

'NEW OLD THINGS'
MYTHS, MYSTICISM AND CONTROVERSIES, PHILOSOPHY AND HALACHA,
FAITH AND RITUAL IN JEWISH THOUGHT THROUGH THE AGES
VOLUME II
JERUSALEM STUDIES IN JEWISH THOUGHT
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Volume II

Editor

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ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

DANGERS AND PLEASURES OF RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM: ON THE FRANKIST DOCTRINE OF CONVERSION

Pawel Maciejko

The theologoumenon of the apostasy of the Messiah and its role in the salvation of the world were the inner kernel of Sabbatianism. The historical development, social characteristics and doctrinal beliefs of the movement were determined not so much by Sabbatai Tsevi's claim to be the Messiah as by his conversion to Islam and the highly original conceptualisations of it in the writings of his prophets and disciples. Consequently, conversion itself became the focal point of the scholarly attention devoted to the movement. This paper focuses on the Frankists' conversions to Christianity, arguing that their theology cannot be regarded as an application or expansion of the doctrines elaborated a hundred years earlier in order to justify Sabbatai Tsevi's conversion to Islam. While the early Sabbatian conversionary theology focused on the doctrine of the descent into the demonic realm of the *kelippot*, Frankist teachings saw it as an attempt at a syncretistic fusion of different religions. The paper makes use of previously unknown Frankist documents as well as the anti-Frankist polemical writings of Rabbi Jacob Emden.

THE ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE IN *LIKUTEI MOHARAN* BY R. NACHMAN OF BRASLAV

Leah Orent

R. Nachman of Braslav has been portrayed by scholars and commentators of his writings as a skeptical religious existentialist, or as a mystic who defies reason. However, his chief work, *Likutei Moharan*, appears to us a treatise of Hasidic ethics. This article demonstrates how R. Nachman's ethical teachings are integrated with his mystical and existential teachings.

Ethical considerations are integrated into each phase of the mystical experience. The mystic's path, in the preparatory stage, includes ethical and ritual practices,

as ethical and religious shortcomings are viewed as obstacles on the way to transcendent experience. The supreme mystical achievement of self-nullification is described in ethical terms as boundless humility. Mystical experience culminates in the attainment of new insights on divine justice and the role of evil in the world. The mental energy generated in the aftermath of mystical experience serves as an incentive to self-transformation and social activism.

R. Nachman, the religious existentialist, grapples with problems of faith and heresy. Here he performs the role of the *Zaddik*, a spiritual and moral guide to the perplexed. R. Nachman teaches that the antinomies perceived by the mind are in principle insoluble. Hence, one has to refrain from seeking rational or philosophical answers. Instead, R. Nachman provides guidelines on how to live with insoluble problems. The distress of the perplexed can be expressed and relieved by wordless means such as breathing, screaming, music and above all ignoring the problems in silence. Moreover, Rabbi Nahman transformed traditional faith by proposing dialectical faith as an alternative path to intellectual inquiry. Dialectical faith, which confronts and even accommodates doubts, is capable of transcending skepticism.

OUT OF THE ASHES: *LIKUTEI MOHARAN* AND *THE BURNT BOOK*

Zvi Mark

The Burnt Book was a secret work written by Reb Nachman of Braslav. R. Nachman heaped lavish praise upon this work, but at a certain point he ordered both existing copies to be destroyed. Among Braslav *hasidim*, there are those who believe that at the time of the redemption 'his hidden book and the burned book will be revealed'. This paper discusses *The Burnt Book*, hypothesizing its content and its relation to *Likutei Moharan*. Among other pieces of evidence, it relies upon Braslav traditions which hint that certain extant texts are, in facts, remnants of *The Burnt Book*.

R. YEHUDA-ZVI OF ROZDOL – THE QUIETIST
ZADDIK OF THE ZYDACZOW DYNASTY

Rivka Dvir-Goldberg

This article deals with an obscure *zaddik* from the Zydaczow dynasty: R. Yehuda-Zvi of Rozdol (1790–1848), the son of R. Moshe of Sambor, brother of R. Zvi-Hirsh of Zydaczow. R. Yehuda-Zvi was also the son-in-law of R. Zvi-Hirsh and the oldest of his nephew-pupils. The others were R. Yitzhak Aizik of Zydaczow (1805–1873) and R. Yitzhak Aizik Yehuda Yehiel of Komarno (1806–1874). All these in turn became *zaddikim* of various communities. A notable kabbalist in the

family tradition, R. Yehuda-Zvi was also a singularly interesting Hasidic leader, as is shown by some of the remarkable stories told about him and by the tales attributed to his authorship. The article examines these stories in relation to his life and teachings.

THE RECTIFICATION OF THE COVENANT AND THE ELEMENT OF
ASCETICISM IN CHERNOBYL HASIDISM

Gadi Sagiv

Hasidism traditionally conjures up an image of an ethos of joy and a condemnation of regret about sins committed in the past. Scholars claim that this optimistic attitude towards life was expressed through an anti-ascetic tendency, together with an opposition to penitential practices such as fasts and sexual abstinence.

In this paper, I suggest that, contrary to this image, a severe attitude towards sins can be discerned in the Chernobyl Hasidic dynasty, especially respecting the guarding of the phallus (known as *Shmirat haBrit* – the keeping of the covenant, or *Tikkun haBrit* – the rectification of the covenant).

This paper opens with an examination of the attitude towards fasts in the sermons of R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, the founder of the dynasty and a disciple of the Besht. This is followed by an examination of the place of *Tikkun haBrit* in the Chernobyl ethos. After this, I describe a system of penitential rituals that has been present in all of the generations of the dynasty and in its major offshoots. These rituals demonstrate a mild ascetic tendency, re-adopting the well-known Kabbalistic rituals of fasting at the beginning of each month (*Taanit Erev Rosh Hodesh*) and for a period in winter (*Tikkun Shovavim*).

The Chernobyl asceticism is milder and easier to perform than the penitential systems of earlier periods, including those of early Hasidism. However, the Chernobyl system of rituals is unique when compared to the penitential systems of other contemporary dynasties and Hasidic groups, such as Habad and Bratslav. This uniqueness gave the Chernobyl group a distinct identity, and helped to differentiate it from other Hasidic groups. This differentiation was especially important in the nineteenth century, when Hasidism was fragmented into many groups, each of which was in need of its own special symbols and identity.

THE BERNYU OF LEOVA AFFAIR AND THE TSANZ-SADIGURA
CONTROVERSY: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

David Assaf

The big inter-Hasidic controversy between the two famous Hasidic factions of Tzans (Nowy Sącz, Western Galicia) and Sadigura (Sadagóra, Bukowina) broke

out publicly in February 1869. The upheaval began when Rabbi Dov Ber Friedman (known as Bernyu), the Hasidic rebbe in Leova (Rumania) and son of the Zaddik Yisrael of Ruzhin, renounced his position as Hasidic rebbe. His unusual behavior caused his brothers to forcefully bring him to the court at Sadigura. Information about the kidnapping reached the Austrian authorities who released him from his imprisonment. Bernyu then lived for about two months among the secular maskilim of Czernowitz, and made a public announcement in the press about his defection from Hasidism and his joining with the Maskilic camp. This affair created a storm among the Hasidic world. Rabbi Haim Halberstam, the leader of Tszanz Hasidism and an admired halakhic authority, led a militant struggle against Sadigura's rabbis ('the brothers') and their followers. He blamed their lifestyle ('the regal way') as the reason for Bernyu's behavior, declaring them heretics and excommunicating their ritual slaughterers, scribes and teachers. The dispute, which included bans, a wide range of polemic incitement literature and heavy violence, swept through dozens of Jewish communities across Eastern Europe, especially in Galicia but also in Russia, Poland, Hungary and Palestine. The story of these events has never been told or written in its entirety and with the passage of time both sides made efforts to gloss over the events, effectively erasing them from their collective historical memory.

This annotated bibliography, a byproduct of a forthcoming comprehensive research by the author on the subject, comprises all primary and secondary sources relevant to these affairs. The bibliography is classified into eight sections: (a) contemporary epistles, polemic tractates and manuscripts; (b) reports and articles in the contemporary press; (c) contemporary literature of the maskilim; (d) scholarly research, studies and annotations; (e) memoir literature, community *Yizkor* (Memorial) books; (f) hasidic and rabbinic literature; (g) prose, poetry, drama, humor and lore; (h) lexica and databases.

THE KABBALAH IN THE HAFETZ HAYIM'S HALAKHIC WORK

Benjamin Brown

Among halakhic authorities of the past we can find a large spectrum of opinions regarding the status of the Kabbalah as a source of law. On the one hand there were those who adopted a doctrine of *separation*, viewing the Kabbalah as no more than a recommended norm, while on the other, we find proponents of *integration*, who viewed the Kabbalah as a fully-fledged source of Halakhah, at least to the degree that it did not contradict the Talmud and other legal authorities (*Poskim*). This article constructs a general model for the evaluation of the status of the Kabbalah in the works of later halakhic authorities and applies it to R. Israel Meir HaCohen (or Kagan), known as the Hafetz Hayim (?1839–1933).

The model, which combines a quantitative and qualitative approach, is in four stages: (1) the author's declaration of principles; (2) a systematic collection of his

rulings referring to the Kabbalah, obtained through the use of computer databases; (3) analyses of the rulings according to the following criteria: (a) what are the kabbalistic sources to which the author refers?; (b) does he address them directly or via intermediaries, and, if so, which ones?; (c) does he turn to the Kabbalah only for stringent rulings or for lenient ones as well?; (4) drawing conclusions and viewing them in a broader perspective: Juxtaposing the findings of the previous stages and placing them within the author's historical context and world-view.

The application of this model to the Hafetz Hayim leads to the following conclusions: In principle, the Hafetz Hayim had a deep reverence towards the Kabbalah as theology, but he did not deal with it very much, and in the sphere of Halakhah he was quite close to the 'doctrine of separation'.

He referred to kabbalistic sources more than 160 times, usually citing the Zohar and the writings of R. Isaac Luria, the Ari. However, only four of these sources were referred to directly, without an intermediary; all the rest were cited via the *Magen Avraham*, *Ba'er Heitev*, *Sha'arei Teshuva* and other Halakhic authorities. Only six rulings adopted from the Kabbalah were lenient, and even those were only to a slight degree. Often his reference to the Kabbalah is actually aimed at preserving or strengthening already-existing customs based on their norms. And even then, his reliance on kabbalistic sources is less extensive than that of most of his predecessors.

The obvious conclusion is that the Hafetz Hayim did not engage in active study of the Kabbalah, and his rulings mark the end of the stage of 'direct absorption' of kabbalistic sources into Halakhah. What had already been absorbed via previous authorities or via popular customs could be accepted, but no further references to the Jewish mystical literature were to be made. This approach was in accordance with the Hafetz Hayim's views on faith: he opposed all theological inquiry, whether philosophical or kabbalistic, and favoured 'simple faith' and popular beliefs. His approach was one of the signs of the decline of the Kabbalah in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both in faith and law.

'THE THIRST' – HILLEL ZEITLIN IN SEARCH OF GOD

Shraga Bar-On

Faith is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. This article claims – in contrary to various former philosophical and theological discussions – that in the concept of faith there is no clear-cut dichotomy dividing the world between 'believers' and 'infidels'. In the broad spectrum of states of faith, one may be singled out which can be called 'the quest for God'. This article seeks to define this state of faith, and argues that although it has not been the object of a systematic philosophical exposition, it has had many manifestations in religious and other literature, crossing the boundaries of accepted religious identities. Moreover, the 'quest for God' was common in the period of the Hebrew Renaissance in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century.

The Jewish thinker who placed it in the centre of his literary production and expressed it most emphatically was Hillel Zeitlin. This article carefully analyses his essay 'The Thirst', published in 1910, which can be seen as the manifesto of the 'quest for God' in this period. Unlike former studies which claimed that his intellectual biography progressed in a linear fashion, this article argues that, despite his turbulent personal life, the 'quest for God' remained the axis of Zeitlin's entire *œuvre*.

THE THEORY OF CONTRACTION (*TORAT HATZIMZUM*) – SCIENCE AND
KABBALAH IN ELIAHU MORDECAI HALEVY WOLKOWSKY (1873–1962)

Lilach Bar-Bettelheim

The work *The True Knowledge and Science*, by Rabbi Eliahu Mordecai Halevy Wolkowsky (1873–1962), was designed to reconcile the apparent differences between science and Kabbalah, and to show that these differences are not irreconcilable, but each is a testimony to divine truth from a different angle. This work was thus intended to be a sort of 'guide to the perplexed' for the changing times of the twentieth century, but for various reasons it was shelved and forgotten.

This article examines the central idea of this work, which Wolkowsky calls 'the theory of contractions' (*torat hatzimzum*), and in particular the 'contractions in pauses' which Wolkowsky bases on a quote from *Sha'ar hapone Kadim* by Rabbi Shelomo Eliashiv.

I demonstrate that even though Wolkowsky puts forward some ideas that are regarded as problematic in Jewish theology (at least, when expressed publicly), he nevertheless creates one of the most original conceptions of *tzimzum*, unlike any expressed by other Kabbalists.

RABBI ELIEZER BERKOVITZ: HALACHAH AND MODERN ORTHODOXY

Avinoam Rosenak

This article gives a panoramic picture of Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits' philosophy of the Halakhah. Among the subjects addressed in the article are humanism, historical and scientific criticism, and the interaction of body and soul. The article illustrates this meta-Halakhic approach in the case of three Halakhic issues: the *Shmittah* controversy, post-mortem medical examinations and the status of women in the Halakhic Jewish community.

VISITING THE TEMPLE MOUNT – A STUDY OF THE RABBINIC DIRECTIVES

Sarina Chen

This paper deals with the discourse concerning the Rabbinic directives on this subject since the Six-Day War (1967). It relates to the negative directives as well as to the positive directive to visit the Temple Mount. It draws attention to three key words in this discourse: entry, walking and ascending, and traces their sources and their role in this polemic. Emphasis is placed on the act of walking as an expression of resistance to the political, social and cultural atmosphere in modern times.

