not others'," used by R. Meshullam Feibush at the opening of his first epistle.³⁹ The expression "he heard and sought a repair (*tiqqun*) in the writing of proper words of truth and faith" calls to mind the opening of R. Meshullam Feibush's first epistle, where he explains that he is writing it because of the need to send his friend "honest words of truth and faith heard from the mouths of the wise ones of the generation."⁴⁰ The expression "words of truth" refers to matters treated as secret, as is clear from the words of Solomon Molkho at the opening of *Book of the Magnificent* (*Sefer ha-Mefo'ar*): "For the sake of my beloved brothers and friends who dwell in Salonika, who demand of me to send them some discourse in the manner of truth."⁴¹ R. Solomon Lutsker's introduction similarly alludes to the text's hidden secret, which can be discerned only by reading between the lines. It should be noted as well that R. Solomon Lutsker mentions R. Dov Ber's name only once in his introduction, thereafter using the abbreviation for the

³⁸ *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (Korets 5541 [1781]), "Introduction to the Book."

³⁹ See above, p. 278.

⁴⁰ *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (Korets 5541 [1781]), "Introduction to the Book."; *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 19b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 110a.

⁴¹ *Book of the Magnificent*, unpaginated.

expression “my lord, master, and teacher.” On the other hand, the name of the book—*He Imparts His Words to Jacob*—hints at R. Dov Ber’s name.⁴²

To resolve the conflicting evidence, I will examine four pivotal practices to prove the hypothesis that the Hasidic conduct literature was created in the House of Zolochov:

1. The practice related to the descent of the *zaddik*, a descent for the sake of the ascent.
2. The practice of equanimity, the purest attribute of a pious one.
3. The practice regarding Torah study, which subordinates it to prayer.
4. The practices of prayer—primarily, swaying in prayer and praying late.

These practices form the underpinnings of the Hasidic ethos, and they prominently display the influence of the ethical literature of the Safed kabbalists. Their common thread is the connection to the qualities of “the early pious ones (*hasidim rishonim*),” and that may be why they were adopted by R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples. They became the targets of attack by the opponents of Hasidism (the *Mitnaggedim*), and they are mentioned disparagingly in most of their forgeries and excommunication decrees dating from the 1770s through the 1790s. The practices are hardly novel, however, for their roots can be traced to the Talmud, the Midrash, and kabbalistic texts, and it is therefore hard to account for the disquiet and opposition that they aroused in some rabbinic circles. Moreover, the suggestion that the opposition was generated by the ranking of spiritual values or the preaching of an ascetic way of life is inconsistent with the ascetic traditions that characterized the most exalted pietists throughout the ages.

There is thus no simple explanation for the opposition to Hasidism, perhaps because the most vocal *Mitnaggedim* never reduced all they knew to writing and never publicly disclosed their inner thoughts. In any event, the organization of a group of *hasidim*, and the direction implied by that organization, are hinted at in the letters exchanged among the leaders of the various communities; for example, a Manifest,

⁴² *Devarav* is spelled דבראב, the first three letters of which suggest דב בר, Dov Ber.—*translator’s note*.

sent in 5532 (1772) by the leaders of the Vilnius community to Brody and Brisk, refers to the *hasidim* as “bands of the wicked.”⁴³ Similar allusions can be found in the texts of the public bans disseminated among the crowds at commercial fairs. For example, the excommunication decree signed at the Zolvo fair in the summer of 5541 (1781) and circulated widely refers to the *hasidim* as “the sect of subversives and agitators.”⁴⁴ But only in *Breaking of Sinners*, which originated in a personal collection of accounts by a particularly obstinate *mitnagged*, are facts revealed about the nature of the group, its messianic character, and its members’ widespread belief in reincarnation.

It thus appears that many facts about the Hasidic faction that were known to the communal leaders were never written down in official documents—just as the names of the banned were not mentioned in the various decrees. It therefore would be wrong to seek the roots of the opposition only in what was publicly disclosed, for they are more likely to be found in what lies concealed beneath the superficial verbiage. Adopting the customs of the kabbalists and “the early pious ones” had a broader meaning, for these customs signified in a sense the organization of a band of kabbalists whose charismatic leader derives his authority from supernal sources. It was the demand to acknowledge that authority from on high that aroused the rabbis’ and communal leaders’ opposition. To all appearances, the pretension of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples to a status resembling that of R. Simeon b. Yohai and his colleagues or the Ari and his disciples attested to their messianic aspirations and was ridiculous in the eyes of many, though few acknowledged that publicly.

Fundamentally, it appears that the targets of the *Mitnaggedim* were the impulse to action, the driving force, and the sense of mission, combined with the demand to acknowledge a new authority. The group’s conduct was not the initial reason for the battle, though it certainly made the atmosphere more volatile.

⁴³ Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 44.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 106.

CHAPTER ONE

DESCENT FOR THE SAKE OF THE ASCENT

Descent of the Zaddik

At the core of the Hasidic doctrine of the *zaddik* is the concept of “descent for the sake of the ascent”; it is the point of departure for the doctrine’s theoretical and societal teachings. The term expresses a central feature of the *zaddik*’s mission—the repair of his believers’ sins by descending to their sins’ level and raising them up from there. Joseph Dan used the following terms to define the connection between the *zaddik*’s mission and the essence of his soul: “Inasmuch as the *zaddik*’s soul is an exalted manifestation of the divine, it is inconceivable that it might be flawed . . . Indeed, no element of evil is to be found in the *zaddik*, and no desires or improper thoughts well up in him. Still, he is linked to the souls of his congregants by a profound spiritual bond, and their sins give rise to a form of sinful thoughts in his soul. When the sinning disciple repents, the *zaddik* raises these evil elements that had been aroused in him to their supernal source and converts them back to good, thereby completing the disciple’s repentance and bringing about full acceptance of that repentance in the supernal world . . . The disciple’s sins are represented in the *zaddik*’s soul, and the process of the disciple’s repentance is intertwined with the process by which evil is raised up and repaired by the *zaddik*. The result is that both are purified as they fulfill the highest purpose—repairing evil and transforming it to good.”¹ Thus, it is precisely the exalted state of the *zaddik*’s soul that enables it to descend to the depths of the sin, repair the evil at its root, and bring redemption to his disciples’ souls.

Resonating within the Hasidic notion of the *zaddik*’s descent is the Sabbatean theological concept of the holiness of sin, of “a commandment achieved through a transgression,” as Gershom Scholem puts it.² That resonance conveys the resemblance between the image

¹ Dan 1998/1, pp. 154–155.

² See Scholem 1937. (There may be some irony in the use of a Hebrew term,

of the Hasidic *zaddik* and that of the Sabbatean messiah, whose believers explained his conversion to Islam as part of his messianic mission of descending to the depths of sin and raising up the holy sparks that had fallen captive to the impure forces there. In that way, the repair of the world would be perfected by raising up the evil and transforming it to good.

The descent of the *zaddik* has been widely examined by students of Hasidism. The inquiry here accordingly will not deal with its theological meaning or its connection to the ritual of falling on one's face during worship; rather, it will consider the place in Hasidic conduct literature of the practice regarding descent for the sake of the ascent. The examination will present the practice's origin in a homily by R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochov and illuminate the manner in which the homily was reworked in the various versions of the conduct literature.

The Practices of "Descent for the Sake of the Ascent"

Several versions of the practices regarding descent for the sake of the ascent appear in the Hasidic conduct literature. An examination of those versions shows that the practices crystallized out of homilies from which the scriptural verses were deleted and whose residue was then recast in the form of a practice. The following version, found in *He Imparts His Words to Jacob*, was fashioned from a discourse on two verses containing the expression "Great waters" (*Mayim Rabbim*)—"Great waters cannot quench love" (Song of Sol. 8:7) and "Those who go down to the sea in ships do their labor in the great waters, they have seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep" (Ps. 107:23–24):

"Great waters cannot quench love," they are the intrusive thoughts, called great waters; they are "those who go down to the sea in ships," who came to the steps that descend, for they descend from their level so they may later raise up the sparks of holiness. *And the descent is for*

mizvah ha-ba'ah be-'aveirah, that normally has a negative connotation rather than the positive one attributed to it here. In a halakhic context it refers to the impossibility, or at least the offensiveness, of performing a commandment in a manner entailing a transgression. One classic example is the invalidity of using a stolen *lulav* to discharge the obligation to waive the *lulav* on Sukkot; see *Sukkah* 3:1.—*translator's note*.)

the sake of the ascent, as was said elsewhere, they “do their labor in the great waters, they have seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep,” for He is present even in those actions.³

The reference points to a similar discourse, interwoven with a commentary on Psalm 107, that deals with repairing the sin of wasteful emission of semen. The commentary is attributed to the Besht and appears in full in *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5198*,⁴ a Hasidic manuscript that belonged to Jonah b. Menaḥem of Pintov.⁵

“Those who go down to the sea . . .”—Sometimes the souls descend from a high place to the husks (*gelippot*), and the husks rejoice over the souls that have descended among them, and “those who go down to the sea” refers to the souls that descend amidst the husks, but the husks do not realize that “they who do their labor in the great waters” refers to the activity of the holy souls when they descend to the great waters and bring up the souls from the husks, whence they ascend to their place.⁶

The term “holy souls” stands out in this homily, suggesting that the reference is only to select souls, who descend to the depths to redeem the sinners’ souls, which had fallen captive to the husks—the forces of the underworld. In another version of the commentary, the wording of the sentence reinforces the impression that the author referred to a specific soul that descends to repair the sinners’ souls and rescue them from their fate: “and the husks rejoice over the soul that has descended among them.”

Another verse expounded in the conduct literature with reference to descent for the sake of the ascent pertains to Abraham’s descent to Egypt. The homily portrays Abraham as a soul and his descent to Egypt as the soul’s descent amidst the husks;⁷ it appears in *Precious Gleanings*, reworked into the form of a practice in which the underlying verse is tucked away at the end. Here, too, one can discern the

³ *He Imparts His Words to Jacob* (ed. Schatz-Uffenheimer), sec. 179.

⁴ The quotations from the commentary on Psalm 107 are taken from the critical edition of the commentary, published by Rivka Schatz on the basis of *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5198* and its parallels. See Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, pp. 193–223.

⁵ See Zucker 1974, p. 235; cf. Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 200. R. Abraham Mordecai of Pintov and his brother, R. Joseph of Zamirgad, were disciples of R. Yeḥiel Mikhel, but it is not clear if they were connected to Menaḥem of Pintov or his son Jonah. See *Great Waters*, p. 136.

⁶ Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 206.

⁷ For the source of the image in the *Zohar*, see Tishby-Lahover 1957, p. 295; Tishby 1961, p. 674.

process by which the practice is distilled from the homily: at a certain stage, the verses underlying the homily are deleted from it, and the residue is rephrased as a practice:

Sometimes a man will fall from his level on account of himself, for God, may He be blessed, knows that he is in need of that; and sometimes the world [i.e., people] cause a man to fall from his level, *and the descent is for the sake of the ascent, in order to arrive at a great status*, as it is written, “And He will conduct us beyond death (‘*al mut*—עַל־מוֹת)” (Ps. 48:15),⁸ and it is written, “Abram went down to Egypt” (Gen. 12:10), and it is written, “Abram ascended from Egypt” (Gen. 13:1)—Abram is the soul, and Egypt is the husks.⁹

A close examination of the three practices dealing with the descent of the holy soul to the husks shows that the original practice was part of the commentary on Psalm 107. The commentary is preserved in full in *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5198*, and a portion was copied into *He Imparts His Words to Jacob*. In *Precious Gleanings*, the homily is reworked into a practice and is tied to a different verse, which speaks of Abraham’s descent to Egypt.

The Descent of the Zaddik and the Midrash of the Red Heifer

The authorship of the homilies in praise of descent for the sake of the ascent, as they appear in the conduct literature, is by no means self-evident. According to one Hasidic tradition, the notion of the *zaddik*’s descent originated with the Besht himself, even if he did not formulate the practices cited above. That tradition is cited in the commentary on Psalm 107, in which the idea of the *zaddik*’s descent is developed into broad, comprehensive doctrine. The commentary appears in *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5198*, which opens with the words: “Writings of the Besht, may his memory endure to the life of the world to come.”¹⁰ Similarly, the practices in *Light of Truth* cite a “wonderful parable” in praise of the descent for the sake of the ascent; it concludes with the comment “And R. Israel Ba’al Shem Tov provided

⁸ The understanding of the verse used here reflects a common interpretation that sees its final five letters as two words, ‘*al mut*—עַל־מוֹת. More likely, they are one word, ‘*almut*—עַל־מוֹת, and the sense is “He will conduct us forever.”—*translator’s note*.

⁹ *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 14; paralleled in *Light of Truth* 103a.

¹⁰ Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 202.

a sign for it—"And He will conduct us forever" (*almut*—על־מִוֶּת)¹¹ The parable alludes to the homily in *Precious Gleanings*, cited above; and it is clear that the three texts are part of a single tradition.¹²

Rivka Schatz took the view that the commentary on Psalm 107 should be taken as an authentic tradition of the Besht and that he should be regarded as its author.¹³ The difficulty with that premise, however, is that the homilies attributed to the Besht go unmentioned in any tradition reported in the Besht's name other than the conduct literature, attributed to "*Ribash* [R. Israel Ba'al Shem]," and the commentary on Psalm 107, which constitutes a part of that same tradition.

Another possibility is that the practices related to descent for the sake of the ascent were formulated from homilies by R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi. We have no text that might support such a hypothesis—other than the anonymous discourses in the conduct literature—and, unless we take for granted that the conduct literature originated in the teachings of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, we can find no other proof connecting R. Dov Ber to these practices. Nor is there any tradition claiming that R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi saw himself as a holy soul or a *zaddik*, descending to the husks in order to raise up the sinners' souls from their captivity.

The Zolochev tradition, in contrast, contains a homily whose content and wording correspond precisely to that of the practices that praise descent for the sake of the ascent. The homily, by R. Yehiel Mikhel, is preserved in *Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life* by R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochev; it is formulated there as something heard first-hand, a point emphasized by the locution "as I heard":

As I heard along these lines from the mouth of the great rabbi, the holy luminary, our master the rabbi R. Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory endure to the life of the world to come, that the *zaddik* is in the nature of the red heifer, purifying the impure but defiling the pure who work with it. So, too, the *zaddik* descends to the lower levels to raise the souls of Israel from there and purifies them; yet for him it

¹¹ *Light of Truth* 77b, after Ps. 48:15—"For this is God, our God, everlasting, and He will conduct us beyond death." (*al mut*—על־מִוֶּת), Cf. above, n. 52; this passage takes the final five letters—*almut*—על־מִוֶּת as one word.—*translator's note*.

¹² See Dinur 1955, p. 195.

¹³ See Schatz- Uffenheimer 1988, pp. 215–216. Gershom Scholem had reservations about her conclusion; see Scholem 1976/1, vol. 2, p. 344, n. 3.

is a descent and an impurity. Thus far his words and the words of the mouth of a sage of the hidden wisdom. And so it is said that the merit of their fathers sustains them,¹⁴ so *after that descent they will have a great ascent*, and that is the meaning of “Moses was worthy and made the public worthy.”¹⁵

In this homily, R. Yehiel Mikhel analogizes the descent of the *zaddik* to the ashes of the red heifer, which purify the impure while defiling the pure who work with them. The reference is to the biblical commandment to slaughter an unblemished red heifer, burn its carcass, and place the ashes outside the Israelites’ encampment. The ashes are to be mixed with water to produce “water for impurity” (*mei niddah*), and a person rendered impure by contact with a corpse is to have that water sprinkled on him as part of his purification process. The priests involved in preparing and working with the ashes, however—those who slaughter the heifer, burn the carcass, place the ashes outside the encampment, and use them to purify the impure—are themselves thereby made impure:¹⁶ “All those involved with the [red] heifer, from start to finish, render garments impure, [though] she herself purifies the impure.”¹⁷ Thus, the dust of the red heifer purifies the impure but defiles the impure. By analogizing the *zaddik*’s descent to the red heifer, R. Yehiel Mikhel stresses the peril of the activity; through his descent, the *zaddik* purifies the souls of the believers and saves them from the underworld, but that reparative action comes at a high price, for it may destroy the *zaddik*’s own pure soul. That may be why R. Abraham Hayyim of Zolochew sought to temper the conclusion’s harsh tone by adding a reference to Moses, who “was worthy and made the public worthy.” The analogy he drew between R. Yehiel Mikhel and Moses stresses the positive aspect of the *zaddik*’s descent, which culminates in a great ascent.

¹⁴ Cf. *Avot* 2:2—“And all who labor with the community should labor with them for the sake of Heaven, for the merit of their fathers sustains them and their righteousness endures forever.”

¹⁵ *Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life* 11b. In *Way to Life, Portion Kū Tissa*, 53a, there appears a “corrected” version of the homily, in which someone inserted the name of R. Dov Ber of Mezhrichi. With respect to the expression “Moses was worthy and made the public worthy,” see *Avot* 5:18—“All who make the public worthy will not be responsible for causing any sins . . . Moses was worthy and made the public worthy; the merit of the public depended on him, as Scripture says, “He executed the righteousness of the Lord; his ordinances with Israel” (Deut. 33:21).

¹⁶ See Num. 19:21; *Parah* 8:3; *Yoma* 14a.

¹⁷ *Midrash Tanhuma (Portion Hūqqat)*, sec. 4, pars. 86–87; paralleled in *Pesiqta Rabbati*, part 14, 64a.

The image of the *zaddik* as a red heifer, which originates in R. Yehiel Mikhel's homily, appears as well in the conduct literature itself. In the fourth formulation of the practice, also found in *Precious Gleanings*, the idea of the *zaddik's* descent appears in its earlier context of Abraham's descent to Egypt, to which is added the mystery of the red heifer. An apologetic strain in the homily suggests that the *zaddik* descends against his will, in order to bring out the sparks-souls that have sunk into the depths of sin. God tests the *zaddik*, and when he withstands the ordeal and rescues the souls from the world of impurity, he augments the power and might of the world of holiness. The rescued souls are referred to as "converts" (*gerim*), in accord with a *midrash* that interprets the word "soul" (*nefesh*) as denoting a convert: "'And the souls they acquired in Haran' (Gen. 12:5)—these are the converts whom Abraham converted . . . R. Hunya said: Abraham would convert the men, and Sarah would convert the women."¹⁸ Just as converts join the nation of Israel, the souls rescued from the depths through the efforts of the *zaddik* join the world of holiness and fortify it:

"God said to Abram, go forth from your land and from your birthplace . . ." (Gen. 12:1)—*For the red heifer purifies the impure and defiles the pure, meaning that when he saw something indecent, he would elevate it to its source, and on occasion he would go to the lower levels even though he did not want to, but it was to bring the sparks out of there . . . And that is the meaning of the verse, for Abraham was now subjected to a trial, and he was at the lower levels in the Land of Egypt, and God said to Abraham . . . Go forth from your land, that is, the upper domain, and from your birthplace and your father's house . . . to the land that I will show you . . . so I will make you there into a great nation, meaning that if he raises [souls] from the lower levels, converts thereby join him.*¹⁹

Thus, the Hasidic conduct literature uses three different analogies for the *zaddik's* descent: the descent to the sea in ships; Abraham's descent to Egypt; and the paradox of the red heifer. The homily of the red heifer, whose attribution to R. Yehiel Mikhel is proven, is incorporated only allusively, with its origin concealed, into the practices in *Precious Gleanings*. The structure of the homily shows signs of

¹⁸ *Genesis Rabbah*, vol. 4 (*Vayeshev*) 84:4.

¹⁹ *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 214. Because of its length, the homily is quoted here in abridged form; the deleted passages are not needed for full understanding. See also *Light of Truth* 79a; *Light of Torah* 14b.

that process: it begins with the verse “God said to Abram, go forth from your land” (Gen. 12:1), moves from there to the matter of the red heifer, and then reverts to Abraham in Egypt—“And that is the meaning of the verse, for Abraham was now subjected to a trial, and he was at the lower levels in the Land of Egypt.” The same is true of the practice in which the verse “Abram went down to Egypt” (Gen. 12:10) is explicated. That practice concludes with a clear declaration—“Abram is the soul, and Egypt is the husks.”²⁰ Thus, the two homilies are, in fact, part of a single homily broken up in the text of *Precious Gleanings*; one part appears at the beginning of the passage and the other at its end. The homily that uses the red heifer as an analogy for the *zaddik*’s descent has been incorporated into the complete homily dealing with Abraham’s descent to Egypt amidst the husks.

Two Interpretations of the Red Heifer

The process by which R. Yehiel Mikhel’s “red heifer” homily was transformed into a practice praising descent for the sake of the ascent can be clarified from the additional perspective provided by the words of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, the disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel who possessed the *Precious Gleanings* manuscript. In his epistles, R. Meshullam Feibush refers to two interpretations of the red heifer; in both, the heifer represents the attribute of haughtiness and pride. In one interpretation, cited in the name of the Besht, the red heifer is portrayed as the quality of haughtiness in serving God, that is, service for ulterior motives. The reference is to one who serves God in hope of being rewarded, as if he had done God a favor meriting recompense in this world or the next. That arrogant attitude can be of use to repenting sinners, for it can draw them close to God and habituate them in observance of the commandments. But it is invalid for who has already drawn close to true service of God and knows that “haughtiness”—the anticipation of reward and recompense—reduces the worth of observing the commandments and is unacceptable religiously:

²⁰ *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 14.

Since it is already known what the Besht, may his memory be for a blessing, said when he was asked about the matter of the red heifer . . . He replied that it was a matter of haughtiness; for at the beginning, a man acts in an improper manner that is removed from God, may He be blessed. The start of his repair involves haughtiness and ulterior motives . . . for he believes it proper that the Holy One, blessed be He, will reward him for his actions, and he considers himself to have done something for Him . . . And it is permissible for him to indulge this haughtiness and self-glorification and to act for ulterior motives, for through ulterior motives he will [eventually] come to perform the actions for their own sake. And to [engage in service of God] for its own sake, one must be pure of any dross of haughtiness and must instead be involved in [the service] for its own sake, and turning to the side of haughtiness will invalidate the service. Thus, haughtiness purifies the impure who are distant from God, may He be blessed, but defiles the pure who have already drawn near to God, may He be blessed . . . And later it is written and explicitly stated by the Besht how everyone can turn his heart to this. And it is not necessary to dwell on this at length. Thus, at the time the commandment is performed, when one is considered pure, haughtiness can defile the pure, God forbid, *and the haughtiness is called the red heifer, which fertilizes and enlarges the mind of man*²¹ *and is red on account of the husks.*²²

The homily, cited by R. Meshullam Feibush Heller in the Besht's name, is cited as well in *Biography of Jacob Joseph* by R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye:

There are two types of admonition, one for the learned and another for the masses, and each group must be addressed in accordance with its nature and level . . . For one must admonish the learned against any turning toward externality, which is not the case with respect to the masses, for whom it is permitted; and that is what our Sages of blessed memory meant [in saying] one should engage himself in Torah for ulterior motives, for through [ulterior motives he comes to engage for its own sake].²³ *And with respect to this I*²⁴ *heard from the rabbi, the maggid our master Menahem Mendel the matter of the red heifer, which defiles the*

²¹ The Hebrew for "fertilizes" is *mafreh* (*mprh*), a play on *parah*, the word for "heifer."—*translator's note*.

²² *Precious Gleanings* (Zolkow 5560 [1800]) 26a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 127a–128b. In the first edition (Lemberg 5552 [1792]), the homily is abridged and censored.

²³ After *Pesahim* 50b: "As R. Judah said in the name of Rav 'One should always engage in Torah and commandments even if not for their own sake, for through [doing so] not for its own sake, he will come [to do so] for its own sake.'"

²⁴ That is, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, author of *Biography of Jacob Joseph*.

pure and purifies the impure, and so forth, and they are the words of the mouth of a sage of the hidden wisdom.²⁵

Even though the homily is cited in the name of “the *maggid* our master R. Menahem Mendel”—apparently, R. Menahem Mendel of Ber—R. Meshullam Feibush Heller treats it as if it were a homily of the Besht. Apparently, his scheme calls for the attribution of everything written in *Biography of Jacob Joseph* to the Besht, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye’s master and teacher. But R. Meshullam Feibush Heller had another homily on the subject of the red heifer, which he treats as an esoteric interpretation that should not be reduced to writing:

And there is another explanation of why haughtiness is called the red heifer, but I do not want to treat it at length, and this is called the red heifer that purifies the defiled, and so forth . . . *for the quality of haughtiness must be possessed by every zaddik for the service of God, may He be blessed, even a great zaddik,*²⁶ *as mentioned above, and it purifies the defiled, as mentioned above . . . and that is the red heifer.* See and understand well, for it is a profound matter that is impossible to explain thoroughly in writing but can only be understood in the recesses of the heart.²⁷

Despite the self-censorship, R. Meshullam Feibush’s allusions teach that the quality of the red heifer, which promotes purification of the defiled, “must be possessed by every *zaddik*.” He appears to be referring to the “haughtiness” of the *zaddik*, who descends to the depths in order to rescue and purify the souls of sinners. Only one whose own exalted soul is an unflawed supernal divine inspiration can elevate the sinners’ souls, purify them, and unite them with the world of the holy. This haughtiness flows from the sense of mission that “must be possessed by every *zaddik*,” and it matches R. Yehiel Mikhel’s approach to the red heifer, as preserved in the homily in *Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life* and alluded to in *Precious Gleanings*. Moreover, R. Meshullam Feibush remarks that this quality of haughtiness was possessed by “a great *zaddik*, as mentioned above,” and he is referring to an earlier passage in the epistle that mentions two particularly prideful *zaddikim*: R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany and “the rabbi, the *maggid*, may his lamp illuminate,”²⁸

²⁵ *Biography of Jacob Joseph, Portion Emor*, 100a.

²⁶ In the Zolkow 5560 (1800) edition 26a: “great *zaddikim*.”

²⁷ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 24b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 128a.

²⁸ Ibid. 23b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 125b.

that is, R. Yehiel Mikhel. R. Meshullam Feibush compares their pride to Moses' haughtiness, directed to the service of Heaven, in contrast to Qorah's pride, which flowed from jealousy and meanness.

It thus appears that R. Meshullam Feibush Heller possessed two commentaries in which the red heifer was explicated with respect to the quality of haughtiness. One was in *Biography of Jacob Joseph*; it saw in the red heifer fulfillment of the commandments for ulterior motives—"in haughtiness and pride"—something permitted to the masses in order to refine and elevate them. The second homily, by R. Yehiel Mikhel, saw in the red heifer the quality of the *zaddik*, who descends to the impure in order to purify them, thereby exposing his own soul to the risk of defilement. That homily was separately formulated as a practice, on the subject of descending for the sake of the ascent, and was incorporated—with the homilist's name deleted—into *Precious Gleanings*. R. Meshullam Feibush treats the first homily as something that can be discussed openly; in contrast, he sees R. Yehiel Mikhel's homily as an esoteric matter that should not be reduced to writing. He may be reacting here to the differences in content between the two homilies. In *Biography of Jacob Joseph*, the red heifer is interpreted as relating to activities—the performance of commandments and the study of Torah. R. Yehiel Mikhel, in contrast, personified the quality of the red heifer and related it to a person—the *zaddik*—rather than to an activity. To be sure, the performance of commandments and the study of Torah also pertain to the domain of the sacred, but the homily itself does not go beyond traditional notions grounded in the words of the Sages. R. Yehiel Mikhel's homily, however, is extremely daring; for personifying the quality of the red heifer is characteristic of the Sabbatean tradition, in which the red heifer is interpreted with reference to a particular individual, Shabbetai Zevi, and seen as the secret key to his messianism:

And that is the mystery of the Messiah . . . which is in the mystery of the red heifer, for all his acts are within [the rubric of] the mystery of the mother cleaning her child's excrement, thus purifying the impure and defiling the pure.²⁹

The expression "the mystery of the mother cleaning her child's excrement" alludes to a Midrash: "And why are all the [other] sacrifices [brought in the Temple] male, but this one [the red heifer] is female?"

²⁹ Scholem 1987, vol. 2, p. 693.

R. Ibo said: It may be compared to the son of a maidservant who dirtied the king's palace. The king said, 'Let his mother come and clean up the excrement.' So, too, said the Holy One blessed be He, 'Let the heifer come and atone for the matter of the [golden] calf.'"³⁰ The premise of the midrash is that the heifer bears a certain degree of responsibility for the sins of her son, the golden calf that Israel danced around at Mount Sinai. Accordingly, it is only right that her ashes defile the pure, just as the mother dirties herself as she cleans up her son's excrement. The Sabbatean interpretation transformed the red heifer into a parable whose referent is Shabbetai Zevi; in the course of his messianic mission he purifies the sinners, thereby defiling himself.

At the core of R. Yehiel Mikhel's interpretation lies a similar connection between a particular soul—that of the *zaddik*, and no other—and its messianic destiny. The connection entails sanctifying the notion of a descent to the depths of sin, a descent for the sake of the ascent, through which the *zaddik* actualizes his higher destiny. That association, because it is found as well among the characteristics of the Sabbatean messiah, may account for the homily being transformed into something esoteric that should not be discussed openly.

To sum up this step of the analysis, it is necessary to go back and consider the textual embroidery surrounding the practice of descent for the sake of the ascent. That examination shows that R. Yehiel Mikhel's role was not limited to formulating the idea as a homily or a practice. The Hasidic conduct literature includes his commentary on Psalm 107, printed in *Precious Gleanings* with the heading "The rabbi, the *maggid*, our master the rabbi Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, expounded Psalm 107 with reference to four classes of people."³¹ Among other things, the commentary treats the quality of haughtiness in fulfilling commandments and studying Torah for ulterior motives. The homily on that, which R. Meshullam Feibush Heller cited in the Besht's name, is connected in R. Yehiel Mikhel's remarks not with the attributes of the red heifer but with the verse "They who go down to the sea in ships" (Ps. 107:23): "Men very great in Torah who study day

³⁰ *Numbers Rabbah*, vol. 10 (*Huqqat*) 19:8.

³¹ *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 165.

and night, but know nothing of service of the Creator . . . for they study the Torah through self-esteem and not for its sake . . . and of them it said, 'they who go down to the sea in ships,' they are the aforesaid students who probe the depths of Torah, known as the sea of the Talmud . . . and [one] says there is no scholar in the world like him . . . but, in truth, by such learning they descend to the depths, they circle and sway drunkenly."³²

Thus, the Hasidic conduct literature contains two homilies on those who study Torah haughtily and not for its sake. One, cited in *Biography of Jacob Joseph* and attributed to R. Menahem Mendel of Ber or to the Besht, connects Torah study with ulterior motives to the attribute of the red heifer. The second, by R. Yehiel Mikhel, describes those who study Torah with haughtiness and pride as "they who go down to the sea in ships."

The Hasidic conduct literature likewise contains two commentaries on Psalm 107. One, by R. Yehiel Mikhel and printed in *Precious Gleanings*, explicates the psalm as referring to four classes of Torah students; among them are "they who go down to the sea in ships," that is, scholars who study haughtily and with ulterior motives. The second, in *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5198* and attributed to the Besht, explicates "they who go down to the sea in ships" with reference to the holy soul, the soul of the *zaddik*, which descends to the underworld to rescue the sinners' souls. The commentary as a whole is a pictorial account of the descent of the holy soul to the netherworld in order to repair the souls of those who have sinned by wasteful emission of seed. The drops of semen are described as sparks-souls, born of the sinful act. Having no body to don, they fall to the depths, where they cry for redemption from their imprisonment amidst the husks. The redemption takes place on Sabbath Eve, when "the holy soul" or the "exalted soul" descends to the netherworld and "upon its ascent through the mystery of descent for the sake of the ascent . . . it raises many sparks."³³ The rescued souls are called converts, and they don their bodies and are born whole.³⁴

The commentary and its subject matter match R. Yehiel Mikhel's doctrine of the *zaddik* and contribute to a clearer understanding of the connection between his role as *zaddik* and the repair of his believers'

³² Ibid.

³³ Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 206.

³⁴ Ibid.

souls: R. Yehiel Mikhel would link up with his disciples in order to repair their souls and elevate them to the supernal worlds. In particular, he is credited with the ability to repair his disciples' sins of wasteful emission of seed.³⁵ That capacity is the capacity of the Messiah, and it may have found poetic expression in the commentary on Psalm 107. Accordingly, it may be assumed that the commentary on that psalm, attributed to the Besht, is, in fact, R. Yehiel Mikhel's. If so, R. Yehiel Mikhel interpreted Psalm 107 in two ways—one of them, exoteric and open, preserved in *Precious Gleanings*; the other, esoteric and messianist, preserved in *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5198* and attributed to the Besht. It may be that the masking of its origin grew out of the need to obscure the connection between the holy soul, which is the psalm's protagonist, and R. Yehiel Mikhel. But the disclosure of that origin highlights the similarity between R. Yehiel Mikhel's messianic role and the Sabbatean messianic image, for Psalm 107 is considered the prayer of Shabbetai Zevi, through which he saved the world.³⁶

*The Descent of the Zaddik and the Doctrine of the Sparks in
Lurianic Kabbalah*

It is no coincidence that the depiction of the *zaddik's* descent in R. Yehiel Mikhel's school recalls the style of conduct of the Sabbatean messiah. The *Hasidim*, like the Sabbateans before them, adopted the Ari's messianic doctrine of the sparks and applied it to their leader.

The Ari's doctrine of the sparks describes the creation of the world as a diffusion of the divine light beyond the borders of the divine, as God contracts Himself to allow space for the existence of His creatures. But the process of diffusion suffered a mishap when the vessels were shattered by the power of the divine light and the sparks they contained were dispersed and sank to the depths, the realm of husks and impurity. As a result, the created worlds found themselves

³⁵ See below, p. 371.

³⁶ See Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 195. In that connection, one should note the messianic interpretations given to various psalms by R. Mordecai Datto. In his scheme, the acts of King David, the traditional author of the psalms, signify the history of the nation from its founding to its redemption. See Jacobson 1996, p. 36.

subject to the husks, amidst which the imprisoned sparks of holiness await redemption. R. Hayyim Vital, a disciple of the Ari, expressed it in these words: “And you have nothing in the world, in any of the worlds at all or in any part of creation, such as the inanimate, the vegetative, the mobile, or the thinking, that does not contain sparks of the holiness contained within the husks, which require separation [from them].”³⁷

The dualistic concept that underlies the doctrine of the sparks is particularly prominent in all matters related to man. His body is part of the domain of the impure forces, while his soul is a divine spark, imprisoned by the husks. When a man is captive to his evil impulse, the divine spark—that is, his soul—falls from the realm of holiness to the realms of impurity.

The cosmic aspect of Lurianic Kabbalah is tied to the personal-biographical aspect of its concern with the mythic image of the Messiah, a simultaneously divine and human force. In the process of repairing the world, the Messiah’s assigned task is the separation of the sparks-souls that fell captive to the forces of impurity and their elevation to their sacred source. The link between the cosmic and personal arenas gained a living expression in Sabbateanism, which adopted the Lurianic doctrine of the sparks and understood what it taught of the Messiah as referring to Shabbetai Zevi. The Sabbateans especially emphasized the blurring of the boundaries between good and evil: even transgressions and sins contain sparks of holiness, which the Messiah separates from the husks and repairs in order to complete the repair of the world.

A similar process took place among the members of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s group, who based their conduct on the Lurianic doctrine of the sparks. Like the Sabbateans, R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples emphasized that within every substance—even transgressions—a spark of holiness is concealed, awaiting its redemption. Indeed, it is difficult to identify any conceptual distinction between the Lurianic source and its incarnation in the Zolochov tradition, for even the wording of the practice is drawn almost verbatim from the writings of R. Hayyim Vital:

³⁷ *Entry to the Gates (Mevo She’arim)*, Gate 7 (*The Gate of the Husks*), part 2, chap. 1, 114b. Similarly, *Tree of Life*, in *Collected Writings of the Ari.*, vol. 1, *The Gate of Rules*, chap. 2, p. 5: “But there remained some sparks of holiness . . . to provide vitality for the husk.”

It is a great rule that within all that exists in the world there are holy sparks. Nothing is bereft of sparks, not even trees and stones, nor any of the actions a man performs; even a transgression that a man performs has sparks in the transgression. And what are the sparks in the transgression? They are repentance; [for] when he repents for the transgression, he elevates the sparks that were in it to the upper world.³⁸

All that notwithstanding, the personal aspect of the doctrine of the sparks, related to the Messiah, was hidden from sight in the Hasidic conduct literature. It is presented as describing an anonymous *zaddik* whose task is to elevate the sparks from amidst the husks. In other Zolochev writings as well the identity of the *zaddik*—R. Yehiel Mikhel—is concealed under generic sobriquets, such as “the righteous ones (*zaddikim*) of the generation,” or under the designation “soul of *shaddai*,” alluding to his divine soul as an embodiment of the *sefirah* of foundation, from which the soul of the Messiah is hewn.³⁹ Only through the disclosure of the Zolochev conduct literature’s source and the identification of R. Yehiel Mikhel as the protagonist of the writings does it become possible to discern the connection between the cosmic redemption and the personal element and to sketch the messianic lines of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s image.

When we consider the conceptual and personal elements together, we see that R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples went to great lengths in adopting the Lurianic doctrine of the sparks, including its messianic aspect. They sought not to neutralize the messianic impulse but to bring it within the reach of history. And even when they chose to conceal the personal-biographical aspect, they used Lurianic doctrine to depict the general redemption.

This conclusion is at odds with Gershom Scholem’s claim that Hasidism effectively rejected the Lurianic doctrine of the sparks by draining it of its concrete substance. Scholem claimed that “The Hasidim regarded concretization, the grasping for substance, as a presumptively dangerous act. Under the pressure of such concretization, as incorporated in the doctrine of the raising of the sparks, ‘existence’ itself was at risk of breaking up. For the ideal consequence of the mystic’s actions is not that the concrete reality of the matters at hand be disclosed, but something of the messianic reality.”⁴⁰ But

³⁸ *Testament of R. Israel Ba’al Shem* 24a.

³⁹ See above, pp. 81–86.

⁴⁰ Scholem 1976/1, vol. 2, p. 377.

Scholem's determination is inconsistent with R. Yehiel Mikhel doctrine of the linkage of souls-sparks, as described by R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir⁴¹ and as expressed in the idea of the *zaddik's* descent. Taking the various details together, we see that the goal of R. Yehiel Mikhel's linkage was to use his actions as a mystic to break up concrete reality in order to reveal the ideal messianic reality.

⁴¹ See above, pp. 71–72.

CHAPTER TWO

EQUANIMITY

The Pious One's Equanimity

The verse “I have set (*shiviti*—שׁוּיִיתִי) the Lord before me always” (Ps. 16:8) acquired two classical interpretations repeated over and again in ethical and kabbalistic works. One, a mystical interpretation, takes the root *sh-w-h* (שׁוּחַ), of which *shiviti* is a conjugated form, as connoting a commandment to contemplate the letters of the Tetragrammaton (rendered in English as “the Lord,” reflecting the Hebrew substitution of *Adonai* for the Tetragrammaton itself, in order to avoid uttering the sacred name) as a means of achieving perpetual communion with God. The connection between contemplation of those letters and communion with God has deep roots in the mystical tradition,¹ and the technique was widespread among the Safed kabbalists. Thus, for example, the divine *Maggid* instructed R. Joseph Karo as follows: “Only cling to me and my Torah and my fear and [maintain] all your thoughts constantly about me, in dread and fear, constantly picturing the Tetragrammaton before your eyes, as if written in black ink, in accordance with the statement of King David, peace be upon him, ‘I have set the Tetragrammaton before me always.’”² A similar interpretation is cited in *Beginning of Wisdom*,³ in the writings of R. Elazar Azkari,⁴ and in *Two Tablets of the Covenant* by R. Isaiah Horowitz, which speaks of picturing the limbs of the *shekhinah* and being bonded to them.⁵

The second interpretation takes the verse as instruction for the pietist's way of life. This tradition originates in the writings of R. Bahya

¹ See Halamish 1982; Idel 1993, pp. 68–76.

² *Preacher of Righteousness*, p. 174. Here, too, the reference to King David indicates a source in the Psalms, which are attributed to David. See, also, Werblowsky 1996, p. 162.

³ See *Beginning of Wisdom*, vol. 1, *The Gate of Love*, chap. 10, sec. 28; Idel 1993, p. 68.

⁴ See Pachter 1991/1, pp. 27, 34, 45–47, 58–59, 76.

⁵ See *Two Tablets of the Covenant*, vol. 1, p. 258; Pickarz 1978, p. 24.

ibn Paquda, in whose work *Duties of the Heart* the word “equanimity” (*hishtavut*—הִשְׁתָּוּוּת) first appears. The meaning of the word, in Judah ibn Tibbon’s Hebrew translation of ibn Paquda’s Arabic work, is a sort of indifference to this-worldly values, especially the opinions of others; in his words, “praise and dishonor are equated in your eyes.”⁶ He is referring to an inner indifference, said to characterize the attitude of the pietist to this world. The source of that indifference is the special communion between the pietist and his God, which enables him to lead an exalted inner life and spurn life’s external manifestations. Ibn Paquda’s principle of equanimity was adopted by the medieval Jewish pietists in Germany (*hasidei ashkenaz*), who made it into a fundamental element of their doctrine of ataraxia, that is, indifference to this world.⁷ The idea appears as well in the writings of R. Elazar Azkari⁸ and in statements by R. Isaiah Horowitz, who reiterates ibn Paquda’s comments and even describes King David as one “in whose eyes everything was acceptable, both praise and dishonor.”⁹ It thus appears that the quality of equanimity was transformed, at the end of the Middle Ages, into a fundamental element of the ethical literature that offered ways to distance oneself from sin and draw near to God. Moreover, prophetic-like Kabbalists, such as R. Avraham Abulafia, elevated the psychological condition of human “equanimity” to become the reflection of God’s unity, being the supreme entity in which all contradictions are cancelled.¹⁰

Hasidic conduct literature likewise contains a group of practices dealing with equanimity. They practices interpret Ps. 16:9 in the spirit of ibn Paquda and *hasidei ashkenaz*; the quality of equanimity is an inner indifference to this world and its values. The pious one is required to despise human desires, to be indifferent to honor and success, and to disregard the opinions and criticisms of others and attend only to pleasing God. Equanimity is especially required with respect to Torah study and prayer, and the practices related to it show how to attain it.

⁶ *Duties of the Heart*, vol. 2, 12a. See also Pickarz 1978, pp. 372–376, Gries 1990, pp. 210–212.

⁷ See Dan 1975/1, pp. 47–65; Dan 1990, vol. 2, pp. 11–16.

⁸ See Pachter 1991/1, pp. 51–52.

⁹ *Two Tablets of the Covenant*, vol. 5, p. 112; Pickarz 1978, pp. 374–376; Gries 1990, p. 211.

¹⁰ See Idel 1985.

The subject of equanimity has been extensively dealt with in studies of Hasidism, especially with respect to its use as a path to communion with God and its place in the formation of the Hasidic ethos. The present inquiry, therefore, will deal with the origins of this practice in the teachings of R. Yehiel Mikhel, the *Maggid* of Zolochov.

Two Interpretations of the Homily on “I Set Before Me”

One distinct version of the equanimity practice is that in *Precious Gleanings* (*Liqqutim Yeqarim*), which preserves the original structure of the homily, including the verse on which it is based:

“I have set (*shiviti*—שׁוּיִתִּי) the Lord before me always” (Ps. 16:8). “*Shiviti*” connotes equanimity (*hishtavut*—הִשְׁתַּוּוּת); everything that may happen to him should be acceptable to him, whether people praise him or demean him, and so with regard to all other things. And so, too, with respect to all foods, whether he eats delicacies or other foods, everything should be acceptable in his eyes, for the evil inclination has been removed from him in all respects.¹¹

Another version of the equanimity practice is found in *Ways of the Just* and *Light of Truth*. That version implies that despising this-worldly values leads to a certain degree of disdain for the practical commandments, which are associated with this world; it includes an instruction not to be too rigorous in adopting halakhic stringencies if those stringencies interfere with constant communion with God. The process by which the practice evolved from the homily is clear: the verse was deleted from the text of the homily, and what remained was written in the form of practices or “great rules,” applicable to various areas including Torah study, the details of the commandments, and prayer. It is noteworthy that in this version, the practice of equanimity is attributed to the Besht:

The Besht said that if a man has no preferences, such that all is acceptable to him, he will merit all the [high] levels, for modesty is the greatest of them all . . . Perhaps because we lack the strength of those who came earlier, we are unable to apply all the [halakhic] stringencies without interrupting communion [with God] on account of our weak

¹¹ *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 179. Slightly variant parallels are in *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem 1b*; *Life and Kindness*, 75a. See also Gries 1990, p. 210.

minds—which was not the case for those who came earlier, whose minds were strong and who were able to observe all the stringencies.¹²

But only the conduct literature attributes to the Besht an exhortation to act with the quality of equanimity. The writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye and other traditions cited in the name of the Besht include not an echo of the idea of equanimity, neither directly from the Besht's mouth nor in his name. Moreover, R. Ephraim of Sidlikov, the Besht's grandson, cites a homily on Ps. 16:8 in the Besht's name, but it bears no resemblance at all to any interpretation of equanimity in the spirit of R. Bahya ibn Paquda or *hasidei ashkenaz*. Instead, it takes the word "*shiviti*" as connoting continual fear of God, and it is tied to the Besht's well-known idea that the verse "the whole Earth is filled with His glory" (Isa. 6:3) teaches the ubiquity of God's presence. Accordingly, it is difficult to assume that the practice included in the conduct literature originated from this homily:

And this has another inner way [of being understood] . . . for my lord my grandfather, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, said regarding the verse "Happy is the man whom the Lord does not hold to have sinned" (Ps. 32:2). The interpretation [is that] man is a great rank [and one possessed of it] fulfills "I have set the Lord before me always"; and when at times his thought momentarily falls away from God, may He be blessed, that is considered to be a sin on his part, for he turned his thought away from fear of God . . . and how much more so it is, for the Holy One blessed be He, whose glory fills the entire Earth, stands by him and sees him; and immediately fear and submission come to him.¹³

Thus, the homily in *Banner of Ephraim's Encampment* (*Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*) tends toward the mystical interpretation of equanimity, in the spirit of R. Joseph Karo and the Safed kabbalists. It emphasizes continuous thought about God, who stands over men, constantly watching them, and it lacks any notion of equanimity in the sense of indifference, as it appears in the Hasidic conduct literature.

Nevertheless, a comparison between *Banner of Ephraim's Encampment* and the Hasidic conduct literature shows that both texts use terminology related to rank: "a great level" and "all the [high] levels." Both describe the state of being cut off or falling away from communion

¹² *Ways of the Just* 8b–9a; *Light of Truth* 100b.

¹³ *Banner of Ephraim's Encampment* 62b; similarly 12b, 7b. See also Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 153, n. 18.

with God as the source of sin and the return to God as its repair. But the two texts offer totally different, non-complementary ways of returning to God, ways that reflect different conceptions of the world. *Banner of Ephraim's Encampment* presents a circular resolution, according to which a person must return and be reminded of God, whose glory fills the Earth; once he does so, he will immediately be overtaken by awe and submission. The conduct literature, in contrast, requires man to free himself from anxiety over not having fulfilled all the commandments punctiliously; doing so will remove the obstacle to service of God and communion with Him. The conduct literature's resolution thus entails suppressing the barrier of fear, not re-erecting it. In *Banner of Ephraim's Encampment* the quality of fear is the key to closeness with God; in the conduct literature, it is a barrier.

The attribution to the Besht of the homily in *Banner of Ephraim's Encampment* is surprising, for the homily is reported as well in the name of other personalities. R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye cites a nearly identical homily in the name of "the rabbi the *maggid* of Ber"¹⁴ (R. Menahem Mendel of Ber), a slightly different version in the name of "the pious one, our master the rabbi R. Nahman Kosover"¹⁵ (R. Nahman of Kosov), and a third version "from the scholar, our master the rabbi N., whom Mendel Piekarz takes to be R. Nahman of Gorodnuk."¹⁶ In *Praise of the Besht* also mentions the technique of contemplating the letters of the Tetragrammaton, attributed there to R. Nahman of Kosov;¹⁷ this seems to support identifying "our master the rabbi N." as R. Nahman of Kosov rather than of Gorodnuk. In any event, it is difficult to determine with certainty which of the texts is authentic, and we may have here several authentic, non-interdependent texts. That the same homily is cited in the name of several individuals may show that R. Ephraim of Sidlikov had a reliable tradition complementing the circulation of the homily on "*shiviti*" among the Besht's contemporaries. Another possibility is that

¹⁴ *Biography of Jacob Joseph* 124b; Scholem 1976/1, vol. 2, pp. 332–333.

¹⁵ *Biography of Jacob Joseph* 194b: "As I heard that the pious one, our master the rabbi R. Nahman Kosover, paid a particular person a fixed sum per week to remind him with a gesture, when he was amongst people, not to forget the Tetragrammaton, so it would always be before him, and [they are] words from the mouth of a sage of the hidden wisdom." See also Weiss 1951, p. 60.

¹⁶ *Biography of Jacob Joseph* 22a; Piekarz 1978, p. 23. (In the Hebrew, the name is abbreviated together with the honorific.—*translator's note*)

¹⁷ In *Praise of the Besht* (ed. Rubinstein), story 192.

R. Ephraim of Sidlikov took the commentary on “*shiviti*” from *Biography of Jacob Joseph* and attributed it, with minor changes, to the Besht, either because he regarded everything recorded in *Biography of Jacob Joseph* as the teaching of the Besht or because he saw a resemblance between the homily and the Besht’s comments on communion with God via the letters of the Torah. In a letter to R. Gershon of Kutov, the Besht describes the ascent of his soul to the supernal worlds through contemplation of the letters of the Torah, for each letter is a doorway to the upper world: “And you should direct the utterance of your lips to unite the Name, for each and every letter contains worlds and souls and divinity, and they ascend and link up and unite with one another, and afterwards the letters link up and unite and become a word, and they unite in true unity with the divine. And you should include your soul with them in each and every aspect of the foregoing, and all the worlds unite as one and ascend and become a great, unlimited joy and pleasure—as you understand the joy of groom and bride in the lesser physical [realm], how much more so in this higher level.”¹⁸ Yet the Besht does not explicitly mention in his epistle the technique of picturing the letters of the Tetragrammaton, and it is doubtful that the use of this technique can be attributed to him without proof from other sources. In any event, a comparison of the texts clearly establishes one fact: they all cite the homily on “*shiviti*” in the Besht’s name as involving contemplation of the letters of the Tetragrammaton, and none of them cites the homily as referring to indifference; that appears only in the conduct literature. Obviously, the question of who authored the homily in the conduct literature remains unanswered, and it is supplemented by the question of how the equanimity practice is related to the Besht.

Yet another possibility is that R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi was the first to interpret the homily on “*shiviti*” as referring to indifference. That possibility is based on the axiom that the source for all the Hasidic conduct literature lies in the words of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi. But we have no proof from any unbiased source that R. Dov Ber in fact delivered such a homily or actually practiced the attribute of equanimity.

¹⁸ Besht’s Epistle, in *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* 100a.

A Tale of R. Yehiel Mikhel and Two Opponents

To locate the thread leading to the origin of the equanimity practice in Hasidic conduct literature, we must return to the most extreme formulation of the practice, in which the quality of equanimity is applied even in the sensitive area of Torah study. It suggests that the need for equanimity, applicable in all areas of life, is particularly pressing with respect to Torah study, for the true pious one does not study in order to be honored by his fellow man, and he must be indifferent to praise or disparagement of his erudition:

The Ba'al Shem Tov said that equanimity is a great rule, meaning that *it should not matter to him whether he is held to be lacking in knowledge or to be knowing of the entire Torah*, and that is what brings about constant communion with God, for by reason of his preoccupation with that communion, he has no time to think of such matters, for he is constantly preoccupied by communing on high, with Him, may He be blessed.¹⁹

This formulation of the practice matches a story, cited in *Light of Isaac (Or Yizhaq)* by R. Isaac of Radvil (a son of R. Yehiel Mikhel), regarding R. Yehiel Mikhel and two opponents (“*menaggedim*”):

I will recount here an incident that occurred with respect to my father, my lord and master, the rabbi the author, peace be upon him, may his soul be in the store-house on high, who was * Zolochew and several great men together with * the rabbi R. Ze'ev Wolf of Dubno * R. Hayyim as follows, let the *Maggid* of Zolochew say [words of] Torah and he said to himself that because they were great *menaggedim*, it would not be proper for him to say Torah in the manner of the *hasidim*, with respect to some mystery, and he asked them to bring out some [book of] *talmud* . . . And the rabbi R. Mikhel taught *talmud* before them in accordance with its simple meaning, and after that he told how Rashi, may his memory be for a blessing, had interpreted it, and after that he presented a long *Tosafot* on the point that disagreed with Rashi . . . and he offered a very sharp interpretation, to the point that they saw and were surprised by the greatness of * And before that, they had called him the *Maggid* of Zolochew, but after he heard * the rabbi R. Hayyim as follows: my teacher R. Mikhel * from your mouth that his status is not that of a scholar but now I * And the rabbi R. Mikhel replied as follows: * I meant, it is true that in this Torah * I am certainly more of a scholar than you, but in this Torah given from Mount Sinai

¹⁹ *Ways of the Just* 9a. Parallels: *The Light of Truth* 100b; *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* 2b.

as black fire on white fire, the Besht, may his soul be in the storehouse on high, was a great scholar of this Torah but I, though I have much knowledge, am not a scholar, and I have spoken the truth. And from that day on, the elder, R. Hayyim, ceased to be an opponent (*mitnagged*), and he called him “my teacher.” What we learn from this is that we have no share in what is concealed, but it is a faith that we need * that was in the first tablets [of the Decalogue] before the sin [of the Golden Calf]. So we cannot understand what will be; and consider this carefully.²⁰

The asterisk (*) appears in *Light of Isaac* where the manuscript text is corrupt or has had something deleted. This may be an instance of the censorship characteristically applied in the Zolochov tradition to everything related to the names of individuals and to matters that touch on secret teachings. In any case, the essence of the incident is preserved despite the deletions, and the story presents an episode of self-revelation, in which “several great men” reveal the secret of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s scholarship: they ask him to say words of Torah, but because the assembly included “great *menaggedim*,” R. Yehiel Mikhel preferred to conceal his kabbalistic erudition and to interpret a passage in the *talmud*. After presenting the simple meaning of the passage, he cited Rashi’s interpretation as well as the opposing view of the Tosafists. Finally, he “he offered a very sharp interpretation,” which apparently used the hair-splitting analytical method characteristic of Talmudic scholars to reconcile the difference of opinion between Rashi and *Tosafot*. Those present were astonished at R. Yehiel Mikhel talmudic erudition, and one of them, R. Hayyim, asked why R. Yehiel Mikhel had concealed his scholarship and initially presented himself as lacking it. R. Yehiel Mikhel responded that his scholarship in matters of Jewish Law exceeded that of the people present but that true scholarship is erudition in the mystery teachings—“the Torah given from Mount Sinai as black fire on white fire”—with respect to which he cannot claim the title of scholar, for the Besht was greater than he.

The incident’s framework adheres to the hagiographic pattern, but that does not necessarily mean the story is fiction. The usage “*menaggedim*” for the opponents of Hasidism shows that the story is early, predating the development of Hasidic hagiography, where the usual term for the opponents is “*mitnaggedim*.”²¹

²⁰ *Light of Isaac*, pp. 2–3.

²¹ Gershom Scholem took that view, having noted by hand in the margin of the

As for the identity of the *menaggedim*, the story suggests that they were two preeminent halakhists who were involved as well in the study of Kabbalah. “The rabbi R. Ze’ev Wolf of Dubno” was chief judge in that town; he provided an approbation for *Pupil of My Eye* (*Bat Eini*), a work of halakhic novellae by R. Issakhar Ber of Zolochov, a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel.²² And the R. Hayyim mentioned in the story may be R. Hayyim Tirrer of Chernovtsy, a preeminent disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel who immigrated to the Land of Israel in his old age, in 5574 (1814) and died in Safed two to four years later.²³ To identify R. Hayyim Tirrer as a player in the story is to suggest it was written before his immigration to the Land of Israel, an important event that otherwise would have been mentioned by R. Isaac of Radvil. In any case, the story was written before R. Hayyim’s death, which occurred between 5576 (1816) and 5578 (1818), for R. Isaac of Radvil calls him “the Elder, R. Hayyim,” a designation pertaining to the time the story was written, not the time the events took place. Thus, the story was written while R. Hayyim Tirrer was still alive, and it is almost certain that he was among the few remaining disciples of R. Yehiel Mikhel who had not yet died.

Another possibility is that R. Hayyim is R. Hayyim Segal Landau, the leader of the sages of the Brody *kloyz*, who supported the group of *hasidim* who emigrated to the Land of Israel in 5537 (1777).²⁴ R. Hayyim Landau was not a “*hasid*” in the usual sense, and he was a cousin of R. Ezekiel Segal Landau, a bitter opponent of Hasidism. If it is he who figures in the story, we can appreciate the significance of R. Isaac of Radvil’s comment that R. Hayyim ceased to be a *mitnagged*, though he did not become a *hasid*. Yet another possibility, favored by Rivka Schatz, is that the story is speaking of R. Hayyim of Tzanz, another leader of the Brody *kloyz* kabbalists.²⁵

One way or another, *Light of Isaac* preserves in this incident an account of how two of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s disciples were drawn to their teacher. And it appears from the account that R. Yehiel Mikhel practiced the quality of equanimity with respect to Torah study. He

text “the term is still *menaggedim*.” See the comment of Gershom Scholem on the copy of *Light of Isaac* in the Scholem Library.

²² See *Pupil of My Eye*, approbation page.

²³ See above, pp. 241–242.

²⁴ See above, pp. 180–181.

²⁵ See Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 70, n. 57.

was unconcerned about the prospect that scholars might disparage him for his ignorance of halakhic matters, but he was equally unconcerned about the prospect that they might praise him for his erudition. Thus, R. Yehiel Mikhel “was indifferent to whether he [was] held to be lacking in knowledge or to be knowing of the entire Torah,”²⁶ just as the practice states. And the converse is true as well: the substance of the practice explains the incident and R. Yehiel Mikhel’s surprising conduct. Before he revealed himself to the two *menaggedim*, he posed as a common boor with respect to in Torah and Jewish Law (Halakhah) and was disparaged as such. His readiness to bear that public humiliation attests to his degree of equanimity and can be explained by reference to the practice “that if a man has no preferences, such that all is acceptable to him, he will merit all the [high] levels, for modesty is the greatest of them all.”²⁷ R. Yehiel Mikhel deliberately incurred public degradation and bore it with indifference, as a pious one, and that practice earned him a high spiritual level, for “modesty is the greatest of them all.”²⁸ The story thus exemplifies the practice of equanimity while also being enhanced by it, for the practice provides the theological background and moral explanation for R. Yehiel Mikhel’s conduct.

The evidence in *Light of Isaac* confirms the practice formulations in another way, clarifying that it was R. Yehiel Mikhel who attributed the practice of equanimity to the Besht. R. Yehiel Mikhel mentions that “the Besht, may his soul be in the store-house on high, was a great scholar of this Torah” only when he is referring to the tradition regarding the Torah as written in “black fire on white fire.” But when the story’s lesson was framed as a practice, some of the framers, disciples of R. Yehiel Mikhel, chose to attribute the totality of the practice to the Besht. That may be why the attribution to the Besht is inconsistent, appearing only in some versions. The lack of consistency shows that some of the copyists hesitated to attribute the entire practice to the Besht, a hesitancy explained by

²⁶ *Ways of the Just* 9a.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 8b.

²⁸ *Ibid.* This practice highlights the similarity between R. Yehiel Mikhel’s doctrine of equanimity and the doctrine of indifference of *hasidei ashkenaz*, which requires the adherent to deliberately place himself in situations of public degradation and to bear humiliation in order to attain the status of piety. See Dan 1990, vol. 2, pp. 9–20.

R. Yehiel Mikhel remarks, attributing to the Besht only the teaching about the fiery letters.

Moreover, the connection between the equanimity practice and R. Yehiel Mikhel clarifies another version of the practice, which deals with linkage of souls through the medium of Torah study:

And when he says words of Torah, he should connect himself in his thoughts first to the Creator, may He be blessed, and the soul of his fellow is likewise connected to the Creator, may He be blessed, for all men live only by His bounty, may He be blessed, which overflows onto all creatures. And he should think that he says these [words of Torah] only before the Creator, may He be blessed, to please Him, and I am not saying them before my fellows, so what difference does it make to me whether [my friends] praise me or demean me. All this is from the Ba'al Shem.²⁹

The practice, attributed to the Besht, instructs the student to connect himself in his thoughts with the Creator and then with his fellows, in order to elevate their souls with the help of Torah study and to please his Creator. Lurking behind this practice may be an impression of the linkage ceremony at R. Yehiel Mikhel's prayer house in Brody on Shavuot 5537 (1777), where R. Yehiel Mikhel used an occasion on which words of Torah were spoken to link up with the souls of his disciples and elevate them to communion with God. That linkage was not performed for the sake of the friends' and disciples' souls, but "only before the Creator, may He be blessed, to please Him," exactly as the practice states.

Equanimity, Reversal, and Concealment

The equanimity practices shed light on another aspect of R. Yehiel Mikhel's moral teachings: equanimity is attained through an intense effort to cast off corporeality.³⁰ The notion of "casting off corporeality" and its connection to the quality of equanimity were explained in detail by R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciple, R. Meshullam Feibush Heller:

And the preconditions are many, but the least of them is to have cast off the desires of the moment with respect to food, sleep, or sexual

²⁹ *Ways of the Just* 9b.

³⁰ On the concept of "casting off corporeality," see Tishby 1967, p. 8, n. 37; Pachter 1991/1, p. 91; Pachter 1992, p. 171, n. 1; Elior, 1993/2.

relations and to break the forces of corporeality . . . the essence of casting off corporeality must be within his heart, that he should find all this-worldly desires repugnant . . . as is written in the book *Preacher of Righteousness*, *Portion Be-Shalah*, that the *maggid* constantly admonished the *Beit Yosef* with respect to this.³¹

R. Meshullam Feibush Heller's remarks suggest that corporeality can be cast off by applying the quality of equanimity to the temporal, corporeal desires that characterize this world—food and drink, sleep, and sexuality—and to perform the associated activities indifferently, deriving no pleasure from them. R. Meshullam Feibush cites R. Joseph Karo³² as an exemplar of the sought-after ideal, for the heavenly *Maggid* instructed him to be indifferent to flesh-and-blood desires and to carry out corporeal activities, such as eating, drinking, and sexual relations, without deriving any pleasure from them: "For what gain is there in your deriving pleasure in this world? Rather, think only that if it were possible to sustain the soul within the body without any pleasure at all, I would very much want to do so."³³

Side by side with R. Joseph Karo, R. Meshullam Feibush offers the additional example of a talmudic sage named Ula, who had cast off corporeality to the point of being able to engage in close physical contact with his sisters free of any concern about improper sexual relations:

And in this way I understood the words of the *talmud* . . . "Ula would kiss his sisters on their chests" . . . for if a man has cast off corporeality, he is divided within himself, himself against himself. In his internal self he is close to the Creator, may He be blessed, with a great desire, but with respect to externalities, he nevertheless engages in corporeal matters in this world, such as eating and sexual relations and the like. Internally he is like an angel, removed from all corporeality, though externally he appears like a beast to those who see him, though that is not really the case. But if, God forbid, that is not so, then he is one with the beasts, not differentiated or separated from them at all.³⁴

The Talmud tells of Ula, who forbade all physical contact between family members lest they come to engage in sexual relations, yet he

³¹ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 20a, 21a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 111b, 117b.

³² Whom he refers to as "the *Beit Yosef*," after his well-known halakhic work of that name.

³³ *Preacher of Righteousness*, p. 5. See also Werblowsky 1996, pp. 162–163.

³⁴ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 21a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 118a–b.

himself would kiss his sisters on their chests.³⁵ The Talmud states of Ula that “he is divided within himself, himself against himself,” that is, there is an internal contradiction between his words and his actions. But R. Meshullam Feibush interprets “he is divided, himself against himself” as connoting a split personality, in which a person is “divided within himself, himself against himself,” to the point that he can kiss his sisters’ breasts without thereby violating the prohibition against incest, for he derives no pleasure from the corporeal act. R. Meshullam Feibush bases his interpretation on that of *Tosafot ad loc.*, “And he is divided, himself against himself—He [Ula] was sure of himself that he would not come to improper thoughts, for he was a completely virtuous man.” R. Meshullam Feibush adds that the Tosafists were endowed with the holy spirit and their interpretation followed the mystical way. He needed to note that point in order to limit the quality of equanimity to an exalted minority, “to those who understand inwardness.”³⁶

R. Meshullam Feibush Heller’s daring interpretation of the quality of equanimity can be understood nicely against the background of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s understanding of the concepts of truth and falsehood. In his scheme, truth is inherently secretive, while falsehood is forthright and blunt. Falsehood, like deception, is a weapon in the arsenal of “the other side”—Satan—and his emissary, the evil impulse, as they mislead man and prevent him from purifying himself and breaking free of defilement’s clutches. And since most men are imprisoned by the evil impulse, they act in accordance with appearances rather than reality. Accordingly, a *hasid* is obligated to maintain indifference to society’s criticisms of his actions. The indications of casting off corporeality cited by R. Meshullam Feibush—“internally he is like an angel, removed from all corporeality, though externally he appears like a beast to those who see him”—show the direct link between a man’s spiritual height and his lowly state in society, ruled, as it is, by the forces of evil.

The idea of reversal and concealment recurs often in the Hasidic conduct literature.³⁷ One extreme formulation states that “he must do his acts in secrecy, so it will appear to people that it is not

³⁵ *Shabbat* 13a.

³⁶ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 21a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 118b.

³⁷ On the practice that instructs the *hasid* to conceal and deny his membership in the “sect,” see above, p. 118.

Hasidism.”³⁸ The practice teaches that in certain situations, an act will not be considered good in God’s eyes unless it is disparaged by men. That approach recalls the extreme doctrine of equanimity of *hasidei ashkenaz*, who interpreted the word *hasid* (חסיד) on the basis of *hivarta*, the Aramaic word for *hasidah* (stork—חסידה), as one whom people humiliate.³⁹ They take a similar approach with respect to the commandment to bury an unclaimed corpse, reasoning that the more difficult and revolting a commandment is to perform, the greater its value and the greater its reward for the few who are able to perform it.⁴⁰

This topsy-turvy approach toward truth and falsehood, good and evil, requires one to be perpetually on guard. It is necessary to distinguish between reality and appearance, for appearance presents itself externally as reality. Thus, one of the practices refers to the apparent *zaddik* “whose eyes were closed by the evil impulse and who envisioned himself in his own eyes as a complete *zaddik* and appeared as well in the eyes of the public as a complete *zaddik*. Yet even though he studies diligently and prays and afflicts himself, his [efforts] gain him nothing, for he lacks communion with the Creator, may He be blessed, and [lacks the] perfect faith needed to commune with Him, may He be blessed, at all times; and he does not know the essence of worship.”⁴¹

This forging of a link between society’s mistaken judgment and the blindness cast by the evil impulse is no mere happenstance. The

³⁸ *Testament of R. Israel Ba’al Shem* 8b; so, too, *Ways of the Just* 5b; *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 173: “Even though they demean him, he should be silent and not respond at all to the one who demeans him, lest these disparagers distract him from the service of the Creator. And he should not be concerned that he will thereby not be appreciated among people and will be unable to attain his goal; [rather,] he should direct his thought on high, to the supernal world and in His service, may He be blessed, and should commune with and trust in Him that he will attain his goal.”

³⁹ *Hivarta*, from the root *h-w-r* (הור), denotes paleness or whiteness. To humiliate one is to cause him to become pale; hence the Heb. *lehalbin*, from the root *l-b-n* (לבן), white. The *hasidah*, one of the unclean birds listed in Lev. 11:19, is usually identified as the stork and is rendered in Aramaic translations as *hivarta*.—*translator’s note*.

⁴⁰ See Dan 1990, vol. 2, pp. 17–20. It should be noted in that connection that the *Jerusalem Talmud* limits the stringencies that an individual may assume to those that do not promote pride or incur praise. *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Berakhot* 2:9.

⁴¹ *Testament of R. Israel Ba’al Shem* 9b. The comments are consistent with a homily cited by R. Meshullam Feibush Heller in R. Yehiel Mikhel’s name at *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 165. The homily speaks of those who study Torah for other than the proper reasons. See below, pp. 362–365.

connection shows that society and community serve, wittingly or unwittingly, as agents of Satan. By making common cause with the evil impulse in a man's soul, they seduce him into remaining in the realm of the husks. That is why one who serves God is obligated to disguise and deny his true situation. He is characterized by bizarre conduct that may arouse the anger of society, but it is his despised position in that society that proves his high inner stature.

R. Yehiel Mikhel's approach to the concept of truth in general and, in particular, to social truth, is intimately linked to his messianic mission. In his scheme, the laws of nature were overturned on account of primeval Adam's sin and, once again, following the sin of the Golden Calf, which resulted in the tablets of the covenant being broken. The Torah that was eventually given to the Israelites was written backwards, and only the Messiah will be able to restore the letters and words to their proper order and thereby redeem the Torah and the world.⁴²

R. Yehiel Mikhel's doctrine of reversal assumes, accordingly, that the warping of Creation is reflected in the Torah, just as the warping of the Torah becomes manifest through people's defective understanding of it. The suggested solution is based on the fact that the *hasid* knows this hidden truth, and his knowledge must be reflected in his abhorrence of the world of falsehood, governed by Satan; of society, governed by the evil impulse; and of the mistaken interpretation that people give to the Torah and its commandments. To avoid being ensnared by Satan and his agents, the *hasid* is obliged to dissemble and to conceal, until the Messiah's advent, his true nature and his knowledge of the Torah's secrets.

Finally, it is necessary to account for the similarity between R. Yehiel Mikhel's worldview and the Sabbatean movement, in which "holy deception" and "holy falsehood" played a powerful role in the believers' conduct. What began as a practical need to conceal any belief in Shabbetai Zevi once he had converted to Islam gained conceptual justification through Nathan of Gaza's comments about the Messiah, who poses as the agent of defilement and performs bizarre actions in order to confuse Satan and succeed in his mission of repairing evil from within. To account for their messiah's conversion

⁴² See *Light of Isaac*, pp. 1–2, 53, 65, 188, 190–191; Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, pp. 67–69.

to Islam, accordingly, Shabbetai Zevi's followers developed a comprehensive doctrine based on the profound opposition between appearance and reality. Sabbatean writings abound with comparisons between the messiah and Queen Esther, who was obligated to defile her honor in Ahasuerus's court in order to atone for the sins of Israel. Esther's mystery was interpreted as applying to Shabbetai Zevi, whose honor was trampled and whose name was cursed by the sages of Israel so that he might atone for the sins of the nation.⁴³

The conceptual background of the equanimity practice and its resemblance to Sabbateanism show that the attribute of equanimity must be regarded as an instruction only for a small group that isolates itself from society and assumes a posture of alienation toward it. It is fair to assume that the practice of equanimity was not included in the Hasidic conduct literature as guidance for the masses; on the contrary, it is the preeminent quality of the pious one, suitable for him but not for others. Presumably the quality befitted R. Yehiel Mikhel, who actively practiced it (as recounted in *Light of Isaac*), as well as the members of his group. But the premise that the practice was meant to be followed literally by the masses is inconsistent with its origin and meaning.

⁴³ See Scholem 1987, vol. 2, "holy deception," index; Wirshovsky 1990.

CHAPTER THREE

TORAH STUDY

Torah Study and Communion

The place of Torah study within the overall religious life was a central concern as Hasidism was developing and in the early polemics against it. Starting in 5532 (1772), when the first excommunication decrees and polemical writings were published, the *hasidim* were charged with disparaging Torah study; “they negate Torah study in principle, and often speak of diminishing their study.”¹ They were likewise accused of disrespect for scholars, and as early as 5532 (1772), the letter from the Vilnius community presents the charge that the *hasidim* “show disrespect to those who study the holy Torah.”² Recurring charges of this sort inflamed the opposition to Hasidism. The attitude of the *hasidim* to Torah study did not initially engender that opposition, but it quickly became an easy target, mentioned in most of the anti-Hasidic polemical writings.

These accusations reflect the complex attitude of early Hasidism toward Torah study, a complexity that grows out of the demand for communion with God. In that connection, Gershom Scholem has made the important observation that the Hasidic conduct literature presents the demand for constant communion with God as conflicting with the accepted value of study, for the study of Jewish Law disrupts the concentration needed to attain communion.³ As will be made clear below, the *hasidim* did not deny the value of Torah study; rather, they transformed study into a tool for communing with God. Study as a means to communion was part of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s scheme, and the Torah study practices in the Hasidic conduct literature grew out of that scheme.

Torah study was one of the areas in which the Hasidic conduct literature demanded the exercise of equanimity. The practice related

¹ Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 59.

² Ibid., pp. 40–41.

³ See Scholem 1976/1, vol. 2, pp. 329–338.

to it calls for disregarding the opinions of others with respect to one's achievements in knowledge of Torah and the manner of its study: "From the Besht, [we learn that] equanimity is a great rule, making it the same to him whether he is considered to lack knowledge or to know the entire Torah."⁴

The need to disregard criticism of one's manner of Torah study can be explained on the basis of two radical practices that regard constant communion with God as a higher value than Torah study. One practice recommends avoiding excessive study, lest the bond of communion between man and his God be rent. The premise is that a man cannot dedicate himself totally to several matters, each demanding his full spiritual strength. Accordingly, he must choose between communion with God and Torah study, and it is self-evident that the choice of communion shows its value exceeds that of Torah study. An additional practice instructs the student to pause from time to time in his study for the sake of communion with God. It should be noted that in the version before us, the order of the practice is reversed, and the "general rule" of not studying excessively is written after the instruction directed to the student:

And when he studies, he must set it aside a bit every hour in order to commune with Him, may He be blessed . . . and another rule is not to study to great excess. For the earlier generations, whose minds were strong and whose holy study was exalted and great, had no need to labor to attain awe [of God], for that awe was always before them. Accordingly, they were able to study much. But we, whose minds are limited—if we stop thinking of communion with Him, may He be blessed, and instead study much, we will forget communion with the Creator and fear of God . . . Accordingly, it is necessary to reduce the amount one studies and to think constantly of the greatness of the Creator, may He be blessed, in order to love Him and stand in awe before Him. And he should not engage in many thoughts; only in one thought, as noted above.⁵

Behind this practice stands the mystical rationale, according to which a man must think of God all the time in order to be in perpetual communion. In the course of Torah study, however, a man immerses

⁴ *Light of Truth* 100b. Parallels: *Ways of the Just* 9a; *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* 2b.

⁵ *Light of Truth* 99a; in a similar formulation, *Ways of the Just* 3a–4b; *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 29.

himself in the content of what he is studying, and the constant pre-occupation with God is interrupted:

That is the great rule, that a man have but one thought in serving the Creator. As it is written (Eccl. 3[:14]), “God has caused men to revere Him” . . . “but they have engaged in many thoughts,” for he is confused by the force of numerous thoughts.⁶

Torah Study in R. Yehiel Mikhel’s Scheme

The origin of the practices regarding Torah study in the Hasidic conduct literature has previously been considered, in connection with the practice of equanimity and the tale of R. Yehiel Mikhel and the two “*menaggedim*.” Here we will see that an additional text confirms R. Yehiel Mikhel’s words as the source for the other practices dealing with Torah study.

The text can be found in *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah* (*No’am Megadim u-Khevod ha-Torah*) by R. Eliezer Horowitz, chief judge of Tarnograd and a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel.⁷ One of R. Eliezer Horowitz’s difficult-to-understand homilies interprets the verse “You shall not delay offering the fullness of your harvest (*meleiatekha*—מלאכתך) and the outflow of your presses (*dim’akha*—דמעתך); the firstborn of your sons (בכור בניך) you shall give me” (Exod. 22:28). The verse speaks of the obligation to set aside priestly gifts and tithes from the crop; *meleiatekha* refers to grain; *dim’akha* (literally, “your tears”) is a term for fruit juices, such as wine or olive oil, which are as clear as tears falling from the eye.⁸ And just like the fruit of the field, so, too, are firstborn sons dedicated to God, necessitating their redemption at the age of thirty days. But R. Eliezer’s homily deals not with the simple meaning of the verse but with the symbolic sense of the term “the firstborn of your sons,” which he interprets with reference to two commandments—fasting and prayer. The homily itself is divided, in *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah*, into three

⁶ *Light of Truth* 98b; the second part of the biblical quotation is from Eccl. 7:29. Parallels: *Ways of the Just* 2b; *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 51; *Testament of R. Israel Ba’al Shem* 7a.

⁷ On R. Eliezer Horowitz, see above, pp. 231–232.

⁸ See commentary of Samuel b. Me’ir, (Rashbam, Rashi’s grandson) on Exod. 22:28.

sections, which are worked into various parts of the text. The first deals with the admonition, issued by “the *Maggid*” to “our teacher, light of Israel, הרב” [*hrby*, written as an acronym], may his memory be for a blessing,” to complete the prescribed study before eating at the conclusion of a fast day:

Or it [the verse] may allude to what they [the Sages], may their memory be for a blessing, said, “Borrow by day and repay by night”; and the *Maggid* admonished our teacher, light of Israel, הרב” [*hrby*], may his memory be for a blessing to complete his study at night before eating, even on a fast day . . . and that is “*meleiatekha*,” to complete your prescribed Torah study that you did not complete during the day by reason of distraction. And do not delay *dim’akha* at the first opportunity that comes to hand, even if you give me your firstborn of your sons, that is, a fast.⁹

R. Eliezer interprets the expression “your firstborn of your sons” as connoting fasting, which he regards as the preferred commandment. He begins with the words of the Talmud, “R. Aḥa b. Jacob would borrow and repay.”¹⁰ According to Rashi, R. Aḥa b. Jacob would assign himself a daily quota of study. On days when the burdens of earning a living precluded him from completing the quota, he would borrow and repay, that is, he would work during the day and complete his study at night. The *Shulḥan Arukh* rules accordingly.¹¹

R. Eliezer Horowitz illustrates the meaning of this interpretation with reference to the account of the *Maggid* who admonished “our teacher, light of Israel, הרב” [*hrby*], may his memory be for a blessing” to complete the study he allotted to himself on a fast day before ending the fast and beginning to eat. He ties the *Maggid*’s admonition to the verse “You shall not delay offering the fullness of your harvest (*meleiatekha*) and the outflow of your presses (*dim’akha*); the firstborn of your sons you shall give me”; in his interpretation, “the firstborn of your sons . . . that connotes fasting.”

Neither the Talmud nor the *Shulḥan Arukh* mentions study on a fast day in this context. The “*Maggid*’s” admonition that one should complete the assigned study before ending the fast, specifically because it is difficult to study on a fast day, instills a quality of piety and good practice into an area where the Jewish Law does not deal with

⁹ *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah, Portion Mishpatim*, 36a.

¹⁰ *Eruvin* 65a.

¹¹ *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 238:2.

it at all. It follows that the words of the *Maggid* are clear, but their context is not; and it is not apparent whether the admonition is intended simply to stress the need to act with the quality of piety in an area where there is no express Jewish Law. The obscurity of the context suggests that this may, in fact, be an indirect admonition with respect to some other matter.

Toward the end of the passage, R. Eliezer directs the reader to the second part of the homily, printed on the previous page. Here, the term “the firstborn of your sons” is taken to connote prayer rather than fasting:

Now, it is known from the holy one of Israel, our master the rabbi R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, may his memory be for a blessing, that the thought is called father to the speech, and the speech is called son . . . And it is also reasonable that [speech] will be called firstborn if it is the best and most select of speech . . . from the point of view of erudition and acuteness, [both] Sinai [and uprooter of mountains].¹² “Do not delay”—you will not need to tarry and be late on that account . . . if you are careful with respect to your heart's intention and your thought's purity in prayer . . . and that is as [Scripture] says, “the firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me” . . . in one manner of interpreting the verse with respect to the matter of Torah study.¹³

This segment of the homily makes no mention of “the *Maggid*” or of “our teacher, light of Israel, הרב” [*hrby*], may his memory be for a blessing.” But it does reveal the problem concealed in the first segment: the tension between Torah study—“erudition and acuteness”—and communion with God, which is achieved through prayer. The resolution suggested here—“if you are careful with respect to your heart's intention and your thought's purity in prayer”—does not compel a choice between dedicating one's time to prayer—the firstborn son—and dedicating it to Torah study. That is because the criterion for achieving communion with God is not the prayer's duration but its quality. Thus, the term “firstborn of your sons” is interpreted in the two portions of the homily as referring to fasting and to prayer.

¹² “Sinai” and “uprooter of mountains” are, respectively, talmudic designations for one who is erudite and one who thinks sharply. See, e.g., *Berakhot* 64a.—*translator's note*.

¹³ *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah, Portion Mishpatim*, 34b. For a description of thought and speech as father and son, see *Light of Truth* 1b.

But it remains to identify “the *Maggid*” and “our teacher, light of Israel, הרב” [hrby], may his memory be for a blessing” mentioned in the first segment of the homily. According to Rivka Schatz, “the *Maggid*” is the *Maggid* R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, and the acronym in “our teacher, light of Israel, הרב” [hrby], may his memory be for a blessing” refers to *ha-rav* **Rabbi Yehiel** Mikhel of Zolochew, called “light of Israel” elsewhere in *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah*.¹⁴

If that identification is correct, we have here an a clear conflict between R. Yehiel Mikhel, who believed that Torah study interfered with perpetual communion with God, and R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, who issued an admonition on the value of Torah study itself. It thus appears that R. Yehiel Mikhel saw prayer, through which one attains communion with God, as the highest purpose, superseding all other values—even Torah study—exactly as provided in the practice related to study. And even R. Dov Ber’s criticism does not bear on issues of principle, for he, too, recognizes that prayer is “the firstborn of your sons,” the most beloved of the commandments. The criticism pertains only to practice, where it is preferable to accommodate the demand for diligence in Torah study rather than openly oppose it.

But Rivka Schatz’s identification of the protagonists is somewhat questionable, for R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi is not mentioned in *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah* as “the *Maggid*,” and R. Yehiel Mikhel, though indeed termed “light of Israel,” is referred to by abbreviation not as “רב” [r-b-y] but as “מורח” [m-w-h-r-y-m]—our master the rabbi R. Yehiel Mikhel.

Accordingly, Gedaliah Nigal takes the view that “the *Maggid*” is none other than the mystical *maggid* of our master Joseph Karo” and “our teacher, light of Israel, הרב” [hrby], may his memory be for a blessing” is R. Joseph Karo, [author] of *Beit Yosef*.¹⁵ But this identification also is problematic, for Nigal cites no proof from *Maggid Mesharim*, and I have searched the texts in vain for the *Maggid*’s admonition. Moreover, R. Joseph Karo’s problem was the opposite of that presented in the homily; it appears that the greatest halakhist of his age tended to think about halakhic issues even during prayer,

¹⁴ E.g., *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah, Portion Terumah*, 37a. See also Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, pp. 166–167.

¹⁵ See Nigal 1973/2, p. 73, n. 12. (This view understands the abbreviation “רב” as signifying *ha-rav* *beit yosef*.)

and the *Maggid* admonished him not to do so, for there is a time for Torah and a time for prayer.¹⁶ That admonition was later included in the list of practices at the beginning of *Preacher of Righteousness*: “To take care during the time of prayer not to think about anything, even related to Torah and commandments, other than the words of the prayer themselves.”¹⁷

It appears, then, that Gedaliah Nigal’s identification of the figures is inconsistent with the texts, while Rivka Schatz’s conjecture also remains doubtful. Accordingly, it is necessary to examine the third part of the homily, set forth in *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah* at a remove from the first two portions. This part cites comments of R. Yehiel Mikhel, who interpreted the expression “firstborn of your sons” as referring to fasting:

Or he may say “The fullness of your harvest . . . the firstborn of your sons.” For our rabbis, may their memory be for a blessing, said that charity is great, for it is as weighty as all the other commandments¹⁸ . . . but we have found that our sages, may their memory be for a blessing, also said that fasting is greater than charity¹⁹ . . . And if follows from this that fasting, too, is greater and more important than all the other commandments. Now it is known that good deeds are called progeny and sons. And for that reason, the most select of the commandments and of human actions will be called the firstborn of the sons, for firstborn denotes importance . . . And with that we can interpret the scripture with what we have seen from the writings of of the rabbi, the *maggid*, מוֹדַרֵּי רַבִּי [our master the rabbi R. Yehiel Mikhel (written as an acronym)], may his memory be for a blessing, who warned that in the event of a nocturnal emission, one should fast on the immediately ensuing day without any delay . . . Only the firstborn of your sons, which is fasting—the most select of your actions—you shall give me; and understand.²⁰

¹⁶ See *Preacher of Righteousness*, p. 51.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 1. Similarly, Pachter 1988, p. 59.

¹⁸ Cf. *Bava Batra* 9a.

¹⁹ *Berakhot* 32b.

²⁰ *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah, Portion Mishpatim*, 35a. In *Golden Doves (Torei Zahav)* by R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy, the homily is cited in the name of R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany, as is common in the Zolochov tradition. See *Golden Doves* 30b–31a, 108b. In *Illumination of the Eye (Me’or Einayim)* by R. Nahum of Chernobyl, p. 217, the homily is cited with the words “and I heard from my teacher”; whether “my teacher” refers to R. Yehiel Mikhel bears inquiry. In *Glory of Ze’vi Ze’ev (Tif’eret Ze’vi Ze’ev)* by R. Ze’vi Ze’ev of Zbarazh, a son of R. Yehiel Mikhel, the homily is cited “in the name of my father.”

Reading the three portions of the homily together suggests that R. Eliezer Horowitz included all the information needed to identify “our teacher, light of Israel, **הרב** [*hrby*], may his memory be for a blessing” as R. Yehiel Mikhel but chose to break up the information so it could be discovered only by taking the three passages together. The starting point for assembling the shreds of information is the interpretation of the term “the firstborn of your sons” that appears in each segment:

- Part 1:** “The firstborn of your sons”—fasting; “our teacher, light of Israel, **הרב** [*hrby*], may his memory be for a blessing.”
- Part 2:** “The firstborn of your sons”—prayer.
- Part 3:** “The firstborn of your sons”—fasting; “the rabbi the *maggid*, [the abbreviation signifying] our master the rabbi R. Yehiel Mikhel, may his memory be for a blessing.”

Part 3 states that the interpretation that “firstborn of your sons” refers to fasting originated with “the rabbi, the *maggid*, [the abbreviation noted above],” that is, R. Yehiel Mikhel. It follows that “our teacher, light of Israel, **הרב** [*hrby*], may his memory be for a blessing,” who explicated “the firstborn of your sons” in the first part of the homily as referring to fasting, likewise is R. Yehiel Mikhel, as Rivka Schatz surmised. That explains why fasting is mentioned in the first part of the homily even though at first blush it appears superfluous and out of context there: in R. Yehiel Mikhel’s scheme, fasting is “the firstborn of your sons” and it therefore is connected to the main point of the homily, that is, the admonition directed to him regarding Torah study. Meanwhile, R. Yehiel Mikhel’s name is omitted from the second part, which casts light on the conflict, obliquely hinted at in the first part, between Torah study and communion in prayer. It becomes clear there that R. Yehiel Mikhel explicated the term “firstborn of your sons” with reference to prayer as well, which he cast in opposition to halakhic casuistry. The third part of the homily, as noted, provides the key to joining the two earlier portions into a unified whole, for it expressly mentions R. Yehiel Mikhel’s name in connection with the other passages. It thus emerges that R. Yehiel Mikhel interpreted “the firstborn of your sons” with reference to two commandments—fasting and prayer—and that each occupies a high rung on the ladder of religious values: prayer precedes Torah study, and fasting precedes good deeds.

Finally, even though it is possible to prove from *Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah* that “our teacher, light of Israel, הרב [hrby], may his memory be for a blessing” is R. Yehiel Mikhel, it does not necessarily follow that the *Maggid* in the first part of the homily is necessarily R. Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi and that R. Yehiel Mikhel was actually admonished by him. The homily’s framework may be fictitious, formulated in manner highlighting the resemblance to R. Joseph Karo and his heavenly *maggid*.

Torah Study for Proper and Improper Purposes

In Iyyar 5532 (May–June 1772), members of the Vilnius community sent libelous anti-Hasidic epistles to the communities of Brody and Brisk. The wording of the letters shows that their senders were familiar with the practices dealing with Torah study, for they are quoted almost verbatim. For example, the practice that reads “and when he studies, he must set it aside a bit every hour in order to commune with Him, may He be blessed”²¹ matches what is said in the letter from the Vilnius community to Brody about the *hasidim* enticing those who follow them to abandon their study on the grounds that service—that is, prayer—is preferable to Torah study:

And they cancel the Torah study of many and throw the yoke of Torah off their necks and the necks of their dear children . . . by saying to them daily, God forbid they should spend their days in Torah; rather [they should engage] in worship, that is, prayer.²²

The wording of the accompanying practice—“not to engage very much in study”²³—matches what is said in the letter sent from Vilnius to Brisk, according to which the *hasidim* “regularly talk of limiting their study.”²⁴

Because we are dealing with two copies of the same epistle, it is easy to discern how, in the version sent to Brisk, the writers in

²¹ *Light of Truth* 99a; *Ways of the Just* 4a; *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 29.

²² From a copy of the epistle of the congregation of Vilnius to the congregation of Brody, Monday, 8 Iyyar 5532 (May 11, 1772). See Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 38.

²³ *Light of Truth* 99a; *Ways of the Just* 4a.

²⁴ From the epistle of the congregation of Vilnius to the congregation of Brisk in Lithuania, New Moon of Iyyar 5532 (May 4, 1772). See Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 59.

Vilnius quoted the wording of the practices but omitted their underlying explanations, thereby transforming the *hasidim* into enemies of Torah study. In the version sent to Brody, however, the conceptual explanation remained, showing that the approach of the *hasidim* does not oppose study in principle but simply regards it as secondary to prayer, for prayer is the high road to communion with God, and communion is the highest goal of the religious life.

In writing to their friends in Brisk about the attitude of the *hasidim* to Torah study, the men of Vilnius speak in terms that are consistent with R. Yehiel Mikhel's method of study, as preserved in frankly worded sources. Among them is the epistle of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, which shows that his teacher, R. Yehiel Mikhel, in fact studied Torah for the sake of communion with God:

And I heard from the holy mouth, the rabbi the *maggid*, who said that all his life, whatever he sees in a book—whether it be *talmud* or Kabbalah—he sees nothing except how to serve God, may He be blessed, and truly it is so. But that is in his situation, for he is a *zaddik* the son of a *zaddik* and perfect in other respects, but not so for us, knowing I believe this in faith, and we have heard of few like them.²⁵

By this account, R. Yehiel Mikhel never negated the obligation in principle to learn Torah; rather, he changed the accepted order of priorities. His starting point was the sanctity of the text, derived not from its literal meaning but from its being the word of God. Accordingly, study of the text is a path to communion with God, and when communion is achieved, the meaning of the words becomes less significant. From that point of view, the literal meaning of kabbalistic writings, like the details of the Talmud's halakhic material, is simply a husk that envelops the fruit. R. Yehiel Mikhel's approach is consistent with the practice of avoiding stringency with respect to halakhic details, for those stringencies confuse a person, distract him, and distance him from communion with God.²⁶

This idea recurs in R. Yehiel Mikhel's homily on Psalm 107. It becomes clear that he suspected some scholars of acting not for the sake of heaven—that is, not to achieve communion with God—but in order to aggrandize their names and to become renowned as great

²⁵ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 23a, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 123b.

²⁶ See *Light of Truth* 98b; *Ways of the Just* 3a; *Ways of the Just* 8b; *Light of Truth* 100b.

Torah scholars. The homily deals with four groups of people, the worst of which are the great Torah scholars who study Torah “with haughtiness and not for its sake.”²⁷ R. Yehiel Mikhel’s critique of scholars pertains not to their dedicating time to Torah study but to their studying “not for its sake”—that is, not for the sake of communing with God—but to enhance their own glory.

R. Yehiel Mikhel thus did not negate Torah study as a matter of principle; rather, he distinguished between two purposes: study for the sake of study alone, and study “for its sake,” that is, for the sake of communion with God.²⁸ That, in turn, suggests a distinction between two types of people, “studiers” and “pious ones (*hasidim*)”: the former study for the sake of the study; the latter, for the sake of communion. In different ways, this distinction appears as well in ethical writings composed before the growth of Hasidism, and there, too, the reference was to these two types.²⁹

R. Yehiel Mikhel’s distinction between those who study for the sake of study and the *hasidim* who study for the sake of communion gained expression as well amongst his disciples. They distinguished between the divine service of the *zaddik*, who strives toward perpetual communion with God, and the routine approach of his disciples, who study for the sake of the studying. R. Meshullam Feibush Heller, the disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel, admonished his colleague in the Land of Israel, R. Joel, that study for the sake of communion was unique to R. Yehiel Mikhel, who was a *zaddik*, the son of a *zaddik*, but was forbidden to his disciples, who were obligated to study Torah in the conventional manner. Accordingly, he urged R. Joel to set aside time for Torah study immediately after the morning prayer and to complete the daily quota of study “even in situations of great difficulty, and if you can study most of the day, so much the better for you.”³⁰ As for the order of study, R. Meshullam

²⁷ *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 165.

²⁸ The distinction as drawn represents an interesting twist on the traditional terminology, which sees study “for its sake” (*torah li-shemah*) as Torah study for the sake of study, and study “not for its sake” (*she-lo li-shemah*) as study for external motives such as honor. Here, in contrast, study for the sake of study alone becomes *lo li-shemah*, while study *li-shemah* is reserved for what might be seen as the “external” motive of communion.—*translator’s note*.

²⁹ See Piekartz 1978, pp. 305–360; Katz 1984, pp. 70–101; Hisdai 1984/1, pp. 147–162; Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 159; Elbaum 1990, pp. 183–222.

³⁰ *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 26b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 132b.

Feibush listed first Bible, *Mishnah*, *talmud* and halakhic decisors; then ethical works; and, last, books of Kabbalah, such as “*Gates of Light* (*Sefer Sh’arei Orah*) and *Garden of Nuts* (*Ginat Egoz*) and the essence of *Zohar* (*Book of Splendor*) and *Repairs of the Zohar* (*Tiqqunim*).” This ranking of preferences was expressed as well in the association for the study of *talmud* and *Mishnah* founded by R. Meshullam Feibush Heller in the town of Zbarazh in 5540 (1780); the organizational document signed by the students stresses this obligation.³¹ It seems that in his view, just as in R. Yehiel Mikhel’s, the real conflict is between fulfillment of the commandments, including that of Torah study, out of an inner desire for moral repair (*tiqqun*), and perfunctory fulfillment of the commandments without “wisdom of the heart.”³²

The Practices of R. Yehiel Mikhel and the Safed Kabbalists

The inner tension between the value of communion with God and that of Torah study did not originate in R. Yehiel Mikhel’s study hall. It can be found as well in the writings of the Safed kabbalists, who served as a source of inspiration for the Torah study practices in the Hasidic conduct literature. In his *Book of the God-Fearing*, R. Elazar Azkari, one of the Safed kabbalists, enumerated the three lofty values adhered to by the pious of Israel—solitude (*hitbodedut*), austerity (*perishut*), and communion (*devequt*): “For the pious of Israel practiced solitude, austerity, and communion; that is, when they were alone, they would distance worldly matters from their minds and connect their thoughts with the Lord of all.”³³ The preference for spiritual elevation rather than Torah study is cited by Azkari in the Ari’s name, with the explanation “that this is seven times more beneficial to the soul than study; and to the extent consistent with his strength and ability, a man should abstain and withdraw one day a week, or one day out of fifteen, or one day a month, but no less than that.”³⁴

³¹ The contract was printed in *Honest Words of Truth and Faith* (Munkacz 5665 [1905]) from the literary legacy of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller.

³² *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 26b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 133a.

³³ *Book of the God-Fearing* 66a. Similarly, Scholem 1976/1, vol. 2, pp. 329, 337; Pachter 1991/1, pp. 70–96. On the spiritual tradition and the introspective aspect of religious life in Jewish culture, see Dan 1975/1, pp. 47–68; Katz 1984, pp. 70–101.

³⁴ *Book of the God-Fearing* 66a. See also *Testament of R. Israel Ba’al Shem* 5a; *Light of*

Azkari also cites a custom of “the early pious ones (*hasidim rishonim*)” to give up their study for nine hours for solitude and communion, crediting that time to Torah study. To all appearances, his words are the source for the Hasidic conduct literature’s practice “that when he studies, he should set it aside for a bit each hour, in order to commune with Him, may He be blessed”:

And that is as we learned [*Berakhot* 30b], “the early pious ones would pause for an hour and [then] pray so they could direct their hearts to God,” and the commentators interpreted it to mean that they would turn their minds away from the affairs of the world and connect their minds to the Lord of all, may He be blessed, in fear and love. And that makes nine hours³⁵ during which they would give up their study for the work of solitude and communion; and they would envision the light of the *shekhinah* above their heads spreading around them, and they would sit in the midst of the light.³⁶

Another custom that R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples learned from the Safed kabbalists was that of solitude in preparation for communion: solitude was practiced by the pietists and separatists who wanted to avoid sinning in order to reach the status of holy speech and attain communion with God. This can be seen in *Beginning of Wisdom*, a work by the Safed kabbalist R. Elijah De Vidash: “And a place apart from people is great preparation for communion, and the early sages would therefore separate themselves from any settled place, and they were called the sect of recluses.”³⁷ De Vidash goes on to explain that scholars, who are supposed to have relations with their wives only on the night of the Sabbath,³⁸ should practice separation during the remainder of the week and withdraw to a separate house:

And the way of holy separation that befits scholars, who separate from their wives from Sabbath to Sabbath, is to select for himself a special house, separate from the house in which he lives with his wife . . . and in this way they will practice holiness of speech and the other sorts of holiness that will be explained. For whenever a man is preoccupied

Truth 104a; *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 28: “The soul said to the rabbi that to the extent he was worthy of supernal revelations, it was not because he had studied many tractates and decisors, but because of prayer, for he always prayed with great devotion, and on that account he attained a high level.”

³⁵ For the derivation of the nine hours, see *Berakhot* 32b.—*translator’s note*.

³⁶ *Book of the God-Fearing* 66a–b.

³⁷ *Beginning of Wisdom*, vol. 2, *The Gate of Holiness*, chap. 6, sec. 16.

³⁸ *Ketubot* 62b.

with going and coming in the market, he will not avoid slander or anger, or will at least sin through what he sees; and separation in a special house saves a man from all this. That is the straight path, which should be chosen by anyone who wants to be sanctified.³⁹

Under the influence of the Safed kabbalists, the Hasidic conduct literature likewise depicts solitude as a path to the achievement of communion: "In any case, he will attain communion through withdrawal to solitude from society and through writing the secrets of the Torah, and through unifications, as is known from the Ari, may his memory be for a blessing."⁴⁰ The practice relating to this shows how to withdraw: "When he wants to be in solitude, one colleague should be with him; for one person alone would be in danger, but two should be in a single room, each one isolated by himself with the Creator, may He be blessed. And sometimes when he is communing, he can withdraw himself even in a house in which people are present."⁴¹

R. Meshullam Feibush Heller likewise exhorts his friend, R. Joel, to direct his attention to the worship of God "when your mind and heart are free of the vanities of the world, such as after midnight or during the day, when you are withdrawn in the holy study hall with colleagues listening to the sound of words [about the] fear God, may He be blessed."⁴² It can therefore be assumed that the origin of the practice of solitude can be found in R. Yehiel Mikhel's practice of withdrawing to a special room, as recounted by his son: "My holy father, may his memory be for a blessing, directed me and my brothers not to casually enter the special room that my father, may his memory be for a blessing, maintained."⁴³

³⁹ *Beginning of Wisdom*, vol. 2, *The Gate of Holiness*, chap. 6, sec. 20. See also Idel 1985, pp. 40–50, 64–77.

⁴⁰ *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* 10b; *Ways of the Just* 8a; *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 38: "And he should constantly isolate himself; his thought with the *shekhinah*."

⁴¹ *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* 8a–b.

⁴² *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 26b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 133a. See also Weiss 1985, pp. 131–142; Gries 1990, pp. 222–224, 357.

⁴³ *Light of Isaac*, p. 58. See also *Life and Kindness (Hayyim va-Hesed)* 77b; an admonition, directed by R. Hayyim Haika of Amdur to his son Samuel, a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel, not to be among "those who withdraw in their houses and set aside a special room and dwell there in their filthy thoughts, covering their eyes from seeing the greatness of their Creator, concerned only that their names be known as pious and secluded, but in fact they are secluded in that they have secluded themselves from the Giver of Life, the shade of Whose Presence hovers over us always." It can be assumed that opposition to R. Yehiel Mikhel and his practices is what underlay his sharp attack on his son.

And so we see that the formulators of the Hasidic conduct literature drew inspiration for their practices from the ethical writings of the Safed kabbalists. These origins are hardly surprising, for R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples aspired to resemble the pietists of past generations, and accordingly took on pietistic practices in the spirit of the Safed kabbalists. As a practical matter, they accepted without change the value rankings of the Safed kabbalists, setting constant communion with God as the highest goal, toward which the other commandments are merely a path. In particular, communion can be attained by observance of such commandments as prayer, solitude, and austerity, but the other commandments as well—such as Torah study—are subordinate to that goal.

But not everyone can commune with God perfectly and at all times. Accordingly, the members of the group shied away from across-the-board adoption of the practices of the Safed kabbalists and reserved some of them, such as communion during Torah study, to the *zaddik* alone. Only R. Yehiel Mikhel, whose soul is uniquely rooted in the divine, is to walk this path without qualification; his disciples should continue to perform the commandments in the conventional manner. Gershom Scholem assumed that the place of communion within Hasidism differed from the place it occupied among the Safed kabbalists, for it was transformed into “a point of departure . . . everyone could realize it immediately.”⁴⁴ That view, however, is inconsistent with the goal of the practices, which were designed for the *zaddik* or the members of his inner circle.⁴⁵

That the Torah study practice adds nothing novel to Safed Kabbalah makes it difficult to understand the controversy and opposition it aroused. Nor could the opposition have been generated simply by the establishment of a scale of spiritual values and the criticism of those who study only for the sake of study, for R. Yehiel Mikhel was not the only one to criticize those who study Jewish Law in a sharply casuistic way, with arrogance and conceit rather than fear of Heaven; the great halakhists of the age offered a similar critique.⁴⁶ It follows that uncovering the roots of the attack on Hasidic Torah

⁴⁴ Scholem 1976/1, vol. 2, p. 331; see also Scholem 1971.

⁴⁵ Scholem's view on communion within Hasidism has been criticized from various points of view. For an overview of the critics and their claims, see Elior 1992/2, pp. 307–310.

⁴⁶ See Pickarz 1978, pp. 305–360.

study requires attending to what lurks beneath the external verbiage of the excommunication decrees and polemical writings and reading between their lines. The opposition was directed fundamentally against the hidden message conveyed by adoption of the practices, that is, R. Yehiel Mikhel's pretension, and that of his disciples, to the standing of the pietists and separatists of past generations, especially the Safed kabbalists.

*The Covenant of the Tongue and the Covenant of Ma'or*⁴⁷

R. Yehiel Mikhel, then, displayed a critical attitude toward Torah study for improper purposes and toward those who study Torah in such a manner. But along with his penetrating critique, he proposed a suitable response for people who had succumbed to that sin. In his scheme, the way to be purified of such sins as studying Torah for improper purposes is through fasting, which has the power to atone for sins that originate in the covenant of the tongue and those that originate in the covenant of *ma'or* (nakedness).

The covenant of the tongue is blemished by sins committed orally, through speech: speaking words of slander, praying orally but with an impure heart, studying Torah other than for the proper purpose—that is, communion with God—such that the student utters the words without the proper inner intention. Sins that blemish the covenant of *ma'or* are those associated with the sex organ, such as masturbation or nocturnal emission. The connection between the covenant of speech and the covenant of *ma'or*—that is, between the mouth and the tongue on the one hand and the sex organ on the other—is no coincidence; it is based on the assonance between “word” (*milah*, spelled *mlh*—מלה, from the root *m-l-l*—מלל) and “circumcision” (*milah*, spelled *mylh*—מילה, from the root *m-w-l*—מול). Moreover, the mouth and the sex organ are found at the upper and lower ends, respectively, of the *sefirah* of foundation, the “central pillar” of the Godhead. The depiction of the central pillar of the Godhead is found as early as *Book of Creation*, which depicts ten hidden *sefirot* as the fingers of two hands stretched out side by side, with the two thumbs attached to a pillar extending from the mouth and tongue to the sex organ:

⁴⁷ *Ma'or* refers to the place of nakedness (*meqom ha-eryah*), that is, the sex organ.

“ten hidden *sefirot*, the same in number as the fingers, five opposite five, with the covenant of the one set in the middle, in word, tongue, and mouth.”⁴⁸ A similar idea appears in the *Zohar*⁴⁹ and in Safed Kabbalah. This gave rise to the kabbalists’ practice of self-mortification by undertaking set periods of fasting and silence in order to purify the mouth by avoidance of food and speech. Purification of the mouth, located at the upper end of the pillar, also purifies the sex organ, situated at its lower end.

The Safed kabbalists’ special emphasis on repairing sins that originate in the mouth and the sex organ stems from the world of kabbalistic imagery, in which these sins are seen as blemishing the *zaddik’s sefirah*, the *sefirah* of foundation—the central pillar of the divine *sefirot*. It therefore should come as no surprise that in the kabbalistic tradition, repairing the sins of the sexual organ, such as masturbation, is seen as the task of the Messiah, whose soul is often described as embodying the *sefirah* of foundation.⁵⁰

The identical connection between sins of the mouth and sins of the sex organ appears in the writings of R. Yehiel Mikhel’s disciples. R. Meshullam Feibush Heller emphasizes that “The covenant of the tongue and the covenant of *ma’or* are synchronized, that is, if one blemishes the covenant [of *ma’or*], the covenant of the tongue is also blemished, and how can he stand here speaking lies and baseness as he prays or studies?”⁵¹ The idea recurs in one of the practices in *Precious Gleanings*: “One who speaks without thought is like one who masturbates.”⁵²

Clearly, the fact that R. Yehiel Mikhel regarded himself as the *zaddik* of the foundation of the world, the embodiment of the *sefirah* of foundation, led him to see repairing sins that blemish that *sefirah* as part of his messianic mission. To this very day, that capacity is alluded to in the designation “guardians of the sacred covenant” applied to his descendants, the *admorim* of the Zvihil dynasty.

⁴⁸ *Book of Creation*, chap. 1, sec. 2.

⁴⁹ See Liebes 1982/1, p. 136.

⁵⁰ On the kabbalistic tradition with respect to repairing the sin of masturbation, see Liebes 1982/1, pp. 130–131, n. 182; Pachter 1986, pp. 585–588; Wolfson 1992, pp. 428–429. On Sabbatean repairs for seminal emissions, see Liebes 1982/2, pp. 177–178, and on R. Nahman of Bratslav, see id., pp. 231–231.

⁵¹ *Precious Gleanings* (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 145b. See also id. 114a: “Studying for improper purposes resembles adultery.”

⁵² *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 90.

Moreover, R. Yehiel Mikhel saw himself as one able to repair others' sins related to wasteful emission of seed precisely because he himself had never sinned in that manner. That, at least, is suggested by a Hasidic tradition of R. David b. Zevi Elimelekh of Dinov:

The widely known tale may be told that in the days of the holy one, R. Menahem Mendel of Riminov, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing in the life of the world to come, the souls of Israel from the supernal world came before him with a complaint, for the holy rabbi, the *Maggid* of Zolochov, may the memory of the righteous endure forever, was on high, as leader of the court, and was very strict regarding the sin of nocturnal emission, God protect us from it, for he himself was holy and pure all his days, never having tasted the taste of that sin. And their request was effective and another was appointed in his stead.⁵³

The sobriquet "Genesis" (*bereshit*) applied to R. Joseph of Yampol, R. Yehiel Mikhel's first born, also suggests that his father had never in his life sinned by wasteful emission of seed and that R. Joseph was born of his father's first drop of semen.⁵⁴ Similarly, a tradition of the Hasidic *admor* R. Uri "the seraph" of Strelisk, recounts the circumstances of R. Yehiel Mikhel's own birth, "that he was the tenth generation to be possessed of the holy spirit . . . and that his father, R. Itsikil, the *Maggid* of the holy congregation of Gorokhov and Drogobych, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing, repaired a thousand reincarnations before bringing the soul of his aforesaid holy son into this world."⁵⁵ Apparently, he means that R. Isaac of Drogobych repaired the sins of other related to wasteful emission of seed and redeemed the souls hidden away in the drops of semen discharged in those acts. Without bodies in which to be garbed, those souls fall to the depths and yearn for redemption, and after they are rescued, they are incarnated in bodies and born once again. That tradition suggests that the belief in the ability of the Zolochov dynasty's *zaddikim* to perform messianic repairs predates even R. Yehiel Mikhel, for the capacity is attributed to his father.

⁵³ *Shoot of David* (*Zemah David*) 12b. This resembles an interpretation of the words of the Shunamite woman to the prophet Elisha. See Jerusalem Talmud, *Yevamot* 2:4—"Now, I know that he is a holy man of God' (2 Kings 4:9). And the rabbis say he never in his life saw a drop of semen."

⁵⁴ See above, pp. 218–220.

⁵⁵ *Great Waters*, p. 4.

We thus see that R. Yehiel Mikhel exalted fasting and defined it as “the firstborn of your sons” because of its power to atone for sins related to the covenant of *ma’or*, which blemish the *sefirah* of foundation. He therefore took pains to “admonish [one who sustains] a nocturnal emission to fast on the immediately ensuing day, with no delay,” as R. Eliezer Horowitz quotes in his name. So, too, one can understand the stringency he practices with respect to anyone who blemished the covenant of the tongue, such as those who study Torah for improper purposes, for these sins likewise blemish the *sefirah* of *yesod*. In his commentary on Psalm 107, cited in *Precious Gleanings*, R. Yehiel Mikhel explicated verse 23, “they who go down to the sea in ships, doing their labor in the great waters,” as applying to those who study Torah for improper purposes and plummet, because of that sin, to the depths of the netherworld. On the other hand, the commentary on Psalm 107 preserved in *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5198* deals with those who wastefully emit seed and thereby blemish the covenant of *ma’or*. In that interpretation, the sinners’ souls are described as sparks that fell to the netherworld and cry out to be redeemed from imprisonment by the forces of evil—the husks—that rule there. On Sabbath eve, the souls of the *zaddikim*, “they who go down to the sea in ships,” descend to redeem the soul-sparks, and that descent is called descent for the sake of the ascent.”⁵⁶ If we accept the premise that the commentary on Psalm 107 portrays the soul of R. Yehiel Mikhel and was composed in his study hall,⁵⁷ we can sum up with the conclusion that we are dealing with two parts of a single commentary: the overt portion, cited in *Precious Gleanings* in R. Yehiel Mikhel’s name, deals with blemishes to the covenant of the tongue, while the esoteric portion, found in *Ms. Jerusalem 8 5198* and attributed to the Besht even though also authored by R. Yehiel Mikhel, treats blemishes to the covenant of *ma’or*.

⁵⁶ See also *Hidden Light (Or ha-Ganuz)* by R. Judah Leib ha-Kohen of Annopol 18a: “Reciting psalms also is a repair [*tiqqun*] for this sin [wasteful emission of seed]. And observing the Sabbath properly is also a repair [*tiqqun*] for that.” Similarly, *Great Waters*, p. 18.

⁵⁷ See above, pp. 328–334.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRAYER

The Uniqueness of Hasidic Prayer

Prayer, the active expression of religious feeling, was the preeminent area in which the *hasidim* were distinct from all others. Numerous studies have been dedicated to Hasidic prayer; they attempt, among other things, to examine its uniqueness and its innovations and to analyze its role in forming a special bond between the *zaddik* and his disciples.¹ The inquiry here will consider the origins of two Hasidic prayer practices—the custom of swaying while at prayer and the custom of delaying the start of prayer. It is clear that these customs grew up amidst “the *Maggid*’s” disciples in the mid-1770s, after the death of R. Dov Ber of Mezhrichi, but there is no proof that they originated with him or with the Besht. In contrast, it is possible to prove that these customs formed part of the distinctive prayer practices of R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples. At least one of them, delaying prayer, was instituted in an effort to imitate the prayers of “the early pious ones, (*hasidim rishonim*)” on the model of R. Simeon b. Yohai and his comrades.

Swaying During Prayer

Prayer was one of the areas in which the Hasidic conduct literature applied the demand for equanimity: “And another great rule. When people show contempt for him on account of his service in prayer or other matters, he should not respond, not even with worthy comments, so as to avoid dissention and arrogance.”²

¹ See Dan-Tishby 1969, pp. 769–821; Weiss 1985, pp. 126–130; Jacobson 1986, pp. 107–120; Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, pp. 78–147; Elier 1992/2, pp. 171–186; Idel 2001, pp. 267–315.

² *Light of Truth* 99b.

The need to disregard criticism with respect to prayer arises from the fact that Hasidic prayer customs outraged the *Mitnaggedim*. One Hasidic custom subjected to severe criticism was that of swaying during prayer and praying loudly. According to R. David Makov, author of *Breaking of Sinners*, the reason for swaying and shouting in prayer was to arouse improper thoughts about women during worship:

And from this evil root, many evils branch out for them, matters of utter futility, for they say that men's thoughts about women are directed to elevating them and bonding them with their root, which is graciousness (*hesed*) . . . Woe to me for the mystery that they invented in their hearts and that God did not command, and alas for them in that they introduce improper, filthy thoughts into the holiest of places³ . . . And God forbid [that they do so], for no such repair of thoughts can be found amidst all the repairs [*tiqqunim*] explained in the writings of the Ari, may his memory be for a blessing, and in the books of the other true early authorities . . . And they want to cast off the [improper] thought from themselves, so they begin to shout many great shouts, with strange statements in the middle of the *shemoneh esreh* [prayer], such as *bam bam bam, ai ai ai, noi noi noi, gai gai gai, um um um*, so many as to reach the heavens, with movements and pounding of the arms on his body, and his knees knocking against each other, to show that he is pushing the improper thought out of them by means of fear. And once the adulterous or similar thought departs from him, he then intends thereby to elevate the adultery to kindness, and he then shouts *nu nu nu* to hint that it is going forth in flight [cf. Dan. 9:21] and ascending in his thought above the depths of the earth all the way to the height of the firmament. And afterwards . . . he begins to hum and sing barroom melodies and love songs, and to clap hands, sometimes ringing in the ears for a half hour in the midst of the *shemoneh esreh* on account of the joy of elevating prayer through an improper thought and its negation . . . and so it happened to me⁴ several times that he would do so in the midst of the *shemoneh esreh*, each time [causing] many interruptions in the *shemoneh esreh* in that they become accustomed to intrusive and evil thoughts during prayer, both day and night it is found amongst them.⁵

R. David Makov accuses the *hasidim* even more harshly of swaying during prayer because they see in it an act of copulation: "And they

³ "*Lifnei ve-lifnim*," a talmudic term for locations pertinent to the High Priest's activities in the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. Cf., e.g., *Yoma* 24b, 32b.—*translator's note*.

⁴ Should be "to him" or "to them."

⁵ Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 159.

say that in their prayer they have to give birth, and therefore the sex organ must bring about the unifications, and he must sway like a man and a woman coupling when they are united.”⁶

R. David Makov’s accusations were certainly directed against practices included in the Hasidic conduct literature, and there is no doubt that these practices lend support to his words. Swaying in prayer was an external expression of the inner intention to unite with the *shekhinah* and to sow the prayers in her palace. One of the practices expressly states that prayer is coupling with the *shekhinah*:

Prayer is coupling with the *shekhinah*; and just as there is swaying at the start of a coupling, so should he sway at the beginning of prayer, but later he may simply stand without swaying, and he should be bound to the *shekhinah* in great communion. And the power of his swaying may bring him to great arousal, thinking “why am I swaying? Because the *shekhinah* is certainly standing opposite me.” And on that account he will attain great fervor.⁷

The expression “swaying”⁸ indicates that the worshipper arouses himself through erotic motions, for prayer is “coupling by a kiss” with the *shekhinah*, that is, coupling mouth-to-mouth. The treatment of prayer as an erotic activity stands out particularly in the description of the prayer of the *zaddik*, who couples with the *shekhinah* when her voice bursts forth from his mouth.⁹ Another practice states that the *zaddik*’s bride is the Torah, one of the *shekhinah*’s embodiments, and

⁶ Ibid., pp. 102–103.

⁷ *Testament of R. Israel Ba’al Shem* 8b; *Light of Truth* 103a; in an abbreviated form, *Precious Gleanings*, sec. 18. See also Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 103, n. 34.

⁸ See the remarks of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller in *Precious Gleanings* (Lemberg 5552 [1792]) 26b, (Jerusalem 5734 [1974]) 132a: “And when a man mentions the letters [of the Torah or of the prayer], he sways the supernal creatures, and when he communes perfectly in his thought with God, may He be blessed, he restores the vitality that devolved from the supernal thought into speech and was placed in man’s mouth and he, in the words of his prayer, craves God, may He be blessed. Thereby he causes the letters to sprout from their roots; if he attains having it in his thought, he attains love and fear, and this is called ‘mayim nuqvin.’” The source is in *Beginning of Wisdom*, vol. 2, *The Gate of Holiness*, chap. 10, sec. 19: “For when he below mentions these letters in his study or his prayer, he sways and arouses on high the supernal roots . . . when a man shakes the end of the chain that is in his hand, the entire chain shakes.” See also Gries 1990, pp. 172–173, n. 88. For elucidation of the concept of “mayim nuqvin,” see Scholem 1976/2, pp. 298–300; Tishby 1991, pp. 115–116; Idel 1993, “Eros and Sexuality,” index.

⁹ That is why the *shekhinah* is called “the world of speech.” See *Beginning of Wisdom*, vol. 2, *The Gate of Holiness*, chap. 10, sec. 24: “It is known that the [divine] speech that comes to a man is from the *shekhinah*.”

it thus becomes clear why the *zaddik's* Torah study and prayer are a coupling with the *shekhinah*:

When he studies or prays, the word goes forth from him with all his might, just as a drop of semen that goes forth from all his limbs. And then his might is garbed in that drop. Likewise the word; it should be garbed with all his might . . . the word which is Torah. And his might is the soul that spreads throughout the body; and the soul is a portion of the God on high. And this achieves absolute communion of that portion with its root. For the souls of *zaddikim* are limbs of the *shekhinah*, as it were. And that is the union of the Holy One, blessed be He with His *shekhinah*.¹⁰

Another practice refers to the *zaddik* as the “limb of the covenant”; this refers not to the human sex organ but to the *sefirah* of foundation, the limb of the covenant in the doctrine of divine *sefirot*. Just as a complete person is formed from the human sex organ, so the *zaddik*—a divine entity—regenerates the worlds through his coupling with the *shekhinah*:

He will eternally recall his covenant [cf. Ps. 111:5]—the generative organ is called the covenant. And certainly included in it are all the limbs, for he begets a man with his 248 limbs. Thus, the *zaddik* is called “covenant,” for he brings vitality to all the worlds, and all the worlds are certainly included in him.¹¹

We then must ask who is the *zaddik* called “covenant,” whose prayer is a coupling with the *shekhinah*? The Hasidic conduct literature describes an anonymous *zaddik*, but his identity is revealed in other writings from the early days of Hasidism, among them manuscripts dealing with the dispute that erupted in 5532 (1772) between R. Pinḥas of Korets and R. Yehiel Mikhel, the *Maggid* of Zolochov. Among other things, R. Pinḥas was angered by “the *Maggid's*” prayer customs, for he could not tolerate “their adoption of the *Maggid's* gestures”¹² and praise his prayer. R. Pinḥas’s criticism suggests opposition to the ecstatic manner of the prayer; it hints as well at the vulgarization of bodily motions. The formulation of the critique shows that

¹⁰ *Light of Torah* 69b. This explains why R. Joseph Karo’s speech of the *shekhinah* began with the saying of words of Torah and communing with the letters of the Torah and why R. Yehiel Mikhel likewise attained “speech of the *shekhinah*” precisely in saying of words of Torah.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 95a.

¹² Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 140. Parallel: Heschel 1948–1952, p. 226.

R. Pinḥas of Korets objected to novel manners of prayer not previously known and that these innovations had been introduced by “the *Maggid*,” R. Yehiel Mikhel.¹³

Moreover, the Besht was not known by the sobriquet “*zaddik*,” as Gershom Scholem has discerned.¹⁴ And the image of R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi ill-suits the description of the *zaddik*, for there is no evidence that he achieved “speech of the *shekhinah*” or was described as an embodiment of the *sefirah* of foundation. In contrast, copious reports show that R. Yehiel Mikhel claimed an experience of “speech of the *shekhinah*” amidst an assembly of his disciples and that he was understood to be an embodiment of the *sefirah* of foundation, the *sefirah* of the *zaddik*.¹⁵ The premise that it was R. Yehiel Mikhel who instituted swaying during prayer is thus consistent with the significance of swaying as coupling with the *shekhinah* and rounds out the picture with respect to his status as an embodiment of the *sefirah* of foundation.

Tardy Prayer

An additional custom associated with Hasidic prayer as early as the 1770s is that of starting one’s prayer late. As is known, Jewish Law sets a range of times for reciting the *shema*’ and the ensuing *shemoneh esreh* prayer. The evening *shema*’, preceded by two blessings and followed by two blessings, should be recited between nightfall and midnight; after the fact, it may recited until dawn. In the morning, *shema*’ is recited, preceded by two blessings and followed by one, from the start of the day—that is, when there is sufficient light—until one quarter of the interval between sunrise and sunset has elapsed.¹⁶ After the fact, it may recited until one-third of that interval has elapsed,

¹³ See above, pp. 53–54.

¹⁴ See above, p. 4.

¹⁵ See above, pp. 81–86.

¹⁶ See *Berakhot* 1:1–2; *Berakhot* 9b; *Shulḥan Arukh*, *Orah Ḥayyim* 58:1—“The time for reciting the morning *shema*’ begins when he can see a casual acquaintance at a distance of four cubits and identify him and extends to the end of the third hour, which is one-fourth of the day.” (The interval between sunrise and sunset is divided into twelve equal “hours,” whose duration varies with the season of the year.—*translator’s note*). In other words, the time extends for about three hours from when there is enough light to identify a familiar person at a distance of four cubits.

and if that time is missed, it may be recited at any time during the day, but without the associated blessings. As the *Shulhan Arukh* puts it, “Even though [the *shema*’s] time extends until the end of the third hour, if the third hour has passed and he has not read it, he reads it, with its blessings, during the entire fourth hour, that is, [until] one-third of the day [has elapsed], but he is not rewarded as is one who has read it on time. And if the fourth hour has elapsed without his reading it, he reads it without its blessings all day.”¹⁷ The times for statutory prayer¹⁸ are likewise fixed: the morning prayer is to be recited between sunrise and the end of the fourth hour; the afternoon prayer, between halfway into the seventh hour (that is, a half-hour after midday) and sunset; and the evening prayer, after nightfall and on through the night.¹⁹

The *Mitnaggedim* claimed that the *hasidim* belittled prayer, prayed tardily, and contented themselves with reading the *shema*’ without its blessings. The Vilnius congregation’s bill of excommunication, dated 8 Iyyar 5532 (May 11, 1772), states “And they always tarry two hours before their prayer, long enough for the times for reading the *shema*’ and even for the statutory prayer to pass.”²⁰ The excommunication decree issued that same year in Brody terms the custom “passage of the time for reading the *shema*’ and for statutory prayer.”²¹

Some of the accusations imply that the tardiness is attributable to laziness and idleness. *Breaking of Sinners* cites a dispute between R. Elimelekh of Lozansky and Rabbi Aaron Ettinga in Jaroslav, Galicia: “And he [Rabbi Aaron Ettinga] asked him further: Why do you tarry beyond the time for reading the *shema*’, for they begin at 9:00 a.m. and read the *shema*’ at 11:00. And the fool [R. Elimelekh of Lozansky] responded that he discharges his obligation with a small reading of the *shema*’ before the [full] reading of the *shema*’.”²² And

¹⁷ *Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim* 58:6.

¹⁸ The Hebrew “*tefillah*” can mean prayer in general as well as the specific prayer known as the *amidah* (or *shemoneh esreh*), required by Jewish Law to be recited at fixed times in the morning, afternoon, and evening. For clarity, the latter sense is here rendered “statutory prayer.”—*translator’s note*.

¹⁹ See *Berakhot* 4:1; *Berakhot* 26a–27b.

²⁰ Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, p. 38.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²² “A short reading of the *shema*’” apparently refers to the reading of the first verse of the *shema*’ during *Qorbanot*, the preface to morning worship devoted primarily to the recitation of various biblical and talmudic passages related to the sacrifices offered in the Temple.

he [Rabbi Ettinga] asked: in that case, your blessings before the *shema'* will be cancelled, as explained in *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim*; but he protested and said: But you do not pray at all."²³

As a substantive matter, it is doubtful that Rabbi Ettinga was correct, for the Jewish Law in the *Shulḥan Arukh* is not so unbending, and there is a way to permit one who timely reads the first verse of the *shema'* to later read the entire *shema'* with its blessings. And while the *Shulḥan Arukh* rules that one who reads the *shema'* late does so without the blessings, it later explicitly determines that one may read the blessings separately and that it is even desirable to read the *shema'* once again with its blessings.²⁴ Nevertheless, the *Mitnaggedim* so frequently and consistently accuse the *ḥasidim* of delaying the start of prayer and belittling it that it is hard to doubt that the practice of delay became something of a purposeful one, a sort of identifying mark of a Hasidic community.

It is not known how the practice of delaying the start of prayer originated or who first instituted it. Here, too, there is no proof or hint that the Besht or R. Dov Ber of Mezhrichi had the practice of praying late or that either of them instituted such a custom among his disciples. Abraham Joshua Heschel noted the criticism directed by R. Pinḥas of Korets against the disciples of "the *Maggid*" who prayed late, and he believed the target was R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev.²⁵ A late Hasidic source, *Purification of the Service (Mizraf ha-Avodah)*, reports that the two who had the practice of delaying the morning prayer were two individual *zaddikim*, R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev and R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zolochov,²⁶ but the Hasidic conduct literature contains no practice that explicitly promotes tardiness in prayer or that explains the significance of such tardiness.

The first references to the custom in positive tones appear in the writings of R. Yehiel Mikhel's disciples—R. Jacob Joseph, "the Seer

²³ Wilensky 1970, vol. 2, p. 176. If the dispute actually took place, it would have been no later than 5536 (1776), the year of R. Aaron Ettinga's death.

²⁴ See *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 60:2—"If he [already] recited the *shema'* without blessing, he discharged his obligation to recite the *shema'* and he goes back and recites the blessings without reciting the *shema'*. But it seems to me preferable to go back and recite the *shema'* with the blessings."

²⁵ See Heschel 1948–1952, p. 227. Similarly, Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 142, n. 50.

²⁶ See *Purification of the Service* 30b–31a. Similarly, Mondschein 1978; Assaf 1992, pp. 204–205.

of Lublin”;²⁷ R. Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir;²⁸ and R. Benjamin of Zalozhtsy, who provides the thread that leads to the custom’s origin. In his *Golden Doves*, R. Benjamin cites the words of R. Yehiel Mikhel, who explains the reason for tardiness in prayer. It thus appears that R. Yehiel Mikhel is the only one of the fathers of Hasidism who defended this custom and cited its rationale:

And so I heard from the rabbi the *maggid*, the venerable, pious, and wondrous man of God, our master the rabbi R. Yehiel Mikhel, may his lamp illuminate, regarding what is said, the early pious ones would tarry an hour before praying and would then pray so they would direct their hearts to God . . . and the aforementioned מוֹדֵר [our master the rabbi R. Yehiel] explained that while they were [tarrying], they would pray that they could direct their hearts in their prayer and that God, may He be blessed, help them so they would be able to pray with *kavvanah*; and that is what they said, they would tarry, etc., and pray at that time that they could direct [their prayers] and that He, may He be blessed, help them to pray properly.²⁹

R. Yehiel Mikhel was referring to the statement in the Mishnah: “One should not stand up to pray [statutory prayer] without a sense of seriousness. “The early pious ones” would tarry an hour and then pray, so they would direct their hearts to God.”³⁰ His point of departure is the sequence of the words, which run opposite to what logic would suggest: at first blush, it would be more reasonable to say that “the early pious ones” would tarry an hour to direct their hearts to God, and only then would they pray. But the Mishnah reverses the

²⁷ See *In Memory of This* (*Zikhron Zot*), pp. 123–124: “If perchance he delays the time because of love of the Creator, may He be blessed, and he is engaged in communion with Him or in praises, or if it seems to him that he will produce more contentment for Him, may He be blessed, by not reciting the *shema* or statutory prayer, even if the evil impulse admonish him, he should not be concerned about any punishment over doing more to please the Creator because of love for Him; and, in truth, God desires the heart, and a sin for a proper purpose is great, and this is [the meaning of] all your deeds shall be for the sake of heaven.” See also *Elior* 1993/3, pp. 390–393.

²⁸ See *The Light That Illuminates* (*Or ha-Me’ir*) 12a: “For it is fitting that before standing to pray he introduce into his heart divine greatness and exaltation and arouse his inner self to worship; and anything he feels lacking in himself he should remedy through several initial pleas before he stands to pray, and then he will be ready to direct the intentions properly associated with the holy names, as it is said, “the early pious ones” would tarry one hour before praying.” See also Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, pp. 130–131.

²⁹ *Golden Doves* 52b. Parallel: id. 93b.

³⁰ *Berakhot* 5:1.

sequence and places “pray” before the expression “so they would direct their hearts to God.” R. Yehiel Mikhel expounded that reversal as meaning that “the early pious ones” would pray for the success of their prayers and accordingly would begin to pray an hour before the designated time. Thus, R. Yehiel Mikhel expanded the time for prayer, including in it the hour that precedes it. That approach suggests that one who tarries before praying does not as a practical matter delay his prayer; for he also devotes the preceding hour to prayer. It follows that he regarded delay not as treating the times for prayer lightly but as broadening the activity encompassed within it. Thus, the custom of delaying prayer originated not in any disdain for Jewish Law or in some freewheeling stance that pursues “conscious denial of the dominance of time,”³¹ as Rivka Schatz believed. Rather, it grew out of an attitude of seriousness and reverence.

Reverence regarding prayer appears as well in a homily cited by R. Moses Shoham of Dolina in R. Yehiel Mikhel’s name. In that homily, R. Yehiel Mikhel explains tarrying before prayer as preparation for casting off corporeality: “And I heard regarding this matter from my child’s father-in-law, my master and teacher, the holy, divine rabbi my master and teacher Yehiel Mikhel, preacher of truth, may his memory endure to the life of the world to come . . . the early pious ones would tarry one hour before prayer, until they cast off corporeality.”³²

The custom of concentrating before prayer to purify one’s heart of the vanities of this world and of evil thoughts, thereby casting off corporeality, is not unique to R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples. It is mentioned in the ethical works of the Safed kabbalists, such as *Beginning of Wisdom* by R. Elijah De Vidash. De Vidash treats preparation for prayer on the basis of the verse “Let your heart not hasten to put forth a word before God” (Eccl. 5:1); he learns from there “that one should not pray immediately but should first compose himself in his mind and know before Whom he stands, as they said, ‘One should not stand up to pray without a sense of seriousness . . .’”³³

Another kabbalist who favorably regarded the custom of “the early pious ones” to tarry before prayer was R. Hayyim Vital, the disciple

³¹ Schatz-Uffenheimer 1988, p. 150.

³² *Words of Moses (Divrei Moshe)*, Portion *Qodashim*, 58a; *Great Waters*, pp. 43–44.

³³ *Beginning of Wisdom*, vol. 2, *The Gate of Holiness*, chap. 10, sec. 28.

of the Ari. He based his remarks on the Ari's theology, according to which prayer brings about unity and coupling in the supernal worlds. The ideal situation in coupling is termed "face-to-face illumination," in which the "small face" (*ze'ir anpin*) and the *shekhinah* are found face-to-face; defective coupling is back-to-back. Tarrying before prayer, accordingly, is intended to "raise *mayim nuqvin*"—raise the feminine to the masculine and bring about face-to-face coupling; tarrying after prayer is intended to continue the coupling for as long a time as possible:

Therefore, the early pious ones would tarry an hour before the prayer, and [an hour] after the prayer, and an hour in prayer, in order to continue face-to-face illumination after the prayer, so that the small face would not draw back immediately after prayer.³⁴

Thus, the custom of tarrying before prayer was adopted by R. Yehiel Mikhel and his disciples as part of the ethos of "the early pious ones," even if that ethos appears at first blush to run counter to Jewish Law. Their desire to act as pious ones and separatists can be seen in the practice of equanimity, which is the attribute of the pious according to R. Bahya ibn Paquda;³⁵ in the interruption of study for the sake of communion, the quality of "the early pious ones" in *Book of the God-Fearing*;³⁶ in the tendency to withdraw in order to become exalted and sanctified;³⁷ and in the delaying of prayer and its dedication to mystical concentration, in the manner in which R. Yehiel Mikhel interpreted the quality of "the early pious ones" in the *Talmud* and in the writings of the Safed kabbalists.

A further source that helps explain the matter of delayed prayer appears in the letter of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady to R. Alexander Sender of Shklov, not himself one of the *hasidim*.³⁸ The letter was written circa 5547 (1787), but in no event later than 5558 (1798), the year of R. Alexander's death. Among other things, R. Shneur Zalman denies the charge that the *hasidim* regard themselves as exempt from the rabbinic commandment of statutory prayer because

³⁴ *Tree of Life*, in *Collected Writings of the Ari.*, vol. 1, *The Gate of Rules*, chap. 13, p. 22. See also Tishby 1991, p. 116.

³⁵ See above, p. 310.

³⁶ See above, p. 365.

³⁷ See above, pp. 366–367.

³⁸ According to *Habad* tradition, R. Alexander Sender eventually joined the *Habad hasidim*.

they compare themselves to R. Simeon b. Yoḥai and his colleagues, who discharged their obligation solely with recitation of the *shemaʿ*, a biblical commandment. That accusation, in fact, is not known from the writings of the *Mitnaggedim*, and we are aware of it only through its denial:

And those who say [statutory] prayer is [merely] rabbinic never in their lives saw illumination, for even though the formulation of the prayer and the requirement to recite it thrice daily is rabbinic, its principle and essence are the basis of the entire Torah—to know God and recognize his greatness and splendor with a full and composed mind and with understanding of the heart, for he should contemplate it so much that the thinking soul is aroused to love the name of God and commune with Him and His Torah and to very much desire his commandments.³⁹ But all of this is achieved by us nowadays through the recitation, with full mouth and a voice that arouses the heart's intentions, of *pesuqei de-zimra* [psalms and other readings before the morning service itself] and the blessings before and after recitation of the *shemaʿ*. And all this may differ from R. Simeon b. Yoḥai and his colleagues, for whom recitation of the *shemaʿ* alone sufficed for all of this, for it was achieved by them at first glance, in the humbleness of the heart that has faith in His covenant with them. But nowadays, anyone who is near to God and has once tasted the taste of prayer, will understand that without it, no man can raise his hand or foot to serve God in truth, rather than perfunctorily.⁴⁰

R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady's words are directed toward the *talmud*'s consideration of whether secular activities may be begun shortly before the time for the afternoon prayer, in view of the risk that a person might forgo the prayer in order to complete his activity. Among other things, one may not begin a haircut, enter the bathhouse, begin tanning a hide, start a legal proceeding, or begin a meal. If a person began one of these activities, he must interrupt it for the recitation of the *shemaʿ* and statutory prayer; but the study of Torah need be interrupted only for the recitation of the *shemaʿ* but not for statutory prayer: "As is learned in a *baraita* [tannaitic text

³⁹ R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady is alluding to a well-known dispute over the origin of the commandment to pray. According to Maimonides, the commandment of prayer is biblical—"from the divine speech," as he puts it. According to Nahmanides, the commandment is rabbinic. See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Sefer Ahavah*, *Hilkhot Tefillah u-Birkat Kohanim* 1:1; Maimonides' *Book of the Commandments*, with Nahmanides' *Comments* (*Sefer ha-Mizvot le-ha-Rambam im Hasagot ha-Ramban*), *Shores Rishon*, par. 9, p. 19.

⁴⁰ Wilensky 1970, vol. 1, pp. 299–301.

outside the Mishnah], friends engaged in Torah pause for the recitation of the *shema*⁴¹ but do not pause for statutory prayer. R. Yohanan said: that was taught only with respect to the likes of R. Simeon b. Yohai and his colleagues, for whom Torah is their usual activity; but the likes of us pause for the recitation of the *shema*⁴² and for statutory prayer [as well].”⁴¹

R. Yohanan’s words “that was taught only with respect to the likes of R. Simeon b. Yohai and his colleagues, for whom Torah is their usual activity” form the basis for the determination in the *Shulhan Arukh* that everyone interrupts Torah study for the recitation of the *shema*⁴³ and for statutory prayer, except R. Simeon b. Yohai and his colleagues, who pause only for recitation of the *shema*⁴⁴ but not for statutory prayer.⁴² R. Moses Isserles (the Rema) added “But if he is teaching others, he does not pause . . . yet he pauses and reads the first verse of the *shema*.”⁴³ R. Isserles’ decision sheds light on the response of R. Elimelekh of Lozansky, that he and his colleagues discharge their obligation by short recitation of the *shema*⁴⁵, that is, by reciting only its first verse.

In sum, it can be said that R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady in fact denied that he and his colleagues skip statutory prayer because they see themselves as worthy of the privileges unique to R. Simeon b. Yohai and his colleagues. Yet the negation implies the assertion: Jewish Law grants R. Simeon b. Yohai and his colleagues extra privileges, which express the community’s recognition of their higher spiritual standing. To all appearances, Hasidic prayer customs, such as delaying statutory prayer, were interpreted by the *Mitnaggedim* as a sign of the demand by R. Yehiel Mikhel and his colleagues to be granted special privileges that would acknowledge their higher spiritual level.

⁴¹ Cf. *Shabbat* 11a.

⁴² See *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 106:2.

⁴³ Ibid. See also sec. 89.

APPENDIX III

FAMILY TREE

The Family of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk

R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk immigrated to the Land of Israel with the members of his family. His son, his son- or sons-in-law, and his grandsons are mentioned in the margins of his letters in such terms as “my delightful son, my son(s)-in-law, and my delightful grandsons all hope you are well.”¹ Of all the men in the family, only his son Moses and grandson Samuel are mentioned by name, for it was they on whom he pinned his hopes—especially his grandson Samuel, born in the Land of Israel of Moses’ marriage to a woman of distinguished Sefardic lineage.

R. Menahem Mendel’s sons-in-law are known by name only through their signatures. A letter sent in 5546 (1786), after the outbreak of plague in Safed, bears the signatures of the survivors who escaped from Safed to Tiberias, including “and the statement of Jacob, son of the rabbi our master the rabbi Aaron, may his memory be for a blessing, son-in-law of the rabbi.”² A similar letter of that year, sent after the spread of the epidemic in Tiberias, was again signed by the survivors, including “and the statement of Dov Ber, son of our master the rabbi Azriel, son-in-law of the rabbi.”³ We thus learn of two sons-in-law of “the rabbi”: Jacob b. Aaron, who likely lived first in Safed and settled in Tiberias after the epidemic, and Dov Ber b. Azriel.

The women of the family are not mentioned in R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk’s epistles even obliquely. The only one alluded to, apropos a report of her marriage, is the daughter of a Sefardic

¹ Barnai 1980, letter 39, p. 168; Sursky 2000, vol. 2, p. 115. See also Barnai 1980, letter 31, p. 147; letter 39, p. 163.

² Barnai 1980, letter 30, p. 144; Sursky 2000, vol. 2, p. 102.

³ *Ms. Jerusalem 8 903*; Barnai 1980, letter 33, p. 151. In *Gleaned Statements (Liqqutei Amarim)* (ed. Schmerler), vol. 2, 20b and Sursky 2000, vol. 2., p. 105, the reading is “son-in-law of the rabbi, may he live [long].”

family from Jerusalem, who married R. Menahem Mendel's son Moses in 5538 (1778).⁴ It is generally assumed, though unproven, that she was of the Abulafia family.

Only after R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk's death did his associates write from Tiberias that his daughter had died shortly before his own passing, leaving two children—a six-month-old infant and a seven-year-old daughter. The orphans were left in the care of their maternal uncle Moses, for “their widowed father had to wander outside [the Land of Israel] to marry a suitable wife, and who knows when he will return to reside in the Land.”⁵ It is known that the son-in-law who departed after being widowed was R. Dov Ber b. Azriel, later mentioned in a letter by R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady. That letter informs us that R. Dov Ber promised to return to the Land of Israel and requested at the outset the allocation promised to R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk's descendants.⁶

The names of the deceased daughter, of her mother, and of R. Moses' wife are known only from a later letter. In 5550 (1790), R. Moses b. R. Menahem Mendel asked his associates to mention his family members in their prayers; in so doing, he identified them, as is customary, by their mothers' names: “I, Moses b. Sima; my wife, *Señora* Yokheved, daughter of Sarah Rebecca Leah; my son Samuel, may he live [long]; my daughter Leah Zisel, may she live [long]; my niece Bryna, daughter of Zisel, may she live [long].”⁷ We see that R. Moses' wife was named Yokheved, his mother (the widow of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk) was named Sima (perhaps a variant of Simḥah), and his deceased sister was named Zisel. It appears as well that Zisel's infant son did not survive; only her daughter Bryna remained alive.

In 5552 (1792), R. Moses and his wife Yokheved arranged for their son Samuel to marry the daughter of R. Nahman of Bratslav, who was then residing in the Land of Israel, but the boy died before the wedding.⁸ In 5559 (1799), R. Moses b. R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk died.⁹ We do not know when his daughter, Leah Zisel, or his niece, Bryna, died or whether they left descendants.

⁴ See Barnai 1980, letter 11, pp. 67–68.

⁵ Barnai 1980, letter 44, p. 180.

⁶ See Hillman 1953, p. 44.

⁷ Sursky 2000, vol. 2, p. 172.

⁸ See *In Praise of R. Nahman (Shivḥei ha-Ran)*, sec. 32.

⁹ See Avishar 1973, p. 303; Sursky 2000, vol. 1, p. 143.

As for the second son-in-law—R. Jacob b. Aaron—we know nothing of his fate or that of his wife, daughter of “the rabbi.” According to a tradition of the Karlin *hasidim*, R. Jacob was the son of R. Aaron “the great” of Karlin.¹⁰ The historian Haya Stiman-Katz accepted that premise but surmised that R. Jacob was the son-in-law not of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk but of R. Abraham of Kolyshki. As she saw it, “Only two of the *hasidim* in Tiberias in those years were called “rabbi”: R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and R. Abraham of Kolyshki.”¹¹ And since the members of the group report only on the fate of the son-in-law R. Dov Ber b. Azriel, who departed the Land of Israel and left behind orphans needing support, she assumed that R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk had only that one son-in-law and that R. Jacob, “son-in-law of the rabbi” was the son-in-law of R. Abraham of Kolyshki. Stiman-Katz herself questioned the second part of her hypothesis, however, and wrote that it needed additional proof. In so doing, she may have recognized that R. Abraham of Kolyshki never refers to a son-in-law in his letters, mentioning only his son and grandson. Moreover, R. Jacob’s signature shows that פ”ס (*a-q*) is the abbreviation for his father’s name, not his father-in-law’s. Those who take the view that the father-in-law’s name is פ”ס (*a-q*)—for Abraham Karliner¹² or Abraham Kolyshkier—confuse it with a possible abbreviation for the father—Aaron Karliner or Aaron the Holy (*aharon ha-qadosh*).

And so, Haya Stiman-Katz’s basic observation—that the members of the Hasidic group in Tiberias used the designation “the rabbi” only for R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk or R. Abraham of Kolyshki—in fact suggests the opposite conclusion: since R. Abraham of Kolyshki had no son-in-law, it is fair to assume that R. Jacob b. Aaron was the son-in-law of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, as was R. Dov Ber b. Azriel. But that, of course, raises the question of why there is no trace of R. Jacob, of his wife—a daughter of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk—and of their children, if any. The mystery of “the son-in-law of the rabbi” led me to investigate whether there

¹⁰ See Grossman 1943, p. 89. It is also possible that his cousin was R. Joel, brother-in-law of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller and addressee of his letters, and son of Moses of Korbin, the brother of R. Aaron “the great” of Karlin.

¹¹ Stiman-Katz 1986, p. 46.

¹² See Grossman 1943, p. 89; Schor 1986; Schor 1994, pp. 169, 175. (“Karliner” and “Kolyshkier” are spelled in Hebrew with a פ (*qof*), represented in transliteration as *q*—*translator’s note*.)

might be some substance to my family's tradition that we are the descendants of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, born to his daughter and her husband, R. Jacob.

R. Hayyim David "The Younger" (ha-Qatan)

My grandmother, Haya Altshuler of the Epstein family, may her memory be for a blessing, was the firstborn daughter of Hayyim David Epstein and Pearl Zisel of the Yaffee family. Her mother's genealogy has long been known to us: Pearl (Peninah) was born in Hebron, the great-granddaughter of Israel and Shprinza Yaffee, who immigrated to the Land of Israel circa 5579 (1819). R. Israel Yaffee, the printer of *In Praise of the Besht*, was "administrator of the holy city of Hebron"¹³—a founder of the community of the Habad *hasidim* in Hebron. The terms of Pearl's marriage contract included an undertaking by her mother, Frayda Leah—widow of Israel Duber b. Ephraim Yaffee—to provide the young couple one thousand groschen, secured by her share in the Habad community fund. Our relatives on the Yaffee side include the Galinsky, Ne'eman, Samuel, Weingarten, Rokeiah, Alkali, Horowitz, and Friedman families. The Horowitz family includes the Bostoner Rebbe, and the Friedman family are descendants of the *Maggid* R. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, to whom are related as well the dynasty of Ruzhin-Sadgura *admorim*.¹⁴

My grandmother's father, Hayyim David Epstein, was born in Tiberias in 5626 (1866). He was a colorful figure, full of life and steeped in controversy and involved in a variety of businesses. Among other things, he was among the first to open a pharmacy in Palestine-Land of Israel, and he was engaged as well in brokering and purchasing land for settlement in the Golan Mountains and in the coastal plan. Their marriage contract was signed in Safed in 5644 (1884), when the intended couple were still very young, and the wedding took place circa 5650 (1890). Soon after, Hayyim David and Pearl Epstein settled in Beirut, Lebanon, where their children were born. The first, my grandmother, was born in 5654 (1894). As a child,

¹³ Avishar 1970, p. 215. See also above, pp. 192; 264–269.

¹⁴ The Yaffee family genealogy has been researched by Avivah Ne'eman, a member of the family; her work is still in manuscript.

she experienced the life of the Hasidic community in Tiberias only through abbreviated visits, for her father had abandoned the traditional way of life and her aunts likewise married children of the pioneers of the First Immigration (*Aliyyah*), the founders of Rosh Pinah and Metullah. The Beirut of my grandmother's youth was a Levantine-cosmopolitan city; grandmother studied at a French Catholic school and became friendly with people of the contemporary, Zionist immigration, who would stop in Beirut on their way to the Land of Israel, and with young people from the Jewish settlements who had come from the Land of Israel to Beirut to study at the American University there. In the Epstein family of Beirut one spoke Yiddish with one's parents, French in school, Arabic with the neighbors, and Hebrew with friends and cousins.

Yet my grandmother also knew quite a bit about her father's family. Accordingly, my reconstruction of our family's chronology began with her stories, supported by documents that she handed down to my parents. These are consistent with the historical sources: my grandmother's father, Hayyim David, was the son of Sarah and R. Jacob Zevi Hirsch, himself the son of R. Menahem Mendel Epstein of Minsk. R. Menahem Mendel Epstein reached Tiberias in 5594 (1834) while still a youth and became a civic leader, administrator of the Reisen community fund in Tiberias. His descendants include the dynasty of Slonim *admorim*, members of the Weinberg family.¹⁵ My grandmother recalled how the Tiberians had referred to R. Menahem Mendel Epstein: "the Reisisher" (from Reisen) or "the Rushisher" (the Russian).

My grandmother told as well of one of her ancestors known as "the Consul" who died in "the great tremor"—an earthquake that hit Safed and Tiberias in 5597 (1837). Her cousin, Amihud Schwartz of Rosh Pinah, may his memory be for a blessing, added more precisely that she was referring to R. Hayyim David "the younger," who was head of the Reisen community fund in Tiberias and whose signature appears prominently on various letters and documents.¹⁶ On one of these, "Hayyim David "the younger," head and administrator of the holy congregation of Russia in Tiberias, may it be built and established,"¹⁷ was among the signatories of a special epistle

¹⁵ See Sursky 2000, vol. 1, p. 255.

¹⁶ See id., vol. 2, pp. 297–298.

¹⁷ Ya'ari 1971, p. 357. Similarly, Morgenstern 1985, p. 131.

given by the leaders of the Land of Israel to the rabbinic emissary R. Barukh, dispatched to Yemen in 5591 (1831) to find the ten lost tribes. The other signatories were R. Israel of Shklov, prominent disciple of *Gaon* of Vilnius, who lived in Safed, and R. Aryeh, the trustee of the fund of the *Perushim* in Jerusalem. R. Hayyim David “the younger’s” standing clarifies why my grandmother referred to him as “the Consul”; the overseer of the charitable organizations or funds of the Sefardi community was called “the Director” (*ha-paqid*), and the head of the Ashkenazi funds was correspondingly called “the Consul.”¹⁸

That R. Hayyim David “the younger” was killed in an earthquake is confirmed by the listing of quake victims sent to Amsterdam, which mentions “the renowned rabbi Hayyim David “the younger,” may his memory be for a blessing, head and administrator of the holy congregation of Russia.”¹⁹ To similar effect is the inscription on his gravestone, preserved in the old cemetery of Tiberias: “Here lies the rabbi, the pious one (*he-ḥasid*), great in Torah, our master the rabbi R. David “the younger,” son of the scholar, our master the rabbi Jacob Judah, may his memory be for a blessing, killed in an earthquake 24 Tevet 5597 [1837], may his soul be bound up in the bond of life.”²⁰ A comparison of the inscription with written evidence shows, among other things, that the name “Hayyim,” given to one who suffers a serious illness or other danger, was not given to Hayyim David “the younger” at birth but was added after 5577 (1817), and therefore does not appear on his gravestone.

Moreover, the census of the Jews in the Land of Israel, undertaken at the initiative of Sir Moses Montefiore in 5599 (1839), notes a five-year-old orphan, the daughter of the rabbi R. Hayyim David, may his memory be for a blessing, killed in an earthquake.²¹ Her gravestone in Tiberias shows that she died in 5664 (1904) and that her name was Haya Malkah.²² Similarly, my grandmother’s father was named Hayyim David and my grandmother was called Haya. Thus, Hayyim David Epstein (my great-grandfather) was the grandson,

¹⁸ R. Hayyim David “the younger” may also have been the honorary consul of a foreign government, in accordance with contemporary practice.

¹⁹ Lunz 1911, p. 161.

²⁰ Sursky 2000, vol. 1, p. 115.

²¹ See *Census of the Jews of the Land of Israel*, p. 64.

²² See Sursky 2000, vol. 1, p. 115.

on his mother's side, of Haya Malkah, and he was named after her father, Hayyim David "the younger," just as my grandmother was named after her.

It must be stressed that Hayyim David "the younger" should not be identified with one of the immigrants (*olim*) of 5537 (1777) called "David, he is "the younger," the rabbi of the holy congregation of Old Bukhov."²³ During the plague of 5546 (1786), R. David "the younger" of Bukhov resided outside the Land of Israel, and when the survivors of the plague were enumerated by name, the listing included "R. Me'ir Bukhover and his entire household—alive . . . The wife of the rabbi of Bukhov and his grandson—alive; accordingly, do not defer coming."²⁴ After the plague of 5552 (1792), R. Abraham of Kolyshki listed the survivors, among them "our master Neta with his grandfather, the rabbi of Bukhov,"²⁵ that is, R. David "the younger" of Bukhov. It is thus clear that in 5546 (1786), R. David of Bukhov had a grandson; and even if he had been blessed with a grandson at an early age, say thirty-five, that would mean he was born circa 5511 (1751). If he was still alive at the time of the 5597 (1837) earthquake, he would have been about eighty-six years old, making it unlikely, to say the least, that he would have left a five-year-old orphan. It follows that among the *hasidim* of Tiberias two men were known as David "the younger": David, the rabbi of Old Bukhov; and a younger man, Hayyim David "the younger."

R. Jacob b. Aaron, the Son-in-Law of the Rabbi

My family line led me back seven generations, to my grandmother's father's great-grandfather, R. Hayyim David "the younger" of Tiberias. At that point, both human memory and family documents reach a dead end, a consequence of the destruction wrought on the Tiberias and Safed communities by both human and natural causes: the rebellion of the local peasants in 5594 (1834) and, three years later, "the great earthquake." Many orphans are mentioned without parents'

²³ Barnai 1980, letter 52, p. 206; Sursky 2000, vol. 2, p. 159.

²⁴ Sursky 2000, vol. 2, p. 104. Other versions omit the reference to the wife of the rabbi of Bukhov and his grandson.

²⁵ Wilensky 1988, p. 115; Sursky 2000, vol. 2, p. 179.

names in the Montefiore census conducted two years after the earthquake. Some of them were raised by surviving members of the community, while others were sent to relatives in other cities or outside the Land of Israel. The earthquake, which killed people and destroyed homes, also tore the continuum of memory, so necessary to reconstructing a family history.

Beyond the gap in memory are two generations—R. Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk and his colleagues, and the generation of their children. The gap can be bridged with information from the gravestone of R. Ḥayyim David “the younger,” for its inscription identifies his father as “the scholar, our master the rabbi Jacob Judah, may his memory be for a blessing.” And the signature of “David b. Jacob Judah” appears on five letters sent from the Land of Israel by members of R. Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk’s group:

5565 (1805)—“and the statement of David son of our master the rabbi Judah Jacob, קִרְאָה־ק (*h-r-a-h-q*), may his memory be for a blessing.”²⁶

5566 (1806)—“and the statement of David son of our master the rabbi Judah Jacob, may his Rock protect and redeem him.”²⁷

5571 (1811)—“the statement of David son of our master the rabbi Judah Jacob, may his lamp illuminate, קִרְאָה־ק (*h-r-a-h-q*), may the memory of righteous be for a blessing.”²⁸

5571 (1811)—“and the statement of David son of our master the rabbi Judah Jacob מְרָא־ק (*m-r-a-h-q*).”²⁹

5577 (1817)—“and the statement of David son of our master Jacob, $\text{פִּי} [(p)arnas-warosh]$, councilor and head].”³⁰

These signatures establish that David—that is, Ḥayyim David “the younger”—was the son of someone in the group that reached Safed

²⁶ Sursky 2000, vol. 2, p. 250. (The abbreviations are explained below; here, they are simply transliterated.)

²⁷ Ibid., p. 260.

²⁸ Barnai 1980, letter 80, p. 291. In some versions, ק (*h*) is substituted for ה (*h*), and the abbreviation reads “ קִרְאָה־ק ” (*h-r-a-h-q*). See Hillman 1953, p. 195; Sursky 2000, vol. 2, p. 275.

²⁹ Ms. *Jerusalem 8 903*. The first letter of the abbreviation— מ (*m*)—is blurred in the manuscript. Cf. Sursky 2000, vol. 2, p. 284: “and the statement of David son of our master the rabbi Judah Jacob, may his lamp illuminate, son-in-law of קִרְאָה־ק (*r-a-h-q*), may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing.”

³⁰ Ms. *Jerusalem 8 903*. Cf. Sursky 2000, vol. 2, p. 293: “and the statement of David son of our master Jacob, may his lamp illuminate.”

and Tiberias in 5537 (1777) with R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk. But who was his father, R. Jacob Judah? Whence did he suddenly appear in 5565 (1805) among the association of Tiberias *hasidim*? And what is the meaning of פ"ר (an abbreviation for פְּרִנֵּס וְרֹאשׁ, "councilor and head") as applied to someone not known to be among the group's leaders? These questions led me back to the mystery of R. Jacob b. Aaron, "son-in-law of the rabbi," who had disappeared after 5546 (1786).

An examination of the various references to members of the Hasidic group in Tiberias shows that three were called "Jacob": Jacob ha-Levi b. Abraham Segal, Jacob b. Judah Goltsor, and Jacob Judah. Clearly, R. Jacob b. Aaron, son-in-law of the rabbi, is not to be identified with "the honorable rabbinic emissary, the wondrous and venerable, our master the rabbi Jacob son of our master and teacher Abraham Segal,"³¹ mentioned in a letter dated 5555 (1795), for the latter's father was Abraham, not Aaron. Nor is R. Jacob b. Aaron "our master the rabbi Jacob Goltsor, may his lamp illuminate,"³² for Jacob Goltsor was Jacob b. Judah, as shown by his signature on a letter dated 5555 (1795): "the statement of Jacob, son of my lord, my father, the honorable exalted Judah Goltsor."³³ The third Jacob was Jacob Judah, father of Hayyim David "the younger," whose father's name, Aaron, is alluded to by abbreviations in three of the five signatures listed above:

5565 (1805)—"and the statement of David son of our master the rabbi Judah Jacob, הַרְאֵה"ק (h-r-a-h-q) [*ha-rav aharon ha-qadosh*; the holy rabbi Aaron], may his memory be for a blessing."

5571 (1811)—"the statement of, David son of our master the rabbi Judah Jacob, may his lamp illuminate, הַרְאֵה"ק (h-r-a-h-q) [*ha-rav aharon ha-qadosh*; the holy rabbi Aaron], may the memory of righteous be for a blessing."

5571 (1811)—"and the statement of David son of our master the rabbi Judah Jacob מְרֵא"ה"ק (m-r-a-h-q) [*moreinu rav aharon ha-qadosh*; our master the holy R. Aaron]."

³¹ Barnai 1980, letter 61, p. 231; Sursky 2000, vol. 2, p. 219.

³² Barnai 1980, letter 37, p. 159; Sursky 2000, vol. 2, p. 108.

³³ Sursky 2000, vol. 2, p. 222. On the basis of signatures appearing on receipts issued as a rabbinic emissary, Joshua Mondschein corrected his name from Koltser to Goltser. See Mondschein 1992/2, pp. 295, 296.

In some versions, to be sure, the signatures were copied corruptly and the letter ן [h] was replaced with ן [l], but the fact remains that all the details pertaining to “Jacob, son of the rabbi our master the rabbi Aaron, may his memory be for a blessing, son-in-law of the rabbi” correspond to what we know of R. Jacob Judah, father of Hayyim David “the younger,” the son (not the son-in-law) of the holy R. Aaron: the grandfather’s name is Aaron; the father’s name is Jacob, or Jacob Judah; and the son’s name is David, later Hayyim David.³⁴

To all appearances, then, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk’s lost son-in-law, Jacob b. Aaron, is Jacob Judah. It follows that his son, Hayyim David “the younger,” was R. Menahem Mendel’s grandson. If true, these family connections account for the high standing of Hayyim David “the younger” and for his appointment as head of the Reisen fund in Tiberias after the last members of the founding generation had died. But that same fact makes it hard to fathom why his father, Jacob Judah b. Aaron, stopped signing the group’s letters from the Land of Israel and why we know nothing of him for a period of nearly twenty years, from 5546 (1786) to 5565 (1805)—when his son began to sign epistles though referring to his father with the blessing for those still alive.

What happened to the son-in-law of the rabbi in the Land of Israel? One possibility is that his wife died and he went on to remarry in a match disapproved by the members of the group, who accordingly removed him from any influential positions. That may be alluded to in the comment about the rabbi’s other son-in-law, R. Dov Ber b. Azriel, who was widowed and “had to wander outside [the Land of Israel] to marry a suitable wife.” It is possible as well that he, too, left the Land of Israel or that the difficulties of living there broke his spirit and made him a recluse, though still alive and living in Tiberias. The documents do not speak to this point, and we cannot know with any certainty.

But all that being as it may, I sometimes wonder: could it be that through R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk’s anonymous daughter and forgotten son-in-law, his hope for his descendants never to leave the Land of Israel was realized? For R. Hayyim David “the younger”

³⁴ My thanks to Joshua Mondschein, librarian of the manuscript department of the National Library in Jerusalem, for his help in explicating the abbreviations.

was a central figure of the Jewish community in the Land of Israel in the first half of the nineteenth century. His great grandchildren married members of the traditional communities (the Tiberian families of Epstein, Weinberg and Toister), became part of the founding families of the First Immigration's settlements—Rosh Pinah (the Schwartz family), Metullah (the Belsky family), and Rehovot (the Altshuler family)—and were among the founders of Kibbutz ha-Ogen (the Bassan family).

PART FOUR

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

The primary sources are in Hebrew. They are generally cited to the first printed version. Where I could not do so, publication details are listed for the edition I used, and information related to the first printed is set forth in square brackets. When an English translation exists, its details are specified independently.

The primary sources are arranged by title in English alphabetical order as translated. The translation name is followed by a transliterated Hebrew in square brackets, the author's name, and publication data.

The Sources cited in the text were quoted verbatim, including erroneous spelling and printers' errors. Where the errors interfered with understanding, I added the correct spelling in square brackets. I likewise added, in square brackets, explanations of the abbreviations used in the sources and of difficult terminology, ambiguous antecedents, and Aramaic terms. The translations in the present edition have been done on the basis of these explanations and clarifications, which are made explicit only where necessary for the argument. In the translation, as in the original, emphasis in quotations is my own, unless otherwise indicated.

Abraham's Swiftmess [*Zerizuta de-Avraham*], Abraham Noah ha-Levi Heller, Lvov 5660 (1900).

Alphabet, Enlightening Letters [*Alfa Beta Otiyot Mahkimoṭ*] (printed from a ms. in the possession of Zevi Hirsch of Nadvorno), Berdichev 5577 (1817) [Breznits 5556 (1796)].

Alphabet, Enlightening Letters [*Alfa Beta Otiyot Mahkimoṭ*], In *Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* [*Zava'at ha-Ribash*], publication place lacking, 5554 (1794).

Banner of Ephraim's Encampment [*Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*], Ephraim of Sidlikov, Yuzepov 5643 (1883) [publication place lacking, apparently 5568 (1808)].

Beginning of Wisdom, complete edition [*Reshit Hokhmah ha-Shalem*], Elijah de Vidash, ed. and readied for printing by Hayyim Joseph Waldman, Jerusalem 5744 (1984) [Venice 5339 (1579)].

Benjamin's Portion [*Helqat Binyamin*], Benjamin of Zalozhtsy, Lvov 5554 (1794).

Benjamin's Sack [*Amtahat Binyamin*], Benjamin of Zalozhtsy, Minkvits 5556 (1796).

Besht's Epistle to R. Gershon of Kutov [*Iggeret ha-Besht le-Rabbi Gershon mi-Qutov*], In *Joseph is a Fruitful Son* [*Ben Porat Yosef*], Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, Korets 5541 (1781), 100a-b.

Besht's Epistle to R. Gershon of Kutov [*Iggeret ha-Besht le-Rabbi Gershon mi-Qutov*], In *R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov (Besht): His Life, Doctrine, and Activity* [*R. Yisra'el Ba'al Shem Tov (Besht): Hayyav, Shitato, u-Pe'ulato*], Abraham Kahana, Zhitomir 5661 (1900), 100-102.

Besht's Epistle to R. Gershon of Kutov [*Iggeret ha-Besht le-Rabbi Gershon mi-Qutov*], from *Ms. Jerusalem 8*, 5979. In *In Praise of the Besht* [*Shi'hei ha-Besht*], ms. facsimile, Joshua Mondschein, Jerusalem 5742 (1982), 229-239.

Biography of Jacob Joseph [*Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*], Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, Warsaw 5641 (1881) [Korets 5540 (1780)].

Book of Brightness [*Sefer ha-Bahir*], ed. Reuben Margalioṭ, Jerusalem 5711 (1951) [Amsterdam 5411 (1651)].

Book of Brightness [*The Bahir*], trans. and commentary by Aryeh Kaplan, New Jersey 1995. (English)

- Book of Creation, with a Commentary by R. Saadiah Gaon* [*Sefer Yezira im Peirush ha-Gaon Rabbeinu Sa'adyah*], trans. and commentary by Joseph Kapah, Jerusalem 5732 (1972).
- Book of Creation, With the Commentary "Secret Rose"* [*Sefer Yezira im Peirush Shoshan Sodo*], Korets 5539 (1779).
- Book of Creation* [*Sefer Yezira*], trans. and commentary by A. Peter Hayman, Tübingen 2004. (English)
- Book of Kanah* [*Sefer ha-Kanah*], Korets 5542 (1782); Korets 5544 (1784); Parichi 5546 (1786); Jerusalem 5758 (1998).
- Book of the God-Fearing* [*Sefer Haredim*], Elazar Azkari, Venice 5361 (1601).
- Book of the Magnificent* [*Sefer ha-Mefo'ar*], Solomon Molkho, Salonika 5289 (1529).
- Book of Visions* [*Sefer ha-Hezyonot*], Hayyim Vital, ed. Aaron Ze'ev Eshkoli, Jerusalem 5714 (1954) [Jerusalem 5626 (1866)].
- Book of Reincarnations* [*Sefer ha-Gilgulim*], Hayyim Vital, Frankfurt 5444 (1684); Zolkow 5532 (1772); Zolkow 5534 (1774).
- Booklet of the Holy* [*Mahberet ha-Qodesh*], Hayyim Vital, Korets 5543 (1783).
- Bud and Flower* [*Kaftor va-Ferah*], Estori ha-Parhi, Berlin 5611 (1851) [Venice 5309 (1549)].
- Census of the Jews of the Land of Israel* [*Mifqad Yehudei Eretz Yisra'el*] (5599–1839) (per Ms. Montefiore 528), introduction by Hadassah Asulin, ed. Zevi Baras, Jerusalem 5747 (1987).
- Commentary on the Torah* [*Peirush al ha-Torah*], Don Isaac Abarbanel, Jerusalem 5724 (1964).
- Covenant of Eternal Priesthood* [*Berit Kehumat Olam*], Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets, Lemberg 5608 (1848) [Lvov 5556 (1796)].
- Duties of the Heart* [*Hovot ha-Levavot*], Bahya ibn Pequda, Vilnius 5673 (1913).
- The Duties of the Heart* [*Hovot ha-Levavot*], trans. and commentary by Yaakov Feldman, New Jersey 1996. (English)
- Entry to the Gates* [*Mevo She'arim*], Hayyim Vital, Korets 5543 (1783).
- Epistle of Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz* [*Iggeret Shelomo ha-Levi Elqabetz*], In *The Preacher of Righteousness* [*Maggid Mesharim*], Joseph Karo, ed. Aaron Sursky, Jerusalem 5720 (1960), 18–20.
- Epistle of Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz* [*Iggeret Shelomo ha-Levi Elqabetz*], In Louis Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*, New York 1976, pp. 99–104. (English)
- Fruit of A Tree* [*Peri Ez*], Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, Zhitomir 5634 (1874).
- Fruit of the Land* [*Peri ha-Aretz*], Menahem Mendel, Kapost 5574 (1814); Jerusalem 5749 (1989).
- Fruit of the Tree of Life* [*Peri Ez Hayyim*], Hayyim Vital, Korets 5542 (1782); Korets 5545 (1785); Korets 5546 (1786); Ostrog 5554 (1794).
- Gate of Kavanot* [*Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*], Hayyim Vital, In *Collected Writings of the Ari, may his memory be for a blessing* [*Kol Kitvei ha-Ari z.l.*], vols. 8–9, Jerusalem 5748 (1988) [Salonika 5612 (1852)].
- Gate of Prayer* [*Sha'ar ha-Tefillah*], Hayyim Tirrer, Sidilkov 5585 (1825).
- Gate of Recompense* [*Sha'ar ha-Gemul*], Moses Nahmanides (Ramban), ed. David Aaron Sofer, Jerusalem 5758 (1998).
- Gate of the Holy Spirit* [*Sha'ar Ruah ha-Qodesh*], Hayyim Vital, In *Collected Writings of the Ari, may his memory be for a blessing* [*Kol Kitvei ha-Ari z.l.*], vol. 10, Jerusalem 5748 (1988) [Jerusalem 5623 (1863)].
- Gates of Holiness* [*Sha'arei Qedushah*], Hayyim Vital, Istanbul 5494 (1734); Amsterdam 5505 (1745); Salzbach 5518 (1758); Zolkow 5540 (1780); Korets 5544 (1784); Benei-Beraq 5733 (1973).
- Gleaned Statements* [*Liqqutei Amarim*], vol. 2, arranged and ed. Benjamin Schmerler, Lemberg 5671 (1911) (printed from a ms. formerly in the possession of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk).
- Gleaned Statements: Tanya* [*Liqqutei Amarim Tanya*], Shneur Zalman of Lyady, Brooklyn 5736 (1976) [Slovita 5556–5557 (1796–1797)].

- Gleaned Statements: Tanya* [*Liqqutei Amarim Tanya*], Shneur Zalman of Lyady, Brooklyn 1965–1972. (English)
- Glory of Uziel, Called the Good Tree of Knowledge* [*Tif'eret Uziel ha-Nigra be-Shem Ez ha-Da'at Tov*], Uziel Meizlish, Warsaw 5622 (1862).
- Glory of Ze'vi Ze'ev* [*Tif'eret Ze'vi Ze'ev*], Ze'vi Ze'ev of Zbarazh, Lemberg 5656 (1896).
- Glory to the Upright* [*Pe'er la-Yesharim*], Israel of Ruzhin, Jerusalem 5681 (1921).
- Golden Doves* [*Torei Z'ahav*], Benjamin of Zalozhtsy, Mohluv 5576 (1816); new edition ed. Jonathan Ze'ev Landau, Jerusalem 5749 (1989).
- Good Circle* [*Ma'agal Tov*], Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, Jerusalem 5694 (1934).
- Great Waters* [*Mayim Rabbim*], Nathan Neta ha-Kohen of Kolbiel, Warsaw 5659 (1899).
- He Imparts His Words to Jacob* [*Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov*], Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, Korets 5541 (1781).
- He Imparts His Words to Jacob* [*Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov*], Dov Bear of Mezhirichi, critical edition with commentary, introduction and indices, Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, Jerusalem 5736 (1976) [Korets 5541 (1781)].
- Herald of Righteousness* [*Me'asser Z'edeq*], Issakhar Ber of Zolochew, Berdichev 5577 (1817) [Dubno 5558 (1798)].
- Hidden Light* [*Or ha-Ganuz*], Judah Leib ha-Kohen of Annopol, Lemberg 5626 (1866).
- Hidden Treasures of Ramhal* [*Ginzei Ramhal*], Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, ed. Hayyim Friedlander, Benei-Beraq 5740 (1980).
- Holy Writings* [*Kitvei Qodesh*], Warsaw 5644 (1884) [Lemberg 5622 (1862)] (printed from a ms. formerly in the possession of Israel of Kozenice).
- Honest Words of Truth and Faith* [*Yosher Divrei Emet*], Meshullam Feibush Heller, Munkacz 5665 (1905).
- House of Aaron* [*Beit Aharon*], Aaron of Karlin, Brody 5635 (1875).
- Illumination of the Eye and Let the Heart Rejoice* [*Me'or Einayim im Yismah Lev*], Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, Jerusalem 5735 (1975) [Slovita 5558 (1798)].
- In Memory of This* [*Zikhron Zot*], Jacob Isaac ha-Levi Horowitz, Munkacz 5702 (1942) [Warsaw 5629 (1869)].
- In Praise of R. Nahman* [*Shivhei ha-Ran*], Nahman of Bratslav, Lvov 5624 (1864).
- In Praise of the Besht*, first edition, [*Shivhei ha-Beshl*], printed by Israel Yaffee, Kapost 5575 (1815).
- In Praise of the Besht*, Mintz: [*Shivhei ha-Beshl*] first edition, with supp. and introduction by Benjamin Mintz, Tel-Aviv 5721 (1961).
- In Praise of the Besht* Mondschein: [*Shivhei ha-Beshl*], ms. facsimile by Joshua Mondschein, Jerusalem 5742 (1982).
- In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov* [*Shivhei ha-Beshl*], trans. and ed. by Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz, New York 1984 [1970]. (English)
- In Praise of the Besht* Rubinstein: [*Shivhei ha-Beshl*], an annotated and elucidated edition by Abraham Rubinstein, Jerusalem 5752 (1992).
- Intense Loving* [*Ahavat Dodim*], Benjamin of Zalozhtsy, Lemberg 5553 (1793).
- Joseph is a Fruitful Son* [*Ben Porat Yosef*], Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, Korets 5541 (1781).
- Kindness to Abraham* [*Hesed le-Avraham*], Abraham Azulai, Jerusalem 5756 (1996) [Amsterdam 5445 (1685)].
- Kindness to Abraham* [*Hesed le-Avraham*], Abraham "the Angel," b. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi, Jerusalem 5714 (1954) [Chernovtsy 5611 (1851)].
- Knowledge of Moses* [*Da'at Moshe*], Moses Elyakum Berich, Lemberg 5639 (1879).
- Life and Kindness* [*Hayyim va-Hesed*], Hayyim Haika of Amdur, Warsaw 5651 (1891).
- The Life of Solomon Maimon* [*Hayyei Shelomo Maimon*], Solomon Maimon, with introduction by Fishel Lahover, Tel-Aviv 5713 (1953).
- Light of Isaac* [*Or Yi zhaq*], Isaac of Radvil, Jerusalem 5721 (1961).
- Light of Torah* [*Or Torah*], Korets 5564 (1804) (printed from a ms. in the possession of Isaiah of Dunayevtsy).

- Light of Truth* [*Or ha-Emet*], Husyotin 5659 (1899) (printed from a ms. in the possession of Zevi Hasid).
- The Light That Illuminates* [*Or ha-Me'ir*], Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir, Korets 5558 (1798) (R 3204/2 in the Scholem Library).
- Lights of the Holy* [*Orot ha-Qodesh*], vol. 2, Abraham Isaac ha-Kohen Kook, Jerusalem 5724 (1964).
- Lover of Israel*, complete edition [*Ohev Yisra'el ha-Shalem*], Abraham Joshua Heschel of Opatow, Jerusalem 5748 (1988) [Zhitomir 5623 (1863)].
- Maimonides' Book of the Commandments, with Nahmanides' Comments* [*Sefer ha-Mizvot le-ha-Rambam im Hasagot ha-Ramban*], with introduction, references, explanations, and indices by Hayyim Dov Chavel, Jerusalem 5741 (1981).
- Mandrakes in the Field* [*Duda'im ba-Sadeh*], Reuben ha-Levi Horowitz, Lemberg 5619 (1859).
- Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai*, ed. Jacob Nahum ha-Levi Epstein and Ezra Zion Melamed, Jerusalem 5715 (1955).
- Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma'el*, ed. Hayyim Saul Horowitz and Israel Abraham Rabin, Frankfort-am-Mein 5691 (1931).
- Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma'el*, trans. with introduction and notes by Jacob Z. Lauterbach, Philadelphia 2004. (English)
- Midrash Exodus Rabbah* [*Shemot Rabbah*], vol. 6, ed. Moses Aryeh Mirkin, Tel-Aviv 5720 (1960).
- Midrash Exodus Rabbah* [*Shemot Rabbah*], trans. by S. M. Lehrman, London 1961 [1939]
- Midrash Genesis Rabbah* [*Bereshit Rabbah*], vol. 2, ed. Moses Aryeh Mirkin, Tel-Aviv 5731 (1971).
- Midrash Genesis Rabbah* [*Bereshit Rabbah*], trans. by Lazarus Shapiro, New York 1906. (English)
- Midrash Genesis Rabbah* [*Bereshit Rabbah*], vol. 3, ed. Moses Aryeh Mirkin, Tel-Aviv 5732 (1972).
- Midrash Genesis Rabbah* [*Bereshit Rabbah*], vol. 4, ed. Moses Aryeh Mirkin, Tel-Aviv 5732 (1972).
- Midrash Numbers Rabbah* [*Be-Midbar Rabbah*], vol. 10, ed. Moses Aryeh Mirkin, Tel-Aviv 5725 (1965).
- Midrash Numbers Rabbah* [*Be-Midbar Rabbah*], trans. by Judah J. Slotki, London 1961 [1939]. (English)
- Midrash on Psalms Known as "He Who Awaits the Good"* [*Midrash Tehillim ha-Mekhuneh Shoher Tov*], ed. Solomon Buber, Vilnius 1891.
- Midrash on Psalms Known as "He Who Awaits the Good"* [*Midrash Tehillim ha-Mekhuneh Shoher Tov*], trans. by William G. Braude, New Haven 1959. (English)
- Midrash Pesiqta of Rav Kahana* [*Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana*], ed. Dov (Bernard) Mandelbaum, New York 5722 (1962).
- Midrash Pesiqta of Rav Kahana* [*Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana*], trans. by William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein, Philadelphia 1978 [1975]. (English)
- Midrash Pesiqta Rabbati* [*Pesiqta Rabbati*], ed. Me'ir Ish Shalom, Tel-Aviv 5723 (1963).
- Midrash Pesiqta Rabbati* [*Pesiqta Rabbati*], trans. by William G. Braude, New Haven 1968. (English)
- Midrash Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, In *Tanna de-Bei Eliyahu*, Jerusalem 5738 (1978)
- Midrash Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, In *Tanna de-Bei Eliyahu*, trans. by Gerald Friedlander, London 1981. (English)
- Midrash Sifri of the Academy of Rav for the Book of Numbers* [*Sifri de-Bei Rav, Be-Midbar*], ed. Hayyim Saul Horowitz, Leipzig 5677 (1917).
- Midrash Tanhuma*, ed. Solomon Buber, New York 5706 (1946).
- Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu*, trans. by Samuel A. Berman, New Jersey 1996. (English)
- Ms. Jerusalem 8 903, Hasidic Epistles from the Land of Israel* [*Iggerot Hasidim me-Eretz Yisra'el*] (formerly in the possession of Moses b. Isaac Schulman).

- Ms. Jerusalem 8 3282* (formerly in the possession of Samuel b. Hayyim Haika of Amdur).
- Ms. Jerusalem 8 5198* (formerly in the possession of Jonah b. Menahem of Pintov), In *Hasidism as Mysticism: Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth Century Hasidic Thought* [*Ha-Hasidut ke-Mistiḡah: Yeṣodot Qevietistiyim be-Mahashavah ha-Hasidit ba-Me'ah ha-18*], Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, Jerusalem 5748 (1988), 193–223.
- Ms. Jerusalem (Rothschild) 8 5979*.
- My Dear Esterlein* [*Esterlein Yeqirati*], Samuel Joseph Agnon, Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv 5743 (1983).
- Nectar of the Fruit of the Tree of Life* [*Seraf Peri Ez Hayyim*], Moses Shoham of Dolina, Chernovtsy 5626 (1866).
- Orchard of Pomegranates* [*Pardes Rimmonim*], Moses Cordovero, Salonika 5344 (1584); Krakow 5352 (1592); Korets 5540–5541 (1780–1781).
- Order of the Generations*, revised edition [*Seder ha-Dorot he-Hadash*], Menahem Mendel Bodek, Russia-Poland 5610 (1850).
- Order of the Joyful Heart* [*Seder Lev Sameiah*], Hanokh Henikh, Lvov 5622 (1862).
- Order of Prayer for the Entire Year with the Kavvanot of the Ari, may his memory be for a blessing in the life of the world to come* [*Seder Tefillah mi-Kol ha-Shanah im Kavvanot ha-Ari, z.l.l.h.h.*], annotated and critically edited by our master the R. Shabbetai of Vad Rashkov, Korets 5554 (1794).
- Order of Prayers for the Entire Year According to the Ashkenazi Custom, With Ten Precious Commentaries by the Holy Great Ones of the Land* [*Seder Tefillot al Kol ha-Shanah ke-Minhag Ashkenaz im 10 Peirushum Yeqarim mi-Qedoshei Gedolei Aretz*], Warsaw 5694 (1934).
- Path of Your Commandments* [*Netiv Mizvotekha*], Isaac Judah Saffrin, Lvov 5618 (1858).
- Pillar of Service* [*Amud ha-Avodah*], Barukh of Kosov, Chernovtsy 5623 (1863).
- “Pirgei ha-Ne’ezar” Commentary on the Laws of Slaughter and Inspection Understood Simply, Homiletically, Allusively, and Mystically* [*Pirgei ha-Ne’ezar al Hilkhot Shehitot u-Bediqot be-Derekh Pardes*], Eliezer the Slaughterer and Inspector of Zhitomir, Lublin 5646 (1886).
- Pleasantness of Elimelekh* [*No’am Elimelekh*], Elimelekh of Lozansky, Lvov 5548 (1788); Polonnoye 5564 (1804).
- Pleasantness of Sweetness and Honor of the Torah* [*No’am Megadim u-Khevod ha-Torah*], Eliezer ha-Levi Horowitz, Lemberg 5567 (1807).
- Praises of Israel* [*Tehillot Yisra’el*], commentary on the Book of Psalms, Israel of Kozenice, Lodz 5683 (1923) [publication place lacking, 5621 (1861)].
- Preacher of Righteousness* [*Maggid Mesharim*], Joseph Karo, trans. and ed. Yehiel Abraham Bar-Lev, Petah Tiqvah 5750 (1990) [Lublin 5406 (1646)].
- Precious Gleanings* [*Liqqutim Yeqarim*], Lemberg 5552 (1792); Mezrirov 5554 (1794); Zolkow 5560 (1800) (printed from a ms. formerly in the possession of Meshullam Feibush Heller).
- Precious Gleanings and Honest Words of Truth and Faith* [*Liqqutim Yeqarim ve-Yosher Divrei Emet*], Meshullam Feibush Heller, ed. Abraham Isaac Kahn, Jerusalem 5734 (1974) [Lemberg 5552 (1792)].
- Pupil of My Eye* [*Bat Eini*], Issakhar Ber of Zolochov, Dubno 5558 (1798).
- Purification of the Service* [*Mizraf ha-Avodah*], Jacob Bacharach, Koenigsburg 5618 (1858).
- Record of Great Men*, complete edition [*Shem ha-Gedolim ha-Shalem*], vol. 1, Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, Podgorze-near-Krakow 5665 (1905).
- Record of Great Men*, complete edition [*Shem ha-Gedolim ha-Shalem*], vol. 2, Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, Pyetrikov 5690 (1930).
- Record of the Council of the Four Lands* [*Pingas Va’ad Arba’ Arazot*], a collection of rules, transcripts, and records arranged and explained by Israel Hailperin, Jerusalem 5705 (1945).
- Mishneh Torah, Sefer Ahavah*, Moses Maimonides, commentary by Samuel Tanhum Rubinstein, Jerusalem 5722 (1962).

- Mishneh Torah* (*The Code of Maimonides*), Moses Maimonides, 'The Book of Love' (Book 2), trans. by Menahem Kellner, vol. 32, New Haven 2004. (English)
- Mishneh Torah, Sefer Shofetim*, Moses Maimonides, commentary by Samuel Tanhum Rubinstein, Jerusalem 5718 (1958).
- Mishneh Torah* (*The Code of Maimonides*), Moses Maimonides, 'The Book of Judges' (Book 14), trans. by Abraham M. Hershman, vol. 3, New Haven 1949. (English)
- Repairs of the Zohar* [*Sefer Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*], Korets 5540 (1780).
- Sabbath Prayer Book* [*Sidduro shel Shabbat*], Hayyim Tirrer, Mohluv 5573 (1813).
- Sanctity of Levi*, complete edition [*Qedushat Levi ha-Shalem*], Levi Isaac of Berdichev, ed. Ze'ev Derbrimdikier, Jerusalem 5738 (1978) [Slovita 5558 (1798)].
- Sayings of Pinhas*, complete edition [*Imrei Pinhas ha-Shalem*], Pinhas of Korets, Benei-Beraq 5748 (1988).
- Shield of the Patriarchs—commentary on Tractate Avot* [*Magen Avot al Avot*], Simeon b. Zemah Duran, Leipzig 5615 (1855) [Livorno 5522 (1762)].
- Shoot of David* [*Zemah David*], David b. Zevi Elimelekh of Dinuv, Peremyshlyany 5639 (1879).
- Sparks of Fire* [*Rishfei Esh*], Mordecai of Nesukhoyezhe, In *Book of Rav Yeivi*, Brody 5634 (1874) [Ostrog 5568 (1808)].
- Spring of Living Water* [*Be'er Mayim Hayyim*], Hayyim Tirrer, Sidlikov 5580 (1820).
- Streets of the River, The Book of Might and Power* [*Rehovot ha-Nahar, Sefer ha-Iluyut ve-ha-Koah*], Uri Zevi Greenberg, Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv 5711 (1951).
- Tablets of Testimony* [*Luhot Eidut*], Jonathan Eibenschutz, Altona 5515 (1755).
- Teaching of the Pious* [*Mishnat Hasidim*], Immanuel Hai Ricchi, Lemberg 5638 (1878) [Amsterdam 5487 (1727)].
- Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* [*Zava'at ha-Ribash*], publication place lacking, 5553 (1793); publication place lacking, 5554 (1794) (printed from a ms. formerly in the possession of Isaiah of Yanuv).
- Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem* [*Zava'at ha-Ribash*], trans. with introduction, notes and commentary by Jacob Immanuel, Brooklyn 1998. (English)
- The Apocryphal New Testament*, a Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature, trans. by James Keith Elliott, Oxford 1993. (English)
- The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. Frank Leslie Cross and Elizabeth Anne Livingstone, Oxford 1997 [1957]. (English)
- This Is a Remembrance* [*Zot Zikkaron*], Jacob Isaac ha-Levi Horowitz, Munkacz 5702 (1942) [Lemberg 5611 (1851)].
- Torah Commentaries by R. Levi Gersonides* [*Peirushei ha-Torah le-Rabbenu Levi b. Gershom* (Ralbag)], vol. 1, ed. Jacob Leib Levi, Jerusalem 5752 (1992).
- Torah Commentaries by R. Moses Nahmanides* [*Peirushei ha-Torah le-Rabbenu Moshe b. Nahman* (Ramban)], vol. 1, ed. Hayyim Dov Chavel, Jerusalem 5719 (1959).
- Torah Commentaries by R. Moses Nahmanides* [*Peirushei ha-Torah le-Rabbenu Moshe b. Nahman* (Ramban)], trans. by Charles B. Chavel, New York 1971–76. (English)
- Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life* [*Masekhet Avot im Peri Hayyim*], Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov, Lvov 5633 (1873).
- Treasury of Wisdom*, [*Ozar Hokhmah*], vol. 1, ed. Joseph Kohen Zedeq, Lvov 5620 (1860).
- Tree of Life* [*Ez Hayyim*], Hayyim Vital, In *Collected Writings of the Ari, may his memory be for a blessing* [*Kol Kitvei ha-Ari z.l.*], vol. 1, Jerusalem 5748 (1988) [Korets 5542 (1782)].
- Tree of Life* [*Ez Hayyim*], Hayyim Vital, Korets 5542 (1782); Korets 5544 (1784); Korets 5545 (1785).
- Two Tablets of the Covenant*, complete edition [*Shenei Luhot ha-Berit ha-Shalem*], Isaiah Horowitz, Jerusalem 5753 (1993) [Amsterdam 5409 (1649)].
- Uprightness of the Heart* [*Yosher Levav*], Immanuel Hai Ricchi, Jerusalem 5733 (1973) [Amsterdam 5502 (1742)].

- Way to Life* [*Orah le-Hayyim*], Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov, Berdichev 5577 (1817).
Ways of Pleasantness [*Darkhei No'am*], Samuel b. Eliezer of Klovrio, Koenigsburg 5524 (1764).
Ways of Righteousness [*Darkhei Zedeq*], Zechariah Mendel of Yaroslav, Lvov 5556 (1796).
Ways of the Just [*Darkhei Yesharim*], Zhitomir 5565 (1805) (attributed to R. Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany).
Word of Solomon [*Dibrat Shelomo*], Solomon Lutsker, Zolkow 5608 (1848).
Words of Moses [*Divrei Moshe*], Moses Shoham of Dolina, publication place lacking, 5561 (1801).
Words of Truth [*Divrei Emet*], Jacob Isaac ha-Levi Horowitz, Munkacz 5702 (1942) [Zolkow 5568 (1808)].
Zohar [*Book of Splendor*], Korets 5538 (1778).
Zohar of Gershom Scholem [*Zohar shel Gershom Scholem*], with his handwritten annotations and an introduction by Yehuda Liebes, Jerusalem 5752 (1992).
Zohar with the Commentary of "the Ladder" [*Zohar im Peirush ha-Sulam*], Jerusalem 5713 (1953).

Secondary Sources in Hebrew

Except for items noted as being in Yiddish, all the titles of the Hebrew sources are translated into English, and they are alphabetized in English by transliterated author's name. When an English translation exists, its details are specified in round brackets after the details of the original Hebrew.

- Alfasi, Isaac. 1969. *Hasidism: Historical and Analytical Studies*. Tel-Aviv.
 ———. 1986. *Encyclopedia of Hasidism: Personalities (I–IX)*. Jerusalem.
 ———. 1997. *The Unique One of the Generations: The Life of Our Master R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, Founder of the Hasidic Movement: His Descendants, Disciples, and Others Influenced by Him*. Tel-Aviv.
 Altshuler, Mor. 1994. "Kevutzat Ya'akov: Between Biography and Hagiography." In *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, sec. 3, vol. 2, pp. 153–160. Jerusalem.
 ———. 1995. *Rabbi Meshullam Feibush Heller and His Place in Early Hasidism*. Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
 Amir, Abraham. 1990. "R. Joshua b. Levi and His Relationships with Elijah, Simeon bar Yohai and Satan." In *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, sec. 3, vol. 1, pp. 141–146. Jerusalem.
 Assaf, David. 1992. *Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin and His Role in the History of the Hasidic Movement in the First Half of the 19th Century*. Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
 ———. 1993. "Review: David Assaf / *Yesod ha-Ma'ala*: A new Chapter in the Historiography of Hasidism in *Eretz Israel*." *Qatadra* 68: 57–66.
 ———. 1996. "'The Rumor was Spread that the Messiah has Already Come': New Light on the Aliyah of *Hasidim* in the Year 1777." *Zion* 61: 319–346.
 ———. 1997. *The Regal Way, the Life and Times of R. Israel of Ruzhin*, Jerusalem. (English: California 2002)
 ———. 2000. "One Event, Two Interpretations: The Fall of 'the Seer of Lublin' in Hasidic Memory and Maskilic Satire." In *Within Hasidic Circles: Studies in Hasidism in Memory of Mordecai Wilensky*, ed. Immanuel Etkes, David Assaf, Israel Bartal, and Elchanan Reiner, pp. 161–208. Jerusalem. (English version in *Polin, Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 15, ed. Antony Polonsky, pp. 187–202. Oxford 2002)
 Assaf, Simḥah. 1947. "Genealogy of the Altshul Family." *Reshumot* 4: 131–143.

- Avishar, Oded (ed.) 1970. *The Book of Hebron*. Jerusalem.
- . 1973. *The Book of Tiberias*. Jerusalem.
- Balaban, Me'ir. 1934. *History of the Frankist Movement*, vol. 1, Tel-Aviv.
- . 1935. *History of the Frankist Movement*, vol. 2, Tel-Aviv.
- Barnai, Jacob. 1977. "Notes on the Immigration of R. Abraham Gershon Kutower to *Eretz-Israel*." *Zion* 42: 110–119, 306–311.
- . 1978. "Revival of the Jewish Community of Tiberias in 5500 (1740) and Its Historic Significance." In *Tribe and Nation*, vol. 8, ed. David Sitton, pp. 35–62. Jerusalem.
- . 1980. *Hasidic Letters from Eretz-Israel from the Second Part of the Eighteenth Century and the First Part of the Nineteenth Century*. Jerusalem.
- . 1987. "Trends in the Historiography of the Medieval and Early modern Period of the Jewish Community in *Eretz Israel*." *Qatedra* 42: 87–120.
- . 1995. *Historiography and Nationalism: Trends in the Study of the Land of Israel and Its Jewish Settlement, 634–1881*. Jerusalem.
- Bartal, Israel. 1983. "The Old *Yishuv*." In *History of the Land of Israel*, vol. 8 (The End of the Ottoman Period, 1799–1917), ed. Israel Bartal and Joshua Ben Aryeh, pp. 194–256. Jerusalem.
- . 1985. "The *Aliyah* of R. Elazar Rokeah of Amsterdam (1740)." In *Studies on the History of Dutch Jewry*, vol. 4, ed. Jozeph Michman, pp. 7–26. Jerusalem.
- Bauminger, Mordekhai Shraga. 1971. "Concerning the Besht's Epistle." *Sinai* 68: 198–200.
- . 1972. "The Epistles of Rabbeinu Israel Ba'al Shem Tov z.l.l.h.h. and His Son-in-Law R. Yehiel Mikhel z.l.l.h.h. to R. Abraham Gershon z.l.l.h.h. of Kutov." *Sinai* 71: 248–269.
- . 1973. "More on the Epistles of the Besht and His Son-in-Law to R. Abraham Gershon of Kutov." *Sinai* 72: 270–283.
- Ben Sasson, Hayyim Hillel. 1969. "Isaiah b. R. Abraham ha-Levi (the Shelah)." In *Hebrew Encyclopedia*, vol. 13, pp. 943–946. Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv.
- Benayahu, Me'ir. 1949. "The *Yeshiva* of R. Immanuel Hai Ricchi in Jerusalem and his Murder on a Mission in Italy." *Jerusalem* 2: 29–37.
- . 1959–1960. "The Brotherhood of R. Judah Hasid and their Settlement in Jerusalem." *Sefunot* 3–4: 131–182.
- . 1961. "The '*Maggid*' Of R. Moses Hayyim Luzatto." *Sefunot* 5: 297–336.
- . 1964. "The Association of *Hasidim* and the Penitential Associations in Safed Founded by R. Elazar Azkari." *ha-Aretz*, 27 March 1964.
- . 1967. *The Toledoth ha-Ari and Luria's "Manner of Life (Hanhagoth)"*. Jerusalem.
- . 1995/1. "Linkage Documents of the Jerusalem Kabbalists." In *Asufot: Yearbook for Jewish Studies*, vol. 9, ed. Me'ir Benayahu, pp. 9–128. Jerusalem.
- . 1995/2. "Linkage Documents of the Safed and Egyptian Kabbalists." In *Asufot: Yearbook for Jewish Studies*, vol. 9, ed. Me'ir Benayahu, pp. 129–160. Jerusalem.
- Biber, Menahem Mendel. 1907. In *Remembrance of the Great Figures of Ostrog*. Berdichev.
- Buber, Martin. 1945. In *The Orchard of Hasidism: Studies in Its Thought and Being*. Tel-Aviv. (English: *Tales of the Hasidim*, New York 1991).
- Dan, Joseph and Tishby, Isaiah. 1969. "The Teaching of Hasidism." In *Hebrew Encyclopedia*, vol. 17, pp. 769–821. Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv.
- Dan, Joseph. 1966. *The Hasidic Novel*. Jerusalem.
- . 1975/1. *Ethical and Homiletical Literature*. Jerusalem. (English: "Jewish Ethical Literature." In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 8, ed. Mircea Eliade, pp. 82–87. New York 1987).
- . 1975/2. *The Hasidic Story: Its History and Development*. Jerusalem.
- . 1980. "*Pirkei Heikhalot Rabbati* and the Story of the Ten Martyrs." *Eshel Be'er Sheva* 2: 63–80.

- . 1981. "The Beginnings of Hebrew Hagiographic Literature." In *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore*, no. 1, ed. Tamar Alexander and Galit Hasan-Rokem, pp. 82–100. Jerusalem.
- . 1990–1991. *Ashkenazi Pietism in the History of Jewish Thought*, vols. 1–3. Ramat-Aviv. (English: Dan 1998/2, vol. 3, pp. 19–200).
- . 1992. "The Revelation of 'the Secret of the World': The Beginning of Jewish Mysticism in Late Antiquity." *Da'at* 29: 5–25. (English: Dan 1998/2, vol. 1, pp. 77–108)
- . 1993/1. "From Theological Paradox to Historical Paradox: The Teachings of *Habad* and the History of *Habad*." *Tarbiz* 62: 137–147.
- . 1993/2. "Sabbatianism and the Modern Era in Jewish History." *Jewish Studies* 33:85–95.
- . 1994. "The Scholar and the Mystic in Jewish Culture." In *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, sec. 3, vol. 2, pp. 1–8. Jerusalem.
- . 1995. "Hasidism." In *Hebrew Encyclopedia*, supp. vol. 3, pp. 412–419. Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv. (English: "Besht Rabbi Israel." In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 2, ed. Mircea Eliade, p. 118. New York 1987; "Hasidism, an Overview." *Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 203–211)
- . 1997. *On Sanctity: Religion, Ethics, and Mysticism in Judaism and Other Religions*. Jerusalem.
- . 1998/1. *The Modern Jewish Messianism*. Tel-Aviv.
- . 1999. "The End of the Frumkinian Hasidism." In *Studies in Hasidism (Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, no. 15), ed. David Assaf, Immanuel Etkes and Joseph Dan, pp. 261–274. Jerusalem.
- . 2000. "The Duality of Hasidic Messianism." In *Within Hasidic Circles: Studies in Hasidism in Memory of Mordecai Wilensky*, ed. Immanuel Etkes, David Assaf, Israel Bartal, and Elchanan Reiner, pp. 299–315. Jerusalem. (English version in *Hesed ve-Emet; Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs*, ed. Jodi Magness and Seymour Gitin, pp. 391–407. Atlanta 1998)
- . 2001. "Hasidism: The Third Century." In *Zaddik and Community: Historical and Social Perspectives in the Study of Hasidism*, ed. David Assaf, pp. 52–65. Jerusalem. (English: Dan 1998/2, vol. 4, pp. 67–86)
- Dinur, Ben-Zion. 1955. *As the Generations Turn: Studies in Early Modern Jewish History*. Jerusalem. (English: "The Origins of Hasidism and its Social and Messianic Foundations." In *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present*, ed. Gershon Hundert, pp. 86–101. New York 1991)
- Don-Yihia, Shabbetai. 1961. *A Pioneering Admor*. Tel-Aviv.
- Dubnow, Simeon. 1901. "Rebellious *Hasidim*." *ha-Shelah* 7: 314–320.
- . 1960 [1931]. *History of Hasidism, Based on Primary Sources, Printed and Manuscripts*. Tel-Aviv.
- Elbaum, Jacob. 1990. *Openness and Insularity: Late Sixteenth Century Jewish Literature in Poland and Ashkenaz*. Jerusalem.
- . 1998. "The Land of Israel in 'Two Tablets of the Covenant' by R. Isaiah Horowitz." In *The Land of Israel in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. Aviezer Ravitzky, pp. 94–112. Jerusalem.
- Elior, Rachel. 1982. "The Minsk Debate." In *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, no. 1, pp. 179–235. Jerusalem.
- . 1986. "The Doctrine of Transmigration in *Galya Raza*." In *Studies in Kabbalah, Jewish Philosophy, and the Literature of Ethics and Thought, Presented to Isaiah Tishby on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Joseph Dan and Joseph Hacker, pp. 207–240. Jerusalem. (English version in *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, ed. Lawrence Fine, pp. 243–269. New York 1995)
- . 1992/1. "The Metaphorical Relation between God and Man and the Significance of the Visionary Reality in Lurianic Kabbalah." In *Lurianic Kabbalah*

- (*Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, no. 10), ed. Rachel Elior and Yehuda Liebes, pp. 47–57. Jerusalem.
- . 1992/2. *Unity of Opposites: the Mystical Theosophy of Habad*. Jerusalem. (English: *The Paradoxical Ascent to God: the Kabbalistic Theosophy of Habad Hasidism*, Albany 1993)
- . 1993/2. “Between ‘Divestment of Corporeality’ and ‘Love of Corporeality.’” In *Studies in Jewish Culture in Honour of Chone Shmeruk*, ed. Israel Bartal, Chava Turniansky, and Ezra Mendelsohn, pp. 209–241. Jerusalem.
- . 1993/3. “The Innovation of Polish Hasidism: From ‘Fear’ and ‘Love’ to ‘Depth’ and ‘Nuance.’” *Tarbiz* 62: 381–432.
- . 1994/1. “Nathan Adler and the Frankfurt Pietists: Pietistic Groups in Eastern and Central Europe during the Eighteenth Century.” *Ẓion* 59: 31–64. (English version in *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism, International Symposium Held in Frankfurt am Main*, ed. Karl Erich Grözinger and Joseph Dan, pp. 135–177. Berlin 1995)
- . 1994/2. “Between Existence and Nothingness: An Examination of the Doctrine of the *Ẓaddik* of R. Jacob Isaac, ‘the Seer of Lublin.’” In *Hasidism in Poland*, ed. Rachel Elior, Israel Bartal, and Hannah Shmeruk, pp. 167–218. Jerusalem. (English version in *Jewish History, Essays in Honor of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein, pp. 393–455. London 1988)
- . 1994/3. “The Paradigms of ‘Yesh’ and ‘Ayin’ in Hasidic Thought.” In *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb*, ed. Michal Oron and Amos Goldreich, pp. 53–74. Jerusalem. (English version in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert, pp. 168–179. London 1996)
- . 1996. “R. Joseph Karo and R. Israel *Ba’al Shem Tov*: Mystical Metamorphosis, Kabbalistic Inspiration, and Spiritual Internalization.” *Tarbiz* 65: 671–709.
- . 1999. *Herut al Hahuhot: Hasidic Thought Mystical Origins and Kabbalistic Foundations*. Tel-Aviv. (English: *Freeing the Spirit: The Mystical Origins of Hasidism*, Oxford 2005)
- Elizur, Yehuda. 1968. “Estori ha-Parhi.” In *Hebrew Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, pp. 449–450. Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv.
- Elqayam, Abraham. 1998. “*Eretz ha-Ẓevi*: Portrayal of the Land of Israel in the Thought of Nathan of Gaza.” In *The Land of Israel in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. Aviezer Ravitzky, pp. 128–185. Jerusalem.
- Elstein, Yoav. 1984. *Ma’aseh Hoshev: Studies in Hasidic Tales*. Jerusalem.
- . 1995. “Magical and Mystic Elements in ‘In Praise of the Besht’ Stories of Healing the Sick.” *Da’at* 34: 131–149.
- Eshkoli, Aaron Ze’ev. 1957. *Messianic Movements In Israel*, vol. 1. Jerusalem.
- Etkes, Immanuel. 1985. “R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady as a Hasidic Leader.” *Ẓion* 50: 321–354.
- . 1988. “The *Gaon* of Vilna and Early Opposition to Hasidism.” In *Transition and Change in Modern Jewish History: Essays Presented in honor of Shmuel Ettinger*, pp. 439–458. Jerusalem.
- . 1997. “The Historical Besht: Reconstruction vs. Deconstruction.” *Tarbiz* 66: 425–442.
- . 2000. *Ba’al Hashem, The Besht: Magic, Mysticism, leadership*. Jerusalem. (English: Boston 2005)
- Ettinger, Samuel. 1965. “Hasidic Practice Formulated.” In *Religion and Society in Jewish and World History*, pp. 121–134. Jerusalem.
- Feldman, Eliyahu. 1971. “R. Hayyim b. R. Solomon Tիրրer.” *Sinai* 68: 87–97.
- Flusser, David. 1979. *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*. Tel-Aviv.
- Frenkel, David. 1923. *Letters by the Besht z.l. and His Disciples*. Lvov.

- Frenkel, Jonah. 1977. "The Image of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi in the Stories of the Babylonian Talmud." In *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, sec. 3, vol. 3, pp. 403–417. Jerusalem.
- Friedberg, Hayyim Dov. 1950 [1932]. *History of the Development of Hebrew Printing in Poland From Its Inception in 5294 (1534) to the Present*. Tel-Aviv.
- . 1951. *The Treasury of Books* [*Beit Eked Sefarim*], vol. 1. Tel-Aviv.
- . 1952. *The Treasury of Books* [*Beit Eked Sefarim*], vol. 2. Tel-Aviv.
- . 1954. *The Treasury of Books* [*Beit Eked Sefarim*], vol. 3. Tel-Aviv.
- . 1956. *The Treasury of Books* [*Beit Eked Sefarim*], vol. 4. Tel-Aviv.
- Frumkin, Aryeh Leib and Eliezer Rivlin. 1929. *A History of the Sages of Jerusalem From 5250 (1490) to 5630 (1870)*, vol. 3. Jerusalem.
- Gelber, Nathan Michael. 1955. *History of the Jews of Brody: Great Cities of Israel*, vol. 6. Jerusalem.
- Ginsburg, Levi (Louis). 1968. *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 4. Ramat-Gan. (English: Philadelphia 1968).
- Ginsburg, Simeon. 1937. *R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto and His Contemporaries: Collected Letters and Documents*, vols. 1–2. Tel-Aviv.
- Glicksburg, Simeon Jacob ha-Levi. 1940. *The Jewish Homily: A Description of the Nature of the Hebrew Homily and Its Transmission from Ancient to Modern Times*. Tel-Aviv.
- Granetstein, Yehiel. 1982. *The Ba'al Shem Tov's Disciples in the Land of Israel*. Tel-Aviv.
- Green, Arthur. 1981. *Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav*. Tel-Aviv. (English: Vermont 1992)
- Gries, Ze'ev. 1984. "From Myth to Ethos: Outlines for the History of Rabbi Avraham of Kalisk." In *A Nation and Its History*, vol. 2, pp. 117–146. Jerusalem.
- . 1990. *Conduct Literature: Its History and Place in the Life of Beshtian Hasidim*. Jerusalem.
- . 1992. *The Book in Early Hasidism*. Tel-Aviv.
- . 1994. "R. Israel b. Shabbetai of Kozienice and His Commentary on Tractate *Avot*." In *Hasidism in Poland*, ed. Rachel Elijor, Israel Bartal, and Hannah Shmeruk, pp. 127–165. Jerusalem.
- Grossman, Levi ha-Levi. 1943. *Remembrance and Remnant* [*Shem ve-She'erit*]. Tel-Aviv.
- Haberman, Abraham Me'ir. 1960. "'The Testament of the Besht' and Other Early Gleanings of the Besht's Statements." In *The Book of the Besht*, ed. R. Y. L. ha-Kohen Maimon, pp. 38–49. Jerusalem.
- Hailperin, Israel. 1947. *Early Hasidic Immigration to the Land of Israel*. Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv.
- . 1957. "Associations for the Study of the Torah and for Good Deeds and the Spread of the Hasidic Movement." *Zion* 22: 194–213.
- . 1969. *Jews and Judaism in Eastern Europe*. Jerusalem.
- Hacker, Joseph. 1984. "The Payment of Djizya by Scholars in Palestine in the Sixteenth Century." *Shalem* 4: 63–118.
- . 1988. "Jewish Autonomy in the Ottoman Empire: Its Scope and Limits." In *Transition and Change in Modern Jewish History: Essays Presented in honor of Shmuel Ettinger*, pp. 349–388. Jerusalem.
- Halamish, Moshe. 1978. "The Evolvment of a Kabbalistic Custom: 'I Hereby Take Upon Myself the Positive Commandment of Love Your Fellow As Yourself.'" *Qiryat Sefer* 53: 534–556.
- . 1982. "On Silence in Kabbalah and Hasidism." In *Religion and Language: Essays in General and Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Moshe Halamish and Asa Kasher, pp. 79–90. Tel-Aviv.
- . 1991. "Some Characteristics of the Land of Israel in the Kabbalistic Literature." In *The Land of Israel in Medieval Jewish Thought*, ed. Moshe Halamish and Aviezer Ravitzky, pp. 215–232. Jerusalem.

- . 1994. "Nefilat Apayyim as an Example of Kabbalistic Influence on the Order of Prayer." *Mahanayim* 6: 124–133.
- . 1998. "Hasidism and the Land of Israel: Two Models." In *The Land of Israel in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. Aviezer Ravitzky, pp. 225–255. Jerusalem.
- Haran, Ra'aya. 1990. "The Authenticity of Letters written by *Hasidim* in *Eretz Israel*." *Qatedra* 55: 22–58.
- . 1991. "On the Copying and Transmission of Hasidic Letters." *Zion* 56: 299–320.
- . 1993. *Inter-Hasidic Ideological Controversies in Late 18-th and Beginning of 19-th Centuries, the Causes of the Dispute between R. Abraham of Kolyshki and R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady*. Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- . 1995. "What Motivated the Hasidic Jews to emigrate to *Eretz Israel* in the Late Eighteen Century?." *Qatedra* 76: 77–95.
- . 1996. "R. Abraham of Kolyshki and R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady: A Friendship Cut Off." In *Many Voices, Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer Memorial Volume (Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought, no. 13)*, vol. 2, pp. 399–428. Jerusalem.
- . 1997. "The Doctrine of R. Abraham of Kolyshki." *Tarbiz* 66: 517–541.
- Harvey, Ze'ev. 1998. "Moses Mendelssohn on the Land of Israel." In *The Land of Israel in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. Aviezer Ravitzky, pp. 301–312. Jerusalem.
- Heilman, Hayyim Me'ir. 1903 [1902]. *My Rebbe's House*. Berdichev.
- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. 1948–1952. "On the Life of R. Pinhas of Korets." In *Alei Ayin: Essays Presented to Shelomo Zalman Schocken on His Seventieth Birthday*, pp. 213–244. Jerusalem.
- . 1952. "Unknown Documents on the History of Hasidism." (Yiddish) *ITVO Bletter* 36: 113–135.
- . 1957. "R. Isaac of Droboych." In *Jubilee Volume of ha-Do'ar on Its Thirty-Fifth Anniversary*, pp. 86–94. New York.
- . 1962. *Heavenly Torah: As Reflected Through the Generations*, vol. 1. London and New York. (English: New York 2005)
- . 1965/1. "R. Nahman of Kosov, Friend of the Besht." In *Festschrift in Honor of Zevi Wolfson on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Saul Lieberman, pp. 113–142. Jerusalem.
- . 1965/2. *Heavenly Torah: As Reflected Through the Generations*, vol. 2. London and New York. (English: New York 2005)
- Heyd, Uriel. 1942. *Dahir al-'Umar*. Jerusalem.
- . 1969. *Palestine during the Ottoman Rule*. Jerusalem.
- Hillman, David Zevi. 1953. *The Epistles of the Author of "Tanya" and His Contemporaries*. Jerusalem.
- Hisdai, Jacob. 1984/1. *The Emergence of Hasidim and Mitnagdim in the Light of the Homiletic Literature*. Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- . 1984/2. "The Beginning of Hasidic and Mitnagdic Settlement in the Land of Israel: Immigration of Commandment and Immigration of Mission." *Shalem* 4: 231–269.
- Horodsky, Samuel Abba. 1923. *Hasidism and Hasidim*, vols. 1–4. Jerusalem.
- Horowitz, Eliezer Immanuel (compiler). 1999. *The Teaching of the Maggid of Zolochew*, vols. 1–2. Jerusalem.
- Horowitz, Zevi ha-Levi. 1978. *On the History of the Polish Communities*. Jerusalem.
- Idel, Moshe. 1976. *Abraham Abulafia's Works and Doctrine*. Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- . 1980. "On the History of the Terdiction Against the Study of Kabbalah before the Age of Forty." *AJS Review* 5:1–20 (Hebrew section).
- . 1981. "The Concept of the Torah in the *Heikhalot* Literature and Its Evolution in Kabbalah." In *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, no. 1, pp. 23–84. Jerusalem.

- . 1985. "'Hitbodedut' qua 'Concentration' in Ecstatic Kabbalah and Its Evolution." *Da'at* 14: 35–82. (English version in *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 103–170. Albany 1988)
- . 1988. *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*. Jerusalem. (English: Albany 1988)
- . 1990/1. "'One From a City and Two From a Family': A New Look at the Spread of Lurianic Kabbalah and Sabbateanism." *Pe'amim* 44: 5–30.
- . 1990/2. *Prophetic Kabbalah*. Jerusalem. (English: *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, Albany 1988).
- . 1991. "On the Land of Israel in Medieval Jewish Mysticism." In *The Land of Israel in Medieval Jewish Thought*, ed. Moshe Halamish and Aviezer Ravitzky, pp. 193–214. Jerusalem.
- . 1992/1. "Sexual Images and Actions in Kabbalah." *Zemanim* 42: 30–39.
- . 1992/2. *Messianism and Mysticism*. Tel-Aviv.
- . 1993. *Kabbalah New Perspectives*. Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv. (English: New Haven 1988)
- . 1998. "The Land as a Divine Vitality: *Eretz Israel* in Hasidic Thought." In *The Land of Israel in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. Aviezer Ravitzky, pp. 236–275. Jerusalem.
- . 2001. *Hasidism Between Ecstasy and Magic*. Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv. (English: Albany 1995)
- Ish-Shalom, Michael. 1979 [1966]. *Christian Travels in the Holy Land: Descriptions and Sources on the History of the Jews in Palestine*. Tel-Aviv.
- Jacobson, Yoram. 1976. "The Doctrine of Creation in the Thought of R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi." *Eshel Be'er Sheva* 1: 307–368.
- . 1978–1979. "Exile and Redemption in Gur Hasidism." *Da'at* 2–3: 175–215.
- . 1984. *From Lurianic Kabbalism to the Psychological Theosophy of Hasidism*. Tel-Aviv.
- . 1985. *The Hasidic Thought*. Tel-Aviv. (English: Tel Aviv 1998)
- . 1996. *Along the Paths of Exile and Redemption: The Doctrine of Redemption of Rabbi Mordecai Dato*. Jerusalem.
- . 1998. "In the Labyrinth of 'Nothing' and Being: Critical Analysis of R. Elior's *Unity of Opposites*, Jerusalem 1992." *Qiryat Sefer*, supp. to vol. 68: 229–243.
- Kahana, Abraham. 1900. *R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov (Besht): His Life, Doctrine, and Activity*. Zhitomir.
- Kahana, Barukh David. 1897. *Love of the Land of Israel [Hibat ha-Aretz]*. Jerusalem.
- . 1904. *The Blessing of the Land of Israel [Birkhat ha-Aretz]*. Jerusalem.
- Karlinsky, Nahum. 1998. *Counter History: The Hasidic Epistles from Eretz-Israel*. Jerusalem.
- Katz, Jacob. 1984. *Halakhah and Kabbalah: Studies in the History of Jewish Religion, Its Various Faces and Social Relevance*. Jerusalem.
- Kook, Saul Hanah. 1947–1948. "On the Association of Jerusalem Kabbalists: Bibliographical Information." *Qiryat Sefer* 24: 84–85.
- Lamm, Nahum (Norman). 1972. *Torah for Torah's Sake: In the Works of Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin*. Jerusalem. (English: New Jersey 1989)
- Lieberman, Hayyim. 1961. "How is Hasidism Researched in Israel?." *Bizaron* 43: 154–161.
- . 1984. "Fiction and Truth Regarding Hasidic Printeries." In *Ohel Rachel*, vol. 3, ed. Hayyim Lieberman, pp. 14–309.
- Lieberman, Saul. 1960. "Mishnat Shir ha-Shirim." In *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, ed. Gershom Gerhard Scholem, pp. 118–126. New York.
- Liebes, Esther. 1997. *Love and Creation in the Thought of R. Barukh of Kossow*. Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- . 2000. "The Novelty in Hasidism according to R. Barukh of Kossow." *Da'at* 45: 75–90.

- Liebes, Yehuda. 1978. "The Book 'Zaddik, Foundation of the World': A Sabbatean Myth." *Da'at* 1: 73–120.
- . 1978–1979. "The Author of the Book 'Zaddik, Foundation of the World': The Sabbatean Prophet R. Leib Prusnitz." *Da'at* 2–3: 159–173.
- . 1980. "R. Nahman of Bratslav's 'Hattikkun Hakkelah' and his Attitude towards Sabbateanism." *Zion* 45: 201–245. (English version in *Studies in Jewish Myth and Messianism*, pp. 115–150, 184–210. Albany 1993).
- . 1982/1. "The Messiah of the Zohar: on R. Simeon bar Yoḥai as a Messianic Figure." In *The Messianic Idea in Jewish Thought: A Study Conference in Honour of the Eightieth Birthday of Gershom Scholem*, pp. 87–236. Jerusalem. (English version in *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 1–84. Albany 1993).
- . 1982/2. "A Messianic Treatise by R. Wolf the son of R. Jonathan Eibeschutz." *Qiryat Sefer* 57: 148–178.
- . 1983/1. "New Light on the Matter of the Ba'al Shem Tov and Shabbetai Zvi." In *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, no. 2, pp. 564–569. Jerusalem.
- . 1983/2. "Mysticism and Reality: Towards a Portrait of the Martyr and Kabbalist R. Samson Ostropoler." *Tarbiz* 52: 83–109. (English version in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. I. Twerski, pp. 221–255. Massachusetts 1987).
- . 1989. "How the Zohar Was Written." In *The Age of the Zohar (Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, no. 8), ed. Joseph Dan, pp. 1–71. Jerusalem. (English version in *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 85–138. Albany 1993).
- . 1992. "'Terin Orzilin de-Aylata' ('Two Young Roses of a Doe'): The Secret Sermon of Isaac Luria before his Death." In *Lurianic Kabbalah (Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, no. 10), ed. Rachel Elior and Yehuda Liebes, pp. 113–170. Jerusalem.
- . 1994/1. "Zohar and Eros." *Alpayim* 9: 67–119.
- . 1994/2. "God's Love and God's Jealousy, On the Dialectical Dualism that is the Heart and Essence of Religion." *Dimuy* 7: 30–36.
- . 1996. "Myth vs. Symbol in the Zohar and in Lurianic Kabbalah." *Eshel Be'er Sheva* 4: 192–209. (English version in *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, ed. Lawrence Fine, pp. 212–242. Albany 1995).
- . 2003/1. "The Vilner Gaon School, Sabbateanism and Dos Pintele Yid." *Da'at* 50–52: 255–290.
- . 2003/2. "The Letter Saddi and the Attitude of the Vilna Gaon and his Circle Toward Sabbateanism." *Kabbalah* 9: 225–306.
- Lunz, Abraham Moses. 1911. "Causing Lips of those that are Asleep to Speak, no. 3: Letters from our Holy Land Regarding the Last Earthquake in Safed in 5597 (1837)." In *Jerusalem: A Literary Anthology for Study of Our Holy Land*, ed. Abraham Moses Lunz, vol. 9, pp. 151–168. Jerusalem.
- Mahler, Raphael. 1954. *History of Israel in Recent Times*, vol. 1 (Central Europe: Poland in the Time of Its Partition). Merhavayah.
- Marcus, Aaron. 1954. *Hasidism*. Tel-Aviv.
- Margolin, Ron Pinhas. 1999. *The Internalization of Religious Life and Thought at the Beginning of Hasidism: Its Sources and Epistemological Bases*. Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- . 2005. *The Human Temple*. Jerusalem.
- Meroz, Ronit. 1987. "R. Moses b. Makhir's Association and its Regulations." *Pe'amim* 31: 40–61.
- . 1988. *Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching*. Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- Mondschein, Joshua. 1978. "The Books 'Purification of the Service' and 'The Great Debate.'" *Alai Sefer* 5:165–175.
- . 1980. *A Tower of Strength [Migdal Oz]*. Kefar Habad.

- . 1981. "The Book of *Tanya*: Its Editions, Translations, and Interpretations." In *The Teaching of Habad: Bibliographies*, vol. 1, ed. Joshua Mondschein. Kefar Habad.
- . 1992/1. "The Authenticity of Hasidic Letters." *Qatedra* 63: 65–97.
- . 1992/2. "Epistles From the Land of Israel by Our Rabbis and Their Disciples." In *The Vineyard of Habad: A Chronicle of Hasidism and the Ways of the Hasidim*, vol. 4, ed. Joshua Mondschein, pp. 267–315. Kefar Habad.
- Morgenstern, Aryeh. 1985. *Messianism and the Settlement of Eretz Israel in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*. Jerusalem.
- . 1999. *Mysticism and Messianism From Ramhal's Immigration to the Land of Israel the Gaon of Vilnius*. Jerusalem. (English: Oxford 2006)
- Nehorai, Michael Zvi. 1991. "The Land of Israel in Maimonides and Nahmanides." In *The Land of Israel in Medieval Jewish Thought*, ed. Moshe Halamish and Aviezer Ravitzky, pp. 123–137. Jerusalem.
- Nigal, Gedaliah (ed.) 1989. *R. Ya'akov Yosef of Polonnoye's Zofnat Pa'aneiah*. Jerusalem.
- Nigal, Gedaliah. 1971. "On the Sources of Communion in Early Hasidic Literature." *Qiryat Sefer* 46: 343–348.
- . 1972. "R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov's Master and Teacher." *Sinai* 71: 150–159.
- . 1973/1. "An Unknown Source of Hasidic Ethical Literature." *Qiryat Sefer* 48: 526–527.
- . 1973/2. "R. Eliezer of Tarnograd and His Books." *Sinai* 73: 72–78.
- . 1991. *Hasidic Tales / Menahem Mendel Bodeq*, critical edition with introduction, notes, and indices. Tel-Aviv.
- Oron, Michal. 1982. "Exile and Redemption According to the Book of 'Peli'ah' and the Book of 'Kanh.'" *Da'at* 8: 87–93.
- . 1992. "Dream, Vision, and Reality in Hayyim Vital's *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*." In *Lurianic Kabbalah (Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought, no. 10)*, ed. Rachel Elior and Yehuda Liebes, pp. 299–309. Jerusalem.
- Oron-Kushnir, Michal. 1980. *The "Peli'ah" and the "Kanh": Their Kabbalistic Elements, Socio-Religious Stance, and Literary Execution*. Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- Pachter, Mordechai. 1982. "The Concept of Communion and Its Description in the Homiletical and Ethical Literature of the Sages of Safed in the Sixteenth Century." In *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, no. 1, pp. 51–121. Jerusalem.
- . 1986. "Traces of the Influence of R. Elijah de Vidash's *Reshit Hokhmah* upon the Writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye." In *Studies in Kabbalah, Jewish Philosophy, and the Literature of Ethics and Thought, Presented to Isaiah Tishby on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Joseph Dan and Joseph Hacker, pp. 569–591. Jerusalem.
- . 1987. "The Beginnings of Kabbalistic Ethical Literature in 16th Century Safed." In *Culture and History: Ino Sciaky Memorial Volume*, ed. Joseph Dan, pp. 77–94. Misgav Jerusalem.
- . 1988. "Joseph Karo's *Maggid Mesharim* as a Book of Ethics." *Da'at* 21: 57–83.
- . 1991/1. *R. Elazar Azikri's Milei de-Shemaya*. Tel-Aviv.
- . 1991/2. "The Land of Israel in the Homiletic Literature of Sixteenth Century Safed." In *The Land of Israel in Medieval Jewish Thought*, ed. Moshe Halamish and Aviezer Ravitzky, pp. 290–319. Jerusalem.
- . 1992. "*Katnut* ('Smallness') and *Gadlut* ('Greatness') in Lurianic Kabbalah." In *Lurianic Kabbalah (Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought, no. 10)*, ed. Rachel Elior and Yehuda Liebes, pp. 171–210. Jerusalem.
- . 1994. *From Safed's Hidden Treasures: Studies and Texts concerning the History of Safed and Its Sages in the Sixteenth Century*. Jerusalem.
- Pedaya, Haviva. 1991. "The Spiritual vs. the Concrete Land of Israel in the Geronese School of Kabbalah." In *The Land of Israel in Medieval Jewish Thought*, ed. Moshe Halamish and Aviezer Ravitzky, pp. 233–289. Jerusalem.

- . 2000. "The *Ba'al Shem Tov*, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, and the *Maggid* of Mezhrich: Outlines for a Religious Typology." *Da'at* 45: 25–73.
- Piekarz, Mendel. 1972. *The Hasidism of Bratslav: Aspects of Its Progenitor's Life and of Its Writings*. Jerusalem.
- . 1974. "Religious Radicalism during the Spread of Hasidism." *Molad* 6: 412–436.
- . 1978. *The Beginning of Hasidism: Ideological Trends in Derush and Musar Literature*. Jerusalem.
- . 1990. "The *Devekuth* as Reflecting the Socio-Religious Character of the Hasidic Movement." *Da'at* 25: 127–144.
- . 1994. *Between Ideology and Reality: Humility, Nihilo, Self-negation and Devotion in Hasidic Thought*. Jerusalem.
- . 1999. *The Hasidic Leadership: Authority and Faith in Zaddikim as Reflected in the Hasidic Literature*. Jerusalem.
- . 2000. "The Impetus for Early Anti-Hasidic Polemics." In *Within Hasidic Circles: Studies in Hasidism in Memory of Mordecai Wilensky*, ed. Immanuel Etkes, David Assaf, Israel Bartal, and Elchanan Reiner, pp. 3–20. Jerusalem.
- Rabinowitz, Ze'ev. 1940. "From the Stolin Archive." *Zion* 5: 125–132.
- . 1961. *Lithuanian Hasidism From Its Beginnings to the Present*. Jerusalem. (English: London 1970).
- Raphael, Isaac. 1960. "A Bundle of Facts Regarding R. Israel *Ba'al Shem Tov*." *ha-Aretz*, 31 May 1960.
- Rapoport-Albert, Ada. 1979. "Self-Depreciation ('*qatnuth*', '*peshituth*') and Disavowal of Knowledge ('*eyni yodea*') in Nahman of Bratslav." In *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History Presented to Alexander Altmann on the occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, pp. 7–33. Alabama.
- . 1990. "The Hasidic Movement after 1772: Structural Continuity and Change." *Zion* 55: 183–245. (English version in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert, pp. 76–140. London 1996).
- Reiner, Elhanan. 1976. "Safed." In *Hebrew Encyclopedia*, vol. 28, pp. 856–859. Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv.
- . 1993. "Wealth, Social Position and the Study of Torah: The Status of the *Kloyz* in Eastern European Jewish Society in Early Modern Period." *Zion* 58: 287–328.
- . 1994. "'In Praise of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*': Transmission, Editing, Printing." In *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, sec. 3, vol. 2, pp. 145–152. Jerusalem.
- Rosman, Moshe. 1987. "Miedzyboz and Rabbi Israel *Ba'al Shem Tov* (Besht)." *Zion* 52: 177–189.
- . 1993. "The History of an Historical Source: on the Editing of '*In Praise of the Besht*.'" *Zion* 58: 175–214.
- . 2000. *The Besht, Founder of Hasidism*. Jerusalem. (English: *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Baal Shem Tov*, Berkeley 1996)
- Rozani, Joseph. 1998. *R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov's "Epistle of the Ascent of the Soul": Sources and Notes*. Master's thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- Rubin, Zvia. 1997. *R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto and his writings on the Zohar*. Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- Rubinstein, Abraham. 1966. "A Possibly New Fragment of *Shivhei ha-Besht*?" *Tarbiz* 35: 174–191.
- . 1970. "The Besht's Epistle to R. Gershon of Kutov." *Sinai* 67: 120–139.
- . 1973. "On a Manuscript of the Besht's Epistle to R. Gershon of Kutov." *Sinai* 72: 189–202.
- . 1974. "Hasidism and *Hasidim* in Warsaw." *Sinai* 74: 61–84.
- . 1979. "The Mentor of R. Israel *Ba'al Shem Tov* and the Sources of His Knowledge." *Tarbiz* 48: 146–158.

- Sack, Bracha. 1982. "More on the Evolution of the Saying 'Kudsha-berik-hu Orayta ve-Yisrael kola-had.'" *Qiryat Sefer* 57: 179–184.
- . 1984. "Man as a Mirror and the Theory of Mutual Responsibility." *Da'at* 12: 37–45.
- . 1989. "Eretz and Eretz Yisrael in the Zohar." In *The Age of the Zohar (Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought, no. 8)*, ed. Joseph Dan, pp. 239–253. Jerusalem.
- . 1991. "The Land of Israel in the Thought of Cordovero." In *The Land of Israel in Medieval Jewish Thought*, ed. Moshe Halamish and Aviezer Ravitzky, pp. 320–341. Jerusalem.
- . 1992. "Moses Cordovero and Isaac Luria." In *Lurianic Kabbalah (Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought, no. 10)*, ed. Rachel Elior and Yehuda Liebes, pp. 311–340. Jerusalem.
- . 1994. "An Inquiry into the Teaching of 'the Seer of Lublin.'" In *Hasidism in Poland*, ed. Rachel Elior, Israel Bartal, and Hannah Shmeruk, pp. 219–240. Jerusalem.
- Safrai, Samuel. 1983. *The Land of Israel and Its Sages in the Time of the Mishnaic and Talmudic Period*. Jerusalem.
- Schatz-Uffenheimer, Rivka. 1960. "On the Nature of the Zaddik in Hasidism: Studies in R. Elimelekh of Lozansky's Doctrine of the Zaddik." *Molad* 18: 365–378.
- . 1961. "Man Confronting of God and the World in Buber's Teachings of Hasidism." *Molad* 18:596–609.
- . 1967. "The Messianic Element in Hasidic Thought: Is There an Historical Messianic Tone in the Hasidic Idea of Redemption?." *Molad* 1: 105–111.
- . 1988 [1968]. *Hasidism as Mysticism: Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth Century Hasidic Thought*. Jerusalem. (English: New Jersey 1993)
- Scholem, Gershom. 1937. "Redemption Through Sin." *Kenesset* 2: 347–392. (English version in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, pp. 78–141. New York 1971)
- . 1940. "A Document by the Disciples of Isaac Luria." *Zion* 5: 133–160.
- . 1941. "Chapters in Sabbatean Research." *Zion* 6: 85–100.
- . 1949. "The Two First Testimonies on the Relationships Between Chassidic Groups and Ba'al Shem Tov." *Tarbiz* 20: 228–240.
- . 1957. "Two Letters from Palestine of the Years 5520–5524 (1760–1764)." *Tarbiz* 25: 429–440.
- . 1969. "Luria, Isaac b. Solomon (the Ari)." In *Hebrew Encyclopedia*, vol. 21, pp. 560–564. Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv.
- . 1974. "The Sabbatean Movement in Poland." In *Studies and Texts Concerning the History of Sabbetianism and Its Metamorphoses*, pp. 68–140. Jerusalem.
- . 1976/1 [1975]. *Explications and Implications (Devarim be-Go): writings on Jewish Heritage and Renaissance*, vol. 2, ed. Abraham Shapira. Tel-Aviv. (English version in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, New York 1971)
- . 1976/2. *Elements of the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*. Jerusalem. (English: *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, New York 1965; *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, New York 1991)
- . 1987 [1957]. *Shabbetai Zevi and the Shabbetaian Movement During His Lifetime*, vols. 1–2. Tel-Aviv. (English: *Sabbatai Sevi, the Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676*, New Jersey 1973)
- . 1990. *Od Davar: Aspects of Heritage and Revival*, vol. 2, ed. Abraham Shapira. Tel-Aviv.
- Schor, Abraham Abush. 1986. "A Voice Calling in the Year 5546 (1786) From the Holy City of Tiberias." *Qobez Beit Aharon ve-Yisra'el*, vol. 1, 5–6: 102–108.
- . 1994. "Our Maser R. Aaron the Great and the Association of Hasidim in Karlin." *Qobez Beit Aharon ve-Yisra'el*, vol. 9, 53: 163–177.
- Shazar, Shneur Zalman. 1970. *The Messianic Hope for the Year 5500 (1740) in the*

- Wake of "Et Qez" by R. Isaac Hayyim Kohen Min ha-Hazzanim, Known as Dr. Cantarini (1643–1723). Jerusalem.
- Shmeruk, Hannah. 1955. "The Social Significance of the Hasidic *Shekhita* (Kosher Slaughter)." *Ẓion* 20: 47–72.
- . 1963. "Tales about R. Adam Ba'al Shem in the Versions of 'In Praise of the Besht.'" *Ẓion* 28: 86–105.
- . 1970. "Hasidism and the Business of 'Arendars.'" *Ẓion* 35: 182–192.
- Stampfer, Shaul. 1999. "The Despute over Polished Knives and Hasidic *Shechita*." In *Studies in Hasidism (Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, no. 15), ed. Immanuel Etkes, David Assaf, and Joseph Dan, pp. 197–210. Jerusalem.
- Stiman-Katz, Haya. 1977. "Concerning Y. Barnai's Notes on the Immigration of R. Abraham Gershon Kutower to *Eretz-Israel*." *Ẓion* 42: 302–305.
- . 1986. *Early Hasidic Immigration to Eretz-Israel, 5507–5579 (1747–1819)*. Jerusalem.
- Steinman, Eliezer. 1957. *The Gate of Hasidism*. Tel-Aviv.
- Sursky, Aaron. 2000. *Yesod ha-Ma'ala : History of the Hasidic Settlement in the Land of Israel Founded by Our Holy Teachers R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and R. Abraham of Kolushki*, vols. 1–2. Benei-Beraq.
- Tamar, David. 1970. *Studies in the History of the Jewish People in Eretz Israel and in Italy*. Jerusalem.
- . 1981. "On the Legend of the Ari and the Eulogy of R. Samuel Di Ozida." In *Studies in the History of the Jews in the Land of Israel and the Near East*, pp. 107–118. Jerusalem.
- . 1984. "R. Hayim Vital's Messianic Dreams and Visions." *Shalem* 4: 211–229.
- Tanenbaum, Isaac Matityahu. 1986. *To'afot Harim: The Żolochew Dynasty*. Jerusalem.
- Ta-Shema, Israel. 1979. "'The Hebrew Print Shop in Ostrog': Corrigenda and Addenda." *Alai Sefer* 6–7: 209–212.
- Tauber, Aryeh. 1924–1925. "The Print Shops of Korets." *Qiryat Sefer* 1: 222–225, 302–306.
- . 1932. "The Print Shops of Korets." *Bibliographical Studies*, a special supp. to *Qiryat Sefer* 9: 15–52.
- Teller, Adam. 1995. "The Reliability of Solomon Maimon's Autobiography as a Historical Source." *Ga'ed* 14: 13–22.
- . 1999. "The Stuck Tradition concerning the Early Days of the Besht." In *Studies in Hasidism (Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, no. 15), ed. Immanuel Etkes, David Assaf, and Joseph Dan, pp. 15–38.
- Tishby, Isaiah and Yeruham Fishel Lahover. 1957 [1947]. *The Wisdom of the Żohar*, vol. 1. Jerusalem. (English: London and Washington 1989)
- Tishby, Isaiah. 1961 [1949]. *The Wisdom of the Żohar*, vol. 2. Jerusalem. (English: London and Washington 1989)
- . 1967. "The Messianic Idea and Messianic Trends in the Growth of Hasidism." *Ẓion* 32: 1–45.
- . 1982/1. "Between Sabbateanism and Hasidism: The Sabbateanism of the Kabbalist R. Jacob Kopel Lifschitz of Mezhirichi." In *Paths of Faith and Heresy: Essays in Kabbalah and Sabbateanism*, pp. 52–80; 204–226. Jerusalem.
- . 1982/2. "The Controversy over the Żohar in Sixteenth-Century Italy." In *Studies in Kabbalah and Its Branches*, vol. 1, pp. 79–130. Jerusalem.
- . 1991 [1942]. *The Doctrine of Evil and the "Kelippah" in Lurianic Kabbalah*. Jerusalem. (English: *Gnostic Doctrines in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Mysticism*, London 1955)
- . 1993. *Studies in Kabbalah and Its Branches*, vol. 3, Jerusalem. (English: *Messianic Mysticism, Moses Hayim Luzzatto and the Padua School*, Oxford 2006)
- Urbach, Ephraim Elimelekh. 1947. "Halakhah and Prophecy." *Tarbiz* 18:1–27.

- . 1978 [1969]. *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*. Jerusalem. (English: Massachusetts 1987)
- . 1988. "The Traditions Regarding Mystical Teachings in the Tannaitic Era." *The World of the Sages*, pp. 486–513. Jerusalem.
- Wunder, Me'ir. 1978. *The Galician Luminaries: An Encyclopedia of the Sages of Galicia*, vol. 1. Jerusalem.
- . 1997. *The Galician Luminaries: An Encyclopedia of the Sages of Galicia*, vol. 5. Jerusalem.
- Weiss, Joseph. 1951. "The Beginning of Hasidism." *Zion* 16: 46–105.
- . 1958. "Some Aspects of R. Nahman of Bratslav's Allegorical Self-Interpretation." *Tarbiz* 27: 358–371.
- . 1967. "Study of the Torah in Israel Ba'al Shem's Doctrine." In *Essays Presented to Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Zevi Jacob Zimmels, Joseph Rabinowitz, and Israel Samuel Finestein, pp. 151–170. London. (English: *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, Oxford 1985).
- Werblowsky, Raphael Yehuda Zevi. 1958. "Characters of R. Joseph Karo's *Maggid*." *Tarbiz* 27: 310–321.
- . 1996. *R. Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic*. Jerusalem. (English: Oxford 1962)
- Wertheim, Aaron. 1960. *Laws and Practices in Hasidism*. Jerusalem.
- Wilensky, Mordecai. 1970. *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim: A study of the Controversy Between them in The Years 1772–1815*, vols. 1–2. Jerusalem.
- . 1988. *The Hasidic Community in Tiberias*. Jerusalem.
- Wilensky, Michael. 1949. "Notes on the Biography of R. Immanuel Hai Ricchi." *Qiryat Sefer* 25: 311–314.
- Wilhelm, Jacob David. 1948–1952. "Orders of Repairs." In *Alei Ayin: Essays Presented to Shelomo Zalman Schocken on His Seventieth Birthday*, pp. 125–146. Jerusalem.
- Wirshovsky, Hayyim. 1943–1944. "The Sabbatean Theology of Nathan of Gaza." *Kenesset* 8: 210–246.
- . 1990. "The Sabbatean Ideology of the Messiah's Apostasy According to Nathan of Gaza and 'Iggeret Magen Avraham.'" In *Between the Lines: Kabbalah, Christian Kabbalah, Sabbateanism*, ed. Moshe Idel, pp. 121–188. Jerusalem.
- Wolfson, Elliott (Ephraim). 1992. "The Ari's Influence on the Shelah." In *Lurianic Kabbalah (Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, no. 10), ed. Rachel Elior and Yehuda Liebes, pp. 423–448. Jerusalem.
- Ya'ari, Abraham. 1943–1944. "Miscellaneous Bibliographical Notes No. 49: Hebrew Printing at Poryck." *Qiryat Sefer* 20:101–115.
- . 1945–1946. "Hebrew Printing in Shklow." *Qiryat Sefer* 22: 49–72, 135–160.
- . 1946. *The Land of Israel: Journeys of Jewish Immigrants From the Middle Ages to the Early Days of the Return to Zion*. Tel-Aviv.
- . 1951. *Emissaries of the Land of Israel: The History of Missions from the Land of Israel to the Diaspora From the Destruction of the Second Temple to the Nineteenth Century*. Jerusalem.
- . 1958. "The Burning of the Talmud in Kamenets Podolskiy." *Sinai* 42: 294–306.
- . 1971. *Epistles of the Land of Israel: Written by Jews Dwelling in the Land of Israel to Their Brethren in the Diaspora From the Time of the Babylonian Exile to the Contemporary Return to Zion*. Ramat-Gan.
- Yinon, Joseph. 1994. "Sufi Influences on Kabbalah in Safed." *Mahanayim* 6: 170–179.
- Yuval, Israel Jacob. 2000. *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. Tel-Aviv. (English: Berkeley 2006)
- Zucker, Solomon. 1974. "An Early Hasidic Manuscript." *Qiryat Sefer* 49: 223–235.

Secondary Sources in English

- Altshuler, Mor. 1999. "Messianic Strains in R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov's 'Holy Epistle.'" *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6:55–70.
- . 2004. "The First Tzaddik of Hasidism: The Zlotchover Maggid and His Circle." *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 11:127–193.
- Barnai, Jacob. 1992. *The Jews in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century*, Alabama.
- Cohen, Amnon and Lewis, Bernard. 1978. *Population and Revenue in the Towns of Palestine in the Sixteenth Century*. New Jersey.
- Cohen, Amnon. 1984. *Jewish Life under Islam: Jerusalem in the Sixteenth Century*. Massachusetts.
- Dan, Joseph. 1991. "A Bow to Frumkinian Hasidism." *Modern Judaism* 11: 175–193. (Reprint: Dan 1998/2, vol. 4, pp. 87–110)
- . 1996. "The Contemporary Hasidic Zaddik: Charisma, Heredity, Magic and Miracle." In *Divine Intervention and Miracles in Jewish Theology*, ed. Dan Cohn-Sherbok, pp. 195–214. New York 1996. (Reprint: Dan 1998/2, vol. 4, pp. 111–130).
- . 1998/2. *Jewish Mysticism*, vols. 1–4, New Jersey and Jerusalem.
- David, Abraham. 1999. *To Come to the Land: Immigration and Settlement in Sixteenth-Century Eretz-Israel*. Alabama.
- Elior, Rachel. 1993/1. "Hasidism: Historical Continuity and Spiritual Change." In *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Joseph Dan, pp. 303–324. Tübingen.
- . 1998. "The Lubavitch Messianic Resurgence: The Historical and Mystical Background 1939–1996." In *Toward the Millennium: Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Mark Cohen, pp. 383–408. Leiden.
- . 2006. *The Mystical Origins of Hasidism*. Oxford.
- Etkes, Immanuel. 1988. "Hasidism as a Movement: The First Stage." In *Hasidism: Continuity or Innovation?*, ed. Bezalel Safran, pp. 1–26. Massachusetts and London.
- . 1996. "The Zaddik: The Interrelationship between Religious Doctrine and Social Organization." In *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert, pp. 159–167. London.
- Ginsburg, Elliot kiba. 1989. *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah*. Albany.
- Goldish, Matt. 2004. *The Sabbatean Prophets*. Massachusetts and London.
- Green, Arthur. 1977. "The Zaddiq as Axis Mundi in Later Judaism." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45: 328–347.
- . 1987. "The Typology of Leadership and the Hasidic Zaddiq." In *Jewish Spirituality From the Sixteenth Century Revival to the Present* 2, ed. Arthur Green, pp. 127–156. New York.
- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. 1985. *The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov: Studies in Hasidism*, ed. Samuel H. Dresner. Chicago and London.
- Idel, Moshe. 1989. "Jewish Magic from the Renaissance Period to Early Hasidism." In *Religion, Science, And Magic in concert and in conflict*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs and Paul Virgil McCracken Flesher, pp. 82–117. New York and Oxford.
- . 1991. "Perceptions of Kabbalah in the second half of the 18th Century." *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 1: 55–114.
- . 1998/1: *Messianic Mystics*, New Haven.
- Krassen, Miles A. 1990. *Devequt and Faith in Zaddiqim: The Religious Tracts of Meshullam Feibush Heller of Zbarazh*, Doctoral dissertation, The University of Pennsylvania.
- . 1998. *Uniter of Heaven and Earth: Rabbi Meshullam Feibush Heller of Zbarazh and the Rise of Hasidism in Eastern Galicia*, Albany.
- Lenowitz, Harris. 1998. *The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights*, New York.

- Loewenthal, Naftali. 1990. *Communicating the Infinite: The Emergence of the Habad School*. Chicago and London.
- Patai, Raphael. 1967. *The Hebrew Goddess*. New York.
- Rapoport—Albert, Ada. 1979. "God and the *Zaddik* as the Two Focal Points of Hassidic Worship." *History of Religions* 18:296–325.
- . 1988. "Hagiography with Footnotes: Edifying Tales and the Writing of History in Hasidism." *History and Theory* 27:119–159.
- Sack, Bracha. 1996. "The Influence of *Reshit Hokhma* on the Teachings of the *Maggid* of Mezchirech." In *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert, pp. 251–257, London.
- Saperstein, Marc. 1980. *Decoding the Rabbis: A Thirteenth-Century Commentary on the Aggadah*, Massachusetts.
- Schäfer, Peter. 1981. *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*. Tübingen.
- Scholem, Gershom. 1961 [1941]. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. New York.
- . 1971. *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*. New York:
- "Forward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism.," pp. 1–36.
- "Redemption through Sin.," pp. 78–141.
- "The Neutralization of the Messianic Element in Early Hasidism.," pp. 176–202.
- "*Devekut*, or Communion with God.," pp. 203–227.
- . 1978. *Kabbalah*. New York.
- Silver, Abba Hillel. 1927. *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel: From the First to the Seventeenth Centuries*. New York.
- Tourov, Igor. 2004. "Hasidism and Christianity of the Eastern Territory of the Polish-Lithaunian Commonwealth: Possible of Contacts and Mutual Influences." *Kabbalah* 10:73–105.
- Verman, Mark. 1988. "*Aliyah* and *Yeridah*: Journeys of the Besht and R. Nachman to Israel." In *Approaches to Medieval Judaism*, vol. 3, ed. D.R. Blumenthal. Atlanta.
- Weiss, Joseph. 1985. *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, ed. David Goldstein. Oxford.
- . 1979. "O Felix Culpa: A Cabbalistic Version." In *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History Presented to Alexander Altmann on the occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Siegfried Stein and Raphael Loewe, pp. 355–362. Alabama.
- Wolfson, Elliot. 1989. "Female Imaging of the Torah: From Literary Metaphor to Religious Symbol." In *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism: Intellect in Quest of Understanding*, Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox 2, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs and Nahum M. Sarna, pp. 271–307. Atlanta.
- . 1995. *Along the Path: Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism, and Hermeneutics*. Albany.

INDEX OF PERSONALITIES

- Aaron (the priest) 41, 143, 169
 Aaron b. Zevi Hirsch (Besht's grandson) 303
 Aaron Ettinga 378, 379
 Aaron ha-Levi of Starsulia 238
 Aaron Leib of Peremyshlyany 217
 Aaron "the great" of Karlin 283, 301, 387
 Aaron (the second) of Karlin 128, 225, 260, 262
 Abraham (patriarch) 73, 74, 75, 76, 79, 83, 119, 120, 143, 154, 169, 171, 323, 324, 327, 328
 Abraham Abulafia 24, 84, 138
 Abraham Azulai 59, 60, 123
 Abraham b. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi 230, 265, 295
 Abraham b. Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets (Solomon Lutsker's son-in-law) 131, 246, 252, 254, 255, 256, 260, 287, 312
 Abraham Dov of Chmelnik 135, 251
 Abraham Hayyim of Zolochov 68, 72, 73, 74, 75, 77, 78, 85, 109, 111, 116, 119, 121, 126, 137, 168, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 235, 257, 264, 276, 277, 284, 285, 325, 326
 Abraham Hayyim Schor 272
 Abraham Jacob (*admor* of Sadgura) 228, 236
 Abraham Joshua Heschel of Opatow 45, 102, 184, 192, 227, 230, 231, 236, 257, 271
 Abraham Katz of Kolyshki 9, 31, 32, 67, 125, 128, 158, 165, 169, 177, 179, 185, 187, 190, 191, 192, 281, 283, 284, 387, 391
 Abraham Karliner 387
 Abraham Mordecai b. Israel Harif Hailperin of Satanov 138, 139
 Abraham Noah ha-Levi Heller 271, 272
 Abraham Revigo 158
 Abraham Samson Katz of Vad Rashkov 27, 135, 251
 R. Adam 261, 262
 Agnon, Samuel Joseph 233
 Aḥa b. Jacob (*amora*) 357
 Aḥiyah of Shiloh 15, 26, 197, 304, 305
 Aḥmed Jazzar 163, 176
 Akiva (*tanna*) 65
 Alexander Sender of Shklov 382
 Alfasi, Isaac 27, 44, 268, 305
 Altshuler, Haya (Epstein) 388
 Altshuler, Mor 14, 36, 52, 59, 277, 304
 Amir, Abraham 21
 Angelicus Miller 162
 Ari See Isaac Luria Ashkenazi, Lurianic Kabbalah
 Aryeh Leib the Rebuker of Polonnoye 31, 197, 299, 300
 Assaf, David 7, 25, 36, 67, 170, 172, 175, 176, 208, 223, 283, 379
 Assaf, Simḥah 37
 Avigdor of Pinsk 255
 Avishar, Oded 161, 162, 192, 266, 386, 388
 Azriel of Shklov 158
 Bahya ibn Paquda 310, 339, 341, 382
 Balaban, Me'ir 30, 31, 49, 62, 63, 305
 Berger, David 209
 Bartal, Israel 25, 241
 Barukh of Kosov 37, 288
 Bauminger, Mordekhai Shraga 299, 300, 305
 Barnai, Jacob 6, 15, 25, 127, 128, 139, 140, 162, 164, 166, 168, 173, 174, 176, 177, 178, 180, 181, 182, 184, 185, 187, 190, 191, 192, 282, 283, 284, 288, 385, 386, 391, 392, 393
 Benayahu, Me'ir 5, 6, 43, 59, 62, 106, 121, 146, 158
 Benayahu b. Yehoyada (biblical personality) 256
 Benjamin of Zalozhtsy 46, 47, 233, 234, 235, 236, 257, 264, 360, 380
 Biber, Menaḥem Mendel 38, 55, 185, 237, 246, 247

- Bluma (Mordecai of Nesukhoyezhe's granddaughter) 270
 Blumah Reizel (Isaac of Radvil's granddaughter) 223
 Bryna daughter of Zisel (Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk's granddaughter) 386
 Buber, Martin 3, 28

 Cain (biblical personality) 114
 Cohen, Amnon 161

 Dahir al-ʿAmr 162, 163
 Dan b. Isaac of Radvil 223, 227, 231, 270
 Dan, Joseph 44, 106, 110, 113, 116, 189, 194, 195, 200, 207, 209, 251, 261, 321, 339, 347, 351, 365
 Daniel (biblical personality) 16
 David (King) 15, 29, 35, 37, 143, 155, 162, 256, 334, 338, 339
 David, Abraham 161
 David b. Nathan Greenhut 136
 David b. Zevi Elimelekh of Dinov 371
 David ha-Levi of Stepin 217
 David "the younger" of Bukhov 391
 David Makov 55, 107, 108, 122, 126, 127, 129, 140, 141, 142, 236, 374, 375
 Dembovsky 30
 Dinur, Ben-Zion 3, 4, 12, 25, 26, 27, 28, 47, 62, 158, 159, 204, 286, 305, 325
 Dov Ber b. Azriel 385, 386, 387, 394
 Dov Ber of Mezhirichi (the *Maggid* of Mezhirichi) 4, 12, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 51, 52, 55, 115, 124, 196, 199, 215, 216, 228, 229, 230, 232, 234, 235, 239, 240, 259, 263, 265, 268, 269, 275, 276, 290, 291, 296, 311, 312, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 325, 326, 343, 359, 373, 377, 379, 388
 Dubnow, Simeon 3, 27, 255, 290, 305

 Elazar Azkari 85, 89, 106, 118, 310, 338, 339, 365
 Elazar b. Elimelekh of Lozansky 66
 Elazar b. Shamu (*tanna*) 76
 Elazar (Eliezer) Zussman 180, 267
 Elazar Rokeiah 158, 164
 Elazar Shapira of Munkacz 129

 Elbaum, Jacob 37, 62, 156, 272, 284, 364
 Eli (priest) 107
 Eliezer Horowitz 82, 83, 128, 231, 235, 356, 357, 361, 372
 Eliezer of Zhitomir (slaughterer and meat-inspector) 60, 237
 Elijah (the *Gaon* of Vilnius) 159, 181, 265
 Elijah (prophet) 8, 15, 21, 22, 23, 65, 138, 240
 Elijah De Vidash 310, 366, 381
 Elimelekh of Lozansky 66, 121, 122, 126, 127, 217, 231, 245, 257, 286, 378, 384
 Elior, Rachel 20, 49, 57, 58, 62, 97, 102, 105, 212, 222, 243, 245, 348, 368, 373, 380
 Elisha (prophet) 371
 Elqayam, Abraham 79, 155, 167
 Elstein, Yoav 44
 Ephraim Zalman Margaliot 225, 228, 246, 264
 Ephraim of Sidlikov 341, 342, 343
 Epstein, Hayyim David 388, 389, 390
 Epstein, Jacob Zevi Hirsch 389
 Epstein, Menahem Mendel 389
 Epstein, Sarah 389
 Esau (biblical personality) 220
 Estori ha-Parhi 161, 171, 185, 186
 Etkes, Immanuel 29, 300, 301
 Ezekiel (prophet) 74, 173, 190
 Ezekiel Segal Landau 40, 42, 47, 140, 241, 346

 Francisco Mendes (*Zemah* Benvenisti) 161
 Frenkel, Jonah 21
 Fridel of Brody 164
 Friedberg, Hayyim Dov 135, 241, 265

 Gedaliah of Zolkow 137, 225, 284
 Gelber, Nathan Michael 48, 49, 62, 137, 139, 226, 272, 276
 Gershon of Kutov 15, 25, 31, 138, 158, 197, 202, 299, 343
 Ginsburg, Levi 99
 Ginsburg, Simeon 107
 Ginsburg, Elliot kiba 418
 Glicksburg, Simeon Jacob ha-Levi 241
 Goldish, Matt 5, 23, 26, 43, 91

- Granetstein, Yehiel 128
 Gracia Miques-Nasi (Dona Gracia) 161, 162
 Green, Abraham Isaac 195, 209
 Greenberg, Uri Zevi 263
 Gries, Ze'ev 117, 128, 135, 250, 255, 258, 264, 270, 287, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 310, 312, 316, 339, 340, 367, 375
 Grossman, Levi ha-Levi 387
 Habakkuk (prophet) 107, 108, 141, 183
 Haberman, Abraham Me'ir 255, 315
 Hacker, Joseph 161, 174
 Hadrian (Roman emperor) 146
 Hailperin, Israel 165, 167, 174, 177
 Halamish, Moshe 92, 123, 124, 129, 155, 160, 167, 338
 Hannah (Barukh of Medzhibozh's daughter) 218
 Haran, Ra'aya 32, 62, 166, 194, 216, 296
 Harvey, Ze'ev 154
 Havah (Mordecai of Kremenets's daughter) 225
 Hayyim Abulafia 158, 162, 163
 Hayyim b. Attar 158
 Hayyim David "the younger" 388, 390, 391, 392, 394
 Hayyim Haika of Amdur 122, 283, 293, 312, 367
 Hayyim Joseph David Azulai 173
 Hayyim Tirrer of Chernovtsy 192, 241, 244, 346
 Hayyim of Krasnow 183, 192, 290, 291
 Hayyim of Tzanz 136, 137, 138, 346
 Hayyim Segal Landau 49, 137, 138, 139, 140, 180, 181, 346
 Hayyim Vital 23, 62, 64, 65, 66, 114, 118, 136, 150, 251, 254, 271, 284, 295, 310, 318, 335, 381
 Heilman, Hayyim Me'ir 295, 296
 Heschel, Abraham Joshua 38, 44, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 99, 133, 184, 191, 192, 231, 236, 246, 248, 249, 250, 260, 312, 376, 379
 Heschel Zoref 128, 129, 226, 260, 261, 262, 303
 Heyd, Uriel 161, 162
 Hillel (the elder) 112
 Hillman, David Zevi 386, 392
 Hisdai, Jacob 41, 364
 Hunya (*amora*) 327
 Ibo (*amora*) 332
 Idel, Moshe 19, 20, 23, 24, 26, 28, 44, 45, 46, 62, 63, 84, 99, 115, 116, 138, 149, 155, 194, 204, 205, 206, 210, 244, 245, 304, 308, 338, 339, 367, 373, 375
 Immanuel Hai Ricchi 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 25, 62, 67, 134, 148, 183, 184, 195, 284, 300, 310
 Isaac (patriarch) 73, 74, 75, 76, 79, 83, 119, 120, 143, 154, 169, 220
 Isaac b. Solomon Gleizor of Korets 247
 Isaac of Babylonian (*amora*) 170
 Isaac Chayes 37
 Isaac Eisik ha-Kohen of Korets 131, 137, 150, 226, 237, 246, 249, 250, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 312
 Isaac Judah Yehiel Saffrin of Komarno 237
 Isaac ha-Levi Horowitz Hamburger 38, 39, 40, 41, 140
 Isaac Hayyim Kohen min ha-Hazzanim 5, 7, 25
 Isaac Luria Ashkenazi (Ari) 42, 43, 51, 57, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 91, 106, 109, 110, 113, 114, 118, 121, 123, 124, 128, 136, 137, 138, 142, 143, 145, 146, 150, 158, 177, 184, 186, 260, 280, 281, 310, 314, 315, 318, 320, 334, 335, 367, 374, 382
 Isaac of Drogobych 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 49, 53, 116, 140, 198, 371
 Isaac of Radvil 46, 47, 80, 115, 116, 125, 146, 147, 217, 218, 220, 221, 222, 223, 227, 231, 243, 245, 270, 271, 287, 344, 346
 Issakhar Ber of Zaslov 192
 Issakhar Ber of Zolochov 192, 226, 235, 257, 258, 276, 277, 346
 Isaiah (prophet) 22, 35, 149, 152
 Isaiah ha-Levi Horowitz (the Shelah) 59, 155, 168, 231, 310, 338, 339
 Isaiah ha-Levi of Dunayevtsy 51, 54, 122, 129, 184, 247, 249, 250, 256, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 303, 304, 305, 312
 Isaiah Mushkat 126, 223

- Isaiah Shapira (Pioneer *admor*) 210, 211
- Ish-Shalom, Michael 162
- Ishmael (biblical personality) 175, 220
- Israel Ba'al Shem Tov (the Besht) 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 36, 37, 38, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 64, 70, 71, 72, 113, 115, 124, 129, 133, 134, 135, 138, 144, 145, 189, 190, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 201, 202, 203, 205, 215, 216, 218, 219, 220, 229, 230, 232, 234, 235, 238, 240, 245, 255, 261, 262, 263, 268, 269, 271, 272, 274, 276, 286, 288, 295, 299, 300, 301, 304, 305, 306, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 323, 324, 325, 328, 329, 330, 332, 333, 334, 340, 342, 343, 345, 347, 348, 372, 373, 377
- Israel Harif Hailperin of Satanov 7, 139
- Israel Lubel 255
- Israel of Kozenice (the *Maggid* of Kozenice) 122, 211, 225, 227, 262, 263, 312
- Israel of Polotsk 173, 176, 180
- Israel of Shklov 390
- Israel Yaffee ("The Printer of Kapost") 190, 192, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 388
- Jacob (patriarch) 70, 73, 74, 75, 76, 83, 91, 95, 110, 119, 120, 154, 155, 219, 220
- Jacob b. Judah Goltzor 393
- Jacob Birav 157, 162
- Jacob Frank 30, 31, 49, 63
- Jacob ha-Levi b. Abraham Segal 268, 302, 393
- Jacob Judah b. Aaron 390, 392, 393, 394
- Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye 15, 17, 27, 31, 64, 124, 133, 134, 135, 137, 138, 142, 144, 196, 197, 198, 200, 202, 233, 251, 272, 299, 300, 329, 330, 341, 342
- Jacob Joseph ("the Seer of Lublin") 68, 102, 104, 116, 121, 122, 127, 168, 211, 222, 227, 232, 242, 243, 244, 245, 379
- Jacob Kopel Lifschitz of Mezhirichi 123, 128, 132, 226, 264
- Jacob Samson of Shipitovka 192
- Jacobson, Yoram 83, 84, 149, 171, 210, 334, 373
- Jeremiah (prophet) 153
- Jeremiah (rabbinic emissary) 284
- Jesus 10, 22, 23, 26, 86, 114, 121, 170, 212
- Joel b. Moses of Smolian 68, 110, 147, 148, 166, 273, 278, 280, 283, 387
- Jonathan Eibeschutz 40, 49, 137, 225
- Joseph (biblical personality) 146, 149, 162
- Joseph b. Jacob (rabbinic emissary) 185
- Joseph Karo 90, 91, 94, 95, 99, 100, 101, 106, 108, 109, 118, 121, 157, 169, 177, 197, 307, 309, 310, 338, 341, 349, 359, 362, 376
- Joseph Nasi (Don Joseph) 162
- Joseph Spravidliever 35, 37
- Joseph of Yampol 37, 43, 46, 144, 145, 164, 171, 191, 210, 217, 218, 219, 220, 231, 289, 371
- Joseph Saul Nathanson 285
- Joshua (biblical personality) 171
- Joshua b. Levi (*amora*) 21, 23, 74
- Judah (*amora*) 329
- Judah Hasid 158
- Judah livva b. Beza'l'el (Maharal of Prague) 246
- Kahana, Abraham 301, 303, 304, 305, 306
- Katz, Jacob 364, 365
- Karlinsky, Nahum 32, 166
- Krassen, Miles A. 36, 110, 272, 279, 315
- Lahover, Yeruham Fishel 33, 74, 109, 113, 323
- Landau, Jonathan Ze'ev 236
- Leah Zisel (Menaḥem Mendel of Vitebsk's daughter-in-law) 386
- Leib Prusnitz 49
- Lenowitz, Harris 195, 202, 207
- Levi (*amora*) 89
- Levi Isaac of Berdichev 111, 122, 126, 128, 226, 227, 228, 233, 235, 236, 237, 238, 263, 264, 285, 290, 291, 292, 312, 379
- Lewis, Bernard 161
- Liebes, Esther 79, 194, 288
- Liebes, Yehuda 24, 26, 28, 49, 62,

- 76, 78, 85, 88, 91, 93, 94, 95, 105,
106, 111, 113, 118, 146, 154, 155,
209, 220, 272, 288, 305, 370
- Lieberman, Saul 87, 266
- Loewenthal, Naftali 19, 195
- Lunz, Abraham Moses 390
- Mahler, Raphael 39
- Marcus, Aaron 57
- Margolin, Ron Pinhas 53
- Matya b. Harash (*tanna*) 72, 74
- Me'ir b. Gedaliah (the Maharam of
Lublin) 284
- Menahem Mendel of Ber 330, 333,
342
- Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk 9, 67,
125, 127, 128, 139, 140, 158, 165,
167, 168, 169, 170, 172, 173, 178,
179, 181, 182, 184, 187, 188, 189,
190, 191, 192, 264, 265, 266, 267,
268, 269, 281, 282, 283, 302, 385,
386, 387, 388, 392, 393, 394
- Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlyany
115, 158, 164, 172, 235, 258, 274,
275, 276, 286, 288, 289, 291, 294,
311, 312, 314, 315, 316, 330, 360
- Menahem Mendel Shneerson
(the Lubavitcher Rebbe) 3, 208,
211, 212, 295
- Meroz, Ronit 35, 62, 85, 106, 118,
146
- Meshullam Feibush ha-Levi Heller 9,
37, 46, 52, 55, 59, 60, 64, 65, 66,
67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 77, 78, 81, 83,
85, 92, 98, 104, 110, 116, 119, 121,
123, 125, 126, 147, 148, 166, 169,
170, 172, 186, 187, 192, 226, 232,
257, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276,
277, 278, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284,
285, 292, 294, 302, 309, 311, 313,
314, 315, 318, 328, 329, 330, 331,
332, 348, 349, 350, 351, 363, 364,
365, 367, 370, 375, 387
- Miriam (Yehiel Mikhel's daughter) 217
- Mondschein, Joshua 166, 195, 268,
296, 301, 379, 393, 394
- Mordecai b. Nahum of Chernobyl
122, 129, 216, 217
- Mordecai Datto 84, 149, 334
- Mordecai of Kremenets 128, 192,
210, 225, 228, 231, 242, 260, 262,
285
- Mordecai of Nesukhoyezhe 122, 191,
270
- Morgenstern, Aryeh 6, 9, 25, 134,
135, 140, 148, 159, 161, 167, 173,
181, 183, 195, 282, 293, 389
- Moses (prophet) 12, 15, 41, 83, 89,
90, 91, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99,
100, 101, 103, 108, 109, 116, 127,
142, 143, 146, 147, 155, 169, 197,
307, 326, 331
- Moses b. Hillel Osterer 138
- Moses b. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk
179, 386
- Moses b. Pinhas Shapira of Korets
52, 53, 58, 239, 247
- Moses Cordovero 63, 135
- Moses Elyakum Berieh 225, 262
- Moses Hagiz 282
- Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (Ramhal) 43,
91, 94, 95, 100, 101, 107, 109, 111,
119, 130, 158
- Moses Isserles (Rema) 284, 384
- Moses Mordecai Levtoḥ of Dzigivko
290
- Moses Shoham of Dolina 125, 271,
272, 381
- Moses of Zvihil 34, 217, 224
- Moses of Zvirsh 37
- Naftali Katz 246
- Nahman of Bratslav 10, 11, 24, 123,
208, 370, 386
- Nahman of Gorodonk 164, 288, 342
- Nahman of Kosov 286, 342
- Nahum of Chernobyl 122, 124, 129,
217, 261, 360
- Nathan Neta ha-Kohen of Kolbiel
36, 143, 215, 238, 285
- Nathan of Gaza 23, 43, 62, 78, 91,
119, 352
- Nathan Shapira 138
- Nehorai, Michael 154
- Nehuniah b. ha-Qaneh (*tanna*) 109
- Nero (Roman emperor) 22
- Nigal, Gedaliah 135, 231, 305, 315,
359, 360
- Oron-Kushnir, Michal 58
- Pachter, Mordechai 64, 89, 106, 119,
146, 150, 155, 307, 338, 339, 348,
360, 365, 370
- Patai, Raphael 77, 86, 88, 94
- Pedaya, Haviva 154
- Peter 22
- Piekarz, Mendel 47, 99, 194, 205,

- 209, 231, 241, 262, 270, 271, 272,
286, 338, 339, 342, 364, 368
- Pinḥas (*amora*) 115
- Pinḥas Horowitz 217, 226, 228, 285
- Pinḥas Shapira of Korets 31
- Qorah (biblical personality) 331
- Rabinowitz, Ze'ev 128, 129, 225,
260, 261, 303
- Rachel (matriarch) See also *Shekhinah*
87, 91, 153
- Rav (*amora*) 329
- Rava b. Huna (*amora*) 309
- Rapoport-Albert, Ada 4, 31, 48, 194
- Redler-Feldman, Benjamin 165
- Reiner, Elchanan 49, 200
- Reuben (biblical personality) 219
- Reuben ha-Levi Horowitz 127
- Resh Laqish (*amora*) 83, 89, 115
- Rosman, Moshe 14, 24, 29, 240,
301, 305
- Rozani, Judah 211
- Rozani, Joseph 195, 300, 303, 304
- Rubin, Zvia 109
- Rubinstein, Abraham 26, 43, 261,
267, 300, 315
- Saadiah *Gaon* 92
- Sack, Brachah 155
- Safrai, Samuel 308, 309
- Samson Meizlish 137, 225
- Samson of Ostropolia 252, 272
- Samuel (prophet) 19, 103
- Samuel (Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk's
grandson) 385, 386
- Samuel b. Hayyim Haika of Amdur
293, 312, 367
- Samuel b. Hayyim Shabtels 140, 181
- Samuel of Klovrio 6
- Samuel Shmelka Zack 246
- Samuel Shmulky of Nikolsburg 217,
263, 285
- Sar Shalom Shar'abi 106, 111, 121
- Sarah (matriarch) 327, 386
- Schäfer, Peter 42, 105, 109, 110
- Schatz-Uffenheimer, Rivka 19, 46,
51, 52, 53, 54, 57, 97, 103, 222,
233, 248, 274, 293, 323, 324, 325,
333, 334, 341, 346, 352, 359, 364,
373, 376, 379, 380, 381
- Scholem, Gershom 3, 4, 5, 12, 13,
23, 28, 43, 55, 58, 62, 64, 71, 76,
77, 85, 86, 88, 90, 91, 94, 109, 116,
136, 138, 158, 167, 193, 194, 200,
201, 202, 203, 204, 234, 261, 273,
285, 286, 309, 315, 316, 321, 325,
331, 336, 337, 342, 345, 346, 353,
354, 365, 368, 375
- Shabbetai of Vad Rashkov 128, 129,
252, 253, 261
- Shabbetai Zevi 3, 5, 7, 10, 26, 30,
43, 49, 62, 63, 67, 79, 85, 91, 94,
95, 106, 108, 119, 121, 137, 141,
142, 155, 157, 158, 167, 173, 178,
202, 208, 226, 260, 331, 332, 334,
335, 352, 353
- Shazar, Shneur Zalman 5
- Shmeruk, Hannah 38, 57, 58, 59,
261, 273
- Shneur Zalman of Lyady 31, 32, 103,
122, 125, 127, 191, 212, 238, 265,
283, 294, 295, 296, 313, 382, 383,
384
- Sima (Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk's
wife) 386
- Simḥah of Zalozhtsy 143, 158
- Simeon b. Judah Leib Ashkenazi 131,
135, 250, 251
- Simeon b. Zemah Duran (Rashbaz) 112
- Simeon b. Yohai (Rashbi) 6, 21, 88,
94, 95, 101, 106, 107, 109, 111,
112, 113, 146, 148, 150, 166, 177,
182, 184, 198, 287, 320, 373, 383,
384
- Solomon Chelmo 179, 181
- Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz 90, 99,
100, 101, 109, 118, 155, 157, 169,
307, 309
- Solomon Lutsker 66, 131, 132, 133,
134, 135, 199, 246, 250, 251, 252,
253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 260, 261,
262, 287, 301, 311, 312, 318
- Solomon Molkho 318
- Solomon Maimon 32, 33, 34
- Solomon Zalman ha-Kohen Vilner
139, 164, 172, 180, 182, 189, 282,
288, 289, 293, 294
- Stalin, Joseph 212
- Stampfer, Saul 57
- Stiman-Katz, Haya 15, 25, 176, 180,
191, 192, 226, 241, 257, 270, 273,
293, 387
- Steinman, Eliezer 238
- Suleiman "the magnificent" 161
- Sursky, Aaron 90, 182, 210, 268,
283, 302, 385, 386, 390, 391, 392,
393

- Ta-Shema, Israel 250, 254, 257
 Tamar, David 23, 146
 Tanenbaum, Isaac Matityahu 36, 37,
 44, 192, 215, 220, 225, 226, 230,
 238, 239, 243, 247, 270, 285
 Tauber, Aryeh 131, 132, 236, 250
 Teller, Adam 14, 34
 Tishby, Isaiah 3, 4, 6, 7, 12, 23, 28,
 43, 57, 62, 74, 88, 91, 92, 95, 99,
 101, 107, 109, 111, 113, 123, 139,
 146, 194, 204, 226, 237, 238, 239,
 241, 264, 323, 348, 373, 375, 382

 Ula (*amora*) 349, 350
 Urbach, Ephraim Elimelekh 73, 86,
 87, 100, 101, 146
 Uri Shapira of Vilnius 164
 Uri "the seraph" of Strelisk 45, 371
 Uziel Meizlish 103, 104, 116, 137,
 143, 148, 149, 150, 225, 245, 284

 Wunder, Me'ir 137, 225, 226, 233,
 271, 285
 Weiss, Joseph 26, 47, 97, 209, 279,
 315, 342, 367, 373
 Werblowsky, Raphael Yehuda Zevi
 99, 100, 106, 338, 349
 Wertheim, Aaron 57
 Wilensky, Mordekhai 6, 31, 34, 55,
 56, 57, 61, 65, 107, 122, 126, 127,
 129, 141, 142, 236, 243, 255, 258,
 262, 263, 265, 270, 293, 294, 320,
 354, 362, 374, 375, 378, 379, 383,
 391
 Wilhelm, Jacob David 89
 Wirshovsky, Hayyim 353
 Wolfson, Elliott (Ephraim) 26, 27, 47,
 62, 104, 194, 370

 Ya'ari, Abraham 30, 143, 158, 174
 Yaffee, David (Israel Yaffee's son) 268
 Yaffee, Pearl 388
 Yaffee, Shprinza (Israel Yaffee's wife)
 388
 Yinon, Joseph 78
 Yehiel Mikhel (the *Maggid* of Zolochew)
 5, 8, 10, 11, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40, 43,
 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53,
 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63,
 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 77,
 78, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 92,
 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101,
 102, 103, 104, 107, 108, 109, 110,
 111, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 121,
 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128,
 130, 131, 133, 135, 137, 138, 139,
 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146,
 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 164, 165,
 166, 168, 169, 171, 172, 180, 186,
 188, 191, 192, 195, 196, 197, 198,
 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 206,
 209, 210, 211, 215, 216, 217, 218,
 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225,
 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 235, 236,
 237, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244,
 245, 247, 250, 251, 256, 257, 258,
 259, 260, 262, 263, 264, 268, 269,
 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276,
 277, 279, 280, 282, 284, 285, 286,
 287, 289, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295,
 296, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 314,
 317, 318, 319, 322, 323, 325, 326,
 327, 328, 331, 332, 333, 334, 336,
 337, 340, 344, 345, 346, 348, 350,
 351, 354, 356, 359, 360, 361, 362,
 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369,
 370, 371, 372, 373, 376, 377, 379,
 380, 381, 382, 384
 Yenta the Prophetess 37
 Yenta-Rechel (Yehiel Mikhel's wife)
 217
 Yohanan (*amora*) 100, 161
 Yokheved (Abraham Joshua Heschel of
 Opatow's daughter) 231
 Yokheved (Menahem Mendel of
 Vitebsk's daughter in-law) 386
 Yom Tov Lipman Heller 272
 Yosi (*tanna*) 35
 Yosi b. Hanina (*amora*) 74
 Yuval, Israel Jacob 22

 Zechariah (prophet) 156, 170
 Zechariah Mendel of Yaroslav 312
 Ze'ev Wolf of Chernyy-Ostrov 60
 Ze'ev Wolf of Dubno 344, 346
 Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir 52, 60, 68,
 70, 72, 77, 85, 95, 97, 98, 99, 101,
 104, 116, 121, 122, 124, 236, 237,
 238, 241, 246, 264, 285, 337, 380
 Zevi Hasid 79
 Zevi Hirsch b. Samson Meizlish 137
 Zevi Hirsch Margaliot 132, 137, 246,
 265
 Zevi Hirsch of Nodvorno 287
 Zevi Ze'ev of Zbarazh 224, 360
 Zucker, Solomon 293, 323
 Zur, Yaron 173
 Zusya of Annopol 121, 122, 217, 232

INDEX OF WRITINGS

- Abraham's Swiftmess (*Ẓerizuta de-Avraham*) 272
- Alphabet, Enlightening Letters (*Alfa Beta Otiyot Maḥkimot*), In Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem [*Ẓava'at ha-Ribash*] 118, 256, 287
- Alphabet, Enlightening Letters (*Alfa Beta Otiyot Maḥkimot*) 256
- Banner of Ephraim's Encampment (*Degel Maḥaneh Efrayim*) 341, 342
- Beginning of Wisdom, complete edition (*Reshit Hokhmah ha-Shalem*) 307, 310, 338, 366, 367, 375, 381
- Beloved Day (*Hemdat Yamim*) 85, 91
- Benjamin's Portion (*Helgat Binyamin*) 233
- Benjamin's Sack (*Amtahat Binyamin*) 233
- Besht's Holy Epistle (*Iggeret ha-Qodesh*) 8, 14, 15, 113, 133, 134, 142, 251, 299, 301, 303, 305
- Biography of Jacob Joseph (*Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*) 15, 17, 26, 133, 134, 135, 251, 329, 330, 331, 333, 342, 343
- Book of Brightness (*Sefer ha-Bahir*) 108, 265
- Book of Creation (*Sefer Yesira*) 20, 369, 370
- Book of Creation, With the Commentary "Secret Rose" (*Sefer Yesira im Peirush Shoshan Sodot*) 132, 133, 250
- Book of Kanah (*Sefer ha-Kanah*) 58, 59, 131, 132, 141, 251, 252, 253, 254, 256
- Book of the God-Fearing (*Sefer Haredim*) 307, 310, 365, 366, 382
- Book of the Magnificent (*Sefer ha-Mefo'ar*) 318
- Book of Razi'el (*Sefer Razi'el*) 261
- Book of Reincarnations See Lurianic Kabbalah
- Book of Splendor See *Ẓohar*
- Book of Tashbaz (*Sefer ha-Tashbaz*) 112
- Book of Visions See Lurianic Kabbalah
- Book of Zoref (*Sefer ha-Zoref*) 128, 226, 260, 262, 303
- Booklet of the Holy See Lurianic Kabbalah
- Breaking of Sinners (*Shever Posh'eim*) 36, 55, 107, 122, 126, 127, 129, 140, 142, 236, 243, 258, 262, 263, 270, 293, 294, 320, 374, 378
- Bud and Flower (*Kaftor va-Ferah*) 161, 171, 182
- Biblical Commentaries*
- Abarbanel, Isaac 154
- Altshuler, David (David's Fortress [*Mezudat David*]) 37, 170
- Altshuler, Yehiel Hillel (Zion's Fortress [*Mezudat Ẓiyyon*]) 37, 47
- Levi b. Gershom (Rabag) 154
- Moses b. Nahman (Ramban) 23, 115, 116, 154
- Samuel b. Me'ir (Rashbam) 356
- Solomon. B. Isaac (Rashi) 35, 37, 41, 99, 154, 170, 171, 186, 280, 344, 345, 356, 357
- Qimhi, David (Radaq) 47, 170
- Census of the Jews of the Land of Israel 390
- Covenant of Eternal Priesthood (*Berit Kehunat Olam*) 226, 246, 247
- Creation See Book of Creation
- Decameron 189
- Duties of the Heart (*Hovot ha-Levavot*) 310, 339
- Entry to the Gates See Lurianic Kabbalah
- Epistle of Solomon ha-Levi Elqabetz (*Iggeret Shelomo ha-Levi Elqabetz*) 90, 99, 100, 101, 109, 118, 157, 307, 309

- Fruit of the Land (*Peri ha-Aretz*) 170,
182, 192, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269
- Fruit of the Tree of Life See Lurianic
Kabbalah
- Gate of Kavvanot See Lurianic
Kabbalah
- Gate of Prayer (*Sha'ar ha-Tefillah*) 242
- Gate of Recompense (*Sha'ar ha-Gemul*)
154
- Gate of the Holy Spirit See Lurianic
Kabbalah
- Gates of Holiness, In *Book of Kavvanot*
See Lurianic Kabbalah
- Gates of Holiness See Lurianic
Kabbalah
- Gates of Garden of Eden (*Sha'arei Gan
Eden*) 226, 264
- Gleaned Statements (*Liqqutei Amarim*,
Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk) 259,
276, 385
- Gleaned Statements—Tanya (*Liqqutei
Amarim Tanya*) 103, 127, 313
- Glory of Uziel, Called the Good Tree
of Knowledge (*Tif'eret Uziel ha-Nigra
be-Shem Ez ha-Da'at Tov*) 103, 148,
149, 245, 284, 285, 286
- Glory of Zevi Ze'ev (*Tif'eret Zevi Ze'ev*)
224, 360
- Glory to the Upright (*Pe'er la-Yesharim*)
55
- God-Fearing See Book of the
God-Fearing
- Golden Doves (*Torei Z'ahav*) 233, 234,
235, 236, 360, 380
- Good Circle (*Ma'agal Tov*) 173
- Great Waters (*Mayim Rabbim*) 36,
37, 44, 45, 143, 144, 215, 225, 227,
230, 231, 236, 241, 242, 243, 257,
262, 270, 285, 322, 323, 371, 372,
381
- He Imparts His Words to Jacob
(*Maggid Devarav le-Ya'akov*) 66, 131,
133, 134, 199, 232, 250, 251, 259,
261, 276, 290, 291, 292, 301, 311,
312, 315, 316, 318, 319, 322, 323,
324
- Herald of Righteousness (*Mevasser
Z'edeq*) 257
- Hidden Light (*Or ha-Ganuz*) 33, 372
- Hidden Treasures of Ramhal (*Ginzei
Ramhal*) 131
- Holy Writings (*Kitvei Qodesh*) 262
- Honest Words of Truth and Faith
(*Yosher Divrei Emet*) 10, 68, 272, 273,
277, 278, 313, 318, 365
- House of Aaron (*Beit Aharon*) 128,
225
- Illumination of the Eye and Let the
Heart Rejoice (*Me'or Einayim im
Yismah Lev*) 129
- In Memory of This (*Zikhron Zot*) 243,
380
- In Praise of R. Nahman (*Shivhei ha-Ran*)
386
- In Praise of the Ari (*Shivhei ha-Ari*)
318
- In Praise of the Besht (*Shivhei ha-Besht*)
Kapost 14, 190, 192, 266, 267
- In Praise of the Besht Mondschein
16, 24, 113, 300, 301, 304, 306
- In Praise of the Besht Mintz 236
- In Praise of the Besht Rubinstein 7,
15, 25, 26, 27, 30, 36, 37, 38, 39,
40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49,
142, 144, 145, 189, 190, 192, 197,
198, 200, 215, 218, 220, 236, 240,
261, 262, 267, 268, 269, 299, 301,
317, 342, 388
- Intense Loving (*Ahavat Dodim*) 46, 47,
233, 234, 235, 257
- Joseph is a Fruitful Son (*Ben Porat
Yosef*) 17, 18, 20, 25, 27, 29, 133,
134, 135, 142, 144, 186, 195, 197,
251, 299, 300, 304, 305, 306, 343
- Kindness to Abraham, Abraham Azulai
(*Hesed le-Avraham*) 59, 60, 123
- Kindness to Abraham, Abraham "the
Angel," b. Dov Ber of Mezhirichi
(*Hesed le-Avraham*) 258
- Knowledge of Moses (*Da'at Moshe*)
262
- Known in Judah (*Noda' bi-Yehudah*,
responsa collection) 40, 241
- Kanah See Book of Kanah

Lurianic Kabbalah

- Book of Reincarnations (*Sefer ha-Gilgulim*) 136, 137, 284
- Book of Visions (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot*) 23, 115
- Booklet of the Holy (*Mahberet ha-Qodesh*) 132, 133, 251, 252
- Entry to the Gates (*Mevo She'arim*) 251, 252, 335
- Fruit of the Tree of Life (*Peri Ez Hayyim*) 125, 132, 138, 139, 142, 145, 150, 251, 252, 253, 254, 271
- Gate of Kavvanot (*Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*) 91, 143
- Gate of the Holy Spirit (*Sha'ar Ruah ha-Qodesh*) 115
- Gates of Holiness (*Sha'arei Qedushah*), In *Book of Kavvanot* 252
- Gates of Holiness (*Sha'arei Qedushah*) 113, 136
- Tree of Life (*Ez Hayyim*) 64, 65, 112, 125, 132, 138, 139, 141, 142, 145, 150, 251, 252, 253, 254, 271, 285, 310, 318, 335, 382
- Life and Kindness (*Hayyim va-Hesed*) 293, 340, 367
- The Life of Solomon Maimon (*Hayyei Shelomo Maimon*) 32
- Light of Isaac (*Or Yizhaq*) 46, 47, 80, 115, 125, 126, 147, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 243, 344, 345, 346, 347, 352, 353, 367
- Light of Israel (*Or Yisra'el*) 265
- Light of Torah (*Or Torah*) 240, 258, 259, 312, 327, 376
- Light of Truth (*Or ha-Emet*) 65, 79, 120, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 312, 314, 324, 325, 327, 340, 341, 344, 355, 356, 358, 362, 363, 373, 375
- The Light That Illuminates (*Or ha-Me'ir*) 70, 71, 95, 96, 98, 99, 124, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 264, 380
- Lion's Voice (*Qol Aryeh*) 299
- Lover of Israel, complete edition (*Ohev Yisra'el ha-Shalem*) 230
- Magnificent See Book of the Magnificent
- Maimonides' Book of the Commandments, with Nahmanides' Comments (*Sefer ha-Mizvot*)
- le-ha-Rambam im Hasagot ha-Ramban* 383
- Mandrakes in the Field (*Duda'im ba-Sadeh*) 127
- Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai* 99
- Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* 101, 182
- Midrash Exodus Rabbah (*Shemot Rabbah*) 89, 113
- Midrash Genesis Rabbah (*Bereshit Rabbah*) 154, 170, 171, 327
- Midrash Numbers Rabbah (*Be-Midbar Rabbah*) 332
- Midrash on Psalms Known as "He Who Awaits the Good" (*Midrash Tehillim ha-Mekhuneh Shoher Tov*) 99
- Midrash Pesiqta of Rav Kahana (*Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana*) 86
- Midrash Pesiqta Rabbati (*Pesiqta Rabbati*) 326
- Midrash Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 154
- Midrash Sifri of the Academy of Rav for the Book of Numbers (*Sifri de-Bei Rav, Be-Midbar*) 86
- Midrash Tanhuma* 171
- Mishneh Torah* 161, 217, 225, 383
- Ms. Cincinnati* 62 52, 248, 249
- Ms. Jerusalem 8 903* 385, 392
- Ms. Jerusalem 8 3282* 293, 312
- Ms. Jerusalem 8 3759* 52, 248
- Ms. Jerusalem 8 5198* 323, 324, 333, 334, 372
- Ms. Jerusalem (Rothschild) 8 5979* 16, 173, 301, 303, 304, 305, 306
- My Dear Esterlein (*Esterlein Yeqirati*) 233
- Nectar of the Fruit of the Tree of Life (*Seraf Peri Ez Hayyim*) 125, 271
- Orchard of Pomegranates (*Pardes Rimmonim*) 132, 135, 250
- Order of the Generations, revised edition (*Seder ha-Dorot he-Hadash*) 234, 237, 238, 247, 259, 268
- Order of the Joyful Heart (*Seder Lev Sameiah*) 126
- Path of Your Commandments (*Netiv Mizvotekha*) 237
- Pesher* on Habakkuk (*Pesher Habaqquq*) 108
- Pillar of Service (*Amud ha-Avodah*) 37, 288
- Pirqei ha-Ne'ezar* (*Pirqei ha-Ne'ezar*) 60, 238

- Pleasantness of Elimelekh (*No'am Elimelekh*) 66, 126, 257
- Pleasantness of Sweets and Honor of the Torah (*No'am Megadim u-Khevod ha-Torah*) 231, 232, 235, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 362
- Praises of Israel (*Tehillot Yisra'el*) 262
- Preacher of Righteousness (*Maggid Mesharim*) 90, 94, 307, 309, 310, 338, 349, 360
- Precious Gleanings (*Liqqutim Yeqarim*) 37, 46, 50, 55, 59, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 78, 81, 82, 83, 84, 92, 98, 110, 119, 120, 121, 123, 125,
- Prayer Books*
- Ari's Liturgy 57, 61, 62, 64
- Liturgy of the Sabbatean kabbalist R. Jacob Kopel Lifschitz of Mezhirichi 128
- Lurianic Prayer Book of R. Shabbetai of Vad Rashkov 128, 129
- Order of Prayers for the Entire Year According to the Ashkenazi Custom (*Seder Tefillot al Kol ha-Shanah ke-Minhag Ashkenaz*) 126
- Prayer Book of R. Elazar Shapira of Munkacz 129
- Prayer Book of R. Moses Shoham of Dolina 272
- Razi'el See Book of Razi'el
- Record of Great Men, complete edition (*Shem ha-Gedolim ha-Shalem*) 111, 121, 282
- Record of the Council of the Four Lands (*Pinqas Va'ad Arba' Arazot*) 40
- Repairs of the *Zohar* (*Sefer Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*) 132, 133, 250, 280, 365
- Sabbath Prayer Book (*Sidduro shel Shabbat*) 241, 242
- Sanctity of Levi, complete edition (*Oedushat Levi ha-Shalem*) 111, 126, 227, 263, 264, 290
- Sayings of Pinhas, complete edition (*Imrei Pinhas ha-Shalem*) 53
- Shield of the Patriarchs—commentary on Tractate Avot (*Magen Avot al Avot*) 112
- Shoot of David (*Zemah David*) 371
- Shulhan Arukh* 57, 90, 269, 357, 377, 378, 379, 384
- 127, 148, 166, 169, 172, 186, 226, 240, 255, 257, 258, 259, 263, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 282, 284, 290, 291, 293, 294, 302, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 318, 323, 324, 325, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 340, 349, 350, 351, 355, 356, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 370, 372, 375
- Pupil of My Eye (*Bat Eini*) 346
- Purification of the Service (*Mizraf ha-Avodah*) 379
- Soul of David (*Nefesh David*) 276
- Sparks of Fire (*Rishfei Esh*), In Book of Rav Yeivi 270
- Splendor See *Zohar*
- Spring of Living Water (*Be'er Mayim Hayyim*) 242, 244
- Streets of the River, The Book of Might and Power (*Rehovot ha-Nahar, Sefer ha-Iliyut ve-ha-Koah Rehovot ha-Nahar*) 263
- Tablets of Testimony (*Luhot Eidut*) 137, 225
- Tashbaz See Book of Tashbaz
- Teaching of the Pious (*Mishnat Hasidim*) 7, 252, 310
- Testament of R. Israel Ba'al Shem (*Zava'at ha-Ribash*) 118, 240, 255, 256, 257, 258, 260, 287, 290, 291, 301, 308, 310, 311, 313, 315, 316, 317, 336, 340, 351, 355, 356, 365, 367
- This Is a Remembrance (*Zot Zikkaron*) 102, 243, 244, 245
- To'afot Harim*—The Zolochov Dynasty 36, 215
- Tosefot Yom Tov* 272
- Tractate Avot With the commentary Fruit of Life (*Masekhet Avot im Peri Hayyim*) 72, 73, 75, 110, 111, 169, 228, 325, 326, 330
- Treasury of Wisdom (*Ozar Hokhmah*) 63, 131
- Tree of Life See Lurianic Kabbalah
- Two Tablets of the Covenant, complete edition (*Shenei Luhot ha-Berit ha-Shalem*) 59, 60, 156, 231, 310, 338, 339

- Uprightness of the Heart (*Yosher Levav*) 6, 9, 148, 284
- Way to Life (*Orah le-Hayyim*) 126, 226, 227, 228, 264, 326
- Ways of Pleasantness (*Darkhei No'am*) 6, 7
- Ways of Righteousness (*Darkhei Zedeq*) 312
- Ways of the Just (*Darkhei Yesharim*) 240, 289, 290, 292, 293, 310, 312, 315, 316, 340, 341, 344, 347, 348, 351, 355, 356, 362, 363, 367
- Words of Moses (*Divrei Moshe*) 125, 271, 381
- Words of Truth (*Divrei Emet*) 243, 244
- Zaddik*, Foundation of the World 85
- Zohar* (Book of Splendor) 62, 63, 74, 76, 78, 87, 88, 90, 93, 94, 99, 101, 103, 106, 107, 108, 109, 111, 112, 113, 118, 120, 121, 141, 142, 146, 148, 150, 154, 160, 186, 301, 323
- Zohar*, Korets 5538 (1778) 132, 133, 250, 365, 370
- Zohar* with the Commentary of "the Ladder" (*Zohar im Peirush ha-Sulam*) 99, 112, 143
- Zoref* See Book of *Zoref*

INDEX OF SUBJECTS AND PLACES

- Acco 174, 178, 192, 266
 Adam
 Primeval Adam 82, 84, 87, 112, 261, 352
 Human mothers 208
 Admonitions (*Azharot*) 60, 92, 307
 Algier 112
 Altona 38, 40
 Amsterdam 136, 158, 164, 178, 180, 390
 Amulets 44, 89, 137
 Annihilation 71, 72, 82, 96, 97, 258, 259
 Ansbach 38, 40
 Arousal above 156, 167
 Arousal below 156, 167
 Asceticism 309
 Assembly
 Great assembly (*Idra Rabba*) 88, 90, 94, 106, 121
 Small assembly (*Idra Zuta*) 94
 Austerity (*Perishut*) 309, 310, 365, 368
 Austria 48, 241

 Tower of Babylon 112
 Berdichev 227, 257, 263, 287
 Blood libel 30, 272, 305
 Brisk 320, 362, 363
 Brody 8, 10, 36, 40, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 56, 57, 67, 68, 69, 92, 93, 98, 99, 102, 104, 121, 126, 127, 136, 139, 140, 142, 144, 145, 164, 165, 172, 175, 180, 181, 182, 186, 196, 199, 210, 216, 218, 225, 226, 228, 246, 270, 273, 276, 282, 284, 294, 320, 348, 362, 363, 378
 Ban 49, 50, 51, 56, 57, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 69, 131, 140
 Kloyz 40, 48, 49, 61, 63, 137, 138, 139, 140, 158, 164, 180, 194, 197, 226, 272, 276, 346
 Bukovina 241

 Christianity 23, 26, 49, 121, 204, 207, 272, 305
 Collateral 39, 40, 41
 Come my Beloved (*Lekha Dodi*) 90, 155

 Commandments 30, 58, 81, 92, 93, 116, 117, 121, 222, 237, 241, 307, 308, 328, 329, 331, 332, 340, 342, 351, 352, 356, 359, 360, 361, 365, 368, 383
 Communion (*Devequt*) 82, 83, 187, 201, 310, 315, 316, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 348, 351, 354, 355, 358, 359, 361, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 375, 376, 380, 382
 Congregation of Israel (*keneset Yisra'el*)
 See *Shekhinah*
 Corporeality 17, 82, 349, 350, 381
 Casting off corporeality 315, 348, 349, 350, 381
 Covenant (*Berit*) See also *Zaddik* 120, 376
 Covenant of *ma'or* (nakedness) 171, 224, 369, 370, 372
 Covenant of the tongue 369, 370, 372
 Guardians of the Sacred Covenant 34, 224, 370
 Council of the Four Lands 40, 48, 246
 Coupling by a kiss 95, 156, 375
 Crimea 163, 175, 176
 Crown See *Sefirot—Keter*
 Cyprus 157, 163

 Dalliance with children See Sexual Offenses, Sinners
 Death 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 16, 17, 18, 29, 31, 40, 44, 45, 46, 51, 52, 55, 58, 60, 61, 67, 69, 81, 94, 111, 113, 116, 118, 127, 128, 130, 133, 136, 137, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 150, 158, 163, 173, 188, 190, 191, 192, 195, 199, 203, 210, 211, 216, 219, 220, 227, 228, 231, 233, 237, 243, 251, 254, 259, 263, 265, 268, 269, 277, 279, 280, 282, 284, 285, 287, 291, 305, 314, 324, 325, 346, 379, 382
 Angel of Death 113, 143
 Death of Messiah 149
 Death of Redeemer 145

- Descent for the sake of the ascent
319, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 327,
328, 329, 331, 332, 333, 335, 337,
372
- Dunayevtsy 305
- Efficacious forces 18, 19
- End
End-reckonings 7, 25, 28, 34, 62,
85, 134, 139, 157, 159, 183, 203
End of days 16, 108, 147
- England 157
- Epiphany at Sinai 74, 86, 87, 89, 90,
92, 93, 94, 99, 100, 105, 106, 109,
112, 115, 116, 307, 332, 344, 358
- Equanimity (*Hishtavut*) 310, 319, 338,
339, 340, 341, 343, 344, 345, 347,
348, 349, 350, 351, 353, 354, 355,
356, 373, 382
- Eternity See *Sefirot—Nezah*
- Evil 18, 23, 26, 30, 34, 66, 112, 149,
171, 190, 238, 294, 306, 310, 321,
322, 335, 340, 350, 351, 352, 372,
374, 380, 381
- Excommunications See also Brody ban,
Vilnius ban 4, 10, 139
- Exile 3, 23, 62, 88, 89, 93, 94, 100,
101, 153, 155, 156, 157, 159, 160,
161, 170, 186, 218, 221
- Faith 22, 49, 66, 118, 149, 157, 159,
207, 273, 278, 308, 313, 345, 351,
363, 383
- Fast 42, 170, 240, 241, 357, 358,
360, 361, 369, 370, 372
- Female (*Nuqva*) 87, 91, 331
- Firstborn 220, 356, 357, 358, 359,
360, 361, 372
- Foundation See *Sefirot—Yesod*
- Frankfurt 136, 226, 246
- Fund (*Kollel*) 40, 48, 139, 140, 162,
165, 172, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181,
189, 191, 192, 216, 225, 270, 293,
390
Volhynia fund 210, 231
Habad fund 266, 294, 388
Tiberias fund 389
Reisen fund 389, 394
Fund's ship 174
- Galati 173, 174
- Galicja 8, 36, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49,
137, 165, 191, 216, 231, 241, 242,
263, 270, 272, 273, 378
- Galilee 2, 106, 160, 162, 163, 176,
177, 178, 180
- Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden*) 8, 16, 18,
21, 81, 86, 87, 94, 112, 154, 221,
226, 264, 304
- Gaza 23, 43, 62, 78, 91, 119, 121,
158, 178, 302, 352
- Germany 32, 48, 246, 339
- Glory See *Sefirot—Hod*
- Gog and Magog 146
- Gorokhov 38, 39, 40, 371
- Grace See *Sefirot—Hesed*
- Great ones See *Zaddik*
- Grodno 141
- Hamburg 38, 40
- Hasidim 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, 24, 34,
41, 55, 65, 68, 86, 117, 122, 127,
140, 141, 142, 151, 158, 165, 173,
175, 176, 181, 189, 192, 208, 209,
223, 224, 231, 241, 242, 255, 257,
264, 267, 270, 273, 282, 293, 294,
295, 303, 311, 334, 336
- Dead Hasidim 10
- Hasidei Ashkenaz (Pietists of
Germany) 113, 339, 341, 347, 351
- Hasidim rishonim (The Early Pious
Ones) 308, 319, 320, 366, 373,
380, 381, 382
- Hasidic immigration See
Immigration (*Aliyyah*)
- Hasidic conduct literature 117, 198,
217, 240, 255, 258, 260, 262,
264, 275, 287, 288, 289, 290,
291, 292, 301, 307, 309, 310,
311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316,
317, 319, 322, 327, 332, 333,
336, 339, 341, 343, 344, 350,
353, 354, 356, 365, 366, 367,
368, 373, 375, 376, 379
- Hasidic courts
Belz 11
Bratslav 10
Gur 11, 309
Vishnitz 11, 309
Zvihil 34, 223, 224, 370
Habad 309
Chernobyl 124, 129, 261
Satmar 11
Slonim 210, 389
Karlin 260, 387
Ruzhin-Sadgura 388
- Hasidic hagiography 4, 12, 14, 36,
43, 44, 46, 122, 194, 196, 198,

- 199, 206, 237, 263, 265, 295,
296, 315, 316, 345
Hasidic slaughter See also Slaughter
9, 39, 53, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 199,
203, 228, 237, 238, 251, 273, 326
Haughtiness 328, 329, 330, 330, 331,
332, 333, 364
Heaven's gate 9, 155, 156
Hebron 59, 123, 158, 160, 162, 178,
192, 210, 266, 388
Heikhalot literature 42, 105, 106,
109, 110, 121, 198
Hell See also Netherworld (*She'ol*) 21,
23, 26
High Holidays of Tishri 279
Holland 180
Holiness 26, 113, 114, 138, 244, 288,
290, 321, 322, 327, 335, 366
Holy deception 352, 353
Holy of holies 73, 75, 119, 154, 155,
169, 217, 224, 274, 374
Holy Spirit 37, 65, 86, 103, 115,
168, 169, 237, 238, 240, 241, 244,
264, 273, 278, 280, 281, 295, 309,
313, 350, 371
Husks (*Oelippot*) 18, 24, 323, 324, 325,
328, 329, 333, 334, 335, 336, 352,
372
Iberian communities 157
Idler (*batlan*) 37, 38
Immersion 91, 240, 241, 265, 267,
272, 295
Immigration (*aliyyah*) 27, 156, 158,
159, 163, 164, 182, 211, 241, 264,
266, 267, 268, 293, 346, 389, 395
Immigration of 5642 (1882) 159
Immigration of the *Perushim* 159
Hasidic immigration 13, 86, 165,
166, 167, 169, 171, 173, 175,
176, 177, 179, 181, 183, 185,
187, 189, 191, 192, 199, 203,
209, 279, 280, 282, 289, 302
Messianic immigration 13, 156,
158, 159, 165, 203
Besht's immigration 7, 14, 25, 26
Gershon of Kutov's immigration
15, 25, 158, 202
Joseph Karo's immigration 91, 118,
157
Shelah's immigration 59
Inspiration (*Ha'azalah*) See also
Manifestation 79, 82, 86, 90, 94,
96, 101, 102, 103, 105, 107, 108,
137, 167, 221, 222, 242, 308, 330,
365, 368
Islam 3, 13, 62, 142, 157, 322, 352,
353
Italy 6, 107, 158, 161
Iyyar 6, 9, 10, 34, 67, 130, 131, 133,
134, 135, 136, 138, 139, 140, 141,
142, 147, 148, 150, 167, 169, 180,
183, 184, 186, 195, 250, 251, 265,
269, 281, 282, 284, 300, 311, 362
Izmir 158, 162
Jerusalem See *Shekhinah*
Judgment See *Sefirot—Din*
Kabbalah 3, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15, 28,
35, 38, 49, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 76,
77, 85, 88, 89, 91, 111, 112, 113,
114, 117, 120, 124, 130, 131, 133,
135, 136, 137, 141, 145, 146, 150,
155, 156, 157, 173, 180, 193, 204,
208, 223, 224, 247, 250, 251, 252,
255, 276, 280, 285, 311, 334, 335,
346, 363, 365, 368, 370
Hidden wisdom (*Hen*) 103, 130,
304, 326, 330, 342
Lurianic Kabbalah 6, 35, 61, 62,
63, 64, 85, 91, 111, 113, 114,
120, 133, 136, 137, 145, 150,
180, 224, 251, 252, 255, 334, 335
Practical Kabbalah 28, 38, 173
Safed Kabbalah See also Safed 3,
63, 78, 89, 135, 307, 308, 338,
341, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369,
370, 381, 382
Study of Kabbalah 7, 49, 63, 64,
131, 280, 346
Kabbalistic books 9, 131, 132, 133,
138, 148, 153, 154, 252, 260,
319, 363
Printing of kabbalistic books See also
Korets, Ostrog, Parichi 130, 197,
251
Kabbalists
Kabbalistic groups
Abraham Revigo's group 158
Ari's group 57, 64, 65, 85, 106,
109, 121, 123, 318, 320
Besht's group 43
Elazar Azkari's group 85, 106, 118
Hayyim b. Attar's group 158
Jacob Frank's group 30, 49, 63
Joseph Karo's group 90, 106,
109, 121, 307

- Judah Hasid's group 158
 Moses Hayyim Luzzatto's
 (Ram^{hal}) group 101, 109, 111,
 119
 Sar Shalom Shar'abi's group
 106, 111, 121
 Shabbetai Zevi's group 10, 106,
 141, 353
 Simeon b. Yohai's group 88,
 106, 109, 111, 113, 146, 148,
 320, 373, 383, 384
 Yehiel Mikhel's group 9, 10, 11,
 35, 37, 40, 57, 58, 60, 61, 64,
 65, 67, 68, 71, 81, 85, 86, 93,
 108, 109, 111, 117, 118, 121,
 123, 124, 126, 130, 131, 138,
 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 150,
 180, 186, 192, 211, 216, 227,
 231, 238, 243, 268, 272, 289,
 293, 308, 309, 310, 311, 319,
 320, 335, 226
 Mighty ones of the group 105
 Kabbalistic practices 9, 49, 57,
 61, 63, 65, 117, 146, 196,
 199, 205, 235, 240, 255, 260,
 263, 264, 265, 270, 276, 277,
 287, 290, 292, 308, 309, 310,
 311, 312, 315, 316, 317, 319,
 322, 324, 325, 327, 339, 351,
 355, 356, 360, 362, 363, 365,
 367, 368, 369, 370, 372, 373,
 375
Kloyz, *Kloyzl* See Ostrog, Brody
 Korets
 Printing house 130, 131, 132, 133,
 134, 135, 137, 138, 150, 199,
 237, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254,
 258, 265, 280, 299, 300, 305,
 311, 312, 318
 Korets abattoir 51, 52, 56, 57, 58,
 60
 Koshtandina (Istanbul) 136
Lag be-Omer 106, 184, 186
 Land of Israel See also Immigration
 (*Aliyyah*) 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15,
 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 35, 37, 40, 59,
 67, 68, 69, 72, 73, 90, 91, 95, 101,
 106, 118, 119, 125, 127, 128, 130,
 139, 140, 146, 147, 148, 152, 154,
 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161,
 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 169, 169,
 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 177, 178,
 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185,
 186, 187, 191, 192, 199, 202, 203,
 209, 210, 211, 216, 225, 226, 231,
 233, 241, 242, 246, 257, 264, 265,
 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 273, 274,
 276, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284,
 288, 289, 293, 294, 299, 302, 303,
 306, 311, 346, 364, 385, 386, 387,
 388
 Liberation of the Holy Land 7
 Light of Israel 83, 128, 232, 290,
 357, 359
 Light of the world 128, 244, 290
 Linkage 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73,
 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 83, 84, 85,
 86, 92, 93, 98, 105, 106, 107, 111,
 115, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124,
 128, 129, 130, 168, 181, 188, 196,
 197, 199, 201, 244, 245, 260, 307,
 337, 348
 Linkage document 111, 121, 128,
 260
 Linkage of souls 70, 72, 75, 76,
 77, 78, 79, 83, 92, 168, 244, 337,
 348
 Love
 Human love 60, 70, 72, 73, 78,
 92, 93, 95, 111, 123, 124, 125,
 126, 127, 128, 129, 132, 168,
 182, 183, 188
 Love of the one God 78, 380, 383
 Lvov (Lemberg) 30, 31, 179, 228,
 233, 246, 276, 285, 312
 Disputations in Lvov (Lemberg) 30
 Magic 20, 28, 42, 45, 205
 Manifestation (*Ha'azalah*) 20, 156,
 204, 208, 321, 339
 Marriage contract 89, 388
 Masturbation, See Sexual offenses,
 Sinners
Matronita (the lady) See *Shekhinah*
 Mayflower 165
Mayim Nuqvin 375, 382
 Medzhibozh 14, 46, 218, 227, 230
 Message 22, 31, 118, 140, 143,
 172, 182, 183, 184, 185, 282,
 369
 Messiah See also Redeemer 3, 4, 5,
 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 17, 18, 19, 20,
 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 35,
 43, 47, 49, 58, 59, 66, 67, 91, 113,
 114, 118, 134, 135, 142, 148, 150,
 151, 160, 167, 182, 183, 186, 187,
 193, 195, 196, 197, 201, 202, 204,

- 206, 208, 209, 210, 220, 224, 256,
281, 282, 295, 306, 332, 335, 336,
352, 353
Messiah's deification 153
Messiah's reincarnation See
Reincarnation (*Gilgul*)
Messiah's sanctuary 18, 306
Descent of the Messiah 63
Death of the Messiah 22, 149
Rebellion of Messiah 113
Messiah's secrets 19, 113
Messiah's soul 45, 63, 85, 201,
208, 370
Messiah son of David 35, 67, 155,
172, 173
Messiah son of Joseph 146, 149
False messiah 23, 26
True messiah 7, 267
Messianism 11, 23, 30, 56, 119, 131,
141, 152, 153, 155, 157, 158, 159,
161, 163, 194, 201, 203, 204, 205,
206, 209, 239, 260, 331
Messianic dates 7
Messianic immigration See
Immigration (*aliyyah*)
Messianic movements 3, 152, 200,
201, 203, 205
Metatron 42
Mezhirichi 132, 133
Study hall 123, 132, 197
Michael the great prince 16
Mitnaggedim 5, 31, 32, 36, 41, 107,
117, 142, 255, 319, 320, 345, 374,
378, 379, 383, 384
Moses 15, 41, 89, 90, 93, 94, 95,
96, 101, 127, 142, 143, 146, 147,
155, 169, 197, 307, 326, 331, 385
Moses's prophecy 91, 97, 98, 99,
100, 103, 108, 109, 115
Moses's soul 12
Mountain of Meron 106, 160, 177,
184
Nabel 173, 302, 303
Name 381, 383
Ineffable Name 112
Holy names 18, 19, 38, 44, 109,
111, 112, 113, 244, 380
Netherworld (*She'ol*) See also Hell
114, 333, 372
Nocturnal emissions See Sexual
Offenses, Sinners
Nuptials (*Hilula*) 86, 88, 89, 91, 94,
184
Ostrog 39, 40, 51, 55, 185, 246, 247
Print-shop 197, 254, 255, 257
Kloyz 38, 137, 150, 246, 253
Padua 107
Parichi 131, 253, 254, 255, 256
Peace (*Shalom*) 111
Pequi'in 176, 178, 189
Pinsk 141, 255, 263
Pious ones, Pietists See *Hasidim*
Plague 6, 29, 177, 189, 190, 268,
299, 385, 391,
Podolia 14, 29, 30, 173
Pogroms 29, 30
Pogroms of 5408–5409 (1648–1649)
246, 272
Pogroms of 5689 (1929) 192, 266
Poland 7, 40, 48, 67, 242, 255, 284
Polished knives See also Slaughter 57
Poor afflicted and humble 21, 23,
170
Prague 37, 40, 47, 59, 223, 246
Prayer
Prayer assembly 61
Prayer house (*beit minyan*) 8, 9, 50,
61, 62, 68, 69, 81, 92, 93, 95, 98,
99, 102, 103, 104, 116, 121, 122,
126, 172, 199, 284
Sanctuary of prayer 68, 71, 72, 73,
74, 87, 88, 110, 169, 210, 239,
284
Linkage in prayer See also Linkage
15, 19, 77, 79, 124
Secrets of prayer 73, 74, 110
Swaying during prayer 373, 374,
377
Tardy prayer 377
Unifications in prayer See
Unifications
Prayer books 123, 124, 125
Closing (*Ne'ilah*) prayer 190
Recitation of the *shema'* 80, 92, 93,
123, 124, 383, 384
Priest 107, 169, 209, 326, 356, 374
Print
Printing kabbalistic manuscripts 24,
59, 63, 64, 130, 131, 132, 133,
134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139,
140, 141, 142, 145, 150, 157,
166, 190, 192, 195, 196, 197,
199, 223, 224, 227, 228, 231,
232, 233, 234, 237, 239, 250,
251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256,
257, 259, 260, 264, 265, 266,

- 267, 269, 271, 275, 276, 277,
 279, 280, 284, 287, 290, 291,
 292, 300, 301, 303, 304, 311,
 312, 313, 316, 317, 333, 358
 Print-shops 130, 131, 132, 133,
 134, 135, 137, 138, 150, 197,
 199, 237, 250, 251, 252, 253,
 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 265,
 280, 299, 300, 305, 311, 312, 318
 Prophecy 16, 22, 33, 42, 43, 90, 91,
 97, 99, 100, 101, 106, 108, 118,
 154, 168, 191, 212
 Prophetic mind 167
 Psalms 99, 308, 334, 338, 383
 Psalm 107 293, 322, 323, 324,
 325, 332, 333, 334, 372
 Quorum 101, 121
 Rabbinic emissary 139, 184, 185,
 189, 267, 268, 282, 283, 293, 294,
 390, 393
 Raziel 261
 Realms
 Earthly realms 111
 Heavenly realms 5, 30, 37, 64,
 111, 145, 197, 305, 306
 Red heifer 324, 325, 326, 327, 328,
 329, 330, 331, 332, 333
 Redeemer See also Messiah 5, 8, 11,
 12, 113, 118, 127, 133, 150, 155,
 198, 202, 208, 238, 253, 254, 265
 Death of the redeemer 145
 Soul of the redeemer 95, 108, 146
 Redemption
 Herald of redemption 5, 15, 195,
 198, 201
 Era of redemption 5, 9, 24
 Time of redemption 6, 24, 34, 67,
 86, 87, 136, 157, 184, 300
 Year of redemption 25, 85, 157,
 158
 Unfolding of redemption
 Secrets of redemption 9, 113, 134
 National redemption 3, 8, 156, 201
 Redemption of individual 3, 12,
 156, 201
 Redemption of *Shekhinah* See
Shekhinah
 Redemption of world 43, 119, 145,
 146
 Reincarnation (*Gilgul*) 12, 30, 45, 58,
 60, 94, 106, 107, 108, 118, 141,
 146, 197, 198, 201, 320, 371
 Reisen 191, 389
 Repair (*Tiqqun*)
 Repair of nation
 Repair of reincarnation See also
 Reincarnation (*Gilgul*) 45
 Repair of *Shekhinah* See *Shekhinah*
 Repair of soul 7, 19, 26, 43
 Repair of world 43, 63, 85, 88,
 111, 114, 147
 Resurrection 16, 161, 185, 186, 241,
 322, 335
 Rome 21, 22, 23
Rosh ha-Shanah 8, 16, 17, 24, 26, 29,
 147, 161, 174, 185, 195, 284, 299,
 304, 305, 306
 Rovno 31, 32, 285, 295, 296
 Russia 7, 48, 67, 144, 172, 176, 260,
 294, 384, 389, 390
 White Russia 165, 216, 264, 270
 Sabbath See *Zaddik*
 Sabbateanism 3, 13, 49, 63, 193,
 200, 335, 353
 Sabbatean calculations 5
 Sabbatean circles 5, 67
 Sabbatean essays 85, 91
 Safed 6, 60, 62, 63, 78, 106, 117,
 123, 124, 135, 143, 160, 162, 172,
 173, 176, 177, 178, 179, 189, 192,
 241, 257, 260, 264, 270, 282, 283,
 307, 308, 310, 346, 385, 388, 389,
 390, 391, 392
 Salonika 90, 106, 135, 157, 318
 Sama'el see also *Sitra Ahra*, Satan 26
 Sanctity 63, 148, 167, 187, 210, 241,
 281, 288, 290
 Sanctuary
 Bride's sanctuary 88
 King's sanctuary 71, 72
 Messiah's sanctuary See Messiah
 Sanctuary of the sapphire pavement
 73, 75, 119, 169
 Sanctuary of prayer See Prayer
 Sanctuary on high 68
 Sanhedrin 105, 157, 160, 161
 Satan See also *Sitra Ahra*, Sama'el 26,
 27, 29, 201, 350, 352
 Secrets 19, 73, 80, 111, 112, 113,
 130, 134, 135, 140, 145, 150, 151,
 206, 219, 223, 253, 300, 311, 352,
 367
 Sect 8, 11, 37, 55, 56, 63, 106, 107,
 118, 122, 140, 141, 142, 170, 203,
 212, 255, 320, 366

- Sefirot*
 Crown (*Keter*) 76
 Eternity (*Nezah*) 76
 Foundation (*Yesod*; *Ẓaddik*) 8, 47, 76
 Glory (*Hod*) 76
 Grace (*Hesed*; Abraham) 74, 76
 Judgment (*Din*; Isaac) 74, 76, 79, 120
 Splendor (*Tif'eret*; Jacob) 74, 76, 79, 120
 Sovereignty (*Malkhut*) See also *Shekhinah* 76, 87, 153
 Understanding (*Binah*) 76
 Wisdom (*Hokhmah*) 76
 Select few See *Ẓaddik*
 Sexual offenses See also Sinners
 Dalliance with children 35
 Masturbation 35, 369, 370
 Nocturnal emissions 35
Shaddai
 El *Shaddai* 8, 83, 84, 85
 Kingdom of *Shaddai* 85
 Soul of *Shaddai* 8, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 92, 95, 99, 102, 108, 115, 119, 202, 209, 336
 Shavuot 9, 17, 29, 67, 68, 69, 72, 80, 81, 83, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 97, 98, 99, 101, 104, 105, 106, 108, 117, 118, 119, 130, 134, 174, 196, 199, 245, 277, 279, 307, 348
 Shefaram 160, 178
 Shekhem 178
Shekhinah See also *Sefirot*—sovereignty (*Malkhut*) 77, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 120, 153, 155, 170, 184, 241, 375, 376
 Lower mother 87, 103
 Repair of *Shekhinah* 93, 118, 119, 238
 Redemption of *Shekhinah* 95, 118, 156
 Speech of *Shekhinah* 96, 97, 99, 101, 102, 198, 222, 376, 377
 As Congregation of Israel (*Keneset Yisra'el*) 77, 87, 88, 89, 93, 101, 120, 153, 201
 As Jerusalem 89, 152, 153, 154, 155
 As Matriarch Rachel 77
 As *Matronita* (the lady) 77, 94, 103
 As Zion 87, 89, 91, 153, 154
 Shklov 158, 265, 382, 390
 Sidon 160, 163
Sitra Ahra (the other side) See also Sama'el, Satan 350
 Sinners 19, 26, 42, 47, 58, 59, 60, 63, 114, 203, 323, 325, 328, 330, 332, 333, 372
 Sivtuvka (*Shpatuvka*) 305
 Slaughter
 Hasidic slaughter See *Hasidim*
 Slaughterhouse 9, 247, 250, 258
 Slutsk 141
 Small face (*Ẓēr Anpin*) 91, 382
 Sodom 56
 Solitude (*Hitbodedut*) 152, 310, 365, 366, 367, 368
 Soul
 Messiah's soul See Messiah
 Moses's soul See Moses
 Soul of *Shaddai* See *Shaddai*
 Soul of *Ẓaddik* See *Ẓaddik*
 Souls of all Israel 70
 Souls of sinners See also Sinners 19, 26, 58, 59, 60, 114, 203, 330
 Ascents of soul 16
 Linkage of souls See Linkage
 Reincarnation of souls See Reincarnation (*Gilgul*)
 Repair of souls See Repair
 Replication of souls 109
 Unification of souls See Unification
 Sovereignty See *sefirot*—*Malkhut*
 Spain 90, 116, 146, 203
 Sparks 26, 47, 63, 114, 202, 238, 322, 327, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 372
 Gathering up the sparks 26
 Splendor See *sefirot*—*Tif'eret*
 Stolin archive 128, 225, 260, 262, 303
 Talmud's burning 30
 Taxes 39, 48, 163, 226, 247
 Torah
 Letters of Torah 19, 343, 376
 Oral Torah 30
 Torah's secrets 112, 145, 367
 Torah reading 134, 142, 300
 Torah study 38, 49, 88, 90, 91, 240, 315, 319, 333, 339, 340, 344, 346, 348, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 371, 376

- Temple 5, 61, 73, 74, 75, 76, 93,
 100, 101, 119, 120, 153, 154, 155,
 160, 161, 168, 169, 331, 378
 Theurgy 88
 Intrusive thoughts 315, 322
 Tiberias 27, 60, 139, 158, 160, 161,
 162, 163, 164, 174, 177, 178, 179,
 180, 181, 184, 185, 186, 188, 189,
 190, 191, 192, 210, 264, 265, 266,
 267, 283, 288, 385, 386, 387, 388,
 389, 390, 391, 393, 394
Tiqun see Repair
 Trieste 48
 Tunis 158, 173, 302, 303
 Turkey 67, 294

 Ukraine 9, 49, 55, 137, 173
 Understanding See *Sefirot—Binah*
 Unifications 18, 24, 28, 73, 367, 375

 Volynhia 191, 216, 225, 231, 270
 Vilnius 139, 140, 141, 180, 181, 182,
 265, 320, 362, 363
 Vilnius ban 141

 Watchman 190, 191
 Warsaw 36, 215, 285, 312
 Wealthy class 9
 Wisdom 33, 38, 55, 66, 102, 103,
 130, 131, 150, 167, 266, 275, 294,
 300, 301, 304, 317, 326, 330, 342,
 365
 As primordial condition (*Qadmut*
ha-Sekhel) 167
 Wisdom See *Sefirot—Hokhmah* 76
 Wise one of the generation See *Ẓaddik*
 36, 70, 71, 77, 79, 115, 240
 World, Worlds
 This world 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24,
 29, 43, 45, 63, 71, 72, 76, 78, 80,
 82, 83, 84, 85, 88, 89, 91, 97, 98,
 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115,
 119, 120, 124, 128, 142, 143,
 144, 145, 146, 147, 149, 150,
 153, 155, 159, 164, 165, 171,
 186, 195, 201, 202, 204, 207,
 208, 222, 239, 240, 241, 244,
 261, 266, 281, 288, 290, 313,
 314, 322, 324, 327, 328, 330,
 333, 335, 336, 339, 340, 342,
 349, 352, 366, 367, 370, 371,
 375, 376
 World-to-come 15, 21, 47, 62, 66,
 70, 71, 96, 112, 125, 128, 133,
 138, 182, 227, 228, 229, 230,
 239, 240, 242, 244, 257, 259,
 262, 266, 271, 273, 274, 275,
 282, 285, 313, 324, 325, 332,
 341, 381
 Lower worlds 86, 88, 91
 Upper worlds 9, 15, 18, 30, 64,
 68, 72, 75, 80, 88, 92, 93, 150,
 167, 198, 205, 217, 263, 321,
 334, 343, 351, 371, 382

 Yampol 40, 46, 47, 144, 289, 292
 Yemen 159, 390
Yom Kippur 29, 147, 190, 284, 374

Ẓaddik
Ẓaddik's descent 319, 321, 322,
 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328,
 329, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335,
 337, 372
Ẓaddik's soul 70, 79, 83, 109, 111,
 120, 125, 244, 333
Ẓaddik of the generation 208
Sefirah of *Ẓaddik* See *Sefirot—*
 Foundation
 Designation of Messiah 4
 Designation of *Yehiel Mikhel* 68,
 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 85, 208,
 209
 True *Ẓaddik* 208
 As covenant (*Berit*) 120, 376
 As great ones 36, 72, 73, 74, 75,
 77, 79, 110, 115, 169, 271,
 280, 281
 As wise one of the generation
 36, 70, 71, 77, 79, 115, 240
 As select few 74, 75, 77, 101,
 111, 119
 As Sabbath 245
 As red heifer 326, 327, 328,
 329, 330, 331, 332
Ẓaddik the son of a *Ẓaddik* 37, 363
Ẓaddikim she-ba-dor (the righteous
 ones of the generation) 8, 36, 70,
 77, 79, 115, 125, 245, 336
 Zalsbach 136
 Zaslov 305
 Zolochov 29, 31, 33, 35, 36, 37, 39,
 41, 43, 44, 45, 47, 49, 51, 116, 124,
 125, 137, 140, 200, 215, 216, 217,
 222, 224, 225, 226, 227, 257, 285,
 286, 289, 317, 325, 335, 336, 345,
 360
 Zolvo 141, 320
 Zion See *Shekhinah*
 Zionism 11, 13, 165, 210