

Rachel Elijor

R. Nathan Adler and the Frankfurt Pietists Pietist Groups in Eastern and Central Europe during the Eighteenth Century *

To Professor Jacob Katz on his ninetieth birthday

1. Introduction

In the early 1770s and during the 1780s, while Hasidism was spreading through Eastern Europe and the Shabbatean-Frankist movement was establishing itself at Bruenn in Moravia and later at Offenbach in Germany, a pietist group emerged in Frankfurt. It was headed by R. Nathan ben Simeon Ha-Kohen Adler, who was born in Frankfurt in 1741 and spent most of his life there, till his death in 1800.¹

During his life R. Nathan Adler achieved a distinguished reputation and was much revered. Highly regarded for his proficiency in religious law, he was also considered a divinely inspired charismatic figure and an original religious innovator. For his immediate associates, he was a penetrating master of kabbalah, a man of exemplary virtue and a leader to be looked up to.² At the same time, however, he

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1 For biographical details of Nathan Adler's life and his family, see Z.B. Auerbach, *Mishnat Rabbi Natan*, Frankfurt a.M. 1862 (hereafter: Auerbach), Introduction; A.Y. Hacothen Schwartz, *Derekh ha-neshet we-torat emet*, Satu-Mare 1928 (hereafter: *Derekh ha-neshet*), p. 4; Mordecai b. Nathan Adler, *Mishpahat ha-rabbanim Adler*, London 1909 (hereafter: Adler, *Mishpahat*); P. Arnsberg, *Die Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden seit der Franzoesischen Revolution*, Darmstadt 1983 (hereafter: Arnsberg), III, pp. 12-17.

2 A. Walden, *Shem ha-gedolim he-hadash*, Warsaw 1864, fol. 61a-b; M.H. Horovitz, *Rabbane Frankfurt*, Jerusalem 1972 (hereafter: Horovitz; transl. by Y. Amir from *Frankfurter Rabbinen*, Frankfurt a.M. 1885), pp. 151-154, 156-158; S. Sofer, *Hut ha meshullash*, [Paks 1887] Munkacs 1894 (hereafter: Sofer), pp. 16-24, 27-33, 55-57. Cf. *Hut ha-meshullash he-hadash*, Drohobycz 1908, pp. 54 ff. The Frankfurt community *Memorbukh*, now in the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem, contains the following entry about Adler: "May God remember the soul of the great eagle [*Adler* in German = 'eagle'], one of the giants, sharp-witted and learned, modest and pious, of great renown... that man whom we have known... A memorial for one who sailed the sea of the Talmud and could decide among authorities on the Law, early and late and responsa, nothing of rabbinic lore did he leave untouched, small or large, his fame spread steadily in acuity and learning... His behavior was marked with piety and asceticism, leading an ascetic and pure life, who delves into the entire tradition to reach conclusions in accordance with the Law. All his customs were holy, bodily holiness and unblemished holiness [?]. From maturity, he never passed midnight in sleep and his candle was never extinguished, for he occupied himself with the Tora, studied and observed it. It may be said of him that he was humble and self-effacing. His house was ever open to whoever wished to enter the study house, and he raised

was a controversial figure in the Frankfurt Jewish community, at times hounded and even excommunicated. The established leadership of Frankfurt Jewry took various administrative measures against his separatist tendencies during the early 1770s, as we learn from a letter to be discussed below; he was the target of proclamations and decrees of excommunication in 1779 and 1789, and a polemical pamphlet attacking him was published in 1790.³ In this paper I wish to discuss the distinctive features of the Frankfurt pietist circle, to analyze the circumstances of its repeated excommunication and to determine the effect of contemporary conditions on R. Nathan's destiny. I intend to examine the common denominator of the Frankfurt pietists and the Hasidic groups of Eastern Europe in the last three decades of the century – a period that witnessed the first cracks in the homogeneity of European Jewry – as perceived, on the one hand, by their critics and opponents, and, on the other, by those circles themselves and other adherents of the Hasidic-kabbalist-pietist tradition.

2. R. Nathan Adler and his Circle – Hostile and Sympathetic Evidence

R. Nathan Adler came from a distinguished family, resident in Frankfurt for many generations.⁴ His contemporaries describe him as intellectually gifted, a master of *halakha*, possessed of an exceptional memory and a charismatic personality of considerable charm. Aside from his scholarly acumen and knowledge, he had a penchant for mystical experiences, ecstatic prayer and study of kabbalistic literature, which inspired him to propose new rituals.⁵ Moved by kabbalistic tradition, R.

many disciples... And the person was approved and the amulet was approved, to help and succor, for he healed several people and turned many back from sin that they be not ensnared in the fowler's trap... He ascended to heaven... and was buried on Thursday, 28 Elul [5]560 [= 18 September 1800]." See Jewish Nat. and Univ. Library, Ms. Heb. 4 1092, p. 762; and cf. Horovitz, Appendix B, p. 270; Appendix C, p. 293.

3 For details see Horovitz, pp. 155-157; S. Dubnow, *Toledot ha-ḥasidut*, Tel-Aviv [1931] 1975 (hereafter: Dubnow), pp. 434-441; M.N. Zobel, "Adler, Nathan ben Simeon ha-Kohen," *Enziqlopediya Eshkol*, Berlin-Jerusalem 1929, cols. 652-659 (hereafter: Zobel). And cf. below.

4 See *Derekh ha-neshet*, pp. 4-5; Horovitz, pp. 151, 234-236. Cf. Adler, *Mishpahat*, pp. 8-9; Arnsberg, pp. 12-14; A. Dietz, *Stammbuch der Frankfurter Juden*, Frankfurt a/M 1907, pp. 11-13.

5 For Adler's mastery of kabbalah see Zofer, pp. 16-17, 20; Horovitz, p. 153; *Derekh ha-neshet*, p. 6. It should be noted that, at the very time of R. Nathan's activities, Protestant Frankfurt experienced a vigorous awakening of pietist sentiments. The pietist movement then active in the Lutheran Church was founded in Frankfurt toward the end of the 17th century and in the early years of the 18th century, by a theologian named Jakob Philipp Spener (1635-1705). Spener, influenced by the theosophical mystic Jakob Boehme (1575-1624) and the mystical poet Angelus Silesius (1624-1677), appealed for repentance, devotion, spiritual renewal and religious renaissance. Pietism promoted religious observance, devotion in prayer, mystical tendencies and asceticism. Spener's disciples, led by Friedrich Christoff Oetinger, were active at the same time and in the

Nathan adopted various customs of piety and abstinence; he was moreover known as a seer and visionary, an adept at practical kabbalah.⁶ At the beginning of the 1770s he established a study group in his home, gathering around him a small circle of associates impressed by his unusual personality, halakhic stature, proficiency in

same place as Adler; perhaps the climate of religious pietism had some, albeit indirect influence on similar currents in the Jewish community.

- 6 See Horovitz, p. 154; *Derekh ha-neshet*, p. 15; and cf. Ḥatam Sofer's account of his master's familiarity with the so-called "holy names": "Presently I shall tell you that the holy names are real actions, as I have seen with my own eyes from the exemplary man, my master, the righteous priest, of blessed memory"; Ḥatam Sofer, *Responsa*, Orah hayyim, no. 197. R. Nathan studied theoretical and practical kabbalah under R. Avraham Avush Frankfurter (1700-1768), son of Zvi Hirsh of Mezhirech, Lithuania, author of the work *Birkat Avraham*, who had previously filled rabbinical positions in various communities of Lithuania, Galicia and the Lublin district, and was known as a *ba'al shem*, "worker of salvation, dealer in charms and amulets and medicines." Avush officiated in Frankfurt from 1759 to 1769; see Horovitz, pp. 123-129, 229. For his relationship with Nathan Adler see *Derekh ha-neshet*, p. 6. His biographer, A.H. Michelsohn, *Ohel Avraham...*, Pietrkov 1911, relates that when Avush was at Lukow, in the province of Lublin, "his reputation grew apace and thousands of Jews used to come to him to heal their souls and their bodies. There he wrote his holy book, *Po'el yeshu'ot*, about amulets and charms"; see *ibid.*, fol. 16a; and cf. *Ohel Avraham*, pp. 7-8. Horovitz, *Rabbane Frankfurt*, pp. 307-308, quotes the entry dedicated to R. Avraham in the Frankfurt *Memorbukh*, which reads, *inter alia*, "The great, pious and humble sage... Rabbi of all the Diaspora, *av bet din* and Principal of the *yeshiva* of our community... True *Tora* was in his mouth, a mouth that produced pearls of the exoteric and the esoteric, and he was proficient also in charms and amulets, having saved thereby, with God's help, many souls, free of charge... Those around him called him a holy man, upright of deed, was there ever such a one? Taking sanctity to extremes, he sanctified himself [by eschewing even] things permitted to him, distancing himself [from sin] to an extent that made him pure... He was proficient in all six divisions of the Mishna, his mouth never rested from study, he learned and delved into scholarly minutiae... No teacher is like him, that can teach good laws and upright judgments." Cf. *ibid.*, Appendix B, "Inscriptions from the Old Cemetery," p. 263, where, too, we read that "he healed, with God's help, many souls free of charge with his remedies, in a place unseen by any human eye." It is further stated in *Ohel Avraham* that "he was renowned as being in command of the holy spirit, and when in Poland was known to have experienced a revelation of the Prophet Elijah.... He was a man of God, famous in his generation, and was known all over the world as a sage and saint and godly kabbalist in things exoteric and esoteric, an exceedingly pious man..."; *ibid.*, p. 8. Many of the tales told in the book indicate that he was known to possess exceptional spiritual powers, supernatural knowledge and clairvoyance; he was known to have experienced nocturnal revelations and to be able to work miracles and so on. For more about him see Horovitz, pp. 123-129, 213. Many of the traditions about R. Avraham Avush are similar to tales told of his contemporary R. Yisra'el Ba'al Shem *tov*, as told in *Shivhe ha-Beshit*. Nathan Adler's biographers completely ignored the influence of Avraham Avush on the shaping of the younger man's outlook, disregarding certain similar and even identical traits in Adler's behavior and in that of Avush, who was active, before arriving at Frankfurt, in the very regions where Hasidism soon emerged, serving as rabbi of Vijnita (Vizhnitsa), Lukow, Janow (Lithuania), Mezhirech (Lithuania), Ryczywol, Karow and Lissa. See *Ohel Avraham*, p. 31. On his book *Po'el yeshu'ot* see *ibid.*, pp. 50-54. His grandson, R. Joseph Loewenstein of Serock, sent the author of *Ohel Avraham* the manuscript of *Po'el yeshu'ot*, which had been in his possession; for further information see M. Wilensky, *Hasidim u-mitnaggedim*, Jerusalem 1990 2nd ed. (hereafter: Wilensky), I, pp. 353-355.

matters both exoteric and esoteric, religious originality and his deviation from accepted practices.⁷

R. Nathan's followers regarded him as a man of God and miracle-worker. Under his influence, they studied kabbalah, demanded extreme standards of abstinence and self-purification, and ascribed prime importance to dreams and visions. They conducted separate prayer services according to a special rite, based on the prayer-book of R. Yizḥaq Luria (the Ari); in general, they maintained criteria of religious observance substantially stricter than those that had been accepted in the Frankfurt community for many generations.⁸

Adler left no written documents of any kind, nor did he publish any books. Any account of his personality or of his life, therefore, must necessarily rely on evidence given, on the one hand, by his disciples and the members of his circle, as to the impact of his personality and spiritual authority; or, on the other, by his opponents and adversaries, who attest to his influence among the community at large. These sources illuminate R. Nathan's person from a variety of angles and, explicitly or implicitly, describe the same events from different standpoints. The historical allusions they contain, combined with certain hitherto unnoticed contemporary docu-

7 See Horovitz, pp. 154-156, and cf. Auerbach, Introduction: "In sum, all who know him have attested and declared that he is a holy man of God, the Spirit of the Lord spoke through him and His word was on his tongue." R. Nathan's disciples included the following:

1. R. Moshe Sofer, later renowned as *Hatam Sofer*, who called Adler "My master, the most learned and pious among the priesthood," and frequently refers to him in his works. For the unique relationship between Sofer and his master see Jacob Katz' instructive paper, "Outline for a Biography of the *Hatam Sofer*," in: *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem on his Seventieth Birthday*, Jerusalem 1967, pp. 115-148 (Heb.; hereafter: *Katz, Outline*). This paper, which defines the main problems raised by the unique figure of R. Nathan, has been republished in Katz's book *Halakha ve-qabbala*, Jerusalem 1984, pp. 353-386 (Heb.).

There exists a rare pamphlet, 8 pp., whose cover is inscribed *Quntres bet ha-keneset Niederhofheim*. According to the author of the catalogue describing it (cf. n 10), "This synagogue was active in Frankfurt a.M. from the time of R. Nathan Adler till the Holocaust. The life and soul of this unique synagogue were R. Benjamin Niederhofheim and his family. It was the only synagogue in Frankfurt that observed the rite of R. Nathan Adler, which was based on the kabbalah and included various customs diverging from what was customary in Germany as a whole. Despite persecution and numerous bans pronounced against R. Nathan Adler, the synagogue continued to observe his rite. This pamphlet... sets out the prayer service and order of blowing the shofar as customary in this unique synagogue. Printed at Frankfurt am Main in the year ca. 1920; the title page states that it was printed by R. Ephraim Isaac Riess. The pamphlet is extremely rare and constitutes the sole printed evidence of the rite of R. Nathan Adler not in the Jewish National and University Library." For the rite observed at the Niederhofheim Synagogue see B.S. Hamburger, "Customs of the Study House of our Rabbi Nathan Adler of Blessed Memory," *Moriya* 17 (1990) no. 1:4, pp. 235-245 (Hebr.). Hamburger claims to possess several sources to which he alludes as "rare or unknown collections, as well as some scattered sources." The only source quoted in his article, however, is a letter to the editor of *Der Israelit*, Kislev 1933, pp. 7-8; the others are neither specified nor described, other than the promise that they will be published in Hamburger's forthcoming book *From Frankfurt to Pressburg*, which, however, has yet to appear. I presume that one of the other sources is the above-mentioned pamphlet, which I have been unable to examine. And cf. Arnsberg, II, p. 29.

8 See Horovitz, pp. 153-154, 236; Dubnow, p. 435.

ments that have a direct or indirect bearing on the events, provide us, I believe, with some clues to the significance of this pietist phenomenon and enable us to trace its definitive link to the personal history of R. Nathan Adler.

Some of the hostile sources were collected in a work entitled *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, published anonymously in 1790.⁹ The title page is outspoken, to say the least:

Ma'ase ta'tu'im [= "An Act of Deception"], to warn against a company of hypocrites, wicked men, deceivers, who presume to make themselves holy and pure with strange deeds and inveigle their neighbors to seduce them with fine words, as it is written in the book.

The items collected in *Ma'ase ta'tu'im* represent the current mood of the Frankfurt community vis-à-vis the dispute and R. Nathan Adler's person – as seen and judged by his adversaries. Included, *inter alia*, are the proclamations and decrees of excommunication issued against him by the community. The work paints a negative picture of the intent and actions of Adler's group, referring specifically and contentiously to the circle's divergence from customary practice and the circumstances that prompted the community to take such extraordinary measures.¹⁰ The primary im-

- 9 See M. Steinschneider, *Ha-mazkir*, 5 (1862), p. 27, and Geiger, *ibid.*, p. 78, both of whom identify the author of *Ma'ase ta'tu'im* as Loeb Wetzler, a Frankfurt *maskil*, challenging W. Zeitlin and Ben-Jacob, who attributed the work to Wolf Heidenheim. In the second edition of *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, Budapest 1922, Yequiel Judah Gruenwald, in an Introduction, reviews the different conjectures as to the author's identity. And cf. Dubnow, p. 440, and Wilensky, I, pp. 324; see also G. Scholem, "Die letzten Kabbalisten in Deutschland," in: *Studien zur juedischen Mystik, Judaica III*, Frankfurt 1973, p. 224.
- 10 The second ban cited in: *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, pp. 22-25, is also cited in a collection entitled *Shever poshe'im*, fols. 27a-28b, edited by R. David of Makow; and cf. Zobel, pp. 656-657; Wilensky, II, p. 96; Dubnow, p. 438. For the text of the first ban see Horovitz, *loc. cit.*; Dubnow, p. 436; Zobel, p. 654; Wilensky's version is based on the text of *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, cf. *ibid.*, I, See Horovitz, pp. 154-156, and cf. Auerbach, Introduction: "In sum, all who know him have attested and declared that he is a holy man of God, the Spirit of the Lord spoke through him and His word was on his tongue." R. Nathan's disciples included the following: (Hebr.) 1) R. Moshé Sofer (1839-1762), known as *Hatam Sofer*, see J. Katz, *Outline* (n. 7 above). 2) R. Eli'ezer Wallase (1742-1821), later principal of the *yeshiva*, *dayyan* and president of the court at Frankfurt. His grandson Abraham Geiger wrote his biography in *Ha-mazkir*, 1862, pp. 78-79; cf. Horovitz, pp. 156, 236. 3) R. Abraham Bing Halevi, chief rabbi of Wuerzburg, author of *Zikhron Avraham*, Pressburg 1892, who served as rabbi of the Wuerzburg district and principal of its *yeshiva* from 1796 to 1838 and wielded much influence in southern Germany. 4) R. Menahem Mendel Kargau of Fuerth, author of a commentary on the laws of *miqwa'ot* entitled *Giddule tohor*, Fuerth 1845. 5) R. Abraham Auerbach, rabbi in Bonn, father of the author of *Mishnat R. Na'an*. 6) R. Hayyim Daitshmann, rabbi of Kalin and Trebitsch in Bohemia. 7) Moses Helishav, excommunicated together with Adler in 1789, see Geiger, *ibid.* 8) R. Isaac Loeb Wormser, known as the *ba'al shem* of Michelstadt. The story of his life is told in: M. Hildesheimer, *Toledot Ba'al Shem mi-Michelstadt*, Jerusalem 1983, and see G. Scholem's comment in his *Mi-Berlin li-Yerushalayim*, Tel-Aviv 1981, p. 148. 9) R. Joseph Mayer Schnaituch, rabbi of Friedenthal, author of a book of responsa. 10) R. Wolf Schotten, rabbi of Dyhernfurth. 11) R. Sholem Ullman-Harif, author of *Divre rash*, Wien 1829, rabbi in Hungary. 12) Leyb Karlbürg. 13) Leyb Emmerich, a *mohel* who was excommunicated together with Adler. In the *Memorbuch* of the "Heqdesch" Synagogue in Frankfurt, Jewish Nat. and Univ.

portance of *Ma'ase ta'tu'im* and the reliability of its evidence as to the attitude of Adler's opponents in Frankfurt lie in the date of its publication – not long after the events themselves, when those involved could still read the book, protest and respond. Further antagonistic evidence, including an indirect testimony from the 1770s, prior to the imposition of the first excommunication decree, and a second, direct, item dating to the 1780s, may be found in two letters, written in 1773 and 1784, to be discussed below.

The favorable reports, sympathetic to Adler and his followers, were written at a slightly later date; they may be found in the works of his disciples, first and foremost his most distinguished pupil, R. Moshe Sofer of Frankfurt (1762-1840), later known as *Hatam Sofer*, rabbi of Pressburg. In a eulogy of his master delivered in 1801, shortly after Adler's death, he describes the latter's personality as seen by his followers and associates; elsewhere in his written works, he not infrequently cites R. Nathan's teachings and customs.¹¹ Other contemporary accounts may be found in the Frankfurt community *Memorbukh* and in the community *pinqas* (record book). An enthusiastic evaluation, written from the point of view of a later generation, may be

Library, MS 8 1465, p. 169, we find the following entry under his name: "May God remember the soul of the famous pious man, holy and pure... Our Master R. Leyb ben Gumpel Emmerich... For since his youth he trudged all over... to study under great scholars... All his deeds were for the sake of heaven and most of his days were occupied with Torah and good deeds... He afflicted himself and fasted 35 and one half years from one Sabbath to the next... pure and holy, ever wandering from place to place... to be a *mohel*... etc." After Adler's death in 1800, most members of his circle left Frankfurt, but Emmerich continued to observe his master's prayer ritual in a house referred to as *zum Mohr*, in the Frankfurt *Judengasse*; cf. Hamburger, cited at the end of this note. Many of Adler's disciples filled rabbinical positions in southern Germany and Bavaria, still looking to him for their inspiration as is evident from their letters and reports of their disciples. Cf. now R. Hurwitz, introduction to her edition of a pamphlet by R. Moses Pinḥas Elḥanan (Hilla) Wechsler, *Devar azhara le-Yisra'el (Quntresim, meqorot u-mehqarim 74)*, Jerusalem 1991. Adler's followers in Frankfurt were based in the Niederhofheim Synagogue. That this is the case follows from a catalogue reference to a pamphlet and an article indirectly referring to the same pamphlet, though not explicitly mentioning it; I am indebted to Dr. D. Assaf for drawing my attention to this source. In a Catalogue entitled *Judaica in Jerusalem*, relating to an exhibition and public auction of ancient Hebrew books, Jerusalem 1993, Item 294 is pp. 324-326. And see below for the text as recorded in the community *pinqas*. In the Frankfurt community, where the *av bet din* and the members of the *bet din* as a whole were not entitled to pronounce a ban without the permission of the *qahal*, little use was made of bans and excommunication; the preferred punitive measure was expulsion from the community, see Horovitz, p. 155.

11 Sofer's eulogy of Adler, cited in: *Sefer Hatam Sofer. Derashot me-Rabbenu Moshe Sofer*, Jerusalem 1974, II, pp. 371-373, is typical of Adler's followers' attitude to him: "Bitter mourning for the demise of our master, the high priest, most learned... Nathan Adler... Crown of my head, my most distinguished rabbi, learned, pious, renowned, the great Eagle, why need I say more in praise of him, after all, he is famous throughout the land... It behooves me to weep and mourn. I saw him sitting and preaching, like Moses, from God's own mouth. I followed him for one hundred miles and left my mother's house, my parent's room, as everyone knows." The eulogy also harshly criticizes the Frankfurters for their treatment of Adler, cf. *ibid*. The editor, Joseph Naftali Stern, appended to the eulogy a detailed list of references to R. Nathan Adler in: *Hatam Sofer's* responsa. Adler's novellae were published only quite recently: Moshe Sofer, *Hiddushe Hatam Sofer al Massekhet gittin. Hiddushim mi-Marana ve-Rabbana Natan Adler*, Mount Kisco, NY, 1961.

found in a book written by Zvi Benjamin Auerbach, son of Adler's disciple R. Abraham Auerbach, entitled *Mishnat Rabbi Natan* (Frankfurt 1862), and in a biography of *Hatam Sofer* authored by his grandson R. Shelomo Sofer, *Hut ha-meshullash*, first printed at Paks in 1887. Other biographical traditions may be found in R. Avraham Yehuda ha-Kohen Schwartz, *Derekh ha-nesher we-torat emet*, Satu-Mare 1928.

Most of these sources have been known for some time, and modern scholarship has indeed drawn upon them to render accounts of R. Nathan Adler's personality, the background of the dispute and the proclamations and writs of excommunication issued against him.¹² Depending on their points of departure, scholars have offered diverging views as to whether and to what degree the excommunication of the Frankfurt pietists may be associated with other events then taking place not far away, such as the anti-Hasidic measures being instituted at the time in Eastern Europe.

3. Hasidim in the East and Pietists in Frankfurt

S. Dubnow, a prominent historian of Hasidism, doubted the existence of a direct link between the formation of Adler's circle and the emergence of Hasidism, and most other scholars who have considered the question agree.¹³ Some reconsideration of this position is now required, as the scholarly world has recently revised its view of the spiritual nature of early Hasidism and embarked on a new assessment of its religious and social features. The new approach, rejecting the earlier, economically and socially oriented theories, with their emphasis on historical crisis situations, studies the beginnings of Hasidism in the context of the religious awakening then taking place in the world of the kabbalistically oriented pietistic groups active in eighteenth-century Europe. We are therefore justified in attempting a reassessment of the link between the different manifestations of religious pietism appearing at one and the same time in Eastern and Central Europe.¹⁴

12 Besides the already cited studies of Geiger, Horovitz, Dubnow, Gruenwald, Zobel, Wilensky, Katz, Scholem and Hamburger, a recently published paper clarifies certain hitherto unknown details of Adler's biography; see n. 69 below.

13 See Dubnow, p. 441; Zobel, p. 652; and cf. Wilensky, I, pp. 25, 324; Katz, Outline, p. 359.

14 For a summary of the different views concerning the background on which Hasidism emerged, see R. Elijor, *Torat ahdut ha-hafakhim. Ha-teosofiya ha-misgit shel Habad*, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 17-21, 24-27, and bibliography cited *ibid.* An English version of the book is entitled *The Paradoxical Ascent to God - The Kabbalistic Theosophy of Habad*, Albany/ N.Y. 1992. And cf. E. Etkes, "Hasidism as a Movement – the First Stage," in: B. Safran (ed.), *Hasidism – Continuity or Innovation*, Cambridge, MA, 1988, pp. 1-26; J. Weiss, "A Circle of Pneumatics in Pre-Hasidism," in: *idem, Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, ed. D. Goldstein, Oxford 1985, pp. 27-42; M. Rosman, "Medzhibozh and Rabbi Yisra'el Ba'al Shem Tov," *Zion*, 52 (1987), pp. 177-189 (Hebr.); and cf. A. Rapoport-Albert, "The Hasidic Movement After 1772. Structural Continuity and Change," *Zion*, 55 (1990), pp. 183-245 (Hebr.).

Alongside the phenomenological similarity between these manifestations of pietism, one can also point to specific links between the Eastern and Central European varieties: the Frankfurt pietist circle and the Hasidic groups in Eastern Europe were established at approximately the same time – the early 1770s; both trends looked to the same sources for their inspiration and sought to create a new ritual expression for new spiritual currents; both used the Hebrew term *ḥasidim*; they recognized the power of charismatic leaders and their authority to innovate new practices; and there was a striking similarity between the two in prayer rites and other customs, as well as in the nature of their deviations from accepted norms in their respective communities. Such points of contact, together with the almost identical accusations leveled against the pietist offenders in proclamations issued both in Frankfurt and in Eastern Europe, lend further thrust to the need for reevaluation.

It follows from both hostile and sympathetic evidence that R. Nathan Adler's divergences from accepted norms, which he attributed to kabbalistic tradition and promoted by virtue of his charisma, were largely similar in spiritual motive and social significance to the deviations of the disciples of the Besht and the Maggid of Mezritch from the traditional norms and frameworks of their communities. Moreover, in both cases the established leadership was motivated by an apprehension of the unlimited spiritual authority claimed by these new bearers of the holy spirit, by opposition to changes in accepted practice justified by that authority, and by the dangers it perceived in the spiritual aloofness and ritual innovativeness of the pietists, which violated the uniform religious practice and social coherence of the community. The various manifestations of pietism, largely inspired by kabbalistic ethos and mystical tradition, such as adoption of the rite of R. Yizḥaq Luria and kabbalistic customs, aroused fear and opposition. It was felt, on the one hand, that the authority of the community and the accepted order were threatened; on the other, the lessons of the Shabbatean apostasy had not been forgotten, and the pietist groups were associated – at least, as we shall see, in the eyes of the opposition – with the Shabbatean-Frankist movement.

4. The Polemical Arguments

If we analyse the texts of the proclamations and excommunication decrees issued in Frankfurt in 1779 and 1789, and also examine the hostile testimonies and compare them with the sympathetic evidence – which confirms the facts but evaluates them differently – we find that the accusations against Adler and his circle fell into five principal categories:

1. They introduced substantial changes in both the text and the conduct of prayers, accordingly holding prayer services apart from the rest of the community.

Most frequently, they were accused of using the Sephardic prayer rite, known as *Siddur ha-Ari* (R. Yizhaq Luria's prayer-book), using the Sephardic pronunciation in prayer, praying in a loud voice in an excessively ecstatic manner, and reciting the long version of the benediction for peace (*Sim shalom*) in the afternoon and evening services.¹⁵

2. Departures from conventional behavior: self-abnegation and fasting to excess, abstinence and various stringent practices, combined with excessively rigorous observance of the laws of purity and ritual slaughter; as a result, they refrained from eating or drinking with outsiders for fear of *terefa* (forbidden foods). This was tantamount to illegitimation of the community at large, who maintained the conventional observances and were therefore shunned for fear of impurity.¹⁶

3. Variations of standard religious practice and introduction of innovative rituals, for example: a new version of the circumcision ceremony; wearing two pairs of phylacteries simultaneously; donning a larger prayer-shawl than usual; tying of ritual fringes in women's clothing; recitation of the priestly blessing daily. These variations, which produced special patterns of religious observance, also encouraged separatism.¹⁷

15 Prayers in Adler's circle are described as follows in *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*: "They have no heart, for they mock their brethren the House of Israel for reciting *Shalom rav* [= the short version of the last benediction in the "Eighteen Benedictions"] in their evening prayers, while they [= Adler's followers] do otherwise, for they recite *Sim shalom* in evening and afternoon prayers as well, and raise their voices, screaming as if the spirit of the Lord had alighted upon them" (*ibid.*, p. 7). See Horovitz, p. 154; and cf. Katz, Outline, p. 358. See also Hamburger, p. 241; Avraham Simcha Bunem Mikhelsohn, *Shemen ha-tov*, Pietrkow 1905, p. 92, §78; *Sofer, Hut ha-meshullash*, p. 2. See below, text near n. 50, for the significance of this change.

16 "For they form separate sects... They are painted with the brush of *piety*, and indeed that is the name by which they are known [*hasidim*], in order to disguise the evil of their ways... They are fools and spurn the discipline of their fathers, declaring clean things unclean, for they have devised for themselves different laws concerning the uncleanness of women after birth and the uncleanness of priests, intending to rebel against the rabbis" (*Ma'ase Ta'tu'im*, pp. 4-6). "For they have slandered their brethren Israel and declare our bread and our wines unfit for consumption" (*ibid.*, pp. 9-10). Cf. *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, ed. Gruenwald, Introduction, p. 8; see *Derekh ha-neshet*, p. 25. And cf. n. 58 below.

17 "For they sought a false accusation, libelling the commandment of circumcision as we practice it... And they invented for themselves a new circumcision, causing infants grief with terrible pain" (*Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, p. 10). "For they lay on their heads two attached phylacteries and pretend to be righteous men, claiming ten portions in the Torah, boasting about in the city, for thus are their actions, to be recognized by all those who see them, for they call themselves *hasidim*" (*ibid.*, p. 6). "...They are simpletons, for the heart has been deceived in the matter of their wives, who make fringes on the corners of their garments" (*ibid.*, p. 9). For the innovative circumcision ceremony of Adler's circle cf. Hamburger, p. 239 n. 5. The daily recitation of the priestly blessing was of particular significance; see *Derekh ha-neshet*, p. 24 and comments in *Mar'e kohen, loc. cit.*; Horovitz, p. 154. And cf. *Hut ha-meshullash*, p. 20: "The *ga'on* R. N[athan] A[dler] was a priest of proven lineage, and he would ascend the dais [i.e., deliver the priestly blessing] every day in his study house. He used to say of himself that if the Temple were to be built, speedily in our days, his soul greatly desired to perform the divine service in the Holy of Holies – so familiar was he in the laws of the divine service." For the kabbalistic interpretation of the priestly blessing see *Sefer ha-bahir*, ed. R. Margaliot, Jerusalem 1951, §§ 92, 124; *Zohar*, III, fols. 145-147. For the special

4. Modifications of the religious calendar: R. Nathan's circle insisted on their own system for determination of the times at which festivals began and demanded freedom of decision in other calendrical matters – all measures that were seen as violating communal unity.¹⁸

5. A revision of the spiritual scale of priorities: overemphasis of the study of theoretical and practical kabbalah, dreams, secrets and prophetic visions with the intent – so ran the accusations – of terrorizing ordinary people, claiming direct contact with the upper worlds and esoteric knowledge.¹⁹

The main points of these accusations might be summarized as follows: introduction of new priorities; ascetic and ecstatic norms beyond accepted standards; exclusive recognition of charismatic leadership, religious awakening and spiritual freedom. Very similar wording, as to both the offending deviations and the polemical descriptions of idiosyncratic practices, may be found in the polemical tracts and writs of excommunication aimed against the Hasidim in Eastern Europe.²⁰ We shall

significance of the priestly blessing in eighteenth-century mystical thought and the frequency of its recitation cf., the testimony of R. Samuel Heller of Safed, who reports the Vilna ga'on's view as to reciting the blessing daily, as in Sephardic practice, in contrast to the Ashkenazic rite which permitted it only on festivals, as a token of remembrance of the Temple service: "I call upon heaven and earth as witnesses, that I several times heard the respected righteous ga'on... Israel [of Shklov], author of the book *Pe'at ha-shulhan...*, who heard the true ga'on, our Master and Rabbi, Elijah of Vilna (may his memory protect us, Amen!), to say that if he could, he would do two things, neglecting Torah and prayer and traveling from town to town, one of these being to abolish the Ban of R. Gershom against bigamy - for that would bring the redemption nearer - and the second being that the priests should raise their hands and recite the priestly blessing every day" (Bezalel Landau, *Ha-ga'on he-hasid mi-Vilna*, Jerusalem 1978, p. 107 n. 65. On the history of the rite and the reasons for its restriction to certain festivals see Y. (E.) Zimmer, "The Times of the Priestly Blessing", *Sinai* 100 (1987), pp. 452-470 (Hebr.); and cf. *ibid.*, pp. 462 ff., for the positions of the Vilna ga'on and R. Nathan Adler (my thanks to Mr. David Louvish, who brought Zimmer's paper to my attention). For criticism of this practice of R. Nathan Adler in his services, see n. 44 below.

18 "This is the way of them that are foolish, who think they have found a stratagem to know the very minute of the beginning of day and night, and they make darkness into light and light into darkness and gloom, and despite our determination of the inauguration of Sabbaths and festivals and fast day, so that when our day is gone and dark has fallen, they consider the day still long" (*Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, p. 8; cf. Katz, *Outline*, p. 358).

19 *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, pp. 17-21; Horovitz, p. 153.

20 Horovitz, pp. 154, 157 n. 25; Wilensky, I, pp. 44-49. The Brody excommunication attacked the Hasidim for holding separate prayer services and using the Sephardic rite (R. Yizhaq Luria's prayer-book), for modifying services, praying too fervently and disregarding the proper times for prayer. The Hasidim were also castigated for dressing in white, advocating separate ritual slaughter with highly polished (*geshlifene*) knives, and studying only kabbalah. For the Hasidic point of view, explaining the significance of the changes, see the letter of R. Samuel Shmelqe Halevi Horowitz (1726-1778), rabbi of Nikolsburg, to the sages of Brody in 1762, cited in Michelsohn, *Shemen ha-tov* (supra, n. 15), pp. 80-83; the letter is also cited by Wilensky, I, pp. 84-88. R. Samuel Shmelqe's letter, written in response to the Brody excommunication during the early 1770s, just when R. Nathan was gathering his group around him, makes it clear that the Hasidim considered themselves bound by R. Yizhaq Luria's rite, acting in accordance with the strict customs of the kabbalah. He claimed that they were "God-fearing and upright, following the customs of the Ari of blessed memory... which are from heaven and descended by tradition from

return to this similarity later. For the moment, suffice it to say that at the root of these similar reactions lies a negative evaluation of certain manifestations of a common tradition – the kabbalistic-hasidic-pietist tradition, which derived from mystical inspiration and charismatic leadership, a tradition that was shared by esoteric circles of *hasidim* and pietists all over Europe.

5. The Pietistic Group and the Community

The traditional community, which saw itself as an autonomous social-religious unit, expressing its unity through public religious worship, did not generally provide any leeway for unconventional behavior or nonconformism on the part of individuals or groups who might wish to conduct their lives freely and independently of the conservative, traditional authority.²¹ The lifestyle that emerged among the Hasidim and the pietists – though they were part of traditional society – drew its strength, however, from kabbalistic tradition, mystical inspiration and charismatic leadership; its adherents took various liberties in the name of kabbalah and mystical motives, seeking an appropriate ritual expression for the spiritual world that they had created. They were thus spontaneously attracted to spiritually authoritative individuals, aspiring to intimate contact with leaders who pointed to kabbalah as a fount of spiritual inspiration for the commandments and observances of the Jewish religion. Individuals and groups alike took upon themselves to transcend accepted norms, gradually repudiating the established community and its authority in matters of worship, rejecting its spiritual values and sanctified customs. They ignored the conventional social-religious stratification, which could not be reconciled with their understanding of the nature and validity of religious obligation. According to the position that emerged among the kabbalists/pietists, the adept has no need of the community's confirmation or agreement; he is not even obliged to observe tradition in all detail in accordance with convention, but is entitled to observe the religious precepts more strictly and scrupulously, adopting new religious practices within the framework of

Elijah.... Shall it be said that these are new customs, which our fathers did not know?" After rejecting in detail all the charges relating to changes in rite and overt ecstasy in prayer, and explaining that the changes were based on kabbalistic tradition, he adds a comment of instructive social significance, rejecting the usual limitations imposed on esoteric lore. Referring to the strictures imposed in the Brody document, according to which only "notable people" could adopt the Lurianic prayer rite, he writes: "God-fearing folk, though they be not notable, are entitled to worship from the heart with all their might and take upon themselves stricter practices as much as possible, whether in clothing or in the offerings offered in the Lord's house [= prayer], each according to his own ability, provided that his heart is properly directed... And it has been truly stated, who knows how to go against the living, to set limits in the heavens, to distinguish between notable and not notable."

21 See J. Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, New York 1961, pp. 79-90, 112-122. For the binding force of the Ashkenazic rite see *ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

darkhe ḥasidut, "ways of pietism." Such innovations could be derived from kabbalistic tradition, in general, and Lurianic customs, which were considered one of those "ways of pietism," in particular; changes and innovations were also founded upon new revelations in visions, dreams or "ascents of the soul."²²

6. Kabbalistic Tradition and the "Pietistic Way" – the New Influence of Kabbalistic Ethos

Naturally, R. Nathan and his group, like the Hasidim in Eastern Europe, thought of themselves not as perverts and sinners, but bearers of the kabbalistic tradition, spiritually unshackled by the authority of the community. They followed the directives of the Safed kabbalists, then being widely disseminated both in manuscript and in print, and adopted the changes dictated therein: "Whosoever wishes to study the *wisdom of truth* must behave in accordance with *the way of pietism* and should therefore maintain these [prohibitions], even though some of them are strictly speaking permissible."²³

Many of those who followed the Safed directives, as set out in such works as *Shulḥan arukh ha-Ari*, *Naggid u-mezawwe*, *Sefer ha-kawwanot*, as well as kabbalistic prayer-books and many other works of mystical lore, experienced a religious and spiritual awakening and adopted a set of values based on kabbalistic literature and on the authority of visions or renewed revelation. From their standpoint, their innovations were guided by kabbalistic ethos, dictated by mystical inspiration channeled through exceptional individuals; moreover, as the changes applied only to members of the closed pietist circles, they did not need the acquiescence of the community and its leadership. Accordingly, they rejected the authority of the excommunicating rabbis, disregarded the bans and maintained their special practices. But the new ritual expressions and changes in religious practice were not powered

22 For a characterization of kabbalistic pietism see B.Z. Dinur, *Be-mifne ha-dorot*, Jerusalem 1972 (hereafter: Dinur), pp. 161-170. And see below, n. 29. The author's introduction to the work *Naggid u-mezawwe*, Amsterdam 1712, edited by Jacob Zemah from the works of Hayyim Vital and arranged according to the Jewish life-cycle, as in halakhic works, states as follows: "You will find in this book all the commandments and customs and pietism (*ḥasidut*) and "restorations" (*tiqqunim*) whose secret meanings are explained in the books of the Rabbi our Master R. [Isaac] A[shkenazi] L[uria], of blessed memory, whether in the inner sense of that commandment or for its restoration... We have found in his book several things that he commanded and said that they are permitted by Law as you will find here, and they are *the way of pietism* (*derekh ḥasidut*) and necessary for those engaged in studying *the wisdom of truth* (kabbalah)."

23 The introduction to *Naggid u-mezawwe* is followed by a heading, "*Shulḥan arukh* according to the wisdom of truth," where the sentence here cited appears. The term "customs of pietism," *min-hage ḥasidut*, is frequently used in relation to the Lurianic circle by R. Shlomo Shlomil Dreznitz, who wished to disseminate and promulgate the kabbalists' practices throughout Eastern and Central Europe; see M. Benayahu, *Toledot ha-Ari*, Jerusalem 1967, pp. 48, 59, 350.

by the weight of charismatic personality and the force of mystical inspiration alone. The major factors were a thorough familiarity with kabbalistic myth, the irresistible allure of esoteric lore and the spiritual freedom it offered; once formulated, the new rites received their sanction from that same kabbalistic ethos and from the tradition of mystical literature, justified by a new freedom of ritual creativity.

The common denominator of all the pietistic innovations in religious observance was rooted in the dualistic ethos of kabbalah. This ethos in turn was inspired by the myth of the Zohar and of Lurianic kabbalah, which picture the world as an arena of conflict between the *śitra ahara* (= "the other side," the powers of evil) and the *śitra di-qedusha* (= "sanctity"), between Samael and the *Shekhina*, between the "external" powers of the "left," which tend to lengthen the exile, and the "inner" powers of the "right," which bring redemption closer. This conflict, which rages simultaneously in the upper and lower worlds and is based on the complex interrelationships between those worlds, is also linked to the relations of separateness and unity in the world of the *sefirot* and to the alternation of exile and redemption in historical reality. The outcome will largely be decided by each person's deeds and intentions, which bridge the gap between heaven and earth, tip the balance and influence the entire universe. The kabbalists and the pietists, who venerated this dualistic kabbalistic myth and the ethos it implied, put a new interpretation on religious commitment, seeing it as participation in the cosmic struggle reflected in the historical experience of the Jewish people, a struggle taking place in the constant shadow of the clash between the *qelippot* (= "husks", evil powers) and sanctity, between the misery of exile and the exaltation of messianic hope.

The kabbalistic ethos invested common religious observances with a new metaphysical significance, underpinning ritual with a cosmic motivation based on the dualistic notions of kabbalah. Kabbalah thus became the main source of the spiritual validity and inner, hidden meaning of the *mizvot*, the religious commandments; prayer and religious observance in general were invested with mystical intentions, so that all the myriad minutiae of worship were correlated with the supernal powers and mythical notions of mystical tradition. This association of the lower and upper worlds, which implied that each and every detail of a person's deeds and thoughts, in prayer and in observance of religious precepts, possessed crucial cosmic significance. The kabbalistic ethos thus resulted, on the one hand, in a stricter attitude to the meaning of worship in general, with close attention to practical details in keeping with kabbalistic tradition; on the other hand, it also offered considerable scope for interpretational freedom, autonomous decisions and ritual innovation. Immersion in the meanings of kabbalistic myth, with its ties between heaven and earth and the ethical implication of those ties, is what shaped the idiosyncratic patterns of kabbalistic pietism, inspired its charismatic leadership and nourished its content.

7. The Spread of Kabbalistic Ethos

The kabbalistic ethos that emerged in sixteenth century Safed, in the study circles of what were known as "holy groups," was committed to writing in Lurianic kabbalistic-ethical literature. It could also be found in the customs of the Safed kabbalists and the literature of vigils and *tiqqunim*. Through the seventeenth century, it gradually spread among select groups of believers in all parts of the Jewish world, reaching particular prominence in the first half of the eighteenth century in circles of ascetically inclined kabbalists, pietists and pneumatics, as well as Shabbateans and what might be termed "proto-Hasidim."²⁴ These circles were engaged in profound study of the interrelationship between religious observance and the mystical and mythical dimensions of the kabbalah, as well as the hidden links between the nether and upper worlds; they invested their prayers and other rituals with mystical intentions and ecstatic devotions that helped to invoke restoration of the *Shekhina*, to raise the "sparks"²⁵ and combat the *śitra aħara*. As a consequence, they were meticulous in their strict observance of all possible minutiae of religious practice and prayer rites. They therefore tended to live in separate, secluded groups, holding separate services, eating exclusively meat slaughtered in accordance with their special strictures and observing various pietistic and ascetic practices.

The pietists were inspired by the Lurianic doctrine of *kawwanot* and by R. Yizħaq Luria's customs, acting largely under the influence of mystical lore that saw history in a metaphysical-dualistic light. Thus they believed in the kabbalistic doctrine of

24 See Dinur, pp. 159-181. The publication of Luria's *Sefer ha-kawwanot*, Venice, 1620; also Hanau, 1624 (see Horowitz, pp. 45, 204), had a crucial effect on the dissemination of the kabbalistic ethos beyond the immediate circle of its creators. A similar influence may be attributed to the spread of the Lurianic *hanhagot* (mystical and moral conduct), in dozens of manuscripts, throughout the seventeenth century, in parallel to the dissemination of the first part of the legal code *Shulħan arukh*. The ultimate printing of *Shulħan arukh ha-Ari* in the 1660s, and later in Frankfurt (1691), reinforced these tendencies. Such books as Eliezer Azikri's *Sefer ħaredim* (Venice 1601), Eliyahu de Vidas' *Reshit ħokħmah* (Venice 1593), Joseph Karo's *Maggid mesharim* (Lublin 1646; Part Two: Venice 1654), and R. Ĥayyim Vital's *Sha'arei qedusha* (Constantinople 1734) – all of which went through numerous editions – were also highly influential in spreading the kabbalistic outlook and shaping the details of kabbalistic ritual. A major contribution was also made by R. Moses Cordovero's *Pardeš rimmonim* (Cracow 1592) and its abbreviated versions *Pelaħ ħarimmon* (Venice 1600) and *Aśiś rimmonim* (Venice 1601), the same author's kabbalistic ethical tract *Tomer Devora* (Venice 1589) and his mystical diary *Sefer gerushin* (Venice 1602). Somewhat later came R. Yesħa'ya Horowitz' *Shene luħot ha-berit* (Amsterdam 1649), Zvi Koidanover's *Qav ħa-yashar* (Frankfurt 1705), *Ĥemdat ħa-yamim* (Izmir 1732) and M.H. Luzzatto's *Mešillat yesharim* (Amsterdam 1740), which also did much to inculcate the idea of the kabbalah as the source of the spiritual authority of the *mizwot* and the hidden meaning of religious practice in general.

25 See G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi. The Mystical Messiah* (transl. R.J. Z. Werblowsky), Princeton, N.J., 1973, pp. 44 ff.; R. Elior, "Messianic Expectations and Spiritualization of Religious Life in the Sixteenth Century," *REJ* 145 (1986): 35-49; idem, "The Doctrine of Transmigration in the Book *Galya raza*" (Hebr.), in: *Mehqare Yerushalayim be-maħashevet Yisra'el* (Tishby *Festschrift*), 1/3 (1984): 207-239.

transmigration, which explained the relationship between bodily exile and the exile of souls, and in the kabbalistic theory of redemption, which involved the *tiqqun* ("restoration") of the *Shekhina* and raising of the "sparks." Kabbalistic practices and mystical lore were also considered instrumental to the achievement of ecstatic experiences and communion with the divine spirit. Such experiences, representing a profound attraction to esoteric worlds, were known variously as dreams, visions, revelations, *maggidim* (heavenly mentors), prophesying and so on, and provided the impetus for ritual innovations.²⁶

However, the innovations thus devised were invariably intended for the select few and were not considered binding on the public in general, as we clearly learn from such terms as *hesger* (seclusion), *kloiz*, *bene aliyya* ("select persons"), *yehide segulla* ("select few"), *hasidim u-prushim*, etc. On the contrary, the traditional esotericism characteristic of such groups of recluses, self-styled saints and pietists, and the spiritual and ethical merits of their members, created a permanent pattern of distance, self-sanctification and aloofness, which was accepted and respected by the community. This was the situation as long as the modifications of religious ritual and prayer, aimed at the achievement of mystical elevation, remained within the esoteric bounds of the limited groups.

A new departure occurred, however, in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the prestige and power of the traditional institutions declined and there emerged certain circles seeking a more distinctive form of religious expression.²⁷ The turning point was signaled by the publication of large quantities of kabbalistic literature,²⁸ the popularization of the kabbalistic ethos and the influence of the various groups of kabbalistic pietists, Shabbateans and Frankists, all of whom made their own contribution to the undermining of prevailing standards of behavior and induced changes in the accepted social religious stratification.²⁹ The dissemination

26 See S. Schechter, "Safed in the 16th Century" (Hebr.), in: *Ha-Galil*, I, ed. A.S. Rabbinowitz, Tiberias 1919, pp. 6-42; idem, *Studies in Judaism* 2, Philadelphia 1908, pp. 202-306; S.Z. Shazar, "Thy Watchman, O Safed" (Hebr.), in: *Ore dorot*, Jerusalem 1971, pp. 11-30; and cf. R.J.Z. Werblowsky, *R. Joseph Karo. Lawyer and Mystic*, Philadelphia 1980, pp. 38-83; D. Tamar, *Studies in the History of the Jews in Palestine and Italy* (Hebr.), Jerusalem 1970, pp. 95-100.

27 On the progressive disintegration of social institutions in this period see Dinur, pp. 83-139; Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, pp. 213-244.

28 After 1764, when the Council of the Four Lands was dissolved by resolution of the Polish Sejm, with the resulting abrogation of the Council's interdict on the publication of kabbalistic works, Eastern Europe experienced a surge of new books on mystical lore. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Hebrew publishers in Eastern Europe printed more than two hundred books on the subject, some from manuscripts, others from earlier editions, dating to the late sixteenth century or the seventeenth century, that could not be reprinted before because of the interdict. See I. Heilperin, *Pinqas Wa'ad arba' ha-arazot*, Jerusalem 1945, p. 205. On the printing and dissemination of the Lurianic *tiqqunim* literature of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth century and the flourishing of kabbalistic liturgy and its influence, see Z. Griss, *Sifrut ha-hanhagot*, Jerusalem 1990, Introduction, pp. xiv-xxi, 41-102.

29 For the spread of the kabbalistic ethos and an account of ascetic pietists and penitents in the first half of the eighteenth century cf. the testimony of Pinḥas Katzenelboigen, *Yesh manḥilin*, Jerusalem 1986, pp. 76-77, 85; S. Maimon, *Hayye Shlomo Maimon*, Tel-Aviv 1953, pp. 120-122, 132-

of kabbalistic literature in manuscripts and printed books, the prevalence of mystical, ecstatic and ascetic ideas among increasingly larger groups, brought the idiosyncratic customs of the Safed kabbalists to various groups of pietists in Eastern and Central Europe. The newly adopted literary-kabbalistic traditions, which threatened to transform conventions and violate the religious uniformity of the community, clashed with the local traditions of European Jewry. The changes brought about social ferment, creating alternative foci of authority and undermining the standing of the established leadership; for the individuals who adopted these spiritual and mystical doctrines wielded disproportionate influence in communal life and their influence went far beyond their actual numbers.

8. Separatist Tendencies

The mystically inspired innovations, justified by appeal to an independent spiritual authority, together with the desire for stricter compliance with the *mizvot* and maintenance of more stringent religious standards, encouraged the formation of separate prayer groups, violating the liturgical unity of the community. The new situation created tension, a sensation of instability and challenge to tradition; the authority of the community in spiritual matters was undermined and the validity of standard norms was shattered. From the standpoint of the official community, mystical meditation on the deity, the aspiration toward a deeper mode of worship and the new illumination of tradition by visionary inspiration, all of which created a new form of religion and generated a revision of standard norms, were seen as violating the common order in religious matters, as a deviation demanding proper reaction: the new norms were threatening the accepted authority of the community and exerting a harmful effect on its values and organization. The community, which considered itself the representative of the values of *halakha* and tradition, responsible for maintaining a unified, traditional framework, now took up arms against the active dissemination of pietistic customs and practices. As long as these had been confined to an esoteric elite, which derived its legitimacy from the community, the latter

134; Dov Baer of Bolechow, *Divre bina*, in: A.Y. Brawer, *Galicia and its Jews*, Jerusalem 1965, p. 203 (Hebr.); and see B.D. Kahana, *Toledot ha-mequbbalim, ha-shabbeta'im ve-ha-hasidim*, III: *Even Ofel*, Odessa 1914, pp. 14-15. On circles of pietists prior to the Besht and his activities see J. Weiss, "A Circle of Pneumatics..." (supra, n. 14). On groups of penitents who gathered together for stricter observance of the commandments under kabbalistic influence see Katz, *Halakhah we-qabbala* (supra, n. 7), pp. 197-198. For a literary account based on historical reality see S.Y. Agnon, "Early Hasidim," in: *Ir u-melo'ah*, Jerusalem & Tel-Aviv 1973, pp. 526-527. From the beginnings of Beshtian Hasidism till the end of the eighteenth century, the borderlines between mystical pietists, inspired by kabbalistic ethos, and the new Hasidic movement were not clearly defined, and the various attempts made by scholars to distinguish between the two trends suffer from unsupported generalizations, sometimes projecting back from later, nineteenth-century expressions of Hasidism to its beginnings in the eighteenth century.

could view them in a positive light; but once such idiosyncratic behavior had transcended the limits of the usual social-religious distribution and removed itself from the agreement and sanction of the community, it threatened to topple the pillars on which the accepted order rested. The community had no choice but to contest the challenge.³⁰

9. Esotericism and Exotericism

Most of the modifications and violations of convention listed – and deplored – in the anti-pietist proscriptions and anti-kabbalist pamphlets were not really devised by the pietists themselves in the 1770s and 1780s; they were based on kabbalistic tradition and pietist custom that had long been current in circles of kabbalists and penitent groups, inspired by Lurianic practices and the directives of the Safed pneumatics; they are readily traced to the kabbalistic ethical literature and *Shulhan arukh ha-Ari*. What was new, therefore, was not so much the content of the "innovative" modes of worship, but rather the breach of the traditional limits of esotericism and the broader dissemination of practices previously confined to a small elite; reforms rooted in the kabbalah were now gaining popularity. Such innovations as separate prayer groups, adoption of the Sephardic liturgy, white clothes, exclusive strictures in ritual slaughter, ascetic inclinations and maintenance of excessive standards of sanctity and purity, alongside constant study of kabbalistic texts and formation of new rituals in the spirit of kabbalah – all these are explicitly mentioned in connection with the members of the *kloiz* in Brody, and allusions to the same effect may be heard in reference to other groups and *kloizes* all over Europe, which had been observing esoteric practices with the full knowledge and sanction of their respective communities.³¹ Again: once these divergences extruded beyond the confines of a select elite and gained currency among the public at large, once the esoteric barriers fell and the sanction of the community was removed – some of the separatist groups even openly challenged the basis of the accepted order and religious-social stratification,

30 The tension finds expression in criticism voiced by R. Moses of Satanov, author of the book *Mishmeret ha-godesh*, Zolkiew 1746, and by R. Solomon Chelm, author of *Mirkevet mishneh*, Frankfurt/Oder 1751, in the first half of the eighteenth century. See quotations in Wilensky, II, pp. 376-383; cf. G. Scholem, "The Two First Testimonies to Groups of Pietists and the Beshit", *Tarbiz* 20 (1950): 228-240 (Hebr.); Dinur, pp. 87, 135-139, 161, 170-180; M. Piekarz, *Bi yeme zemihat ha-hasidut*, Jerusalem 1978 (hereafter: Piekarz), pp. 131-141, 305-320, 338-346.

31 See N.M. Gelber, *Toledot Yehude Brody (Arim we-immahot be-Yisra'el 6)*, Jerusalem 1956, pp. 62-73, 332; and cf. Dinur, pp. 161-162; Dubnow, p. 121; Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, pp. 141-155, 191-194; and most recently: E. Reiner, "Capital, Social Standing and Torah Study: The *kloiz* in Jewish Society in Eastern Europe in the 17th-18th Centuries", *Zion* 58 (1993): 287-328 (Hebr.).

turning directly to the people and attempting to inculcate them with their exclusive kabbalistic practices – the community was forced to take measures.

10. Joseph Steinhardt's Letter

Evidence of the considerable tension caused by the spread of pietistic practices in Eastern and Central Europe in the 1770s, of the suspicions aroused by the concomitant departures from convention and of the measures adopted by the community leaders, lay and rabbinical alike, to halt the tide, may be found in an unnoticed letter written by R. Joseph Steinhardt of Fuerth³² to R. Ezekiel Landau of Prague³³ in Ja-

32 On Joseph Steinhardt (1720-1776), whose introduction to his book of responsa, *Zikhron Yosef*, Fuerth 1773, was included in *Shever poshe'im* and cited in anti-Hasidic arguments, see L. Loewenstein, *Zur Geschichte der Juden in Fuerth* (= *JJLG* 6), 1908, pp. 190-199; *Enc. Judaica*, Jerusalem 1971, 15: 368; Dubnow, pp. 130-131; Wilensky, II, pp. 141-143. Steinhardt studied in his youth in Frankfurt, at the *yeshiva* of R. Jacob b. Benjamin Hacohen Poppers, author of the responsa *Shav Ya'akov*, a major opponent of Shabbateanism in the first half of the eighteenth century. Later he officiated as rabbi in Alsace and was from 1763 on rabbi of Fuerth. Steinhardt, who was closely involved with Frankfurt community affairs, was one of the rabbis connected with the well-known Cleves divorce, an episode which shook the Jewish world in the 1760s – he publicly criticized the Frankfurt *bet din*, which had invalidated the bill of divorce written by R. Israel Lipschuetz; see Horovitz, pp. 124-129.

33 R. Ezekiel Segal Landau, *Noda' bi-Yehuda*, Prague 1776, no. 93: "Concerning your fourth question, relating to the text of *le-shem yihud* [a mystical formula to be recited before performance of a religious commandment], which has lately become popular and is printed in prayer-books. Here is my answer. As to your question concerning the text, one should sooner ask whether we say that it is at all worthy of being recited. In my opinion it is a pernicious evil in our generation..., for they have forsaken the Lord's Torah, the fount of living waters, the two Talmuds, Babylonian and Jerusalem, and hewed them out broken cisterns, and presume to boast, each one saying, I am the seer and for me have the gates of Heaven opened and for me does the world exist – these are the destroyers of this generation. Concerning this orphan generation I say: The paths of the Lord are straight; the righteous can walk on them, while sinners stumble on them" (cited from ed. Warsaw, 1891). And see A. Wertheim, *Halakhot wa-halikhot ba-hasidut*, Jerusalem 1989 (hereafter: Wertheim), pp. 71-72; Wilensky, II, pp. 88, 135, 330. And cf. D. Sperber, *Minhage Yisra'el. Meqorot we-toledot*, II, Jerusalem 1991, pp. 116-119. R. Ezekiel Landau was closely acquainted with the pietistic-kabbalistic experience as sanctioned by the communities, for he was born in 1713 in Opatow, where his family maintained a *kloiz*, and had studied at Dubna and in the *kloiz* at Brody, where he had also dabbled in kabbalah. He served as *av bet din* in Yampol, Podolia, before being appointed in 1745 rabbi of Prague, where he stayed till his death in 1793. Landau, who had witnessed outbreaks of Shabbateanism in Podolia and was involved in the Eybeschuetz-Emden controversy in the 1750s, also excommunicating the adherents of Shabbetay Zvi, was also known for his opposition to the Hasidim who, as he put it, "have recently appeared to change the customs of our sacred ancestors in these parts." He suspected them of ties with Shabbateanism and objected in principle to tampering with the text of the liturgy. For more on R. Ezekiel Landau see Y.A. Kamelhar, *Mofet ha-dor*, Munkacs 1883; Kahana, *Toledot*, II, pp. 44-46; *Enc. Judaica*, s.v.

nuary 1773. The letter,³⁴ which deals with the Frankfurt pietists, was written in answer to a letter from Landau, who had also sent Steinhardt a copy of a responsum on that subject addressed to R. Nathan Maas, *av bet din* (= Chief Justice of the Rabbinical Court) of Frankfurt. Yet another motive for the writing of the letter was Steinhardt's receipt of a copy of the anti-Hasidic tract *Zemir arizim* (lit.: "cutting of the terrible ones", cf. Isaiah 25:5), published in 1772, which he had received from a disciple resident in Frankfurt.³⁵ This unnamed disciple had given his rabbi the latest news from Frankfurt, referring to clashes with the pietist groups who were tampering with accepted practices.

At that time, moreover, Steinhardt was writing the remarkable polemical introduction to his book *Zikhron Yosef*, published in 1773, in which he inveighed against "the congregation of *hasidim* and *prushim* (= pietists and recluses), who remove themselves by their actions and customs from the holy community," and the text of the letter in several places is very similar to that of the introduction. Steinhardt in his letter encourages R. Ezekiel for

having put his pure mind to be zealous with the zeal of the Lord of Hosts, to expose and reveal the hidden motives... [of] a good many hypocrites, who show themselves as pious men, but put on airs and act presumptuously, failing to observe the customs of the Children of Israel, the Torah, dictated to us from days of old by our Ancients, of blessed memory. They only mix with those who are different, to change them as dictated by their hearts and their proud spirits, to parade their abstinence and ostensible piety before the masses, the blind Hebrews [wordplay in the original Hebrew], who have eyes but do not see that [the pietists] are insincere, and do not understand that their words are false.

Steinhardt, who was an ardent defender of the Ashkenazic rite and vigorously opposed attempts to change it,³⁶ saw in R. Ezekiel Landau, whose letter was an attack on the pietists' attempts to deviate from the accepted rite, a kindred soul and fellow fighter. He told Landau of his fears and actions in that respect:

I bless the Lord that I share the view of his Excellency, may the Lord protect and redeem him, for I am sorely troubled by such actions, and it has long been like fire shut up in my bones. But I could not communicate to others the anxiety that

34 The letter is in MS 257 of the Stolin-Karlin Collection, Jerusalem; reproduction in the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem, Institute for the Photography of Hebrew Manuscripts, Film 49262. I am indebted to Dr. Michael Silver, who brought it to my attention and provided me with a photograph, and to Dr. Mordecai Nadav, who very kindly helped me to decipher it.

35 *Zemir arizim* was published in Aleksnietz 1772; see Wilensky, I, pp. 15-26.

36 The authors, in their preface, point out that the Fuerth rite was established by rabbis of the Nuernberg community, which was obliterated in 1499 and its Jews escaped to Fuerth. Hence the Fuerth rite was based on the ancient rite of Nuernberg and therefore preserved the early Ashkenazic liturgy.

is in my heart. I only thought constantly, would that I could act uprightly and rebuff them, as your Excellency's eyes may see from the copy of the letter I sent to the holy community of Frankfurt am Main to one of my disciples there, who sent me a few weeks ago the book *Zemir arizim*, copied by hand in full from the printed book, which is in the possession of the head of the *bet din* (rabbinical court) there, the great rabbi, R. Nathan (may God protect and redeem him) Maas,³⁷ who permitted him to copy it and send it to me.

Steinhardt attaches to his letter a copy of a letter that he had written to his disciple in Frankfurt before receiving the letter from Landau: "...that I sent last week, before I had received the letter from his Excellency, may God protect and save him," in order to prove that he had acted independently to persecute the pietists who were tampering with the conventional rite. In that letter he praises his disciple for having sent him the copy of *Zemir arizim* and urges him to pursue his attacks on the pietists:

And this is a copy of my answer to my above-mentioned disciple, and here is its text.... You have done well! May you continue to fight for the Torah. Great is your merit, in this world and the next, that you have put your mind to be zealous with the zeal of the Lord of Hosts, for the honor of the Holy One, Blessed be He, against those *prushim*, upstarts who are trying to change the customs of the Children of Israel, with a Torah never presumed by our fathers and our father's fathers.

It is clear from the text of the letter that Steinhardt saw no difference between the *hasidim* in Eastern Europe – the target of *Zemir arizim* – and the pietists in Frankfurt, for he refers to both as "*prushim*, upstarts [lit.: just recently arrived]," who have taken the liberty in the name of "their abstinence and ostensible piety" and in the name of kabbalistic tradition to tamper with religious convention. Later on in the letter he copies down what his disciple had written him regarding measures recently ordered by the Frankfurt religious courts against the would-be reformers:

And when I speak of him, I still remember what that disciple of mine wrote me on the matter, how the above-mentioned R. Nathan [Maas],³⁸ together with the other judges, long life to them, decreed that no rabbi would be admitted to the

37 In 1759-1769 R. Abraham Lissa (see n. 6 above) officiated as Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt. Upon his death the position of the chief rabbi remained unfilled; R. Nathan b. Solomon Maas (the spelling of the name varies), principal of the *yeshiva* and the study house, served as acting rabbi until the appointment of R. Pinḥas Halevi Horowitz at the end of 1771. On R. Nathan Maas, a prominent figure in the Frankfurt community and one of R. Nathan Adler's chief persecutors, see Horovitz, pp. 120, 135-143, 269. The institute for the Photography of Hebrew Manuscripts in Jerusalem possesses several halakhic works written by Maas.

38 See *supra*, n. 37.

study house of that place [= Frankfurt] else he undertake by a handshake³⁹ with the honored managers of the study house to observe the twelve points listed below:

1. That neither he nor the other persons besides him in that study house would lay two pairs of phylacteries together;⁴⁰ 2. that they would not lay phylacteries in the afternoon service;⁴¹ 3. that they would not lay phylacteries in the morning service of the ninth of Av;⁴² 4. to make the same knot in the phylacteries that we make;⁴³

- 39 An agreement sealed by a handshake was considered as binding as one concluded with an oath; see J.D. Eisenstein, *Ozar Yisra'el*, Jerusalem 1944, vol. V, p. 296, s.v. "teq'at kaf."
- 40 Compare Adler's custom as described in *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, p. 15: "Two attached phylacteries," and see above, text at n. 17. The background for this practice may be its definition as permissible for particularly worthy persons only. R. Joseph Karo, in: *Shulhan arukh*, Oraḥ ḥayyim, 34:4, writes: The custom of laying two pairs of phylacteries should not be practised save by a person who is known and famed for his piety." And cf. *Ozar Yisra'el*, V, s.v. *Tefillin*, p. 292: "Pious men and men of good deeds, who wish to avoid any doubt as to the observance of the precept, lay phylacteries of Rashi and of Rabbenu Tam at the same time... But only one who is known and famed for his piety should do so, and moreover he should not do so publicly." For the source and significance of the practice in the *Zohar* see Katz, *Halakhah we-gabbala*, pp. 48-49; cf. J. Gertner, "Influence of the Ari on the Custom of Laying Two Pairs of Phylacteries", *Da'at*, 28 (1992), pp. 51-66 (Hebr.). The popularity of the practice in pietist circles was enhanced by passages in *Sha'ar ha-kawwanot*, 6th Homily on Phylacteries; *Shulhan arukh ha-Ari* 11, discussing phylacteries according to both Rashi and Rabbenu Tam, and citing R. Yiḥzaq Luria's personal practice: "My master... laid in the morning phylacteries of Rashi and of Rabbenu Tam at the same time," Jacob Zemah, *Naggid u-mezawwe*, Przemysl 1880, pp. 35-36. For evidence of some bewilderment as to the pietistic significance of the practice in the first half of the eighteenth century, see R. Pinḥas Katzenelboigen, *Yesh manḥilin* (supra, n. 29), pp. 311-312. On two pairs of phylacteries as practiced by the Beshtian Hasidim in general and the Habad ḥasidim in particular cf. M. Rodkinson, *Toledot ammude Habad*, Koenigsberg 1876, p. 19; Michelsohn, *Shemen ha-tov* (n. 15 above), p. 75. On the significance of the practice in Hasidism and its growing popularity see Wertheim, p. 78.
- 41 On the laying of phylacteries in the afternoon service see *Naggid u-mezawwe*, Lemberg 1861, p. 33, which promoted the custom by attributing it to R. Yiḥzaq Luria: "My master... would lay phylacteries of Rabbenu Tam at the afternoon service, and then he made phylacteries of Rashi, two finger-breadths by two finger-breadths,... and would lay them at the afternoon services." Moreover, "R. Ḥayyim Vital... would lay phylacteries of Rabbenu Tam at the afternoon services." Cf. *Shulhan arukh ha-Ari*, Hilkhot tefillin, paras. 11-12; and cf. Gertner, supra.
- 42 Phylacteries are laid only in the afternoon service of the fast of the ninth of Av. An anthology of Frankfurt customs compiled and edited by Z. Leitner from various books and manuscripts, *Minḥage Frankfurt. Osef minḥage q"q Frankfurt de-Main*, Jerusalem 1982, (Festivals), explicitly states concerning the ninth of Av (p. 144): "In the morning one does not don the prayershawl, neither does one lay phylacteries." Cf. Sperber, II, p. 252.
- 43 On Luria's special phylactery knot see *Naggid u-mezawwe*, p. 33; and see *Shulhan arukh ha-Ari*, Hilkhot tefillin, paras. 2, 3. For the Frankfurt style of winding phylacteries on one's arm see Yoṣef Yuzpa b. Moshe Kashman, *Noheg ka-zon Yoṣef*, Hanau 1718 (repr. Tel-Aviv 1969), p. 29, para. 6. When Kashman published this book, the celebrated book by his grandfather, R. Yoṣef Yuzpa Hahn, *Yoṣif omez*, on Frankfurt customs, had not yet been printed, but he possessed the manuscript, from which he quoted copiously. See further *Enc. Hebraica*, 32, p. 1024, s.v. "Tefillin," for the difference between the Ashkenazic and Hasidic styles of laying phylacteries.

5. that the priests would not raise their hands [in the priestly blessing] each day;⁴⁴
 6. not to remain in his home when there is a death in his neighborhood;⁴⁵ 7. not to walk in the gate known as "Wallthor"⁴⁶ when an impure thing is about to leave there;⁴⁷ 8. that no man of them would go to any synagogue in which the priestly blessing is recited each day;⁴⁸ 9. not to pronounce the letter *het* as a *he*;⁴⁹ 10. not to say *sim shalom* in the afternoon or evening services, save in the afternoon service of a fast day;⁵⁰ 11. to recite the *mi she-berakh* for a person called up to

- 44 For the daily recitation of the priestly blessing in morning services of Adler's circle, see *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, and cf. n. 17 above. But compare the Frankfurt custom: "It is the custom of the Ashkenazim (unlike the Sephardim in the Holy Congregation of Amsterdam) that the priests raise their hands [in the priestly blessing] only on festivals that are days of rejoicing" (*Noheg ka-zon Yosef*, p. 89). For the special custom of Amsterdam cf. Zimmer (supra, n. 17), pp. 460-461. Daily recitation of the priestly benediction was practiced only in Palestine. The reason for the innovation in Adler's congregation may be a statement made in R. Yizhaq Luria's name in a description of the latter's customs given by R. Shlomil Dreznitz: "Every day the priests ascend the dais [i.e., deliver the priestly blessing] in *Sim Shalom* [= the last of the "Eighteen Benedictions"], and on fast days in the afternoon service as well" (S. Assaf, "Letters from Safed", *Qobez al yad*, 3 (13) (1940), p. 126 (Hebr.). See also *Naggid u-mezavve*, 21b: "One should practice great devotion in the priestly benediction. The priest should align his raised hands exactly with his head, and one should take great care in this matter." Prayer-books following the Lurianic tradition place great emphasis on the priestly blessing, prescribing it as a daily practice. For the Zoharic source of the custom and the great importance ascribed to it cf. *Zohar*, III, pp. 145-147.
- 45 See Horovitz, pp. 93-94; Adler, *Mishpahat*, pp. 8-9; cf. Arnsberg, III, p. 15..
- 46 The Hebrew may be a transliteration of the German *Wahlthor*, referring to a small church near the cemetery just by the Jewish Quarter (communication by Mr. Henry Zimmer, formerly of Frankfurt); more propable, it might mean "Wool Gate" (wool = *Wolle*), one of the gates of the Judengasse, as follows from Joseph Hahn's *Yosif omez*, quoted by Horovitz, p. 37 as the Judengasse was built on the Wollgraben. Yet another possibility is Old German *Wallthor*, meaning simply a gate besides the „Wall“, the rampart; cf. J. Grimm & W. Grimm, *Deutsches Woerterbuch*, Leipzig 1922, vol. 13, p. 1310. I am indebted to Ms. Batya Beer and Dr. Ita Shedletzky, who helped me to investigate the meaning of this word.
- 47 The gate at the southern end of the Judengasse.
- 48 As stated, R. Nathan was accustomed to recite the priestly blessing daily in the morning service; cf. nn. 17 and 44 above.
- 49 In *Noheg ka-zon Yosef*, pp. 66-67, there is a lengthy discussion of this question. The author cites his grandfather's manuscript: "In the book *Yosif omez* para. 22 it is stated: "As to the pronunciation of the *het*, that we Ashkenazim pronounce like a *he*, that is evidently correct." He cites detailed reasons for this practice, which was common in Frankfurt but – as implied by the extent of the explanation – controversial; this special pronunciation, too, was one of the bones of contention in the 1770s and a cause of attempts to form separate groups. See Weinrieb, *Bne het and Bne he*.
- 50 Compare the accusation leveled against Adler and his associates in: *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*: "They recite the prayer *Sim shalom* in the evening and afternoon services as well." Cf. above, text at n. 15, concerning this practice in Adler's prayer group. The accepted Frankfurt rite, however, stipulates: "At a time of day when the Torah Scroll can be brought out, one says *Sim shalom*, which refers to the living Torah... but at times that are not fit for bringing out the Torah, one says *shalom rav*, except in Additional Prayers and the Closing Prayer [of the Day of Atonement]" (*Noheg ka-zon Yosef*, p. 44, para. 14). On the controversy over this point in Frankfurt see S.Z. Geiger, *Divre qehillot. Minhage tefillot q"q Frankfurt a"n Main*, Frankfurt 1862, pp. 103, 171, 196, 205, documenting the customary practice in the early nineteenth century. Compare Wertheim, p. 120, who notes the rule given in the prayer-book of the Rabbi of Lyady (Shklov 1803), that *Sim shalom*

read the Torah in keeping with our custom; 12. not to say *qaddish* and *barekhu* in the evening service after the Eighteen Benedictions.⁵¹

These regulations, probably composed not long before the letter was written in 1772, at the time the first anti-Hasidic bans were being pronounced in Eastern Europe, attest to the community's struggle against rejection of its religious conventions and against any disloyalty to long sanctified traditional patterns, which had been the basis and *sine qua non* for the unchallenged continuity of Frankfurt Jewry.⁵² On the other hand, the regulations attest, albeit indirectly, to the kind of ritual innovation emerging in pietist circles and the changes that were taking place in the separate prayer groups, which amounted to a rejection of the traditional Ashkenazic rite and its replacement by Sephardic and Lurianic liturgies. Such changes erected barriers between the pietists and the mainstream worshipers, violating the religious unity of the community. The regulations also reveal the efforts made by the authorities to exert social and religious pressure on the offenders, who were clearly members of rabbinical, learned circles, by barring them from entering the community's main study house. One discerns an obvious desire to segregate the would-be reformers from the majority of the community, still loyal to the traditional Ashkenazi practices, and so to limit the practices introduced by the members of R. Nathan Adler's pietist circle: these spread of the new customs and rites that were appearing in Frankfurt during the 1770s. More than half of the above twelve points clearly recall, on the one hand, practices adopted at the beginning of the decade in R. Nathan Adler's group, as we learn from followers and opponents alike; on the other hand, they are also reminiscent of practices common at that time in the world of East-European Hasidism, as demonstrated both by the various writs of excommunication and by Hasidic books.

should also be recited in the afternoon prayer and even the evening prayer, contrary to the Ashkenazic rite, in which *Sim shalom* is replaced in the afternoon prayer by *Shalom rav*. And *ibid.*, pp. 121, 130, concerning the Hasidic practice of reciting *Sim shalom* even at evening services. For the practices involved in the altered rite of Hasidic prayer cf. Wilensky, index, p.402, s.v. "prayer, changes in rite, times and modes of prayer."

- 51 On the recitation of *qaddish* and *barekhu* after the Eighteen Benedictions in the Hasidic rite cf. Wertheim, p. 124 and n. 56 *ibid.* On the wording of the *mi she-berakh* formula in Frankfurt, see A. Yaari, "The *Mi she-berakh* Prayers, their Development, Customs and Formulae", *Qiryat sefer*, 33 (1958), pp. 118-130, 233-250; 36 (1961), pp. 103-118 (Hebr.).
- 52 The Frankfurt community zealously maintained its special customs and was excessively cautious toward any hint of change, as may be deduced from the community's books of *minhagim*: *Yosif omez, Noheg ka-zon Yosef; Sefer minhage Frankfurt, Osef minhage q"q Frankfurt*; and Geiger (supra, n. 50).

11. The Meaning of Separatism – Hostile and Sympathetic Views

The author of *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, written, as we have stated, in Frankfurt seventeen years later, describes in an extremely hostile vein the various novel related to the laying of phylacteries, daily recitation of the priestly benediction, textual modifications; unorthodox laws of ritual slaughter; adoption of excessively high standards of purity; and other practices, some of which have already been described here. However, R. Joseph Steinhardt's letter clearly shows that the offending innovations had already been introduced in the early 1770s, for that was when the regulations described above were enacted.

The author of *Ma'ase ta'tu'im* attributes the separatist tendencies and the rejection of the Ashkenazic rite to a rebellion against established authority; in his view, the "reforms" reflected in the modifications of ritual essentially cast aspersions on the religious conventions of the community and challenged their sanctity. At the very beginning of his tract, the author hurls a harsh accusation at the pietists, who were concerned, he claims,

to destroy the foundations of our customs, to sever the roots of our tradition, to build them new laws.... In their insolence they mock at our holy ancestors and deny the bearers of the tradition, regarding the wise founders of our good customs as if they were locusts.... For they are wise in their own eyes.... For they are separate sects.... And a streak of piety colors them....⁵³

He goes on to condemn the reformers' attempts to extend their influence and undermine communal unity, explaining the significance of such self-isolation and the implied affront to and disrespect for the general public:

Know, my friends, that deceitful people have flocked together, to ensnare wise men with their cunning, blackguards are they, they have made an alliance against the Lord and his Torah.... They have brought forth from their folly a new religion, as if the Torah had been given them for an inheritance....⁵⁴ They have devised for themselves different laws and conspire to rebel against the rabbis.... For they have spread calumny about their brethren Israel, declaring our bread and our wines unfit, refusing to eat our food or drink our wine, neither will they use our utensils; and they refrain from mixing with us, for fear that they might become impure from our bread and our wine, for they consider us Cutheans, as Karaites are we in their eyes.⁵⁵

53 *Ma'ase ta'u'im*, pp. 3-4.

54 Loc. cit.

55 *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

The innovative laws and customs, inspired by the kabbalistic ethos, combined with exaggerated emphasis on the laws of purity and impurity and excessive piety, all of which encouraged a tendency to remove oneself from society at large, were thus seen by the establishment as arrogant separatism, a disparaging criticism of accepted usage, tantamount to violation of halakhic norms. The adoption of a special liturgy, with separate services held at different times, insistence on separate food and distinctive dress – all originally intended as a means of self-sanctification and mystical devotion, aspiring to apprehension in heavenly spheres – were interpreted as a threat to the accepted scale of values, a challenge to *halakha* and tradition as represented by the community.

Naturally, the pietists themselves, the members of the separate prayer groups, held the opposite viewpoint. Maintaining that the conventional practices were deficient, they deliberately erected a barrier between themselves and the rest of the community. For a striking expression of this attitude we turn to a homily written by a contemporary pietist – one of the first proponents of Hasidism – around the same time as the first excommunication of Nathan Adler's circle. Referring to the various pietist groups, with their separate prayer services and aloof life-styles, on the one hand, and the community at large, hounding and harassing the pietists, the author recalls the biblical story of the Children of Israel in the desert and the "mixed multitude":

We learn from this that Israel kept themselves apart from the mixed multitude in two ways: when eating, they would not eat together with them; and also they refused to mingle with them, keeping themselves apart in the clouds of Israel and not the mixed multitude. From this issued that calf, for they argued: let us be together with you, that is to say, why are you isolating yourselves from us to pray and study by yourselves, neither do you eat our food? *And as mine own eyes have seen, not a stranger's eyes, this war is also waged against a person wishing to sanctify himself and to be separate, to pray in a separate minyan, since one cannot pray in a congregation whose members are observing the commandments merely by rote.* And there are several related reasons. As to food, I cannot approve a generation in which anyone is permitted to slaughter, even one not proficient in the laws of ritual slaughter, who is not God-fearing and opposes our holy rabbis, for our early and late halakhic authorities admonished us: that the slaughterer should be especially God-fearing, and in particular in connection with his sense of touch, to feel and sense the blade of the knife, in accordance with his fear of God.... Surely, whoever abstains from ordinary food should be called a saint, for many are not proficient in the laws of salting and rinsing [of meat during preparation prior to cooking].... Surely, whoever wishes to sanctify himself will not eat in their company, as the author of *Shene luhot ha-berit* wrote, in matters of food above all.... *And the hint to future generations is by his making a separate prayer group with other worthy men and moreover not eating in their company at all.... And the hint to future generations is that they make a study*

*house for the select of Israel, who shall be separate from the masses, for they cannot be together with them in one company.*⁵⁶

These words, published in 1780, were written by R. Jacob Joseph ha-Kohen of Polonnoye, disciple *par excellence* of the Besht, author of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, who experienced persecution while serving as rabbi of Shargorod, following his attempt to maintain both a kabbalistic, segregated way of life and at the same time to keep his rabbinical post. The attempt was unsuccessful, ending in his dismissal from the rabbinate of Shargorod.⁵⁷

For the Hasidim and pietists the self-sanctification and spiritual betterment necessary to maintain the mystical ethos were dependent on their segregation and isolation as a group from the surrounding world. Indeed, the normal standards of the traditional community in matters of cleanliness, devotion at prayer and strictness in religious observance were inadequate for these pietist circles, who spoke of the usual liturgy, ordinary ritual slaughter and general comportment of the public in such terms as the "mixed multitude" or the Cutheans and Karaites – that these were the pietists' sentiments was stated, as we have seen, by R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, on the one hand, and by the author of *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, on the other.⁵⁸

12. Excommunication and Accusation of Sectarianism

The kabbalistically inspired customs and practices adopted by the pietist groups in Eastern and Central Europe in the name of an independent spiritual authority, the freedom with which they interpreted the innermost essence of written tradition and the true, esoteric purpose of religious worship, and the autonomy they claimed in certain calendrical matters – all these seemed to the established leadership to be proof of sectarianism and seditious motives. Resolved to stem the tide of spiritual secession and tampering with ritual, the community leaders seized the weapon of

56 *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, Koretz 1780, portion *Naso* (repr.: Jerusalem 1973), vol. II, pp. 460-461; and see further *ibid.*

57 At the end of the cited passage R. Jacob Joseph writes: "And I, the author, have myself experienced the above-mentioned things from beginning to end, and I am hinting at how I myself commanded to make a study house at Shargorod." Cf. Dinur, p. 154; Piekarz, p. 391; J. Hisdai, *The Early History of Hasidim and Mitnaggedim in Light of the Drush Literature*, Dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1984, pp. 147-162 (Hebr.).

58 The reports of dissatisfaction with the usual modes of ritual slaughter and insinuations against the community slaughterers, which appear repeatedly in the literature of the pietist's opponents and in homilies in contemporary kabbalistic and pietistic literature, point to the importance of this matter for the pietists. We may also infer from such reports as to the considerable tension aroused by these questions. See H. Shmeruk, "The Social Significance of Hasidic *Shehitah*", *Zion* 20 (1956): 47-72 (Hebr.); and cf. Wertheim, pp. 200-208; Wilensky, I, pp. 44-49.

herem, excommunication, to bolster their power. They defined the offenders as sectarians, heretics, and called for their excommunication.⁵⁹

Preserved in the *pinqas* of the Frankfurt community⁶⁰ is the text of the ban pronounced on R. Nathan Adler and his associates in the synagogue on Sunday, 3 Elul, 5539 (= 15 August, 1779). The *pinqas* also records the background for the proclamation, emphasizing the separatist tendencies of the separate prayer groups and their disregard for the authority of the *qahal* [= the leaders of the community]:

This day, as specified below, the [leaders of the community], together with the *gabbaym* [= community officials], may God preserve and redeem them, reached the following decision.... Insofar as the learned and respected Rabbi Nathan, son of our most respected Rabbi Simeon Adler Katz, a member of our community, has admitted that without knowledge of the *qahal* he has repeatedly rejected the enactment [?] command [?] of the *qahal* and turned a deaf ear [lit.: a rebellious shoulder] to every message from the *qahal*. It is therefore resolved by the *qahal* and the collectors that the herald should proclaim in the synagogue as detailed below:

Hear ye, gentlemen, that I have been instructed to proclaim in the name of the holy company, may God preserve and redeem them, in conjunction with the leaders and *gabbaim*, may God preserve and redeem them, that it is forbidden for the learned and respected Rabbi Nathan, son of our master Rabbi Simeon Adler Katz, and the learned and respected Rabbi Leizer Wally [= Wallase] to assemble a quorum of ten men and to pray in their house. Any member of our community who should go to their house to pray in their house in a *minyán*, whether a property owner or an ordinary person of our community, is hereby excommunicated and banned; and whosoever is not a member of our community, if he is a student under the above-mentioned R. Nathan or R. Leizer, it is absolutely forbidden to given him lodging for the night and he should be expelled from our community without any discrimination.⁶¹

59 On *herem* see *Enz. Talmudit*, vol. 17, Jerusalem 1983, pp. 325-375 (Hebr.); for an account in English see *Encycl. Judaica* (Jerusalem 1971), vol. 8, cols. 353 ff. On the significance of *herem* in the Jewish community in Europe see Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, pp. 98-102; idem, *Halakha we-qabbala*, pp. 239, 246; and cf. J. Kaplan, "The Punishment of *Herem* in the Sephardic Community of Amsterdam in the 18th Century", *Proc. Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Pt. 1, vol. 1, Jerusalem 1990, pp. 195-201 (Hebr.).

60 The community *pinqas* of Frankfurt is now in the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem (MS Heb. 4 662). For a detailed description, including a useful index, see M. Nadav, "The *Pinqas* of the Community of Frankfurt am Main", *Qiryat sefer* 31 (1957): 507-516 (Hebr.).

61 The *herem*, written in the "chancery language" of the *pinqasim* – a mixture of Old Yiddish and Hebrew, is preserved in the Frankfurt *pinqas*, fol. 250a, doc. no. 481. See also Horovitz, p. 155. *Ma'ase ta'tu'im* records the text announced in the synagogue in August 1779, which is also cited in Wilensky, I, pp. 325-326; for the significance of the social and religious isolation of the subject of the decree see the sources cited above, n. 59.

However, the community was not strong enough to enforce its prohibition on the formation of pietist prayer groups, nor even to impose its authority on individual members, as we see from the next document in the *pinqas*:

Insofar as the above-mentioned learned and respected Rabbi Nathan, son of Si-meon Adler Katz, has not heeded the decision of the *qahal* and the *gabbaym*, may God protect and redeem them, neither has he obeyed the proclamation that was proclaimed in public in the synagogue, but has once again assembled a *minyān* in his home and held services, contrary to the enactment of the *qahal* and the *gabbaym*, may God protect and redeem them – accordingly, the holy company, may God protect and redeem them, and the leaders the *gabbaym*, may God protect and redeem them, together with the *ga'on av bet din* (High Chief Justice of the Rabbinical Court), may God protect and redeem him, and the two *bate din* (= panels of judges), may God protect and redeem them, have assembled; and they have resolved to inform the above-mentioned R. Nathan that he should not pray with a *minyān* by any means, save in synagogues that have authorization from our *qahal*, the proclamation of the *herem* [= excommunication] containing the text that we sent him, with the agreement of the holy company, may God protect and redeem them.... The above-mentioned R. Nathan is hereby ordered, on pain of *herem* under no circumstances to assemble ten men for prayer. Given this day of Sunday, tenth of Elul 5539....⁶²

The purpose of the ban was to emphasize that loyalty to accepted custom and emotional commitment to convention – both sentiments that were practically taken for granted in the community – were irreconcilable with disregard of those values by the excommunicated person and his associates. Any individual, even one as learned as R. Nathan Adler, was expected to bow to the community's time-honored custom and to respect its spiritual conventions. Longstanding modes of *halakha* and custom were to be upheld and enforced in face of the changes proposed by the would-be reformers in the name of kabbalistic tradition and charismatic leadership.

The community *pinqas* demonstrates that the community was at the time much agitated by controversy, due to the proliferation of synagogues and private prayer groups – a situation reflecting the economic and social tension aroused by religious and spiritual elitism. The documents reflect a considerable degree of tension and anxiety; the inner relationships between the *qahal*, on the one hand, and the various circles that aspired to guide their lives more independently by a variety of social and spiritual tendencies and therefore chose to assemble in separate prayer groups, on

62 *Pinqas*, fol. 250a, doc. no. 482, and immediately thereafter a slightly different version of the same writ, in doc. no. 483. In the second version the title "learned" (Hebr. *torani*) is omitted. The second writ was signed – probably unwillingly – by Adler's friend R. Pinḥas Horowitz, author of *Sefer hafla'a*, then Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt; he was also the brother of R. Samuel Shmelqe, cited previously as a defender of Hasidic practices (n. 20) And See Arnsberg, III, p. 221.

the other, were marked by unease and controversy.⁶³ In 1783 we read in the *pinqas* of nine private *minyanim*, and there is an obvious decline in the status and authority of the *qahal*.⁶⁴ In 1790 the author of *Ma'ase ta'tu'im* describes some of these prayer groups in acrimonious terms, referring to Adler's circle as a sect "that has already done much in the way of sinning and misleading others."⁶⁵

The ritual innovations instituted by the kabbalists and pietists out of spiritual and mystical motives induced them, as we have seen, to isolate themselves from society so as to ensure stricter compliance with ritual minutiae rooted in kabbalistic ethos; the subsequent social consequences, though unintentional, were quite far-reaching. The pietist groups in both Eastern and Central Europe were seen as a sectarian phenomenon, since they viewed themselves as a saintly company, living a life that demanded social isolation and rejection of the lifestyle favored by the majority of society. The description of R. Nathan Adler's group in *Ma'ase ta'tu'im* was written in that vein. The traditionalists, when they accused the pietists of having spurned accepted, normal standards, were essentially saying that R. Nathan and his followers considered their mode of worship exclusively valid while challenging the legitimacy of the traditional lifestyle; the pietists themselves, however, viewed themselves as bearers of the mystical tradition, not obligated to the community's authority in matters of spirit, fully committed to erecting a barrier between them and their fellow Jews in order properly to maintain the kabbalistic ethos.

13. R. Nathan Adler in Boskovice

R. Nathan, impelled by the tension surrounding himself and his group, his removal from participation in community life and the continuing conflict over his leadership – which had now come to the knowledge of the city authorities – now left Frankfurt. In 1782 he was invited to officiate as rabbi of Boskovice in Moravia, where he arrived in winter 1783. But there, too, he persisted in his "pietistic ways" and again formed a group of adherents; there, too, he became the center of a controversy and a target of persecution; his eccentric behavior aroused hostility and criticism; and the community was incensed both by his organization of an elite group and by the stringent standards that he set for ritual slaughter, ignoring the local usage. In a little

63 On the economic significance of spiritual isolation and its social implications see Nadav, p. 513; and cf. Horovitz, pp. 94-109, for the considerable social tensions in mid eighteenth-century Frankfurt and the various disputes in the community. More on Frankfurt in the 1780s and the struggle against the *maskilim* there see J.N. Heschel, "The View of the Great Rabbis of the Time in their Struggle against the *maskil* Naftali Herz Wessely", in: *Bet Aharon we-Yisra'el*, VIII/4 (1993), pp. 147-156 (Hebr.).

64 Frankfurt *pinqas*, docs. 488-490; cf. Nadav, p. 513.

65 *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, p. 25.

known letter, first published in the German translation of *Hut ha-meshullash*,⁶⁶ a certain R. Zvi Hirsh Posilberg, originally of Prague, who had been appointed by the Boskovice community to contact the Frankfurt *bet din* (= rabbinical court), complained to R. Nathan Maas of Frankfurt about the unconventional behavior of his townsman Nathan Adler, who was trying to impose rigorous religious standards on the Jews of Boskovice, refusing to compromise or to recognize accepted practices. The community had fallen into the trap of electing a rabbi who had been excommunicated, because the Frankfurt *bet-din* had not given the case sufficient publicity. And he wrote, among other things:

A whole year ago, the foremost leaders of our community listened to the crackling of nettles and the counsel of fools, devoid of reason, taking as their rabbi a member of [your] community, R. Nathan Adler, without any inquiry of the scholars of the generation in his place of birth as to the man and his actions; they gave ear only to the voice of the masses, and their soul was enticed by hearsay, that the aforementioned rabbi was famous among men of little worth, who judged by the sight of their eyes, yea, they saw his deeds and marveled, and thought themselves wise, believing *that these were deeds of piety*. So those men issued a proclamation throughout the camp, saying, lo, this is an exceedingly wise and pious man, there is none like him in our generation (heaven forbid!), and they mouthed empty words.... And it was our ill fortune that the foremost leaders of our community bowed their heads and he was appointed over us. Soon after his arrival here, the aforementioned rabbi terrified us with all manner and kind of fears, particularly in matters of unacceptable ritual slaughter, [requiring] the slaughterer to show his knife to the rabbi each time [he slaughtered], whether for animal or for fowl, both before and after the slaughter, so that really all the animals were declared *terefa* [unfit for consumption].... And it became known to us that his slaughter with a bad knife, extremely smooth, was counter to the view of the *Bayit hadash* and the *Siftei kohen* [R. Yo'el Sirkes, 1561-1640, and R. Shabbetay ha-Kohen, 1621-1662, authoritative commentators on *halakha*]. Never have we heard such a thing out of concern for the word of the Lord.... Moreover, the learning and wisdom of the aforementioned rabbi is still unknown to us. He preached on the Sabbath, as is the custom, but did not hesitate to burden the public, making them wait for him almost one hour until his cronies came running before him, and he stood before the Holy Ark some three hours and preached as is the custom, but none of us could understand what he was saying, I heard a language that we knew not, as though he were speaking to foreigners in a foreign tongue, while our magnificent community is, thanks be to God, full of scholars.

66 The letter was published from MS Zurich, Zentralbibliothek, Heid 192, pp. 7-8, in the German translation of Sofer's book: *Der dreifache Faden*, Basel 1952, pp. 157-159. I am indebted to Prof. J. Katz, who brought it to my attention. Prof. Katz himself learned of its existence from the late Prof. G. Scholem, after the latter had read Katz's paper "Outline etc." (supra, n. 7).

Thus, besides complaints that R. Nathan was enforcing stricter observance of ritual laws in general, particularly with regard to examination of the slaughterer's knife and of slaughtered animals – such complaints recur repeatedly in the polemical anti-pietistic literature – the writer finds fault with the new rabbi's sermons, which were incomprehensible and overlong; perhaps this was due to Adler's Frankfurt accent, which may have been strange to his Moravian audience's ears, or to his habit of praying according to the Lurianic rite, using the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew and affecting kabbalistic customs.⁶⁷

The writer further censures Adler at length for "acting dumb" when requested to demonstrate his proficiency in devising novel interpretations of the Torah and casuistry. Adler also refused to discuss matters of kabbalah with community members who wished to test his knowledge, arousing the impression that "the well is dry, there is no water in it – he spends his days and years burnishing and examining the knife to no avail." He goes on to argue vehemently against the pietistic company that had gathered around Adler:

How sorely has the noise grown in our camp, in our midst, from the braying of asses and barking of dogs that have gathered about him, wicked men, abounding in alien customs, men of low character, murderous, deceitful men, their love for him is strong and rooted in their hearts and burning as fire; all their silver and gold are as nought in their eyes, like dung on the face of the earth, compared with his love; and they accept his discipline, preferring to die rather than to disobey.... Through him a sect of liars, insolent men, speakers of calumny, has grown and multiplied, and neglect of the Torah is rife.

The hostile description of the group, rather reminiscent of accounts of the early Hasidic groups in Eastern Europe, tells us, on the one hand, something of the anger and suspicion that the separatist coterie aroused with its disregard for traditional

67 Cf. Hatam Sofer, *Responsa, Oraḥ ḥayyim*, para. 15: "Therefore, my master, the wise, pious and priestly Nathan Adler, of blessed memory, he himself would lead the services and pray in Sephardic [pronunciation] from R. Yizhaq Luria's prayer-book." Cf. Abraham Loewenstamm of Emden, *Responsa zeror ha-ḥayyim*, Amsterdam 1820, sec., "*U-neginotay yenaggen*": "As to what has been testified of the unique sage our master and lord R. Nathan Adler in Frankfurt, that he too used to pray in the Sephardic pronunciation, I too know this.... And heard him pray in the Sephardic pronunciation, and apart from that ... R. Nathan, of blessed memory, was at that time quite alone in his usage, counter to all the great authorities of that time in Frankfurt a.M., and none ruled like ... the aforementioned R. Nathan, but prayed in the Ashkenazic accent as we do." According to Adler's biographers, he had learned the Sephardic accent in his youth from a Jerusalemite visitor to his home. *Derekh ha-neshet*, p. 22. And see Horovitz, p. 156, to the effect that R. Nathan's followers considered him a miracle-worker. Cf. *Hatam Sofer, Oraḥ ḥayyim*, para. 197. For the spiritual characterization of these figures cf. also G. Scholem, "*Mizwa ha-ba'a ba-avera*," in: *Mehqarim u-meqorot*, pp. 19-20.

values; on the other, it indicates the fervor and immediacy of the relationship between R. Nathan's followers and their leader.

R. Zvi Hirsh goes on to query Maas why the Frankfurt rabbis and *bet-din*, having excommunicated Adler for his separatist tendencies, had not made the ban a matter of public knowledge; by failing to do so they had misled the Boskovice notables, who would otherwise not have appointed him:

Afterwards I heard from wise and faithful people that His Excellency the great Rabbi, may the Lord protect him, had branded the injurious rabbi, that same R. Nathan Adler, with four signs, with the rabbinical curse and with the thorn that draws no blood [= excommunication], because of his evil deeds and his laws that are different from [those of] all the people, against the laws of our holy Torah.... But I am surprised and exceedingly amazed at such a wise man as himself, incomparable in his generation..., why did he not publish the matter in the streets and cities of Israel, lest people be misled by him, to learn from his actions, to withdraw from the ways of the community as he has done, Heaven forbid, [such actions as] it is impossible to list in detail, for the time would end and the list would not. Had we heard but one suspicious thing or blemish, surely he would not have become a stumbling-block for our community.... So my request is set forth, may it please [him]... to instruct one of his servants to inform us of everything, so that we may see whether these things are true, that in [his Excellency's] community as well, a great city in Israel, the holy community of Frankfurt am Mein, he built a high-place for himself and separated from the people and committed sins of the ways of —⁶⁸ against our Torah and the great *bet din zedeq* in his city. And if it indeed be true that he is under a curse and an excommunication pronounced by His Excellency the great rabbi, may the Lord protect him.

The Boskovice community leader ends with a request that the Frankfurt rabbi respond, "that I may be able to determine the truth, lest there again proliferate in Israel sects and factions, we are troubled by the first [such factions], and we fear that others will gather about him, Heaven forbid.

Adler did not stay long in Boskovice. The biographies claim that he left in 1784,⁶⁹ after the lessor of the city meat tax, convinced that Adler's stringent approach to ritual slaughter was causing him financial loss, denounced him to the authorities.⁷⁰

68 The allusion may be to the "ways of the Amorites," a standard idiom meaning false, idolatrous beliefs. In both manuscript and printed versions the phrase is completed by a dash; perhaps the writer balked at using such a harsh expression.

69 Adler's biographies generally state, wrongly, that he left Boskovice in 1786. He in fact left the city toward the end of 1784; this may be inferred from a statement by R. Joseph Hayyim Pollak, rabbi of Trebitsch (Moravia). For details see A. Benedikt, "The *Ḥatam Ṣofer* with his Rabbi at Boskovice", *Moriya* 17 (1990), 226-230 (Hebr.).

70 For Adler's rabbinate in Boskovice and its acrimonious termination, see Horovitz, pp. 155-156; Dubnow, p. 437; *Derekh ha-nesher*, pp. 38-41; Zobel, pp. 655-656; Katz, Outline, p. 360; and cf. now Benedikt (*supra*, n. 69). For the dispute over ritual slaughter in Frankfurt as well, see *Derekh*

However, as the above letter indicates, his hasty departure was not due exclusively to financial disputes with powerful townsmen or to slanders put about by persons whose income he had affected. His standing in the community was severely damaged by the tension and hostility due to his deviation from accepted norms and his religious eccentricity, not to speak of the bitter acrimony aroused by his followers. All these created conditions in which he could no longer function properly. The discovery that he had been excommunicated did nothing to calm the controversy, and the community leaders, considering themselves responsible for preserving religious unity in the city, attacked Adler and the changes he was advocating. Toward the end of 1784, probably shortly after the community officials had received an answer to their appeal to Frankfurt, which had been sent in December 1783, he was forced to flee. He traveled to Nikolsburg (= Mikulov, Moravia) and thence to Vienna, returning in 1786-1787 to Frankfurt, where he reassembled his followers and reopened his *yeshiva* and study house. Soon, however, he again incensed the leaders of the community and was excommunicated for a second time in 1789.

14. Spiritualism and Antinomism in the Various Pietistic Groups

The strained relations between the members of the separate prayer groups, on the one hand, and the community leaderships, on the other, were further complicated by the imprecise spiritual and social identity of kabbalistic pietism; the definition became even more blurred as the various groups strove to repudiate the authority of the official community and assumed a variety of religious molds. The term *hasid*, literally: a pious, righteous person, was applied to learned men of the traditional stamp, recognized by the community, who sat in specially appointed study houses, the *kloizes*; to pietists who operated outside the community and convened in separate circles and prayer groups; to clandestine Shabbateans; and to *hasidim* of the Beshtian kind, who severed their direct ties with their respective communities and created new allegiances. This diversity of group identities subsumed under the term, its variety of spiritual meanings and the lack of a clear distinction among the different brands of *hasidim*, are clearly reflected by the then commonly held view that a penchant for exaggerated pietism, going beyond the conventions of the official community, was an unmistakable symptom of Shabbatean inclinations.⁷¹ In other words, the anti-pietists suspected that the supposed sanctity, asceticism, deviant customs and meticulous observance of the commandments were nothing but a false,

ha-neshet, p. 25: "R.N.A. wanted to declare the ritual slaughterers of Frankfurt a.M. unfit and to defeat the mark of the Evil Spirit that rests upon unfit slaughterers." For the meaning of Hasidic slaughter and the controversy it occasioned see above, n. 58.

71 See G. Scholem, "The Shabbatean Movement in Poland", in: *Mehqarim u-meqorot le-toledot ha-shabbeta'ut we-gilguleha*, Jerusalem 1974, p. 80. Cf. M. Balaban, *Le-toledot ha-tenu'a ha-frankit*, Tel-Aviv 1934, pp. 53-66.

misleading cover for nefarious intentions.⁷² That was why the opponents of Hasidism in Eastern Europe tended to accuse the Hasidic groups of affiliation with the Shabbatean movement in its various guises, to brand it as a heretical sect and to hound it mercilessly.⁷³ R. Nathan Adler's experiences, too, were largely an outcome of what was perceived as the Shabbatean-Frankist danger: in view of the increasingly vague borderlines between kabbalistic pietists or ascetics, on the one hand, and the Shabbatean and Frankist pietists, on the other, any manifestation of separatism, be it only so much as a separate prayer group or an unconventional kabbalistic-pietist practice, was automatically suspect, arousing attacks and excommunication – unless it had been explicitly sanctioned by the community authorities and leadership.

Throughout the eighteenth century, there is varied evidence of tension between the various pietist groups and the traditional leadership. The turn of the seventeenth century was marked by the mass conversion of the Doenme in 1683 and their renewed excommunication in 1714; while the eighteenth century was racked by continuous disputes – Hayon versus Hagiz, Eybeschuetz versus Emden, Moses Luzzatto versus his opponents – which clearly betrayed the effects of Shabbatean agitation, its appeal and the fear it aroused throughout European Jewry. Consequently, any mode of spiritualism was immediately seen in an antinomistic light, and any group showing kabbalistic and mystical tendencies was suspected of Shabbateanism. The campaign waged by R. Jacob Joshua Falk of Frankfurt and R. Jacob Emden of Altona, an indefatigable anti-Shabbatean, against R. Jonathan Eybeschuetz in the 1750s, which exposed the latter's Shabbatean leanings and shook all of European Jewry;⁷⁴ the excommunication of the Frankists at Brody in 1756 and the Frankist conversion at Lwow in 1759, which was unprecedented in its nature and extent; and

72 Cf. *Zikhron Yosef* (supra, n. 32), Introduction.

73 Noteworthy in this context is a statement by the secretary of the Brody community, who copied the 1772 writ of excommunication: "When the forementioned letter reached us [at Brody], we were frightened to see, anguished to hear, that even now the fire that has been burning for so many years has not been extinguished, those companies of wickedness are still dancing among us"; see Wilensky, I, p. 44; and cf. Gelber, *Toledot Yehude Brody*, p. 111. Wilensky understood the statement as referring to the controversy in Vilna, news of which had reached Brody, supposing that "nothing was actually done until the Vilna letter was received" [*ibid.*, n. 59]. I believe, however, that Wilensky was wrong: the secretary is speaking of the Shabbatean and Frankist pietist circles, which were banned in Brody several times: in 1752, 1753, 1756 and 1760. This is also the conclusion to be drawn from the wording of the proclamation: "Sects and factions have reappeared among our people," the implication being that the anti-Hasidic bans were aimed at the resurgence of Shabbateanism, not against something that the authors of the bans considered an essentially new phenomenon. The members of the Brody *qahal* were in the forefront of the anti-Shabbatean efforts; we know that it was they who issued the bans against R. Jonathan Eybeschuetz, Leyb Prossnitz and Jacob Frank in the first half of the eighteenth century. Wilensky seems to have underestimated the weight of the accusation of Shabbateanism as a motive for the anti-Hasidic bans; see *ibid.*, p. 18. Even after the conversions of 1757 and 1759, most of the Shabbateans remained in the Jewish community, and their actions, covert and overt, aroused considerable unrest and tension. See Scholem, *Mehqarim u-meqorot*, p. 136.

74 See Horovitz, pp. 101-109; and cf. Kahana, *Toledot* (supra, n. 29), II, pp. 20-48.

the Frankist conversion at Prossnitz in Moravia in 1773 – all these could not but confirm the establishment's worst fears about the continued subversive activities of the Shabbatean movement. Such developments reinforced the positions of the opponents of kabbalistic pietism, Hasidism and various pneumatic practices, accentuating suspicions that ascribed secret meanings to any changes in the standard ritual. Various pietistic groups were suspected of entertaining heretical beliefs and practicing strange rites, as we hear from a variety of evidence throughout the eighteenth century.⁷⁵ Apparently, however, it was not until the 1770s, when the first writs of excommunication were issued against the Hasidim in Eastern Europe, as well as the first ban on R. Nathan Adler and his associates, that the traditional religious and social establishment began to identify the various pietistic manifestations with Shabbatean-Frankist circles.

15. Jacob Frank and the Excommunication of the Pietists

Scholars seem to have overlooked the fact that the proclamations were being issued, in both Eastern and Central Europe, at approximately the same time as a series of events of crucial importance that was casting an ominous shadow on the Jewish world. I am referring to the intensive activity of Jacob Frank (1726-1791) and his propaganda efforts toward the end of the 1760s, as well as his journeys throughout Eastern and Central Europe after he had been released from captivity in Czestochowa in 1772, when he launched a systematic campaign to disseminate his doctrines through emissaries, letters and books.⁷⁶

Thus we read, in a letter from Yeruham b. Hananya Litman of Czernowitz and Solomon b. Elisha Shor, a kabbalist from Rohatyn, and his brother Nathan Neṭa, concerning the history and teachings of Jacob Frank (the letter was first published by Brawer):⁷⁷

And when he left Czestochowa in the year 1772 he sent us, the undersigned, to several towns, such as Lublin, Lwow and Brody and others, on a mission from

75 See n. 26 above; cf. Piekarcz, pp. 310, 324-326, 331-338.

76 Czestochowa was captured by the Russians in August 1772, and Frank, who complained to the Russian commander that he had been wrongly imprisoned, was released. For his actions in the 1770s see A. Kraushar, *Frank and his Congregation 1726-1816*, I (Hebrew translation by N. Sokolow), pp. 272-273; II, pp. 5-16 [vol. II of Sokolow's translation was published only partly, bound together with vol. I; that volume, too, appeared in only a few copies]; A. J. Brawer, *Galicja and its Jews* (supra, n. 29), pp. 267-275; Scholem, *Mehqarim u-meqorot*, pp. 137-138; H. Levin, *Ha-khronika – te'uda le-toledot Ya'aqov Frank u-tenu'ato*, Jerusalem 1984, pp. 76-86. For Frank's vigorous propaganda at the end of the 1760s, with the outbreak of the Russia-Poland war, see Kraushar, *ibid.*, I, p. 257: "During the year 1768 he dispatched numerous emissaries." And cf. *ibid.*, pp. 272-273, for the emissaries in the early 1770s.

77 See Brawer, p. 272.

him, to proclaim to all God-fearing people that they should know that a time will come when all the Jews will be forcibly converted. For the decree is from the Lord alone, however it may be fulfilled, and whosoever shelters in the shadow of true faith, in the house of the God of Jacob [= Frank], the God of Jacob shall come to his aid, that the believer shall not lose worlds, for in His shadow shall we live among the nations.

It is commonly believed that Jacob Frank was released in the summer of 1772, when Czestochowa fell to the Russians in August of that year. According to the Frankist chronicle, Frank was freed on January 21, 1772[3], subsequently proceeding to several places in Poland, Moravia and Walachia. His journey aroused a spiritual resurgence and waves of conversion,⁷⁸ reawakening and reinforcing suspicion of all the pietist groups and separate prayer groups, perhaps even prompting the various decrees of excommunication; for the common denominator among the kabbalistic pietists, the Beshtian *hasidim* and the Shabbatean-Frankist groups was far more prominent – in the minds of the opponents – than the fundamental differences among them.

It was in that spirit that the author of *Hut ha-meshullash*, Hatam Sofer's grandson, described the background to Adler's excommunication:

At that time the land was heaving and surging and the war waxed great against the *hasidim* in the lands of Poland and Russia, the *ga'on*... Elijah of Vilna, of blessed memory, and together with him some other great sages of Israel, sent letters to all the large communities of Israel, to persecute the *Hasidim* and dispute with them, as they have changed their ways and altered the prayers and other standard customs.... And the sages of Israel were particularly fearful of change and innovation at that time, for then the sect of Shabbetay Zvi, may his name be blotted out, were prevailing, doing evil and vile things in Poland and Germany, and the members of that sect were also occupying themselves with books of kabbalah, with hints and *gematriot*, wrapping themselves in cloaks of piety.... One could not see whether they were of the *Zvians* [= Shabbateans], a stock sprouting poison weed and wormwood, or of the *bona fide hasidim*, whose faith was pure. So they feared the *Zvians*, who resemble *hasidim*, and since they saw in the behavior and processions of the men of R. Nathan Adler, of blessed memory, certain things that resembled the behavior of the *hasidim*, and did not wish the things to spread through the city and the country, they therefore tried to prevent people from doing so. In Prague at that time the *bet din zedeq* forbade all study of the kabbalah, for that reason.⁷⁹

78 For the mass conversions see Y. Goldberg, *Ha-mumarim be-mamleket Polin-Lita*, Jerusalem 1986, pp. 10, 12.

79 *Ha-hut ha-meshullash*, p. 29. Compare the wording of the prohibition to print kabbalistic books because of the Shabbatean connection: I. Heilperin, *Pinqas wa'ad arba' arazot*, p. 205, para. 432; p. 417, para. 753; cf. idem, *Yehudim ve-Yahadut be-Mizrah Evropa*, Jerusalem 1968, pp. 78-87.

All the pietist groups, whether the ascetic kabbalists, Beshṭian *ḥasidim* or the like then operating in the vicinity, or the Shabbateans and Frankists, shaped their ideologies in the light of kabbalistic tradition and subscribed to patterns of thought and behavior that were strongly influenced by the ethical literature of the kabbalah and its mystical-visionary currents. It was only natural that the believers in the various creeds assigned new meanings to kabbalistic practices; in time, each group laid emphasis on different spiritual dimensions and created its own distinctive social and religious patterns. All, however, had a common denominator: a profound affinity with kabbalistic tradition, coupled with the conviction that the bearers of that tradition were authorized to modify the more conventional tradition. It was because of this element that the changes introduced in common practices by the various pietistic groups and the characteristic peculiarities of their methods of worship, together with their attraction to charismatic inspiration and recognition of the authority that it conferred, looked very similar to outside observers – so much so that the latter could not properly distinguish groups still loyal to traditional values from those deviating from them and striving to undermine them.⁸⁰ The established community, faced with a resurgence of the Shabbatean heresy and its Frankist offshoots, did not give serious consideration to the real distinctions between the different groups, but took a generally negative stand toward all and any separatist, pietist coteries and any groups attempting to modify existing practices without the agreement or sanction of the traditional leadership.

The presence of Frankists in Poland and Galicia, "Red Russia" (Eastern Galicia) and Moravia, throughout the 1780s, generated considerable tension and unease, a feeling of imminent catastrophe.⁸¹ Indeed, the number of their affiliates to one degree or another, ranging from clandestine supporters through enthusiastic spokesmen to avowed apostates, was too large not to leave an imprint, inducing the establishment to close ranks and ostracize the offenders for undermining the community and its values. Excommunication was the principal tool that could clearly define the common identity of the community and arrest spiritual separatism of any variety, whether it involved ascetic-pietistic practices, ecstatic tendencies or unabashedly antinomistic beliefs.

It is perhaps not inconceivable that the letters and emissaries Frank dispatched to his supporters and believers in Brody in the late 1760s and early 1770s⁸² were di-

In 1746, the Council of the Four Lands also prohibited the study of the kabbalah by anyone aged less than thirty and anyone "who had not filled his belly with Talmud and *poseqim* [= halakhic literature]." For more information about the interdict, reissued now that the Frankists, too, were exploiting mystical lore, see Scholem, *Mehqarim u-meqorot*, pp. 123-124; cf. Gelber, *Yehude Brody*, pp. 107-108.

80 See *Mehqarim u-meqorot*, pp. 113-115.

81 See Levin, *loc. cit.* (supra n. 76).

82 See Brawer, p. 272; and cf. accounts of the emergence of the Frankists in Warsaw from 1770 onward, Scholem, *Mehqarim u-meqorot*, p. 137.

rectly or indirectly responsible for the willingness of the Brody community leaders to cooperate with the anti-Hasidic excommunication of the summer of 1772.⁸³ At any rate, it was in that year that the *ga'on* of Vilna excommunicated the Hasidim, out of the conviction that the "sect of *hasidim*... was shot through with heresy of the sect of Shabbetay Zvi," as cited in his name in *Shever poshe'im*.⁸⁴ The Hasidic leaders, on the other hand, who considered themselves the bearers of kabbalistic tradition, its faithful interpreters and disseminators, furiously protested their classification under the heading of Shabbatean heresy, but to no avail.⁸⁵

In other words, the Frankist propaganda of the late 1760s, the journeys throughout Europe of Jacob Frank and his emissaries in the early 1770s and the subsequent ferment may well have contributed to the banning of Hasidism in 1772, which the authorities saw as aimed against the Shabbatean heresy and its Hasidic manifestations. These measures, in turn, indirectly prompted the first excommunication of R. Nathan Adler and his associates; it will be remembered that the various texts of the anti-Hasidic ban, as cited in *Zemir arizim*, were in the hands of the Frankfurt *av bet din* when the latter book was published.⁸⁶ As to the second excommunication of the group, it is perhaps no accident that it occurred shortly after Jacob Frank settled in nearby Offenbach in 1787.

All through the 1780s, the Frankfurt community fought R. Nathan and his circle, while at the same time the Shabbatean-Frankist threat intensified. By the close of the decade there were some one thousand Frankists in Frank's fortress in Offenbach,⁸⁷ on the outskirts of Frankfurt across the Main, and his supporters numbered several thousand. It was only natural that this situation could only aggravate the attack; and, indeed, a further ban, more extreme than the previous one, was pronounced in 1789.⁸⁸

16. The Second Excommunication

An extraordinary feature of the polemical evidence dating to this decade is the prominence of dreams and allegedly prophetic visions, which were common in R. Nathan's circle, in the bans and writs of excommunication. Again and again we read that Adler's followers put considerable stock in dreams and their efficacy:

83 See Wilensky, I, pp. 44-49; and cf. *supra*, n. 73.

84 *Shever poshe'im*, p. 77b.

85 See Wilensky, II, pp. 178-179; D.Z. Hillman, *Iggerot Ba'al ha-Tanya*, Jerusalem 1953, nos. 77, 83, 86; and cf. R. Elior, "The Disputation at Minsk", *Mehqere Yerushalayim be-mahashevet Yisra'el* 1 (1982): 202-203 (Hebr.).

86 See Levin, p. 100; cf. Y. Gruenwald's introduction to the second edition of *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, p. 8.

87 Scholem, *Mehqarim u-meqorot*, p. 138; cf. *ibid.*, n. 200.

88 See Horovitz, pp. 156-157; Zobel, pp. 656-657; cf. Wilensky, II, p. 96.

For they began to terrify the people with their dreams and frighten them with the falsehood of their visions. But that is all their wisdom and intelligence, to awaken their imagination as they lie prostrate abed, for in their company whosoever dreams more dreams is considered superior.⁸⁹

While Adler's followers, inspired by kabbalistic tradition, interpreted their dreams as *bona fide* visions and prophetic manifestations, reliable predictions of the future and a means of direct contact with the supernal worlds, the community officials and rabbis considered them despicable manipulative measures, intended to influence the masses, or, at best, delusions and hallucinations. The second ban (1789) was concerned entirely with this aspect:

Those bans that were recorded in the community *pinqas* and publicly proclaimed in the synagogue in the year 5539 [= 1779], as has already been stated and repeated, are hereby upheld in their original force and strength, redoubled and expanded, so that these false prophets and their ilk should desist from terrifying and frightening the people.⁹⁰

The proclamation continues, sternly forbidding

...to threaten, terrify or frighten with dreams and false visions and hallucinations any man in the world, such as that sect has been doing in its evil and sinning ways. The dreamer of that dream shall be despised and banned and excommunicated and set apart from all sacred things of Israel. And besides this ban, which is intended to cover all such evildoers, the hand of the leaders of the community, may God protect and preserve them, shall continue to be held over them to fend them off and persecute them to the utmost.⁹¹

Adler's followers could rely on a rich kabbalistic literature on the major significance of dreams, ranging from the *Zohar*, which sees dreams as revelations seen by the soul in the angelic world and interprets righteous men's dreams as being close to prophecy, to sixteenth-century kabbalistic works, much of which was actually written under the influence of supposedly heavenly inspired dreams and visions. In view of the kabbalistic-visionary tradition that real *qabbala*, in the sense of "received tradition," was based on revelation in a heavenly vision or on the soul's ascension to higher worlds, dreams were considered a source of spiritual authority independent of teachers or books. Kabbalistic tracts disseminated in manuscript or in print, such as *Galya raza*, *Hayyat ha-qane*, *Maggid mesharim* and *Sefer ha-hezyonot*, populari-

89 *Ma'ase ta'tu'im*, p. 17.

90 *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25; cf. Zobel, p. 657.

91 *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

zed the view that dreams and visions were omens of heavenly import, messages from the higher worlds.⁹²

It was only natural, then that the various pietistic groups in Eastern and Central Europe, moved by their ascetic and ecstatic kabbalistic ethos, considered dreams to be a means of transcending the bounds of time and place, an instrument of direct contact with the supernal worlds that would enable man to achieve communion with the Holy Spirit. Dreams were not only a mere figment of man's mind, but a manifestation of the action of external forces on his soul, through which the denizens of heaven could reveal their will and transmit information to the lower worlds. Such notions as divesting oneself of corporeality, eliminating one's consciousness, presenting a question in a dream (Hebr.: *she'elat halom*), ascent of the soul, *devequt* (= communion with God), ecstasy and indifference, revelation of Elijah and even charms and use of "holy names" – notions shared by all pietistic persuasions – created a world-view that recognized visionary powers nurtured by contact with the supernal, encouraged the emergence of charismatic inspiration and esteemed those who possessed such inspiration. For the believers, the various figures that appeared all through the eighteenth century, such as the Besht, R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, the Maggid of Mezhiroch, Jacob Frank or R. Nathan Adler, were charismatic leaders who transcended the usual limits of perception; driven by divine inspiration, they maintained direct contact with higher worlds beyond the sensual. The Besht defined himself as "like one who comports himself as on a supernatural level,"⁹³ and a contemporary said of him: "What the Besht knew was by asking in a dream every night."⁹⁴ His disciple the Maggid of Mezhiroch stated of him: "Why do you wonder, that he had a revelation of Elijah and other, very high levels."⁹⁵ And Hatam Sofer, R. Nathan Adler's disciple, who was constantly lauding his master's extraordinary virtues and talents, saw him as "one who has reached the uttermost limits of piety and self-abnegation... no secret is hidden from him." He cites Adler as having said of himself, "For when I have an 'ascent of the soul' in paradise, I always see...."⁹⁶ He is described in Hasidic tradition as a person of whom R. Elimelech said: "For many years now there has not come to this world such a holy soul as R. Nathan Adler, except for our sainted master R. Yisra'el Ba'al Shem of blessed memory."⁹⁷

92 *Sefer ha-zohar*, I, 183a-184a; cf. I. Tishby & F. Lachower, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, transl. D. Goldstein, Oxford 1989, II, pp. 812-813; Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo*, pp. 41, 182; R. Elior (ed.), *Galya-Raza. A Critical Edition*, Jerusalem 1981, pp. 15-16 (Hebr.).

93 See Toledot Ya'aqov Yoşef, Koretz 1780, portion *Mishpatim*, fol. 56b, Jerusalem ed., 1973, p. 209.

94 G. Scholem, "The Historical Figure of the Besht", *Devarim be-go*, Tel-Aviv 1975, p. 302, and cf. p. 294 (Hebr.).

95 *Maggid devaraw le-Ya'aqov*, Koretz 1781, Introduction.

96 *Derekh ha-neshet*, pp. 22. And see Horovitz, p. 156, to the effect that R. Nathan's followers considered him a miracle-worker. Cf. *Hatam Sofer*, Orah Hayyim, para. 197. For the spiritual characterisation of these figures cf. also G. Scholem, "*Mizwah ha-ba'a ba-avera*", in: *Mehqarim u-meqorot*, pp. 19-20.

97 See *Ohel Naftali*, para. 127, pp. 45-46.

It is axiomatic that the interpretation of paranormal phenomena depends primarily on the position of the person involved, the religious meaning derived from them and the cultural mentality of their time and locality. Thus, phenomena seen in circles that promote a mystical atmosphere as revelations of the Divine Spirit, hence as worthy of serious consideration and awe, will be considered manifestations of confusion or delusion in another environment, which fears their influence and treats them with contempt and condemnation. A fortiori, the evaluation of such phenomena is dependent on whether they are viewed as challenges to established authority, whether they pose a danger to the accepted order, or arouse objections on the part of the ruling leadership. A considerable proportion of the bans pronounced against the pietistic circles was motivated, I believe, by fear of the unbridled authority claimed by charismatic leaders believed by their followers to be divinely inspired; by dismay at the new ritual molds of spiritual and mystical tendencies and at the changes implied thereby, which violated the customary order of things.

Once contact with the supernal worlds ceased to be the exclusive prerogative of one exceptional person or persons, operating with the approval of the community, and became a socially significant group phenomenon, it aroused suspicion, hostility and criticism. Those same dreams that were, for R. Nathan and his circle, an expression of prophetic revelation and divine inspiration, received an utterly different interpretation in the minds of the communal leaders. Adler and his associates were denounced as frauds and cheats; the establishment generally identified prophesying, revelations and nightmares with the Shabbatean movement and condemned the Frankists as charlatans pure and simple – these views most probably produced the exaggeratedly negative evaluation of the dreams reported by Adler's followers.⁹⁸ After all, Jacob Frank, who was living, as we have seen, near Frankfurt, at Offenbach, toward the end of the 1780s, was notorious for his dreams, prophetic visions and manifestations of the Divine Spirit,⁹⁹ not to speak of the acts of sexual abandon and promiscuity practiced by his circle – under such circumstances one could hardly expect a clear-headed, tolerant or moderate assessment of the visionary phenomena and prophetic dreams common at the same time and in the same place among R. Nathan Adler's followers.

98 On the role of prophesying, visions and frightening dreams in the Shabbatean movement, see Kraushar, *op. cit.*, and Scholem, "The Shabbatean Movement", in: *Mehqarim u-meqorot*, pp. 78, 98 (Hebr.).

99 Frank's dreams are referred to in the book *Divre ha-Adon*, paras. 2145, 2201, 2203; see also Levin, p. 48 para. 37, p. 72 para. 77, p. 82 para. 93; and elsewhere. Cf. the memoirs of Dov Baer of Bolechow, cited by Brawer, p. 216; see also Scholem, *Mehqarim u-meqorot*, p. 119.

17. Conclusion

Our conclusion, then, concerns certain kabbalistically inspired pietistic circles of ascetic, mystical and ecstatic proclivities, active in both Eastern and Central Europe in the seventies and eighties of the eighteenth century. These circles restyled their religious practice in light of kabbalistic-pietistic tradition and gathered around a variety of charismatic leaders. They were harassed and excommunicated not only, I propose, because of what they really professed, but also because of what their opponents, genuinely apprehensive of the Shabbatean-Frankist threat then reemerging with unprecedented vigor, thought they were. It was the pietists in Eastern and Central Europe that adopted the "pietistic custom," delved into the "wisdom of truth" and, prompted by kabbalistic tradition, ventured to modify conventional religious observances, undertaking legal minutiae and excessive stringencies in order to achieve spiritual elevation and sanctity. Their "reforms" were motivated by mystical awareness and spiritual impetus; they strove to unify the supernal worlds, to participate in the kabbalistic myth of struggle against the forces of impurity and to influence the fate of the Divine Presence. Unfortunately for them, the communal leaders saw them as undermining the authority of the community and gnawing at the foundations of the traditional world. Such changes were tantamount to a rejection of time-honored custom in favor of a kabbalistically inspired rite.

For observers outside these groups, the borderlines between the kabbalistic-pietistic circles, on the one hand, and the Shabbateans and Frankists on the other, became increasingly vague. All of them drew their inspiration from kabbalistic literature of all kinds and called themselves *hasidim*, pietists, because they observed the "pietistic custom" (Hebr.: *minhag hasidut*) and in its name deviated from the rites commonly observed in their communities. The common features, rooted in mystical tradition and pietistic ethos, were far more numerous than the nuances that kept them apart. The leaders of the community saw fit, therefore, to resort to excommunication against any attempt at spiritual secession, any aspiration to spiritual autonomy, that might erode the unity of the community and challenge its authority. They were blind to the fundamental differences between those whose idiosyncracies arose from a desire to penetrate the mystical heritage of Judaism and plumb the depths of kabbalistic tradition, and others, who went beyond that tradition to build a new spiritual world on its ruins.

R. Nathan Adler suffered a fate similar to that of his contemporaries, the Hasidim of Eastern Europe. They, too, were active at that time in small groups, under the leadership of a few charismatic individuals; they saw themselves as bearers of the sanctified kabbalistic tradition, as innovators who aspired to reach new depths – but exclusively within the limits of that tradition. The fate of the pietists in both Eastern and Central Europe was largely sealed by the clash between standard conventions and the new, kabbalistic practices, which were considered not in their own right, but

in the light of the antinomistic intentions and anarchistic messages that the Shabbateans and Frankists, then active in the same geographical areas in the name of the same kabbalistic-pietistic tradition, derived from the kabbalah.