

Kabbalistic Circles in Jerusalem (1896-1948)

Jonatan Meir



יש העמודים והמכונות, אשר בית ישראל נכון עליהם. אנשי החסד וה
ומנים, רודפי צדק, מחויקי כל בדק, אוהבי התורה ולומדיה, מחויקים
מים, מבהר עצמים, האדונים הנכבדים היושבים ראשונה בעובי
זיהם מלמעלה דייני דנה'ר דיע'ה, הרבנים המופלאים, מלאים
ויו ומפיקים, יחד כולם אתה ה' תשמרם, וכצנה רצון תעטרם. כיר'א :

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Kabbalistic Circles in Jerusalem (1896–1948)

By

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“Truth will be lacking [*ha-emet ne'ederet*, Isa 59:15].” The truth is [that] part of the esoteric will proliferate and those occupied with it will be *edarim*, *edarim* [flocks upon flocks] studying kabbalah. Indeed, there are now private individuals each one learning from his own angle in secret, but in the future all will study it like they study Psalms, and you will find flocks upon flocks in the *beit midrash*.

R. YOSEF HAYYIM, *Sefer Benayahu*, 38a

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For the truth is this wisdom [i.e., the kabbalah] is not the stock of grocers which every person inspects with their hands; and the *beit midrash* of this wisdom is not like a food bazaar where the feet of every person enter. To wit, one can find what is written in the Talmud concerning R. H[anina] who taught two of his students in the market. And [as a result,] Rebbi was angry at him, reprimanding him for thirty days. As I explained in my holy book, he was so incensed at him because he taught them secrets of the Torah.

R. YOSEF HAYYIM, *Rav Pe'alim*, part 3, “Sod Yescharim,” §1, 1b

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Preface

Both in Israel and beyond, it is difficult to ignore the diversity of the present-day kabbalah and the modest if rowdy revelations of this body of knowledge. While this phenomenon has indeed attracted substantial research attention in recent years, the literature has yet to take stock of the historical background behind these developments. First and foremost, the world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century kabbalists still awaits a full accounting. The hagiography that has been crafted by the progeny and admirers of these figures consists of dozens of books that paint a romantic picture of a glorious past. More specifically, the beginning of the twentieth century is depicted as a kabbalah renaissance unequalled since the halcyon days of R. Isaac Luria (HaARI) in Safad. Surprising as it may be, that same period's Hebrew and Yiddish *belle lettres* and, under their influence, the scholarly literature give the impression that by the early 1900s, the kabbalah deteriorated to the brink of extinction. According to this Zionist narrative, the flame was barely being preserved by a handful of survivors – a sort of dying kabbalah elite. Perhaps the boldest brushstrokes of this portrait were reserved for the contemporaneous kabbalah circles in Jerusalem, as Zionist writers portrayed a great awakening, on the one hand, and a steep decline, on the other. The desire to understand this contradiction is one of the main catalysts behind the present book, which focuses on the growth of the city's kabbalah seminaries from 1896 to 1948. An understanding of these institutions also opens a window onto various Jewish mystical streams throughout the rest of the Middle East and Eastern Europe, which still await comprehensive accounts of their own.

During these same years, Jerusalem became a cynosure for a host of kabbalists from around the globe, largely owing to the establishment of new yeshivot that were entirely dedicated to studying and disseminating the concealed Torah. Some of these institutions even devised systematic approaches to and curriculums for learning this wisdom. Seminaries of this sort practically did not exist in other communities, where kabbalists tended to study alone or in diminutive groups, on the margins of synagogues, Talmudic study halls, and Hasidic courts. For instance, we do not find so much as a single kabbalah yeshiva in Eastern Europe during this period. However, quite a few books on this topic were printed throughout the region, so that there was evidently a local readership. The various waves of *aliyah* (Jewish immigration to Palestine) at the outset of the twentieth century included seasoned kabbalists who sought an umbrella organization that would provide both financial support and a group framework in which to study. Moreover, young Torah scholars that displayed

an interest in kabbalah and sought a nurturing environment to pursue this calling also turned to such institutions. Established in 1737, the renowned Beit El Yeshiva, which concentrated a small handful of experienced kabbalists, was no longer the only “game in town.”

In 1896, Jerusalem’s kabbalah landscape began to diversify. A few institutions, most notably Rehovot haNahar and Sha’ar haShamayim, branched out of the aforementioned yeshiva or saw themselves as “the New Beit El,” while developing a unique character of their own. Among the resident scholars of these emergent seminaries were both Ashkenazim and Sephardim who energetically advanced their institutions, formulated curriculums, coined techniques, printed kabbalah material, and reached out to the traditional Jewish public, both in Palestine and abroad. Most of Jerusalem’s yeshivot championed the Sharabian way (discussed at length further on), but also had regulars with different leanings, such as devotees of the Vilna Gaon’s approach to Jewish mysticism. Be that as it may, the RaShaSh’s way was presented as the only legitimate interpretation of Lurianic kabbalah – a consensus view that indeed spawned indignation and resistance. The majority of the kabbalists, though, adopted one of the offshoots of the Sharabian school of thought or integrated elements of this gospel into other traditions, which they had brought from their places of origin.

In recent years, Menachem Kallus, Moshe Hallamish, Joseph Avivi, Pinchas Giller, and other researchers have expanded on the RaShaSh’s mysticism and theology. Moreover, they have presented his image against the backdrop of earlier kabbalah literature, analyzed *tikkunim* and *kavanot*, and conducted a typological comparison between Sharabian and other kabbalah streams that emerged in the nineteenth century. In fact, Giller’s monograph on the Beit El Yeshiva offers the most in-depth look at the RaShaSh’s thought and prayer intentions. Furthermore, he meticulously compares the Sharabian way with those of different Hasids and with the Vilna Gaon’s school of thought. That said, the literature has yet to describe the yeshivot themselves, their resident scholars, and wide-ranging enterprise from a broad historical context. Kabbalistic Circles in Jerusalem comes to fill this void. Put differently, this book adds a historical-cultural dimension to the literature on the early twentieth-century kabbalah world. The events of the Holocaust, the subsequent waves of immigration, the major socio-political transformations that Jerusalem underwent in 1948, and the diversification of the local kabbalah scene constitute the logical borders of this work. From this point forward, the picture indeed changed in many respects.

Apropos to its title, the book opens with a chapter on the kabbalah’s “imagined decline” in the eyes of Zionist novelists, poets, and researchers. A special emphasis is placed on the nostalgic writing of Ariel Bension, the

fiction of Haim Hazaz, and various accounts by Gershom Scholem, who began his research enterprise on Jewish mysticism during those same years. Chapter two begins with a quick survey of the RaShaSh's way and the criticism of this approach's exclusivity among kabbalah circles in Jerusalem. That said, the nub of this and the following chapter (2 and 3) is an exposition on the kabbalah seminaries in Jerusalem, particularly Beit El, Rehovot haNahar, and Sha'ar haShamayim. This account draws heavily on the abundance of material that was written by the habitués of these same institutions as well as an array of manuscripts that pertain to their activities: public notices, private correspondences, official letters, financial statements, and the dossiers of rabbinical emissaries. In the process, the chapter discusses the relations between kabbalists from different ethnic backgrounds. The fourth chapter expands on the efforts of R. Shimon Zvi Horowitz, a founder of Sha'ar haShamayim, to find the Lost Tribes. This undertaking is strongly linked to the rabbi's kabbalistic approach and his own vision of the emergent national redemption. Likewise, we unveil two harrowing epistles that Horowitz addressed to the Sons of Moses. In the hopes of advancing their exoteric goals, Jerusalem's kabbalists turned to the printing press. This enterprise constitutes the topic of the fifth chapter, which focuses on two major collaborations: new and improved editions of HaARI's works, which were predicated on manuscripts that the publishers happened to come across; and the first print version of the RaShaSh's siddur. The latter stirred up a heated debate within the community under review. All the more so, it intensified the dynamic between revelation and concealment – a balance that was espoused by kabbalah insiders. For the most part, these publications catered to the initiated—both veteran and novice practitioners of the Jewish mysticism—in the Land of Israel. Within this context, we introduce several unknown kabbalists whose printing initiatives rendered them cultural agents. The sixth chapter assays the “policy” of the Jerusalem seminaries toward the greater public. Embracing the *hoi polloi*, the yeshivot's resident scholars could no longer be viewed as an insular elite that strove to preserve the kabbalah's esoteric nature. Instead, they exhorted traditional Jews to expose themselves to a deeper stratum of their religion and culture. To this end, kabbalists disseminated prayers that were compiled for “lay” audiences. Additionally, the general public was encouraged to perform a variety of Lurianic and Sharabian kabbalah rituals and to learn the Zohar. In the seventh and final chapter, we examine the immediate reaction to this outreach in Jewish *belle lettres* and the local daily press. The resistance to, parody of, and disagreement with Horowitz and his cohorts in these works attest to the fact that Maskilic elements were apprised of what was going on in Jerusalem's kabbalah circles.

No single library encompasses all the material that I consulted in researching Kabbalistic Circles in Jerusalem. That said, it would have been impossible to complete this project *sans* the treasures housed in the Gershom Scholem Collection at the Israel National Library in Jerusalem. I would like to thank the librarians of the “Scholem room” from the bottom of my heart for maintaining such a tranquil, productive atmosphere and for the unfettered access to each of those sources. Furthermore, important archival material was discovered in the National Library’s Manuscripts Department, the Central Zionist Archive in Jerusalem, the Israel State Archives in Jerusalem, and the Yeshiva University Archive in New York. I am indebted to the directors and staff at all these institutions for helping me find the relevant documents. Rare notices and manuscripts also turned up at other libraries in Israel and the United States as well as private collections, whose owners were gracious enough to place these items at my disposal. In this respect, the book’s thick bibliographical list, which nearly constitutes a full inventory of the Jerusalem kabbalah seminaries’ publications and many other related manuscripts, promises to facilitate new studies in the field.

This short preface cannot possibly hold the names of all those people who helped bring the Hebrew and expanded English version of Kabbalistic Circles in Jerusalem to fruition. That said, my long conversations with and sage advice from Prof. Daniel Abrams, Prof. Zeev Gries, and Prof. Boaz Huss left an indelible mark on this book. I am also indebted to the fine craftsmanship of the translator Avi Aronsky, who proved equal to the task of transforming obscure and flowery kabbalistic rhetoric into flowing and comprehensible passages. May this book constitute a stepping stone to further research on twentieth-century kabbalah, not least its expansion beyond the formidable borders of the Jewish faith. The removal of the old barriers—the irrevocable shift in the balance between revelation and concealment in favor of openness—has also had a decisive impact on how traditional Jews approach this wisdom, to the point where the history of kabbalah, as it was hitherto understood, is in the midst of a veritable metamorphosis.

The Last Kabbalists

Ariel Bension and the Imagined Decline

In 1925, Ariel Bension (1880–1932), a staunch Zionist activist, came out with a small booklet titled *Hilula* (Anniversary of a Passing) – a quasi-introduction to a more comprehensive book. The latter, *Sefer Rafael*, was slated to be a biography of “the last kabbalist.” Or as the author put it, the book is about “the last Sephardic mystic-cum-hero of the moribund Sephardic Hasidism in the Beit El Yeshiva.”¹ He was essentially describing the lifestyle of his father, R. Yehoshua Ben-Zion of Morocco (ob. 1897), who was among the *habitué* of that same, venerable kabbalistic seminary in Jerusalem.² Needless to say, Beit El has been in the Jewish public’s consciousness since its halcyon days in the eighteenth century, under the leadership of Gedaliah Chayun (ob. 1750) and his successor Shalom Sharabi – none other than the RaShaSh (1720–1777). The yeshiva was best known for the “writs of allegiance” (or “contracts of unity”) that its kabbalists composed and for the depths of their asceticism and immersion into Lurianic kabbalah. Beit El disseminated redacted versions of HaARI’s writings and copied manuscripts of parts of a siddur bearing the RaShaSh’s *kavvanot*

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- 1 Bension, *Hilula*. An earlier, German version of this work places less of an emphasis on the yeshiva’s decline; idem “Die Hochzeit des Todes,” 956–972; idem, *Die Hochzeit des Todes*. In the introduction to the latter, Richard Beer-Hofmann wrote: “Die Hochzeit des Todes soll nur Einleitung einem grösseren Werke, dem Buch Raphael sein, und Sie sagten mir, dass Sie darin versuchen, Wesen und Art einer kabbalistischen Gemeinschaft festzuhalten, die, unter Spaniolen in Jerusalemstanden, Jahrhunderte wuchs und lebte, und nunmehr ihren Ende nahe ist.” Portions of the non-Hebrew edition remain in manuscript form to this day, along with various drafts by Bension on the Jewish mystical literature and its annals; see Grubel, *Catalog*, 4. For more on Bension, see Aranov, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, xiii–xv; Katz, *A Guide to the Archival Holdings*, 5–6; Levy, *Un diamante en el camino*; Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 318–319; Low, “Dr. A. Bension,” 11–12; Ben-Yaakov, *A History of the Jews of Iraq*, 32, 66–67; Yatsiv, *Between Eye and Soul*, 215–216; R. Binyamin, *Family of Scribes*, 314–316; Kressel, *Encyclopedia of Modern Hebrew Literature*, vol. 1, 292; Tidhar, *Encyclopedia of the Pioneers*, vol. 4, 1626.
 - 2 Bension, “The Interpreter of the Zohar,” 14: “I was born into a Cabbalistic circle in Jerusalem, and I absorbed Cabbala almost with my mother’s milk. I was brought up surrounded by scholars who carried on daily discussions on the Zohar, and my father was the spiritual head of this group of learned Chassidim.” Also see the notes that Scholem added on the margins of his personal copy of Ariel Bension, *The Zohar in Moslem and Christian Spain* at the Gershom Scholem Library, Jerusalem.

(kabbalistic prayer intentions that were integrated into the traditional liturgy). The kabbalists of Beit El devoted themselves to these silent meditative prayers, which last for hours (a practice that Pinchas Giller expounds upon in his groundbreaking book on the Sharabian kabbalah).³

In *Sefer Rafael*, Bension endeavored to describe the yeshiva and its lifestyle up to the early 1900s. That said, only the aforementioned introduction to the full-scale book came out during his lifetime. As evidenced from his correspondence, Gershom Scholem was quite familiar with the author and his books, and even kept in touch with his widow.⁴ In any event, attempts to locate the rest of Bension's shelved work on the Beit El Yeshiva have come to naught.⁵

The famed seminary is also discussed in a few of Bension's other works, in Hebrew, Spanish, English, and German. All these works portray Beit El as an institution that had lost its ardor and is thus mired in a state of atrophy. Examples include a booklet on Sharabi, a short article on the yeshiva and its evolution, a piece in the Viennese journal *Menorah* revolving around a couple of the writer's memories, and an appendix on the seminary in his comprehensive book about the Zohar.⁶ In all these publications, Bension waxed poetic about the yeshiva's way of life and its past leaders, but the present did not merit a faithful representation. Of course, he had nothing positive to say on Beit El's continued existence or any living kabbalists. At the end of one article, Bension gave a particularly far-fetched account:

That same star, Beit El, which rose upon Sharabi's arrival to Jerusalem, began to set at the end of the previous century and a period of internal disintegration commenced. The outer shell of Beit El was consumed over the years and the rot is crumbling those walls, which long ago were a stronghold of the sacred fire, which was borne hither from the mountains of the Galilee. The storms and rain completely destroyed the roof's dome,

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- 3 There is a wide-ranging literature on the Beit El Yeshiva. See Frumkin, *Toldot Hakhmei Yerushalayim*, vol. 3, 46–54, 107–121; Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 1, 138–143; idem, “Beit El;” Gepner, *Midrasho shel Shem*; Moskowitz, *Sefer Hayei haRashash*, 90–94; Bar-Osher, “Foreword,” iii–xiii; Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*, 156–169; Giller, “Between Poland and Jerusalem,” 237–238; *ibid*, *Shalom Sharabi and the Kabbalists of Beit El*. For a description of the yeshiva's daily schedule and customs, see the introduction of Yeshayah Asher Zelig Margalio, *Sefer Şevi laŞadiq*, 35–36; Hakohen, *Sefer Minhagei Beit-El*; Afg'in, *Sefer Divrei Shalom*, vols. 1–12.
- 4 Scholem, *Devarim b'Go*, 43–44. See Ida Bension, Letter to Scholem, 1932 (MS).
- 5 On the manuscript of the shelved book that was in the family's possession, see Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, 319.
- 6 Bension, *Shalom Sharabi*, 13–42, 48–49; idem, “Beth-El: Die Synagoge,” 678–681; idem, *The Zohar in Moslem and Christian Spain*, 242–246; *Retrievements*, 105–107.

this palanquin, which canopied those same “bridegrooms” adorned in white vestment, and lusterless silver candelabras spread their pale light on the faces of stooped and decrepit figures. The spirit, which hovered long ago over Beit El; the prayers, which ended with yearnings for the redemption; the *kavvanot*, the struggle for *tikkun* [rectification]; the melodies that engendered the unity of the hearts; the silence, which the holy fire whispered in it – all this slipped away and vanished, as though they were concealed by the meteors, which suddenly glow with their light over the mountains belonging to Jerusalem, the holy town.⁷

Advocating a revival of the East in the spirit of cultural Zionism, Bension perceived the kabbalah as a glorious movement that harbored sparks of the national redemption. That said, he also believed that it was a theological system that was no longer relevant to the “New Jew” in the Land of Israel. For this reason, kabbalah is destined to “vanish.”⁸

Critique of the Decline Theory

According to a 1931 review of Bension’s *Master Shalom Sharabi* in the newspaper *HaOlam*, “this book, is the first attempt to present the life of Sephardic Hasidism in a new style and a modern lyrical-literary form, like that of Martin Buber with respect to Ashkenazic Hasidism.”⁹ R. Binyamin (the pseudonym of Yehoshua Radler Feldman) gushed that “With this precious book a gate has been opened for us to the world of mystery.” However, he also stressed that *Master Shalom Sharabi* is not “a historical research, but impressions and memories possessing the dew of childhood and pure excitement.”¹⁰ In an obituary on Bension, R. Binyamin added that “It was my privilege in my capacity as the editor of *Moznaim* to publish one of your most beautiful articles in this

7 Bension, “Beth-El: Die Synagogue,” 11; idem, *Shalom Sharabi*, 49.

8 For an in-depth look at Bension’s thoughts on cultural Zionism and his vision of the East in his own words, see Bension, “El Nevei haSheker,” 1; idem, “The Jewish Renaissance in Eretz Israel,” 5–6. As a delegate of the Keren Hayesod in the 1920s, the author travelled throughout the Jewish world, including communities in India, Iraq, Egypt, Spain, Portugal, China, Mexico, Yemen, and Australia.

9 Yigal, “The Sephardic Hasidism,” 227–228. Bension himself mentioned the influence of Buber on his writings. In fact, he declared that Buber’s books on East European Hasidism led him back to the study of Jewish mysticism. See Ida Bension, *Letters to Martin Buber*, 1932 (MS).

10 R. Binyamin, “*Master Shalom Sharabi* by Bension,” 21.

profession. From Beit El you hailed, from the tribe of ‘intenter’ [*mekhavnim*]. And you too were an ‘intenter’ your entire life, a dreamer-intenter, a poet-intenter, a laborer-intenter. And you labored not with the passions of rhetoric, which was repugnant to you, not with clamor; I’ll say it candidly, not with the ‘revealed’ in you, but with the ‘concealed’ in you, in the undertones of the esoteric, the religious undertones in you.”¹¹ What is more, foreign translations of Bension’s books and articles also received positive feedback, especially from the German reading audience.¹²

As opposed to these adulatory pieces, Moshe David Gaon’s 1931 review of *Hilula* excoriates Bension for “the dissembled wonderment and the radical emotionalism” that “are alien to the spirit of Jerusalemite Sephardic Hasidism.” The reviewer was intimately familiar with the Beit El Yeshiva, as his father was a regular at the institution for several years. On the basis of this knowledge, Gaon described many of its figures in *The Oriental Jews in the Land of Israel* (1938).¹³ At any rate, he doubted whether Bension’s planned sequel would provide a faithful account of Jerusalem’s kabbalists:

For this reason [i.e., the author’s sentimentality] I will allow myself to be removed if the body of the forthcoming book will be able to be accepted in the literature in a bond of trust, which depicts and establishes the image and lives of the Sephardic Hasids in Jerusalem. And there is no difference in my opinion, who is “the last hero,” the Sephardic mystic of the moribund Hasidism in the Beit El Yeshiva in Jerusalem, whose life will be described and illuminated in *Sefer Rafael*. Only it bears emphasis, for the sake of historical truth, that he was not the last and that Sephardic Hasidism is not dying as per the account of the distinguished writer; that

11 Idem, “Following the Loss of Bension,” 16.

12 See, for example, the review of Eugen Hoeflich (Moshe Ya’akov Ben-Gavriel) on *Die Hochzeit des Todes*: idem, “Neue östliche literatur,” 32; idem, *Tagebücher*, 346; and Themanly, “The Beth El Kabbalist,” 22–24. Some reviewers compared Bension’s works to those of Dante and Novalis. In 1921–1922, Bension was interested in commissioning the well-known Jewish ethnologist, musicologist, and composer Abraham Zevi Idelsohn to compose “Oriental music” for a proposed film adaptation of *Die Hochzeit des Todes* – his book on the last kabbalist. See Bension, Letters to Idelsohn (MS); Cohen, “The Opera,” 130–131.

13 According to Gaon, his father was a foreign emissary of Beit El; in this capacity, he was responsible for the yeshiva’s collections (i.e., charity boxes) overseas. Upon immigrating to Jerusalem in 1919, the fund raiser joined the ranks of the seminary’s habitués; Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 189–191.

said, there is no denying that it has declined a great deal from its import, from its grandeur, and its vitality in the past.¹⁴

Gaon also hints that Bension's father is the protagonist of *Hilula*. Moreover, he discusses the reception of the book's German edition. In Gaon's estimation, it was feted in the German press due to many odd Romantic inclinations in that country. However, in the Land of Israel, he claimed, this topic cannot be digested in such a manner:

In place of the act in which Hasidism is revealed with all its flaws through the lens of reality and actuality – one must not ignore the deficiencies that are attributed to it, lest naïve people believe that this is the color of the standard that Rabbi Gedaliah Chayun, and Shalom Mizrachi Sharabi (the Sun) of blessed memory raised in their time, and under it [i.e., this misperception] their progeny and admirers will today be deceived and misconstrue it [the kabbalah].¹⁵

Although Gaon believed that the kabbalists had regressed, he merely saw this as a passing phase. The intellectual then concluded his review with the following hopes:

The Hasidic movement and the pathways of its development among the Sephardim in Jerusalem – still awaits its describer and appraiser. It is still too early to speak of “the last Sephardic mystic and of the dying Hasidism in Beit El in Jerusalem.” Unlike the Baal-Shem-Tov Ashkenazic Hasidism, which is boisterous and mirthful, this mystical movement that abounds in tranquility and eternal suffering – awaits a craftsman, who will reveal the source of light that is concealed therein, and who will draw out something of its delightful virtues, not one who will, God forbid, place a heavy stone over its ruins, but will spread out before the Hebrew audience with great love and pity its radiance in the past and its diminished standing in the present. Even in times of decline we shall not tremble; it is a step down for the sake of ascending; the light and the shadow will stand out... I pray that our modest aspiration will come to pass, neither more... nor less...¹⁶

14 Gaon, “Review of New Books,” 76–77.

15 Ibid, 77.

16 Ibid.

While the savior that Gaon longed for never materialized, numerous observers wrote about the ostensibly moribund state of the kabbalah world. On occasion, the Pollyannas grounded themselves on the work of Gaon himself, who penned a few surveys on the Beit El Yeshiva that objectively reported on the thinning of its ranks and other formidable hardships since the First World War.¹⁷

Until recently, Bension's accounts were to a large extent the only comprehensive descriptions of the Beit El Yeshiva. As such, they nourished early twentieth-century scholars, novelists, and even kabbalists who, for the most part, gleaned his myths about the RaShaSh.¹⁸

Reports of Decline and the Kabbalah-Socialism Myth

Riveting as they may be, Bension's accounts of the kabbalists' supposed fall from grace evidently attest to a heartfelt wish or the Romantic proclivities of an author who was reared in and subsequently distanced himself from their world. In any event, a similar picture of the Beit El Yeshiva emerges from the period's Hebrew and Yiddish literature and even from its scholarly writing, to the point where the Jerusalem institution became a symbol of "the sinking kabbalah."¹⁹ Descriptions of living kabbalists or other seminaries were eschewed in favor of that same comforting picture of Beit El's dissipation and the consequent birth or rejuvenation of something else. Even an objective historian like Eliezer Raphael Malachi, who grew up in and was intimately familiar with

17 Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 1, 138–143; idem, "The Holy Community," 117–120, 236–241; idem, *The Sages of Jerusalem*, 14–18. A substantial amount of the material that Gaon collected on Jerusalem's kabbalah seminaries, including original documents, have been preserved in his personal archive; see Gaon, Notes and Documents on the Annals of the Kabbalistic Yeshivot in Jerusalem (MS). While Gaon was working on *Oriental Jews*, the kabbalist Ovdia Hedaya sent him material on Beit El; Hedaya, Two letters to Gaon on the Sages of the Beit El (MS).

18 See, for example, the generous use of Bension's observations in the literature: Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 328–329, 422; Themanlys, *The History of Beit El* (MS); idem, "Bethel Foyer du Hassidisme Sefardi," xxii–xxiii; Heschel, "Rabbi Gershon Kutover," 52; idem, *The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov*, 84; and the reprinting of several pages in Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*, 156–161; idem, "The Uplifting of Sparks," 112–113; Hoffman, *The Kabbalah Reader*, 104–107. The kabbalist Jacob S. Kassin also drew on one of Bension's books for his own account of the RaShaSh; Kassin, *Sefer Pri Eš haGan*, 7–15.

19 Among the fanciful accounts of Beit El's demise are Frumkin, *Toldot Ḥakhmei Yerushalayim*, vol. 3, 46–56, 107–121; Freiman, *Sefer haZikharon haYerushalmi*, 10, 50, 81.

turn-of-the-century Jerusalem, wrote in 1931 that Beit El's decline began back in the 1870s. Moreover, he described the head of the seminary, Yedidyah Raphael Chai Abulafia (the YaREh), as "the last of the kabbalists' lions and with his death [in 1869] the candle, which was kindled by Rabi Gedaliah Chayun, began to wither until it completely expired." Malachi also contended that Abulafia vehemently opposed the opening of modern Jewish schools, namely those integrating general and religious studies, in Jerusalem, but "history avenged him." Abulafia's grandson, Nissim Behar, "established the first standardized school in Jerusalem," thereby laying "the foundation for Hebrew education, from whose roots we are imbibing to this very day."²⁰ Succinctly put, besides offering an account of destruction, the researcher claimed that a profoundly different enterprise had sprung forth from these ashes. Like all his contemporaries, Malachi failed to describe the living kabbalists who indeed perpetuated the allegedly wilting traditions of Sharabi and his ilk; and the same can be said for all the researcher's contemporaries.²¹

A similar fate was shared by the period's Hasids. Evocative descriptions of Hasidism's atrophy and decline were penned by those same writers who lauded the Hasidic literature and its resplendent past, including those who

20 Malachi, "Nissim Behar," 158–160. Behar discussed his efforts on behalf of "standardized education" in a newspaper article; Nissim Behar, "Paris," 364–367.

21 Malachi also brought up this topic in 1928; idem, *Mekubalim in Eretz Yisroel*, Introduction: "This work interested me from as far back as my youth. When I was a small boy, before leaving Jerusalem, I would frequently visit the seminaries in which they studied kabbalah, a place where 'the last Mohicans' of the kabbalah world would sit on low stools and learn the Zohar and other kabbalah books in a sad tune. I would sit for hours on end in the yeshiva of someone that recently passed away, the sage Isaac Gagin. Out of compulsion, I would leaf through the dusty old books, and I would listen to the deeds and myths that Gagin would tell me about Shalom Sharabi and the other kabbalists from the Beit El Yeshiva." The work ends with R. Hayyim Vital. The author represented the so-called "end" of those mystics, or the description of their remnants, exclusively through the story of Beit El, as he refrained from mentioning the other kabbalistic seminaries in Jerusalem. In this work, Malachi also touches on the RaShaSh (ibid, 20): "Rabbi Shalom Sharabi was the last of the great kabbalists. He was the true restorer of past glory. He was the one that rekindled the light of the kabbalah. A light that burns to this very day. A small center of Beit El exists to this very day in Jerusalem." A planned sequel to *Mekubalim in Eretz Yisroel* never came to fruition. At any rate, the "first volume" merited positive reviews in the press; Yekuti'el, "Kabbalists," 584. Malachi did eventually devote an article to his contemporary Jewish kabbalists. Among the featured figures in this piece were the Jerusalemites Shimon Zvi Horowitz, Menahem Menkhin Halperin, and Rahamim ben David Shrem. See Malachi, "R. Shimon Zvi Horowitz," 330–331.

spurred on a renewed interest in this corpus, albeit in the new Romantic spirit of the time.²²

These same, Zionist writers raised the banner of the “writs of allegiance,” which had epitomized the fellowship between Beit El’s kabbalists. Most of these compacts were later published on various stages between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as part of the efforts to construct a model for the idea of the emergent Land-of-Israel communes. All that the authors had to say about living kabbalists was that they were “final remnants” or a minor phenomenon unworthy of serious attention.²³ A case in point is Alexander Ziskind Rabinowitz’s article “The Commune among the Kabbalists of Jerusalem” from 1923. Besides providing the text of one of the said compacts, Rabinowitz argued that “The commune, qua idea, was discovered among the kabbalists of Eretz Yisrael 166 years ago. The kabbalah, which strives for absolute unity and equality, is what paved the way for the rise of the commune.”²⁴ Thereafter, other writers followed Rabinowitz’s lead, such as Eliezer Rivlin (in his notes to Aryeh Leib Frumkin’s book), and Eliyahu Tsherikover, who stressed the socialist dimension of the writs.²⁵

The observer who put the lie to the analogy between the writs of allegiance and the modern communes in Palestine was Shaul Hana Kook (the brother of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook – the Ashkenazic chief rabbi of Mandatory Palestine). “In our days,” he wrote, “before our eyes, a” completely baseless “myth has taken form as to the commune of the RaShaSh.”²⁶ Moreover, Kook identified Rabinowitz as the one who had disseminated the misinformation

22 For more on this phenomenon, see Ross, *Beloved-Despised Tradition*; Meir, *Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav*, 10–39.

23 The writs of allegiance have merited considerable attention. See Gepner, *Midrasho shel Shem*, 40–51; Benayahu, “The Writs of Allegiance of Jerusalem’s Kabbalists,” 14–18; Liebes, “The Messiah of the Zohar,” 157–158; Morgenstern, *Mysticism and Messianism*, 94–103; Fine, “A Mystical Fellowship in Jerusalem,” 210–214; idem, “Spiritual Friendship,” 61–75. Benayahu provides the exact wording of these compacts. On the assorted versions and content of these documents, see Kook, “On the Association of Jerusalem’s Kabbalists,” 84–85. On earlier fellowships and the origins of these sort of mystical groups see Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, 300–314; Weinstein, *Kabbalah and Jewish Modernity*, 261–324.

24 Rabinowitz, “The Commune,” 469–471; idem, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 141–144.

25 Frumkin, *Toldot Hakhmei Yerushalayim*, vol. 3, 47–48, note 3; Tsherikover, “Die Komune,” 115–139. Moreover, similar accounts were destined to rear up, such as the following article in an organ of the kibbutz movement: Nini, “The Writs of Allegiance,” 12–13.

26 Kook, “The Myth surrounding the Commune in Jerusalem Kabbalistic Circles,” 128–130; idem, “The Annals of the Kabbalist Society in Jerusalem,” 134–137; idem, “The First Writ of Allegiance of the Jerusalem Kabbalists,” 221–225; idem, *Studies*, vol. 2, 153–159.

that the kabbalists shared their property. Kook concluded that this theory is a “flight of fancy.” However, at the time, the myth was stronger than reality.

Gershom Scholem and Coeval Kabbalists

In the same 1943 edition of the journal *Moznaim* as an article by Bension on the Beit El Yeshiva, one S. Adaya contributed a short story titled *Nehora Kadisha* (Holy Light), which she dedicated to Gershom Scholem. The work describes a kabbalist in Jerusalem’s Old City who manages to calculate the end of the days. However, the protagonist winds up taking the secret with him to the grave. When other kabbalists realize what had happened, they set out to salvage his findings; but they are scalded in the process and ultimately abandon the quest. Over the course of the story, the gap between the old-school mystic and the next generation comes into focus.²⁷ *Nehora Kadisha* not only reflected the prevailing attitude toward the putative decline of the kabbalah circles, but also the outlooks concerning the secrets that they harbored – esoteric knowledge that kabbalists, researchers, and novelists sought to embrace or debunk.

As adduced from his writings, Scholem’s approach is nearly the same as Bension’s and the rest of the decline camp, as he too employed terms and descriptions like “the remnants,” “the last of the kabbalists,” and “the survivors, the surviving residue who watch over the dim flame of the kabbalah and the gospel of *kavvanot* in a few of Jerusalem’s yeshivot.”²⁸ The scholar primarily referred to Beit El’s habitués, some of whom he met during his first years in Jerusalem.²⁹ On this particular topic, his accounts were predicated on and expansively cited from Bension’s work.³⁰ The crux of Scholem’s theory was that in response to the Sabbatai Zvi affair, Sharabi’s acolytes had basically withdrawn from public life. In *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, he claimed that the fellowship of Beit El decided to completely “forego” the creation of “a mass movement, in order to avoid a repetition of the disastrous consequences which had followed the most recent of these attempts.” As a group, these kabbalists “entirely renounced the more popular aspects of Lurianism [Lurianic mysticism] and

27 Adaya, “Nehora Kadisha,” 160–164. This same tension is described in a short story by Naftali Ben Menachem (who subsequently became a kabbalah scholar); idem, “The Kabbalist,” 3.

28 Scholem, *Devarim b’Go*, 225.

29 Boaz Huss elaborated on the genesis of this approach in several articles, including idem, “Ask No Questions,” 141–158; idem, “Authorized Guardians,” 104–126.

30 E.g., Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 328–329, 422.

tried to lead the kabbalah back from the market place to the solitude of the mystic's semi-monastic cell." Moreover, Scholem viewed Sharabi as "the classic representative of this tendency"³¹ In this context, he described the contemporaneous Beit El Yeshiva as "a forlorn spot in the Old City of Jerusalem." That said, Scholem noticed that the institution continued to resonate in the public consciousness:

Even today as I write these lines, men who are thoroughly "modern" in their thought may draw inspiration from contemplating what Jewish prayer can be in its sublimest form. For here the emphasis was again, and more than ever, laid on the practice of mystical prayer, the mystical contemplation of the select. "Beth El," says Ariel Bension, the son of one of its members, "was a community resolved to live in unity and sanctity. Of those who thought to enter its portals it demanded the attainment of the scholar and the self-abnegation of the ascetic. Thus it missed the masses." [...] Kabbalism becomes at the end of its way what it was at the beginning; a genuine esoterism. A kind of mystery-religion which tries to keep *profanum vulgus* at arm's length. Among the writings of the Sephardic Kabbalists of this school, which has exercised a considerable influence on Oriental Jewry, it would be difficult to find a single one capable of being understood by the laity.³²

These observations notwithstanding, Scholem refrained from expanding on the multifaceted world of Sharabi's followers. For instance, he made no mention of the various kabbalistic practices that they sought to promote as general religious duties for the community at large. On the face of things, Scholem described these mystics as aloof – shut off and secluded – and as individuals guarding the palace gates. He preferred the topic of East European Hasidism. At the time of its founding, he averred (in the spirit of Martin Buber), Hasidism was a vital movement that turned to the masses and transformed the kabbalah in various ways. As demonstrated in the next few chapters, though, these kabbalists straddled the fence between the revealed and the concealed and between populism and seclusion.

In his memoirs, Scholem reflected on the yeshivot under review in a similar fashion. However, the discussion is rather terse and is nestled into the author's description of his relentless hunt for Hasidic and kabbalah books:

31 Ibid, 328.

32 Ibid, 328–329.

In Jerusalem, the last of the kabbalists of Beit El and other yeshivot like Sha'ar haShamayim and Porat Yosef were still active. Beit El was a center with an uninterrupted tradition of approximately two hundred years entirely devoted to immersion into Lurianic kabbalah and praying with *kavvanot* – an introspective (meditative) practice that was designed down to the last detail by R. Shalom Sharabi, the rosh yeshiva [seminary head] in the mid-eighteenth century. All the *mekhavvnim* followed in his footsteps. However, they did not recognize any stream outside of Lurianic kabbalah, and every other form of kabbalah was neither genuine in their eyes nor worthy of serious study. As such, they had no interest whatsoever in books of kabbalah that did not accord with their view, and certainly not in works of Hasidic literature that they deemed a sort of kabbalah for the masses that was incompatible with their spirit.³³

Scholem's research enterprise on Jewish mysticism coincided with a major resurgence of its use in the Land of Israel and an influx of Sharabian kabbalists to Jerusalem. Against this backdrop, it comes as no surprise that he tried to distinguish between kabbalah scholars and the contemporary kabbalists. This vantage point comes across in an observation that Scholem made in a 1935 article titled "Kabbalah at The Hebrew University:"

The kabbalist places himself within the long chain of the kabbalah's tradition and views it from the inside. He lives in the world of kabbalah and forgoes broaching questions that scientific-minded people must raise. And if I say that he dwells in this world, it means that he is living in that same curtailed part in adherence to that same approach that still exists and is persevering in recent generations too. He does not see the expansion in methods or the many and manifold variations of kabbalistic thought and he does not see the progression of things over the generations. [...] The last remnants of Lurianic kabbalists are still to be found in several yeshivot in Eretz Yisrael. These men are the last sentries at the palace door [i.e., authorized guardians]; from all the spiritual richness

33 Scholem, *MiBerlin leYerushalayim*, 206 (also see the shorter and heavily revised versions of this book in English and German; idem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, 169–170). Thereupon, Scholem admitted that the kabbalists' horizons were broader than he had originally thought: "Only years later did I discover that a few of them also furtively occupied themselves with the writings of Abraham Abulafia and copied them for themselves, but these books did not come out in print." These activities at the Beit El Yeshiva will be discussed in the next chapter; *ibid* (missing in the English version).

and refinement in the kabbalah world, all that remains for them is that same psychological education and system of mystical training that goes by the name of “praying with intention.” They live in the world of “intention” [*kavvana*] and it is this method that they still teach; however, in all that concerns researching the entire range and depth of the kabbalah world there is no savior amongst them.³⁴

Scholem made similar comments in an English article from around 1938, titled “The Research of the Kabbalah at The Hebrew University:”

In Jerusalem there are, at the present day, certain Yeshivas where groups of Kabbalists can be found who are maintaining the chain of Kabbalist tradition, and safeguarding its spiritual heritage and treasures. Kabbalists in the Diaspora regard them as those most authorized and best fitted to expound their lore. But the great majority of these latter-day kabbalists have completely forgotten the historic elements of their movement. The only kabbalists [*sic*] system among them which still maintains a measure of vitality is that of Rabbi Shalom Sharabi of Yemen, who lived in Jerusalem during the Eighteenth Century. In this tradition the lore of the Kabbalists is based on the sacred forces of prayer, on prayer with devotions [*kavvanot*], absorption, and assimilation in the mysteries of Divinity and worship, down to details so minute as to border on excess. There are still, at the present day, followers of this lore of mystical devotion by means of prayer, who live their lives in accordance with it during long years of study and preparation. To them all other branches and sections of Kabbalistic lore have become closed and obsolete except insofar as they serve for the theoretical confirmation of the principles of devotion and meditation. If ever they do trouble to read one of the earlier Kabbalist’s works, it is only in order to discover therein the secrets of their own system.³⁵

Scholem occasionally depicted the “Sharabian kabbalists” as a monolithic group. Put differently, they all marched to the beat of the same drum and were devoid of true innovation. Therefore, he did not publically express his views on their sundry books, even though he was quite familiar with them. More specifically, the vast majority of these works reached Scholem’s personal library, and he even added comments on their margins. In an interview almost forty

34 Scholem, “HaKabbalah baUniversita haIvrit,” 14.

35 Scholem, “The Research of the Kabbalah at The Hebrew University,” 9–10 (also see the Hebrew version; idem, “Hakirat haKabbalah baUniversita haIvrit,” 9).

years later, Scholem described the regression of the Jerusalem kabbalah center *vis-à-vis* previous generations: “What remains from the kabbalah in Beit El was something akin to yoga. I got the impression that I was dealing with a group of people practicing yoga according to a Jewish formula in the Land of Israel.”³⁶ This contention resurfaces in a number of his later works, some of which also portrayed “the last survivor.” The common denominator between all these accounts was their brevity and lack of detail.

Scholem reprised the theme of the kabbalah world’s “decline,” especially with respect to the Beit El Yeshiva, in “On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in our Time.” He claimed that there is no “original mysticism” in his generation, save for a couple of exceptional phenomena.³⁷ Likewise, a “renaissance” was not to be found in Jerusalem’s kabbalah seminaries or in the practices of Sharabian mystics.³⁸ Rehashing earlier insights, Scholem noted that the writing of these same figures had transformed the kabbalah back into an esoteric field that is closed off to outsiders and difficult to penetrate. “Had I behaved like an Orthodox person,” Scholem contended, he would have acquired more knowledge about their enterprise.³⁹ As evidenced from his correspondence with one Samuel L. Lewis in 1948, Scholem displayed little interest in fathoming these realms. His *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* had sparked a fire in Lewis’ heart. Owing to the book’s descriptions of the Jerusalem kabbalists, the Jewish Sufi from California wanted to meet these same “survivors” for the sake of a spiritual unification. Scholem’s response to the new-age leader’s letter is compelling in several respects. Laced with derision, it nevertheless touches on the author’s link to, or more precisely, detachment from Jerusalem’s kabbalists. “I must confess,” Scholem wrote, “that I have never been initiated into any esoteric circle, and in interpreting Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism at all, I have been relying on my own intuition and that measure of understanding which a careful analysis of difficult texts on a philological basis may afford.”⁴⁰

Scholem indeed encountered quite a few kabbalists during his years in Jerusalem. These meetings are documented by an assortment of papers in his literary estate, notes written on the margins of books in his personal library,

36 Scholem, *Devarim b'Go*, 44.

37 Ibid., 71–83; Scholem, *On the Possibility*, 6–19. See Huss, “Ask No Questions,” 141–158; Dan, *History of Jewish Mysticism*, vol. 11, 19–20.

38 Scholem, *Devarim b'Go*, 44.

39 Ibid.

40 Scholem and Lewis, Correspondence (MS). Scholem’s answer was published in Scholem, *Briefe*, vol. 2, 5–6. However, his reply cannot be understood without reading Lewis’ letter, which has remained solely in manuscript form.

and more explicitly in anecdotes and recollections gleaned from his memoirs. Among the Jewish mystics that he spoke with are R. Gershon Chaim Vilner, who attended Beit El and the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva (Vilner agreed to teach his interlocutor kabbalah under one condition: *Keine Fragen zu stellen* – no questions allowed);⁴¹ R. Makhluḥ Amsalem, an alchemist and kabbalist who he visited together with Simcha Assaf;⁴² R. Eliyahu Avraham Mizraḥi Dahuki, a mystic from Kurdistan who was apparently interested in teaching him practical kabbalah;⁴³ a face-to-face encounter with R. Yehuda Fetayah towards the end of the rabbi's life;⁴⁴ and he had a conversation about Abraham Abulafia with R. David Cohen the "Nazirite." Upon first hearing about the latter, Scholem was reportedly astonished: "I thought that the kabbalists had come to an end, yet here in Jerusalem wanders a living kabbalist and produces words of kabbalah in this day and age – a living kabbalist!"⁴⁵ In any event, Scholem concluded his own impressions of Cohen thus: "All my efforts to get to the bottom of his thought came to naught."⁴⁶ In 1938, Scholem received an invitation to Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva (discussed at length below) from R. Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, the head of the seminary. "It is our privilege," Dweck-HaKohen wrote, "to invite you to visit our institution, for we have heard that his honor is interested in the wisdom of the kabbalah; on our premises, he will find a library rich in this knowledge."⁴⁷ There are doubts as to whether Scholem took advantage of this

41 Scholem, *Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik*, 117; idem, *Devarim b'Go*, 43–45. See Huss, "Ask No Questions," 141, 155. Sha'ar haShamayim's records suggest that Vilner was among the yeshiva's regulars; Sha'ar haShamayim, *Account Books* (MS), 1908–1922.

42 Scholem refers to this encounter on the margins of his personal copy of *Tapukhei Zahav B'maskiot Kesef* (1926–7). Also see Fenton, "Rabbi Makhluḥ Amsalem," 92–123.

43 Scholem, *Notes on Contemporary Kabbalists* (MS). Mizraḥi copied various manuscripts, including the book of magic *Harvah deMoshe*. In 1931, he printed *Refuah veHayyim meYerushalayim* (Medicine and Life from Jerusalem), which includes remedies and amulets from various manuscripts.

44 Scholem makes note of this in his personal copy of Fetayah, *Sefer Beit Lehem Yehuda* (vol. 1, 1936). This book is currently in the possession of The Hebrew University's Bloomfield Library.

45 This anecdote was related by Zalman Shazar, the third president of Israel. See Cohen (haNazir), *Kol haNevua*, page 9 of the appendix "Praise Be the Voice of the Prophecy." This section consists of adulatory speeches about the said book that were given at the President's Residence in the summer of 1970.

46 Scholem, *MiBerlin leYerushalayim*, 204. For Cohen's impressions of Scholem after giving the latter a manuscript by Abulafia, see Cohen, *Mishnat haNazir*, 819–834. For a discussion on this encounter, see Idel, "Abraham Abulafia," 819–834; Bitty, *Philosophy and Kabbalah*, 250–252; Huss, "The Formation of Jewish Mysticism," 142–162.

47 Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, Letter to Gershom Scholem, 1938 (MS).

opportunity; and if so, how the tour went. Despite these encounters and the wide-ranging literature that these figures penned, Scholem was not motivated to write about what was transpiring in their circles. That said, he did make an effort to secure all of their publications for his collection.

In light of the above, Scholem's attitude towards these kabbalists and every other manifestation of Jewish mysticism in early twentieth-century Palestine must be understood within the broad context of the prevailing mindset at the time among Jewish novelists, especially in the Yishuv (the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel). These intellectuals were wont to understate the value of their contemporaneous kabbalists' enterprise or to ignore it altogether. At one and the same time, though, these writers, as well as academic scholars, burrowed through the Jewish mystical literature in the hopes of igniting other sparks with which to construct a new literary, research, and/or interpretive edifice.

Haim Hazaz's Vision of Decline

The sources under review not only depict a world that is slowly ebbing or has already vanished, but were part of a trend to assert that the kabbalah's decline in the Land of Israel was a *fait accompli*. Historic events, foremost among them the ingathering of the exiles in the Zionist spirit, had sealed the fate of Jewish mysticism. This position was radically evinced in a handful of belletristic works by Haim Hazaz, an East European Jewish writer who immigrated to Palestine in 1931. During these years, there were also novelists, like Israel Zarchi and Ezra Hamenahem, who had a different take of the local kabbalah scene, casting some of its practitioners in a positive light. However, these viewpoints were exceptions to the rule. Over the next few pages, we will examine several of Hazaz's works that comport with the "decline theory."

In the novel *Ya'ish* (1947–1952), Hazaz portrayed a Yemenite kabbalist who undergoes a metamorphosis amid a series of trials and tribulations.⁴⁸ Given the background, it is only natural for the reader to conjure up images of other mystics, not least Shalom Sharabi. While in Yemen, the protagonist, *Ya'ish*, is occupied with mystical practices, such as *yihudim* and *kavvanot*. He merits dreams, visions, and ascents of the soul and regularly merges with the upper

48 Hazaz, *Ya'ish*, parts 1–4. He published the first chapters of this novel under the pseudonym Zecharya Uzali (a moniker for a native of Sana'a), before issuing a revised edition, under his own name, circa 1968. For a disquisition on Hazaz and his major works, see Bargad, *Ideas in Fiction*; Kressel, *Encyclopedia of Modern Hebrew Literature*, vol. 1, 595–597.

spheres by feverishly dancing at ritualistic celebrations to musical renderings of poetry by the kabbalist and Torah scholar Shalom Shabazi (1619–1720).⁴⁹ These scenes are comprised of fragments of kabbalistic texts that Hazaz interspersed, to distinctive emotional and prosodic effect.⁵⁰

Towards the end of Hazaz's circuitous plot, Ya'ish immigrates to Palestine, where the revelations that he often had in Sana'a come to a grinding halt. As one of the book's characters puts it, "the Land of Israel is the end of all the miracles."⁵¹ The novel concludes with the protagonist deeply regretting this loss: "Indeed, he was not answered – not in word and not in action, not with a vision nor a dream. Every travail he travailed and every exertion he exerted did not help. The heavens were sealed before him and would not be opened for the rest of his days, forever."⁵² Although Hazaz's description of this stage in Ya'ish's life is threadbare, the hero undergoes a transmigration and redeems himself via deeds, rather than visions. Upon encountering the temporal realm of Palestine, his religious-cum-mystical life changes so drastically that the "old

49 Ya'ish's visions are concentrated in the third part of the book, but a few turn up in the fourth as well. The first two sections cover the hero's youth, the early years of his marriage, and a litany of struggles. According to Halevy, these visions are a satire or parody of the mystics' "fall;" Halevy, *Image and Self-Portrait*, 76–78, 87–93. In a few of Ya'ish's ascents, the import of the kabbalistic world actually rises, even surpassing the heavenly realms. For instance, the angels that he encounters are not impressed with his stories of redemption. It is "doubtful," Hazaz wrote, "that they hear and they certainly do not understand." See Rabinovitz, "Between Supremacy and Inferiority," 251–254; Bargad, *Ideas in Fiction*, 105. The satiric conversation with the angels was translated into English by Ezra Spicehandler: Hazaz, "Yaish Meets the Angels," 51–57 [idem, *Stories*, 251–261].

50 That said, it is worth remembering Abramson's words on this topic: "The novel *Ya'ish* was influenced by the kabbalah, of course. And there is no need to go into detail and extrapolate, only that when you check you find that not all the words of the kabbalah therein derive from the kabbalah's sources, and some of them are nothing but the fruit of Hazaz's ingenuity, who suited his language to the language of the kabbalah. There are those who sought to draw insights from this on the language of the Jewish ethnicities, such as the natives of Yemen, but this warrants extreme caution, two- and fourfold. In my estimation, whoever comes and says: such is the Yemenites' speech – it is incumbent upon him to bring evidence that this is indeed the case, and that it is not the creation of Hazaz." Abramson, "The Language of Haim Hazaz," 72.

51 Hazaz, *Ya'ish*, part 4, 139. Be that as it may, the novelist recounts an episode in which Beit El's kabbalists put forth a "dream question;" *ibid*, 144.

52 *Ibid*, 231. Also see Kurzweil, *Our New Literature*, 265; Halevy, *Image and Self-Portrait*, 24; Elhanani, *Four Authors and Their Narratives*, 163.

ways” lose their significance or, more precisely, are no longer accessible.⁵³ Between the lines, the novelist criticized those who wished to adhere to the Diasporic lifestyle Palestine. What is more, he alluded to the ideological revolution that was ushered in by the Jewish people’s new, profane historical reality. In a certain sense, then, Ya’ish’s *aliyah* (literally ascent), namely his immigration to Palestine, was his *yeridah* (descent).

Similar to a handful of earlier writers from the First Aliyah (a wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine between 1882 and 1903), Hazaz enlisted “Yemenite mysticism” to the service of “the ideological story.” More specifically, he presented images of Yemenite kabbalists that embody not only an ethnic way of life, but a “vision of the earthly redemption.” The shift from *aliyah* (ascension) to lofty spheres to *aliyah* (immigration) to the material Land of Israel became a basic template for some of Hazaz and his above-mentioned predecessors’ works.⁵⁴

Hazaz expanded on this theme in the novel *HaYoshevet ba’Ganim* (She Dwelleth in the Gardens, 1944). To some extent, this novel picks up where *Ya’ish* left off. Once again, the narrative revolves around the figure of a seer – a dreamer who calculates the end of the days – by the name of Mori Said, whose mystical world is vanishing before his very eyes. In contrast to Ya’ish, this protagonist does not experience ascensions of the soul. His world is comprised of dreams that he interprets by connecting a myriad of gematrias and acronyms. As per the mystic’s understanding of his own dreams, the Exile has been abrogated; the messiah has already taken up residence in Jerusalem; and is on the verge of revealing himself. As Hazaz puts it, “all his dreams were really identical,

53 For a full analysis of this story, see Miron, *Haim Hazaz*, 47–111; Michali, *By the Potter’s Wheel*, 165–181; Bargad, “Hazaz’s Yemenite Works,” 232–250; idem, *Ideas in Fiction*, 101–109; Goitein, “Hazaz’s Yemenite Enterprise,” 232–244; Drori, *Yemenite Redemption and New Hebraism*. Also see Michal Oron, “Mystical Elements in the Novel *Ya’ish*,” 162–170. Oron provides a different interpretation of the closing scene, as he views the shuttering of heavens’ gates in a positive light. Alternatively, Ratzaby wrote that “Ya’ish, who in the Diaspora was the son of the kingdom of heaven, with his *aliyah* to the Land of Israel the gates of heaven were shut before him. This contains a hint of the lowering in the status of the religious and spiritual figure in the Yishuv [Jewish settlement] in the Land of Israel, which is causing the removal of the *shkkinah* [divine presence],” Ratzaby, “Hebrew Dialects,” 75, note 3. For more on Ratzaby’s interpretation, see Barzel, “Introduction,” 13–15. This reading appears to deviate widely from Hazaz’s own words, but the gates of interpretation have yet to be sealed.

54 For more on this paradigm, see Berlovits, *Inventing a Land, Inventing a People*, 98–102; Gerber, *Ourselves or Our Holy Books*, 85–116.

variations on one central theme: the hour of redemption was near. And this was actually the cause of his *aliya* to Palestine... Mori Said had prophesied that hard times would come, that they would pave the way for the Messiah's advent. In his interpretation every event, whether petty or significant, took on apocalyptic meaning and was crucial to Israel's redemption."⁵⁵ Whereas Mori Said delves into the kabbalah, his progeny discover other worlds. The hero's son, Şiyon (Zion), straddles the fence between two realms. At times, he boasts about the sanctity that he is engaged in; at other times, despair thrusts him into a life of sin. Alternatively, Şiyon's daughter, Rummyeh (or Miriam), severs herself from the Orthodox community and runs away to a kibbutz. In parallel, Mori Said's dreams turn from good to bad. Horrified, the protagonist searches for another path to the same destination, for he is certain that his revelations concerning the end of the days will come to pass. His solution is to convince people to cede their part in the afterworld to the messiah. If everyone did so, Mori Said assumes, the savior would certainly deign to expedite his arrival. However, the kabbalist's appeal falls on deaf ears and his life falls apart. The protagonist ends up among the destitute panhandlers at the Western Wall, which he vows not to leave until the scion of David assumes the throne. The story ends with the hero's tumultuous and painful death in a ruin adjacent to the Western Wall. In sum, Mori Said clings to a fading world and desperately awaits a tarrying messiah at an hour in which the redemption is being advanced by a competing ideological camp – the builders of the temporal Land, who count his own children among their ranks.⁵⁶

Hazaz's plot thus unveils the revolution that was triggered by the severance of the pioneers from the Diaspora. It was Berl Katznelson, a leading advocate of Labor Zionism, who remarked that Mori Said "is our Don Quixote."⁵⁷ In an interview conducted by Galia Yardeni in 1968, Hazaz explained his outlook: "At first, I assumed that kabbalah, kabbalists seeking to bring about the redemption – all this is ancient history, not a living reality. And lo and behold, amongst the Yemenites I found kabbalists who are preoccupied with

55 Cited in Bargad, *Ideas in Fiction*, 94.

56 Hazaz, *HaYoshevet baGanim* [also see the English translation by Ben Halper: idem, *Mori Sa'id*]. For more on this story, see Kurzweil, "Haim Hazaz's *HaYoshevet baGanim*," 225–231; idem, *Our New Literature*, 265–266; Kariv, *Discernments*, 284–294; Michali, *By the Potter's Wheel*, 181–187; Bargad, "Hazaz's Yemenite Works," 235–244; Avishay, "Delusions of Redemption," 254–257. For a discussion on the connection between *Ya'ish* and *haYoshevet baGanim*, see Miron, *Haim Hazaz*, 89–102. In Halevy's estimation, the entire work is a satire on the Yemenite-Jewish notion of the messiah; Halevy, *Image and Self-Portrait*, 23–25, 87–89.

57 Elhanani, *Four Authors and Their Narratives*, 161.

calculations of the end and are attempting to hasten it; to them, it is a living and vibrant reality.”⁵⁸ Be that as it may, Hazaz chose to portray this state of affairs as a last hurrah.

As in some of Hazaz’s other works, Mori Said’s heart-wrenching end must be understood in the context of the author’s negation of the Exile and the champions of the Diasporic way of life. This outlook comes across in, among other places, the writer’s short story “*HaDrasha*” (The Sermon, 1943),⁵⁹ and his controversial play, *BeKeš haYamim* (The End of Days, 1934), on the Sabbatai Zvi era.⁶⁰ In the latter, Hazaz described how Jews thirsted for liberation from the diaspora, as well as the accusations thrust by the false messiah’s acolytes at co-religionists who refused to see the light. Sabbatianism is portrayed as a movement that aroused national yearnings, to the point where Sabbatai Zvi is cast in the role of political savior.⁶¹ The play ends with Yuzpa, a character with apocalyptic leanings, calling for the Exile to be incinerated. Years later, Hazaz clarified this position, linking it to Zionism and the Holocaust:

Yuzpa burns down the Exile, but we [i.e., Zionists] also incinerated the dispersions [that we left] behind us. All the polemicizing against the book [i.e., the play *BeKeš haYamim*] is a waste of time, for we did so ourselves. The Jews of Yemen and Iraq also incinerated the Diaspora. If only we really had burnt down the Exile, the people would have been saved. By burning down houses, by burning down property, the people would have been saved.... Instead, they sat carefree while calamity dangled over

58 Yardeni, “No Limits to Perfection,” 261–262.

59 Hazaz, “*HaDrasha*,” in *Avanim Rothot*, 219–237 [idem, *Stories*, 231–249]. Another facet of this outlook turns up in “*Drabkin*,” *ibid*, 163–187 [idem, *Stories*, 203–230], which was written that same year. The story’s protagonist takes the opposite view of the sermon giver in “*HaDrasha*,” yet preserves the dichotomy between Judaism and Zionism. Similar developments inform “*Mar’ot Yerushalayim*,” one of the author’s stories from the 1930s; idem, *BeŠilan shel Malhuyot*, 169–297. At any rate, it bears noting that in Hazaz’s works, the Exile’s negation does not come at the expense of a full description of the vitality of Diaspora life. This balancing act is discussed in Kurzweil, *Our New Literature*, 39–40, 260–266; idem, *Facing the Spiritual Perplexity of Our Time*, 120; Laor, *The Struggle for Memory*, 165.

60 Hazaz, *BeKeš haYamim*. For more on the play, its sources, and reception, see Barzel, “The Play *The End of Days* for All its Versions,” 203–215; Shaked, “The End of Days,” 272–302; idem, *Hebrew Historical Drama*, 95–102, 199–204, 250–253, 309–315; Bargad, *Ideas in Fiction*, 59–60; Werses, “Sabbatai Zevi and Sabbatianism in Modern Hebrew Literature,” 122–132.

61 Hazaz had similar things to say in a conversation with Elhanani, *Four Authors and Their Narratives*, 165.

their heads. There was no one to force them to be saved. If they had burnt down their houses, they would have been rescued.⁶²

In a conversation with Hayim Elhanani, the novelist took a similar stance:

One of our comrades intimated that he was hurt by the lethal line on the Diaspora in *The End of Days*. Many got caught up in this matter. Yiddishists in America fought against *The End of Days*, claiming that ‘Hazaz is burning the Diaspora.’ It is true; it contains the incineration of the Exile; what is Zionism if not the burning of the Exile? From its inception, Zionism has always negated the Diaspora. Would that we had burnt down the Exile on our own before it was too late, for then Hitler would not have annihilated six million Jews.⁶³

While Hazaz’s oeuvre is not without conflicting trends, it is impossible to ignore the prevailing spirit.⁶⁴

These explicit statements by Hazaz are indeed commensurate with, *inter alia*, the final scenes of *Ya’ish* and *haYoshevet baGanim*. As per this worldview, the Diasporic version of the kabbalah and mysticism in general has no place in the modern Palestine. In fact, the loss of the Exile’s spiritual world is also manifest in the novelist’s devaluation of its literature as an invigorative enterprise. Moreover, what Hazaz saw as the Exile’s religio-centric culture was bound, in his estimation, to be either revamped or annulled by the Zionist redemption. Under these circumstances, there was certainly no place for a positive description of kabbalah-oriented Jews in Palestine at the outset of the twentieth century. It is only logical that these kabbalists were portrayed as heading off a cliff.

Perhaps this outlook does not faithfully express Hazaz’s personal views? The novelist is on record as stating that “it is a mistake to ascribe ruminations or opinions of a figure in a book to the author,” even if “now and again there is something to it, but not overtly, not all the way.”⁶⁵ That said, the stories in

62 Cited from Hazaz’s remarks at the press conference on the opening night of the play at Habima Theater in 1950. See David, “The Nation did Not Want a Full Revelation,” *Werses*, *ibid*, 123–124.

63 Elhanani, *ibid*, 185.

64 For an analysis of the various trends in Hazaz’s output, see Miron, *Haim Hazaz*, 11–26; Barzel, “Introduction,” 18–21; Megged, “The World of Broken Vessels,” 82–86; Shaked, *Hebrew Narrative Fiction*, 48–53; *idem*, “The Cry of the Revolution,” 13–14; Gretz, “To Caesar What is Caesar’s,” 183–196.

65 Yardeni, “No Limits to Perfection,” 261; Gilad, “Clear-Sighted,” 305; Elhanani, *ibid*, 148. In this context, Megged went so far as to say that “Stories are neither a political program nor

question clearly reach the following conclusions: the Exile's spiritual life is in its death throes; and Zionism is precipitating far-reaching changes in the Land of Israel.⁶⁶ Even if we were to deny that literature is harnessed to simplistic political agendas, given the historical context in which Hazaz operated, it is impossible to ignore the picture that emerges from these works.⁶⁷

In a letter to Gershom Scholem from around 1972, Hazaz distinguished between "That which pertains to history and that which pertains to a play. History's reach is short and is not an artistic creation. For this reason, the poem is charged with repairing history, hastening the belated, detracting and adding, etc."⁶⁸ These themes that the novelist developed were not an island onto themselves and even permeated – albeit in a refined and understated manner – the period's research literature on Jewish mysticism. As a result, scholars presented a distorted picture of their contemporary kabbalists in Palestine. Hazaz's "correction" of the historical image was an ideological outlook that was out of touch with reality.

Decline and Zionist Utopia

A riveting picture of the kabbalistic circles in the Land of Israel can be found in *Anshai Gil'ad* (The Men of Gilead), a Zionist utopia written in 1942 by the future Biblical scholar Haim Gevaryahu. The protagonist, Shlomo, is "the head of a procession of young kabbalists from Jerusalem who moved to the Gilead for the sake of dwelling in the homeland of Elijah the Prophet." To this end,

a philosophical tract. Things that are communicated by the people in his stories – they are voices." Megged, *ibid*, 85.

- 66 For Hazaz's position on the relation between the Diaspora and the Land of Israel, see his anthology of lectures and articles: Hazaz, *Mishpat haGeula*, 131–132, 139–164. Most astounding is the novelist's determination that not an iota of mysticism has seeped into the New Hebrew literature, which he completely identifies with Zionism; see *ibid*, 114. In another lecture, Hazaz averred that Zionism is the final incarnation of the Jewish belief in the messiah. Furthermore, he stated that this movement will end differently than Sabbatianism; *ibid*, 150. On the importance of these lectures, which bear the same dialectic tensions and irony that characterize his stories, see Schweid, "Between Philosophizing and Narrative Fiction," 20–34.
- 67 Kabbalistic figures also surface in Hazaz, *BeKolar Echad* (In a Single Collar). In this story, the novelist portrays the father of Moshe Barazani (a member of the Jewish underground against the British Mandate in Palestine) as a kabbalist who studied at the Shoshanim leDavid Yeshiva and was a member of Yehuda Fetayah's inner circle; Hazaz, *BeKolar Echad*, 63, 86, 206–207.
- 68 Hazaz, Letter to Scholem, 1972 (MS); Cited in a manuscript by Werses, "Sabbatai Zevi and Sabbatianism in Modern Hebrew Literature," 132.

they established a village by the name of Ḥakal Tapukhin (apple field). In “the [settlement’s] athenaeum for the youth of the prophets’ children,” Shlomo finds clay tablets containing the secret for growing cereals on trees. “The words of Elijah the Prophet of Thisbe,” the inscription reads, “where in the upper worlds that were destroyed crops grew on trees, and on account of the sin they have decreased in size and their stems die each and every summer.” The tablet’s next passage declares that the time for the “*tikkun*” has arrived. Towards the end, it notes that the “cereal apples” decisively altered the global economy.⁶⁹ Gevarya-hu combined images of husbanding the Land with an old-school kabbalist to form a picture that is a far cry from the contemporaneous reality in Jerusalem. From this standpoint, his utopia is a critique, perhaps even a satire, of the era’s kabbalists.

In a similar fashion, the only contemporary kabbalists that the Second Aliyah poet David Shimoni (1891–1956) depicted in a positive fashion were those advancing the Zionist cause, which he ultimately viewed as an incarnation of “the messianic idea among the Jewish people.”⁷⁰ Throughout his career, Shimoni occasionally referred to kabbalists, but always in the same particular context. A case in point is an earlier play in which a Yemenite Jew integrates the vision of the redemption and *tikkun ḥaṣot* (Midnight Vigil) with toil in the vineyard.⁷¹ In another of the poet’s idylls, there is a short description of “a rich, wondrous kabbalist; by day he labors in his vineyards and by night he ponders the Zohar.”⁷² Shimoni also produced a more complex tableau. He considered the signs of the “land’s redemption” and the pioneers’ yearnings to be a quasi-transformation of the erstwhile longings of kabbalists and prophets. For example, in the idyll *Maṣeva* (A Memorial, 1928–1938), he wrote that “The redemption always appeared before my eyes in the image of an expansive field.”⁷³ Upon describing the pioneers’ zeal, the poet turned his attention to *seuda shlishit* (the third Sabbath meal), which became a central kabbalistic ritual

69 Gevaryahu, *The Men of the Gilead: A Utopian Story of the Life in Eretz Yisrael over the Next Three Generations*, citations from pp. 46, 56–57. Under the editorship of Shalom Schwartz (Ben-Baruch), the weekly *Hed Yerushalayim* put out a different version of this work in serial installments between June 1941 and January 1942. One of the first chapters of the serial version places an emphasis on the “Sons of the Prophets.”

70 Halevy, *Image and Self-Portrait*, 37–56. Halevy’s claim that Shimoni was a sort of mouthpiece for the Kookian school of thought is a tad excessive. Also see Laor, *The Struggle for Memory*, 15–33; Hever, *To Inherit the Land*, 88–130.

71 Shimoni, *Layla baKerem*. See Gerber, *Ourselves or Our Holy Books*, 171–173.

72 Idem, *Yovel haEglonim*, 6.

73 Idem, “Maṣeva,” *Sefer haIdilyot*, 246 [also see the English translation: “A Memorial,” *Idylls*, 23–97].

during the halcyon days of Safad. Shimoni essentially transformed this meal into a poem on nature and the Land of Israel, thereby adding a new wrinkle to this idea which suited the needs of his own generation. More specifically, he converted *seuda shlishit* into a dinner for the poor out in the field. By virtue of this meal, the lips of “Eretz Yisrael on high and the temporal Eretz Yisrael” met, “and the sensual touch,” along with “the mysterious touch of the messiah’s wing, delighted the coveted land, in the unknowns of the quest of the generations [of Jews] who pleaded for the wonder of the redemption.”⁷⁴ Thereafter, “the Torah of Eretz Yisrael” is described as the physical labor of the pioneer.⁷⁵ Like Gevanyahu and others, this sort of utopian writing allowed Shimoni to release himself from and criticize the present, while lionizing the past, of all things. Perhaps the apotheosis of this “sub-genre” is a series of poems that he dedicated to the early kabbalists of Safad. These works draw heavily on the book *Shivḥai HaARI* (Praises of Isaac Luria). Although the series is devoid of hints concerning the present and although Shimoni’s ostensibly limited himself to praising the poetry’s language, the very act of replication gave rise to a utopia that nourished the redemptive pioneering reality of his time.⁷⁶

It stands to reason that the above-mentioned Zionist writers had no desire to fathom their era’s kabbalistic worldview. Instead, they glanced at the mystics from afar and chose to emphasize those elements that suited their accounts of the emergent reality in the Land of Israel. Rather than describing the living spirit of the seminaries under review, they set their sights on the “pure kabbalistic knowledge” of yesteryear, “the last kabbalist” who is slowly going under, and/or “the first kabbalist” to break new ground.

74 Ibid, 270–272.

75 Ibid, 274, 285.

76 Ibid, “Me’Agadot Šfat,” 165–187.

The Kabbalah Seminaries of Jerusalem

Shalom Sharabi and the Rise of the Kabbalistic Yeshivot

In recent years, writers are fashioning a new picture of early twentieth-century kabbalah circles in which a small handful of figures, particularly Yehuda Leib Ashlag and Abraham Isaac Kook, assume center stage. On more than one occasion, though, the spotlight is being maneuvered by the aggressive and outspoken latter-day followers of these same kabbalists, at the expense of other key players. Accounts of Jerusalem's kabbalah seminaries are nowhere to be found in these works, and conjecture as to the demise of Jewish mysticism has even infiltrated the research literature.¹

The Beit El Yeshiva was clearly the largest and most renowned kabbalah seminary, as throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many Jews turned their eyes to this institution. Most of Jerusalem's kabbalists adhered to the way of the RaShaSh. Even if some practitioners adopted more nuanced or countervailing positions *vis-à-vis* those endorsed by Beit El, all of Jerusalem's early twentieth-century kabbalah seminaries saw themselves as Sharabian institutions, followed in the footsteps of the Beit El Yeshiva, and focused their attention on the Zoharic and Lurianic literature as well as the writings of the RaShaSh and its offshoots.² Already in the 1800s, like-minded centers were established in Baghdad and Aram Şoba (a Jewish toponym for Ḥalab, namely Aleppo). The blossoming of the new centers in Jerusalem at the outset of the twentieth century was largely spurred on by the relocation of influential kabbalists from these communities to the Land of Israel, along with the tireless efforts

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- 1 For a discussion on these preliminary accounts of the kabbalah streams at the outset of the twentieth century, which are gradually changing the accepted view, see Garb, *The Chosen will Become Herds*; idem, "Mystical and Spiritual Discourse," 17–36; idem, "Contemporary Kabbalah and Classical Kabbalah," 19–46; Myers, "Kabbalah at the Turn of the 21st Century," 175–190; Huss, "Altruistic Communism," 109–130; idem, "The New Age of Kabbalah," 107–125; idem, "All You Need Is LAV," 611–624; Mayse, *From the Depth of the Well*, 270–280, 349–354; Meir, "Light and Vessels," 163–247; idem, "Wrestling with the Esoteric," 585–647; idem, "The Revealed and the Revealed within the Concealed," 151–258; idem, "New Findings concerning R. Yehuda Leib Ashlag," 345–368.
 - 2 On kabbalistic trends in Jerusalem and the criticism and reservations regarding the way of the *mekhavvnim* and the exclusivity of the RaShaSh's approach, see Meir, "Wrestling with the Esoteric," 602–605.

of several kabbalists to expand the circle of Sharabi's acolytes. Although the hardships that the Beit El Yeshiva faced in the early 1900s (a topic that will be expounded on below) led to a decrease in its "student body," new and vibrant centers with a similar spirit were concomitantly founded in the city. Before delving into this renaissance of Jerusalem-based kabbalah circles, the way in which its members grasped the RaShaSh and his thought warrants a close look.

Kabbalists espousing many and manifold outlooks indeed coexisted in Beit El from the yeshiva's very inception. A generation after Sharabi's passing, though, his worldview and approach to prayer intentions and Lurianic thought steadily came to define the "Beit El way" and emerged as the hallmark of its sustained exceptionalism. While some of Beit El's regulars undoubtedly took issue with the RaShaSh's way, there is no denying that it was the cornerstone of the kabbalah world, as even his critics were preoccupied with responding to the Sharabian gospel.³

In fact, the RaShaSh was widely viewed as no less than the reincarnation of HaARI, and his approach became the final word on practicing Jewish mysticism. As early as 1853, R. Haim Palaggi noted that "Alas we have the great Torah scholar and Hasid, renowned in kabbalah, Rabbi Master Shalom Sharabi of blessed memory, may his merit protect us amen, of whom they said that our rabbi HaARI of blessed memory promised his students when he would dip into his ritual immersion when they led him to have him buried [that] if you will merit it I will come to you another time; for the rabbi, HaARI, came to them again in the form of R. Shalom."⁴

At the turn of the twentieth century, R. Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen personally copied Palaggi's words atop a manuscript version of an introduction to one of Sharabi's works that was in the possession of the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, to which he added the following words: "From this we may deduce that our holy teacher the RaShaSh was an incarnation of our rabbi HaARI, and

3 Shlomo Molkho, among the sages of Salonica and Izmir, arrived in Jerusalem circa 1780. In his book *Shemen Zayit Zakh*, he called into question the RaShaSh's interpretation of HaARI's works. For an in-depth look at the debate that this sparked, see Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, vol. 1, 756–757; vol. 3, 1064–1069.

4 Palaggi, *Tohekhot Hayim*, vol. 2, 96b. He repeated this point, albeit more garrulously, in 1859; idem, *Kaf haHayim*, §32, letter 18, 258b-259a. Similar sentiments are to be found in the writings of one of Beit El's leading figures; Aharon Refael Chaim Perera, *Efer Yiṣḥaq*, 9b. This outlook is also expressed in a book from 1913; Aharon 'Eli ha-Kohen Tawil, *Sefer Yiṣakhar uZevulun*, 37b-38a. Though assuming various forms, this tradition recurs in several works. E.g., Dablitski, *Makhshevet Beṣalel*, 83; Mutzafi, "Introduction," in De la Rosa, *Sefer Torat Hakham*, 21–23; Gepner, *Midrasho shel Shem*, 62; Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, 3–9; idem, *Aspaklariyah*, 26–30; Giller, "Leadership and Charisma," 29–31.

his disciples are the disciples of HaARI of blessed memory.”⁵ In a similar vein, kabbalists described revelations that were conveyed to Sharabi by Elijah the Prophet and other revered figures. Moreover, they claimed that the RaShaSh settled esoteric matters that were concealed from R. Hayyim Vital and revealed other secrets as well.⁶ These beliefs are evident from the contemporary writings of one Yaakov Moshe Hillel, the rosh yeshiva of *Ḥevrat Ahavat Shalom*, a kabbalah seminary in Jerusalem. According to Hillel, Sharabi “came to the world to put the finishing touches on and explain the thought of HaARI.” In addition, he “had the good fortune to complete the revelation of Rabbi Hayyim Vital. For this reason, the greats of the generations after him accepted his way and the approach of our master the RaShaSh of blessed memory in the explanation and arrangement of the thought of HaARI, with the same level of acceptance as HaARI’s authority; for this reason they do not budge from his view and method so much as an iota. And they accepted his words as absolute truth from Sinai, without dissent.”⁷ While some kabbalists disagreed with this firm stance, it was certainly the prevailing outlook among the Jerusalem circles of the early 1900s.

Praise of this sort turns up in almost every book that was put out by the RaShaSh’s own students and adherents in subsequent generations, on through the twentieth century. For example, accolades were incorporated into works that raise the banner of Sharabi’s works, including *tikkunim* (vigils), rituals that he authored or revised, his explanatory notes for books, and his arrangements of prayer intentions. A case in point is a 1866 recommendation by R. Yedidyah Raphael Chai Abulafia (1806–1869) – the head of Beit El Yeshiva in the

5 Dweck-HaKohen, *Pe’at HaSaDeH*, vol. 2, 223. As per his own testimony, Yeshaya Asher Zelig Margaliot heard the same story from Dweck-HaKohen in 1930: “What is written in the end of *Sefer haGilgulim* [Vital’s Book of Incarnations] that our rabbi HaARI said before his holy soul departed with a kiss. That if you shall merit it, I will come to you and teach you, see therein. We have a tradition that it was our rabbi the master Shalom Sharabi who came once again to this world to open the gates of HaARI like the opening of a hall. And to illuminate and examine in deep and plain words. And joyous is he that has merited to study the writings of HaARI as was instructed by the RaShaSh in the way of his sanctity.” Margaliot, *Sefer Yashev Ruho*, 4a. These words resurface in Moskowitz, *Hayei haRshahash*, 35; idem, *Oṣar haSipurim*, vol. 4, 5. Suliman Mutzafi also heard this story from Dweck-HaKohen, albeit in a different context; Mutzafi, “Introduction,” in De la Rosa, *Sefer Torat Ḥakham*, 23.

6 For example, see Yosef Hayyim, *Rav Pe’alim*, part 3, “Sod Yesharim,” §4, 3b–4a.

7 Hillel, *Aspaklariah*, 25, 30; idem, *Ahavat Shalom*, 1–3, 168. For a comprehensive look at Hillel and his efforts to promote the Sharabian way in Jerusalem during the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first century, see Meir, “The Revealed and the Revealed within the Concealed,” 241–258; idem, “The Boundaries of the Kabbalah,” 163–180.

mid-nineteenth century – for *Sefer Eṣ Ḥayyim*, according to which it is futile to study this work *sans* the RaShaSh's insights.⁸ Yehoshua Tzvi Michel Shapira (1840–1906), who can be counted among Beit El's habitués, also held Sharabi in the highest regard:

One must not, heaven forbid, budge at all from the words of the RaShaSh of blessed memory. And there was even an episode involving a Torah scholar of blessed memory, who on a certain matter wrote the opposite [of Sharabi's view], and he had a revelation [from heaven] that appeared to be a support for his position. Nevertheless, we do not listen to this. As is known to a couple of Torah scholars here in the holy city, the RaShaSh's words are for the strong pillar to illuminate the path of the Jewish greats, and the keepers of the holy spirit from the generations before us of blessed memory. And to this day thus behave the sages of the concealed [Torah], may God protect and save them, for whom the RaShaSh's words illuminated a path.⁹

In an anthology of kabbalah books that came out in around 1922, R. Akiva Porush (1881–1922), Shapira's student, went even further:

Anyone that engrossed himself in [and] expanded on *Rehovot haNahar* and dove into the depths of *Nahar Shalom* and the Siddur by our teacher the rabbi Shalom Sharabi, will understand that they are to the books of

8 “And it is already known that anyone who grabs *Sefer Eṣ Ḥayyim* with the aforementioned annotations [of the RaShaSh], comes to the conclusion that one who learns *Eṣ Ḥayyim* without the annotations of Master Shalom, regarding such a student it is said commandments done by rote, and he will addle his mind in the spring of confusion, it is all a pitfall, he does not understand from the end to the beginning, for he is like a drunk in the middle of the sea, and he does not know in what direction the light shall rest. When we saw some associates who compiled many a book, they dove into mighty waters, came up with shards in their hands, and so on and so forth. In fact all who grab a book and desire to partake from the fruit of the tree must traverse the river [i.e., the RaShaSh's book *Nahar Shalom* – Shalom's River], where he will find a haven to illuminate the eyes of the wise, and his words are living and binding.” Abulafia, “Approval for *Eṣ Ḥayyim*.” Hillel discusses this recommendation in idem, *Aspaklariah*, 19.

9 Shapira, *Seder Tikkun Ḥaṣot*, vol. 2, 2636. R. Shlomo Molkho put forth a question on the RaShaSh's approach, which was affirmed in, among other places, a dream of Eliezer ben Tuvo – a scholar from the Maghreb. For more on this episode, see Dablitski, *Makhshevet Beṣalel*, 73 (who heard it from Yosef Leib Zussman); Hillel, *Aspaklariah*, 18–19; idem, *Ahavat Shalom*, 151; Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El*, 91–92.

our rabbi HaARI like Maimonides and the *Tur* and the *Shulḥan Arukh* are to the Talmud, as well as the books of HaARI are to the *Zohar* and the *Tikkunei Zohar*.¹⁰

There is little doubt, then, that many of Jerusalem's kabbalists saw the RaShaSh as a transcendent figure, even if they integrated disparate traditions and elements into their own approach.

Sharabi's leading role in these same circles can also be discerned from the content of dreams – a genre that was quite popular among kabbalists and therefore warrants our undivided attention. In these visions, words of Torah – scriptural, Talmudic, and kabbalistic innovations along with esoteric mysteries – were revealed. The RaShaSh frequently surfaces in these recollections. Among the purposes of his “visits” was to validate a novel idea, approve a forthcoming book, afford physical or spiritual succor, and rescue the dreamer from some danger.¹¹ For example, in one dream, Sharabi reprimanded a kabbalist for finding fault with a passage of a book by the savant's grandson.¹²

As a direct result of this worldview, the RaShaSh's approach was considered the only faithful (or alternatively, the most perspicacious) interpretation of Lurianic thought. This perception led kabbalists to object to or ignore other works of kabbalah.¹³ A case in point is the following exchange between Yosef

10 Porush, *Merkavah Shlema*, “Small Opening,” 3. These words turn up at the beginning of a most unusual book, which has nothing to do with Lurianic or Sharabian kabbalah. According to Porush, he toiled on this book for several reasons: “In this sort of orphaned generation, even after all the study of the *Eṣ Hayyim* and the eight gates and *Minḥa Blulah beShemen* and the intention in the siddur of our teacher the rabbi the RaShaSh and the rest of the *yihudim*, one must still take heed not to be overtaken by disgrace and opprobrium heaven forbid for the great day of judgment.”

11 E.g., Aharon Azriel wrote that the RaShaSh appeared to him while he was ill and gave a quasi-recommendation for his book; Azriel, *Sefer Kapei Aharon*, part 1, “Second Introduction;” Moskowitz, *Hayei haRashash*, 85–89; Grayevski, *Miginzei Yerushalayim*. Likewise, in Shlomo Tzofioff's dream, the RaShaSh allegedly prayed on behalf of Jacob S. Kassin; Hillel, “The Life of Jacob Kassin,” 69.

12 The “culprit” in this episode is Eliyahu Suliman Mani. While studying with Nissim Eyni from the book *Divrei Shalom* by Rafael Avraham Sharabi (the RaShaSh's grandson), a difficult passage came up. Mani asserted that the author of the work in question did not get to the bottom of the RaShaSh's words. As soon as these words left Mani's lips, he lost his ability to speak. Following a confession, the RaShaSh came to Mani in a dream and reprimanded him. As a result, the dreamer subsequently proclaimed in a manuscript “Not to criticize *Sefer Divrei Shalom*.” Mani, *Sefer Me'il Eliyahu*, 6. Hayyim Vital also revealed himself to Mani in one of his dreams; *ibid*, 5.

13 Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El*, 98–104.

Hayyim of Baghdad (1835–1909) – the influential Sephardic rabbi and author of the popular halakhic-cum-mystic work *Ben Ish Hai* – and another Torah scholar at the end of the nineteenth century: “If I am fortunate,” the latter said, “and will go up to Jerusalem, of which it is said (Isa 2:3): ‘From Zion the Torah shall depart, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem,’ where many scholars study this wisdom [i.e., kabbalah], how will I know who is the consummate sage that I can rely on and sit before [in order] to learn this wisdom from?” R. Yosef Hayyim replied that he should test out all the candidates and ask each scholar to explain several pages of Sharabi’s work of kabbalah *Nahar Shalom*. In the end, he should choose the one who discerns all the hints to HaARI’s writings in those of the RaShaSh, compares between the two savants’ oeuvres, and manages to reconcile the supposed contradictions between them. Upon finding the right mentor, tell him, R. Yosef Hayyim added, to “please teach me the wisdom of truth that was revealed by our rabbi HaARI. If you understand these texts clearly, then it is for the best [because] I truly thirst for the words of our rabbi HaARI that you will teach me; and if heaven forbid your mind is confused by them, why would you confuse me”¹⁴ According to one tradition, the novice who sought Hayyim’s guidance was Suliman Eliyahu, who ended up studying under Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen at Rehovot haNahar.¹⁵

The major kabbalah seminaries in Jerusalem all toed the same line with respect to the study of Lurian and Sharabian thought. Accordingly, most of the customs that they observed, the *tikkunim* they instituted, and the prayers they formulated were based on these traditions. In addition, their way of life revolved around the RaShaSh’s prayer intentions, which were usually copied onto folios and disseminated to other places as well. The kabbalists at these yeshivot worked diligently on these intentions during prayers that lasted for hours on end, as this practice was considered the very essence of learning Torah and worshipping God.¹⁶ For this reason, a string of warnings was targeted at those

14 Yosef Hayyim, *Sefer Da’at uTvunah*, “The Author’s Foreword.” In several places Yosef Hayyim reiterated the need for and importance of learning kabbalah orally from the mouth of a wise rabbi according to an established tradition. He even went so far as to equate one who studies exclusively from books to a congenitally blind person who is taken to the palace and given an explanation of the splendor before him; Yosef Hayyim, *Rav Pe’alim*, part 3, “Sod Yesharim,” §13, 130a. Also see *ibid*, §1, 1a-2b. Hayyim’s contention that it is incumbent upon kabbalists to reconcile the contradictions between HaARI and the RaShaSh is tied to R. Shlomo Molkho’s claims in *Shemen Zayit Zakh*; see Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, vol. 3, 1064–1069.

15 Hillel, “The Life of Suliman Eliyahu,” 28–29; Meir, “Toward the Popularization of Kabbalah,” 148–149.

16 Giller expands on how Jerusalem’s kabbalists prayed in the Sharabian tradition and on the meaning of *kavvanot*; *idem*, “Between Poland and Jerusalem,” 226–250; *idem*, “Leadership

who approached this kind of prayer. Alternatively, plaudits were heaped on mystics that advanced to the level of *mekhavven* (intenter) – a title outranking that of *mekubal* (kabbalist).¹⁷ Sharabi's commentary on the Lurianic kabbalah, which for all intents and purposes was an additional floor of that same edifice as well as a new kabbalistic method in its own right, gradually became the only reading that is deemed to be faithful to HaARI's thought.¹⁸ Although not a focal point for most of Jerusalem's kabbalists, commentaries that diverged from the RaShaSh's path (especially the kabbalistic writings of the Vilna Gaon's disciples and Hasidic works) were nevertheless copied, printed, and studied in Jerusalem. Manuscript copies of, say, R. Abraham Abulafia's works could also be found on Beit El's shelves during the nineteenth century. In fact, the yeshiva's habitués went to great lengths to obtain these texts and occasionally copied them alongside the RaShaSh's intentions. However, there is no evidence that these writings were studied in a systematic and orderly fashion.¹⁹ In any

and Charisma," 21–41; idem, *Shalom Shar'abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El*; Kallus, *Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah*; Mezuman, *The Intentions of the Four Deeds*. Also see Green's lucid description: "Kabbalah developed a highly complex system of *kavvanot* for...the daily prayers. Each divine name that appeared in the *siddur* was taken as a reference to some permutation of the *sefirot*. The precise wording of the prayer text became the object of seemingly endless commentary and mystical speculation. Praying with the proper *kavvanot* required great amounts of time and patience, in addition to significant kabbalistic learning;" idem, *These are the Words*, 131. We will expand on the *siddur*'s first print run below.

- 17 Hillel elaborates on this topic in idem, *Ahavat Shalom*, 241–310.
- 18 The RaShaSh's gospel and the changes that he introduced to Lurian kabbalah are not broached herein. For a discussion on these topics, see Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El*; idem, *Kabbalah*, 132–134; Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, vol. 2, 756–757, 782–788, 853–854, 898; vol. 3, 1052–1053, 1064–1069. Avivi also examines Lurianic kabbalah and the writings of HaARI's adherents under Sharabi's tutelage.
- 19 For example, Sasson ben Moshe (the head of the Beit El Yeshiva until 1903) possessed manuscripts of Abraham Abulafia's *Sefer Hayei Olam haBah* and *Sefer Sulam haAliyah*. See Scholem and Yisakhar, *Catalogus codicum Cabbalisticorum Hebraicorum*, 33. Several of Abulafia's works that were copied at Jerusalem kabbalah seminaries are preserved at the Israel National Library and in Shlomo Moussaieff's manuscript collection. However, there was apparently some resistance to Abulafian thought in the early twentieth century. For instance, Shimon Zvi Horowitz deprecates Abulafia in a book that, first and foremost, praises the kabbalah and beseeches its readers to delve into this body of knowledge; Horowitz, *Sefer Ohr haMei'r veKol Mevasser*, 19b–20a (including Solomon ben Aderet's famous words against Abulafia). On the reception of Abulafia from hereon in, see Huss, "The Formation of Jewish Mysticism," 142–162; Idel, "Avraham Abulafia," 819–834. One of Yohanan Alemanno's manuscripts that was held by the Beit El Yeshiva is discussed in Ogren, "Chaotic Beginnings," 96.

event, Beit El's kabbalists and their ilk were far from reclusive Nazirites obsessed with prayer intentions or the minutiae of Lurian esoteric knowledge. A survey of the institution's regulars and their activity indicates that they were interested in a wide selection of topics. For instance, many of them penned books of homiletic literature and ethics, *tikkunim*, Talmud commentaries, and an array of Halakhic books.²⁰

This state of affairs basically endured until 1948. Be that as it may, the expansion of Beit El's "student body" and the founding of new yeshivot of this sort inevitably triggered riveting changes that diversified the approach of the Sharabian kabbalists.

Beit El's Astonishment at Reports of Its Decline

In essence, the status of early twentieth-century kabbalah appreciably differed from the morbid accounts that we highlighted in the introduction. By the tail end of the 1800s, Beit El had certainly seen better days, and the major earthquake that hit the region in 1927 severely damaged the yeshiva's building. As a result, quite a few of its regulars transferred to other seminaries. In 1929, Eliezer Rivlin wrote the following description in his annotations to Frumkin's above-cited book, *The Annals of Jerusalem's Sages*:

Over the past few years, the bundle of Jerusalem's kabbalists has come apart, and they have been divided among a few yeshivot. The Beit El Synagogue was almost completely destroyed; the kabbalists have left it, and its books have been scattered in every direction, and the building itself was almost completely ruined in the great earthquake that took place on the 11th of Tamuz 5687.²¹

While all this information is true, Rivlin failed to mention that the yeshiva was rebuilt and continued to operate virtually without pause until 1948.²² There are beautiful accounts of Beit El that were penned during the first half of

20 For a description of Beit El's resident scholars from its establishment in 1737 to its temporary relocation in 1948, see Gepner, *Midrasho shel Shem*.

21 Note by Eliezer Rivlin in Frumkin, *Toldot Hakhmei Yerushalayim*, vol. 3, 122.

22 For a description of the yeshiva's renovation and activities in 1928, see Baruch, "Qehal Hasidim," 296–300; Hedaya, *Sefer Deiah yeHaskel*, vol. 1, 15a; Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 1, 142–143; Haibi, 'Anaq haRuah 97–98. Also see the effusive account of Unger, "MeHayei Kat haMequbalim," 716–718.

the twentieth century by visitors to the seminary. For instance, Shmuel Yosef Agnon, who occasionally prayed in the yeshiva, rendered belletristic portraits thereof. According to his own testimony, the Nobel laureate befriended a few of its kabbalists, who helped him translate parts of the Zohar that are quoted in his popular anthology *Yamim Nora'im* (1938).²³

At any rate, when Beit El's own habitués got word of Rivlin's claims, they were indeed aghast. Nevertheless, the regulars wasted no time in articulating a firm riposte. In a 1931 anthology on the Azriel family and its connection to Beit El, the yeshiva's scholars also sought to debunk the hypothesis as to their sharp decline. More specifically, a letter was sent by "The Holy Community of the Beit El Hasids" to the book's editor, Pinhas Grayevsky. Signed by the kabbalists and sextons Shalom Hedaya, Shmuel Azran, Avraham Azriel, Naftali Baruch, and Yeshuah ben Sasson, they described the yeshiva as a vibrant place bustling with a wide range of activities, including the following:

And on the 14th of Shvat the eve of the passing of the rabbi and sage Shalom Mizrahi Sharabi a righteous person of blessed memory the founder of this holy place, we do a huge [night of] study for the ascension of his soul and most of Jerusalem's sages and rabbis come and the building will be filled as will the court and the sukkah what with the lack of space. And a few Torah scholars learn all night and the sexton of the holy community remunerates them each according to his status; furthermore, on the sixth week of the Omer²⁴ we schedule a study session every night on the kabbalah, as was instituted by the founders, like angels may their virtue protect us amen, and on the sixth night of the sixth week we do a *tikkun karet* to repair the *yesod* [foundation] and [pray for] the success of all the people that consecrate and maintain this place. And unlike what was written by R. Eliezer Rivlin in his notes to the book *Annals of Jerusalem's Sages* that the Beit El Synagogue was almost completely destroyed and

23 Agnon, *Me'atsmi el Atsmi*, 184; idem, *Elu veElu*, 420–424; idem, *Lifnim min haHoma*, 12–13, 29–32 (where he describes the venerable kabbalist Massoud HaKohen and the cantor Avraham Chaim of Volozhin). For a discussion on Agnon's ties with Beit El's habitués, see Yaron, *Chapters from My Life*, 76; Brawer, "BeMeḥiṣato shel Agnon," 427; Shilo, *The Kabbalah in the Works of Agnon*, 17–34; *inter alios*. R. Yehuda Tzvi Brandwein and Avraham Chaim of Volozhin helped Agnon translate the above-mentioned parts of the Zohar. In 1944, Agnon attempted to set up a meeting between Brandwein and Fishel Lachower, who was then working on the first volume of the scholarly Zoharic anthology *Mishnat haZohar*. See Agnon, *Misod Hakhhamim*, 163; Brandwein, Letter to Agnon, undated (MS).

24 The Omer is a devotional-cum-agricultural countdown between the second day of Passover and the Festival of Weeks.

the kabbalists have left it and its books have been scattered in every direction and the building itself was almost completely ruined in the great earthquake that took place on the 11th of Tamuz 5687. This is untrue. For it has already been rebuilt; and on the first of the month of Adar the year 5688 [1928] they made a dedication ceremony with utmost pageantry and splendor and before an enormous crowd, a king's splendor [...] Great will be the honor of this house until the coming of the redeemer swiftly in our time amen may this be His will.²⁵

It appears that this description is more faithful to reality than Rivlin's. In fact, the yeshiva continued to operate more or less in this fashion until 1948. The seminary was headed by R. Sasson ben Moshe (1823–1903) from 1883 to 1903.²⁶ He was succeeded by Massoud Alhadad HaKohen (1820–1927) who, among other things, stood at the institution's helm and regularly led the congregation in prayer, until his death at a ripe old age.²⁷ Between approximately 1927 and 1945, the mantle was held by Shalom Hedaya (1864–1944), who immigrated to Jerusalem from Allepo in 1899.²⁸

Throughout these years, Beit El continued to dispatch rabbinical emissaries to various lands for the sake of collecting money for the institution and its students.²⁹ An extant leaflet and account book from a fundraising mission

25 Grayevsky, *Miginzei Yerushalayim*, 18. For a look at the Azriel family, see Azriel, Letter from a Member of the Azriel family to Moshe David Gaon (MS), *inter alia*. This document includes a list of the kabbalists that the family produced.

26 Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 160. For information on Moshe ben Sasson's passing, see the announcement in the newspaper *Habazeleth*: Frumkin, "Yerushalayim," 177.

27 Hedaya, *Sefer Deiah veHaskel*, 13a-15b; Bar-Osher, "Foreword," iii-xiii; Gepner, *Midrasho shel Shem*, 205–206; Dayan, *Hakhmei haMa'arav*, 297–302; Kahn, "HaMequbal ye'haPoseq," 22–25; Hallamish, *Kabbalah in North Africa*, 46; Bar-Asher, "Eretz Israel in the Thought of North African Sages," 221–222. According to Gaon, Alhadad HaKohen "was among the greatest of Jerusalem's rabbis, headed the holy community and the Beit El Beit Midrash of Hasids. In the last years of his life he suffered many tribulations, for his ability to walk on his feet was taken from him. His admirers and those who held him in esteem carried him on their shoulders to the above-mentioned house of worship on holidays and festivals. For a long period of time he was left lying in the corner of his room without moving, and boreth the burden of his bitter fate in silence. For many years, he was considered the doyen of Beit El's kabbalists;" Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 46.

28 Kahn, "Ma'ase Shalom," 3–68; Laniado, *LaQedoshim asher baAReS*, 37–38 (picture included); Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 219; Gepner, *Midrasho shel Shem*, 213–214; Levi, *Derekh Sadiqim*, vol. 1, 72–73.

29 See, for example, Beit El Yeshiva, Letter to Tunis, signed by Massoud Alhadad HaKohen, 1901 (MS); idem, Letter to Oran, Algeria, signed by Massoud Alhadad HaKohen, 1904 (MS);

that was carried out during the 1909–1910 year by one of the seminary’s envoys, Ben-Zion Chaim Pizanti, shed light on this enterprise.³⁰ The same can be said for myriad documents (e.g., copies of sermons) that are connected to similar efforts on the part of Joseph Haim Shrem, whose final expedition on the seminary’s behalf was in 1917. Shrem is one of the last envoys for whom there is substantial documentation.³¹ In a placard distributed upon his departure for a mission that same year, the yeshiva was touted as “a place where they will always explore the holy Zohar and the wisdom of the kabbalah for all its sublime secrets and [hold] prayers according to the kabbalah.” Moreover, the flyer reads that “our prayers determine whose life shall be sustained in this holy and awe-inspiring place, Beit El, a place that is capable of having prayers accepted and is a gateway to heaven.”³² Even following the outbreak of the First World War, the yeshiva apparently continued to dispatch rabbinical emissaries who occasionally netted contributions from individuals and organizations. That said, the cataclysm took its toll on the Beit El community. In around 1919, Alhadad HaKohen wrote a moving letter to the Municipal Committee for the Jews of Jerusalem concerning his institution’s plight.³³

Among Beit El’s noteworthy regulars in the early 1900s were Ovadia Hedaya, Eliyahu Yaakov Lag’imi, Isaac Gagin, Abraham Gagin, Isaac Perera, Nahman Angil, Haim Yisrael Alfiyah of Aleppo, and his son Yitzchak Alfiyah. Angil compiled a document listing tens of scholars who took part in special study groups (on the revealed and the concealed) that convened at the seminary in either 1920 or 1921 on the anniversary of Sharabi’s passing (the 14th of Shvat).³⁴ There

idem, Letters concerning the Mission of Nahman Angil, 1908 (MS); idem, Letters concerning the Mission of Shlomo Isaac Reuven, 1908 (MS); idem, Letters to Iran and Kurdistan, 1929 (MS). Also see the important material in the Jacob Ben Atar Archive, Beit El Yeshiva, Letters and Documents (MS).

30 Beit El Yeshiva, Letters, concerning Pizanti, 1909–1910 (MS). For more on this emissary, see Haim, *Documents from the Collection of Elie Eliachar*, 51.

31 Beit El Yeshiva, *Ma Nora haMaqom*, 1917 (placard). The flyer’s main emphasis is a call to deposit “A ransom as is customary from years past” in Shrem’s hands. For more on his fundraising and other efforts on behalf of Beit El, see Shrem, *Sefer Raḥshi Lev*, 15–31; Ben-Yaakov, *Travelling Envoy*, vols. 1–2; Laniado, *LaQedoshim asher baAReṢ*, 175–176.

32 Beit El Yeshiva, *Ma Nora haMaqom*, 1917 (placard).

33 Alhadad HaKohen, Letter to the Municipal Committee for the Jews of Jerusalem, 1919 (MS). The Gaon archive also holds a fancy receipt that the yeshiva issued during this period. Signed by Massoud Alhadad HaKohen, it records a cash donation from the Sephardic Committee; Beit El Yeshiva, Receipt, 1919 (MS). Also see Beit El Yeshiva, Letter to Yaacov Bardugo, Morocco, 1925 (MS).

34 Angil, *Drushim vePeirushim*, viii–ix, 208. The list only includes the guests, not regular congregants. For more on this event, see the 1874 account by one of the yeshiva’s sages; Azriel,

is also a registry of the yeshiva's deceased sages and rabbis, from the days of the RaShaSh onwards. Assembled between 1934 and 1940, this source also divulges the books that the institution helped bring to press over the years.³⁵ It bears noting that in around 1931, "the Hasids plot" on the Mount of Olives, namely the section for Sharabian kabbalists, was reinaugurated.³⁶

When the Jewish Quarter fell to Jordan in 1948, Beit El was compelled to find a new home. It was the incumbent rosh yeshiva, Ovadia Hedaya (1889–1969) who renewed the yeshiva's activities outside the Old City's walls.³⁷ In a draft of a fundraising appeal from the 1950s, Hedaya bemoaned the paucity of kabbalists in his lifetime:

Much to our regret [the kabbalah] is steadily fading into oblivion. We remember the kabbalist rabbis in and outside the [Old] City, that there were kabbalistic synagogues in Beit El founded by the RaShaSh may his merit protect us amen as well as in the Bukharan Quarter which also abounded with their virtues; their huge merit safeguarded the entire world, and now much to our regret this entire generation has come to a close and passed on, and all that remain are o[ne] from [the] city and two from the family; about four years ago I stood up and drew encouragement to coordinate and renew the great yeshiva of Beit El, but unfortunately the opportunity has yet to present itself to me to fully renew it given the absence of a designated venue for this purpose and the lack of a helper and supporter; for I have seen mystics and they are few – there is no aspirant and no seeker.³⁸

It appears that Hedaya's words are more an outpouring of nostalgia for a bygone generation and an attempt to demonstrate that he was the faithful custodian of its legacy than an accurate diagnosis of the state of kabbalah at the time.

Kapei Aharon, "Second Introduction." Also see Grayevski, *Miginzei Yerushalayim*, 18; Gepner, *Midrasho shel Shem*, 63; Bension, *Shalom Sharabi*, 58.

35 Beit El Yeshiva, *Pinkas Shemot*, 1934–1940 (MS). The registry was perhaps compiled by Gaon's father.

36 Beit El Yeshiva, *Qol Qore*. This four-page booklet lists the sages of Beit El that are interred on the Mount of Olives.

37 Ovadia Hedaya was also involved in the yeshiva's affairs while his father, Shalom, was at the helm. In addition, the son wrote many Halakhic books. For more on Hedaya the younger, see Garb, "Kabbalah Outside the Walls," 13–27.

38 Hedaya, Portions of a Sermon, 1950 (MS). Part of Hedaya's estate, including kabbalistic responsa and the drafts of his sermons, have reached the Israel National Library.

A Short Note on the Essence of the Kabbalah Seminaries

In parallel to the activity at Beit El, new kabbalah centers flourished in Jerusalem. Moreover, tens of individual kabbalists studied outside the yeshiva framework; and at times, they attracted study groups and disciples of their own. All of these figures toiled, in one way or the other, to disseminate Jewish esoteric knowledge in the early 1900s. Elsewhere, I examined the dozens of kabbalists who were active in the city during this period, but these figures have yet to be researched in an exhaustive manner. Each of them was tied, to some degree, with at least one or more seminaries in the city.³⁹ This enterprise gave rise to a sort of Jerusalem kabbalah renaissance. Among the new yeshivot that significantly contributed to this phenomenon were Rehovot haNahar, which opened its doors in around 1896; Sha'ar Shamayim, which was established about a decade later; and the Oz veHadar Yeshiva, which has been in existence since 1923. Every institution had a unique character; and a host of influential kabbalists – only a small portion of whom will be mentioned over the course of this book – gravitated around each yeshiva. On occasion, these individuals were affiliated with multiple institutions, as some of their names turn up on the rosters of a couple of the seminaries at one and the same time. Moreover, established kabbalah groups met at several of Jerusalem's synagogues as well as private residences and synagogues that were founded by Hasidic courts. From the 1940s onwards, many kabbalists arrived in the Land of Israel, and these new arrivals indeed warrant a survey of their own. Not surprisingly, there was a concomitant upsurge of seminaries in Jerusalem with kabbalah studies on the curriculum.

The stated objective of most of these yeshivot was neither to increase kabbalah wisdom among young Jews within the institution's confines nor design a standard approach to teaching this literature. Instead, the official role of these independent institutions was to provide for the livelihood of Torah scholars with a long track record in this field.⁴⁰ To this end, the yeshivot regularly dispatched emissaries on fundraising missions. The most active players in this arena were Beit El and Sha'ar Shamayim, both of which garnered considerable support from abroad. Comprehensive descriptions of these and other seminaries were penned by their founders and habitués as well as random visitors to

39 Meir, "Wrestling with the Esoteric," 585–647.

40 Luncz, "The Jews in the Land of Israel," 192–193; Ben Hillel HaKohen, *Atkhalta*, 122–123; Ben-Arieh, *A City Reflected in its Times*, 346–347, 413; Ben-Naeh, "Religious Life in Nineteenth Century Jerusalem," 332–333, 337.

Jerusalem.⁴¹ At times, the kabbalistic schools operated alongside other frameworks, such as *talmud torahs* (Talmudic academies) and synagogues; these affiliates even shared the same name. In other words, some of the institutions ran two separate divisions under the same roof. For example, Sha'ar haShamayim established special *talmud torahs*, and Oz veHadar was an in-house “subsidiary” of Porat Yosef. At any rate, the publications of the various seminaries indicate that most of them allocated resources to both kabbalah and Talmudic studies.

Zvi Meroni, who in the late 1930s canvassed the “lives of Jerusalem’s kabbalists” from the outside looking in, concluded (in his book *The Dreamers in Jerusalem: Sketches of the Lines and the Dreamers, Esotericism, and Kabbalists in the Jerusalemite Present*) that his subjects had ushered in a mystical “renaissance.” In his estimate, there are 500 Jewish mystics in Jerusalem, “half of them study in public [i.e., in yeshivot specializing in kabbalah] and half on a solitary basis.” All told, he offered a romantic and far-fetched account of the kabbalistic “magic” that permeated the city.⁴² However, his assessment that Jerusalem had an unparalleled number of frameworks for studying Jewish mysticism was certainly not an exaggeration.

Rehovot haNahar

Many observers considered Rehovot haNahar to be the preeminent kabbalah seminary in Jerusalem during the first half of the twentieth century – a sort of new Beit El or its successor. Headed by R. Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen of Aleppo (1857–1933),⁴³ the institution was founded in the Bukharan Quarter circa 1896 by a cadre of kabbalists who broke off from the venerable Beit El Yeshiva. The lion’s share of Rehovot haNahar’s budget was provided by Nissim Nahum (1863–1927), an affluent Tripolitan who practiced kabbalistic mortification. In the years ahead, Nahum would also help finance the establishment

41 See, for instance, the general accounts of contemporaneous observers: Abraham Samuel Herschberg, *In Oriental Lands*, 302, 429–430; Meroni, *The Dreamers*, 65–118; Unger, “MeḤayei Kat haMequbalim,” 716–718.

42 Meroni, *The Dreamers*, 72–73.

43 Shapira, “The Elder of the Kabbalists,” 6; Laniado, “The Elder of the Kabbalists,” 3; idem, *LaQedoshim asher baArēṣ*, 8, xvii–xviii (with his picture); Sutton, *Aleppo*, 172–178; Moskowitz, *Hayei haRashash*, 95–98; Hillel, “The Life of Dweck-HaKohen,” 23–31, 41; Afang’in, *HaRashash*, 326–331; Kallus, *The Theurgy of Prayer*, 127–129; Pozailov, *From Bukhara to Jerusalem*, 246–248; idem, *The Great Rabbis of Syria and Lebanon*, 148–160; Giller, *Shalom Shar’abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El*, 58–59, 88–89.

of Porat Yosef and Sha'ar haShamayim. Moreover, he footed the printing costs for numerous kabbalah books.⁴⁴ Generous backing, not least the property for the seminary, also came from the elites of Jerusalem's Bukharan community.⁴⁵ Foremost among them was Shlomo Moussaieff (1852–1922), among the neighborhood's founders. A practitioner of the kabbalah in his own right, Moussaieff opened his home and library to Rehovot haNahar's sages, *inter alios*.⁴⁶

While passing through the Bukharan Quarter in 1899–1900, Abraham Samuel Herschberg, a Jewish pilgrim from Bialystok, entered the said yeshiva and made the following observations:

I visited its synagogue and its beit midrash, both of which are simple rooms with benches next to the walls and mats spread out on the ground. In its beit midrash I found sages from Aram Şoba (Aleppo) sitting on the mats and studying books of kabbalah. These sages are subsisted by the community for this purpose. Additionally, I found two young Sephardim sitting alone and delving into *Eş Hayyim* by R. Hayyim Vital. I struck up a conversation with these young scholars and reminded them of what it is said: that youngsters like them should avoid [studying kabbalah], and they apologized to me, for they do not really study it.⁴⁷

44 For more on the patron, see Kassin, *Sefer Pri Eş haGan*, vol. 1, 75–104; Laniado, *LaQedoshim asher baAReŞ*, 96–97; Sutton, *Aleppo*, 282–283. Gaon depicted Nahum's kabbalistic-cum-ascetic practices; idem, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 462; Noy, *Jewish Folktales*, 228–231. Also see Yehoshua, "Fortune Tellers," 238; Pe'er, *HaMore*, 80–85; Levi, *Derekh Şadiqim*, vol. 2, 89–90; Agiv, "Nissim Nahum," 28–41; Nahum, "Avi Z'L," 42–47; Munseh, *Pada et Avraham*, vol. 1, 401–402, 410, 417–418; Hillel, "The Life of Dweck-HaKohen," 9–59. For more on Nahum's support of the institution, see Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, Report, 1938 (MS), *inter alia*.

45 Details of the seminary's expenditures can be found in the annual financial statements of the Rehovot Co. E.g., Rehovot, *Heshbon* (1899), 13; idem, *Heshbon* (1903), 66; idem, *Shemes şdakah*, last page. The later reports list all the sages-cum-kabbalists that received support. This patronage is also discussed in Pozailov, *From Bukhara to Jerusalem*, 233, 246–247; Wharman, *The Bukharians*, 52. During the first years of its existence, the yeshiva resided in Shlomo Moussaieff's synagogue. From 1899 until the early 1930s, it was in the Issacharoff-Babayof Synagogue, whereupon it relocated to the neighborhood of Maḥane Yehudah. See Rehovot haNahar, Report, 1938 (MS).

46 For more on Moussaieff as well as his library and its wealth of kabbalistic manuscripts, see Avivi, *Ohel SheM*; Pozailov, *Bukharan Jewry*, 325–353; idem, *From Bukhara to Jerusalem*, 355–356. At one stretch, Rehovot haNahar was located in Shlomo Moussaieff's home; see *ibid.*, 248, 369–371.

47 Herschberg, *BeEreş haMizrah*, 429. An earlier report from that same trip offers the following information: "In their neighborhood, they built for themselves a special 'midrash' in

It is worth noting that Herschberg also broached the topic of the language of instruction, Hebrew, in Rehovot haNahar. He posited that the holy tongue was chosen because it was the only one that all the participants had in common. Despite the use of the “renewed” ancestral language, Herschberg commented that the Bukharians are far removed from any national ardor or Zionism, for they “are radical Orthodox predisposed toward the secrets of the kabbalah.”⁴⁸

The founding core of the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva was indeed comprised of sages from Aleppo. However, it appears that scholars from other ethnic communities soon got on board, as they were all united by their affinity to the RaShaSh’s way and the unique personality of Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen.

Dweck-HaKohen began immersing himself in kabbalah back in Aleppo, where the Sharabian gospel had arrived at an early stage. Already in the RaShaSh’s lifetime, tens of manuscript copies of his siddur with the intentions – subsequently known as the “short version” – were distributed in Aleppo. Although we lack firm evidence of standardized kabbalah study in Aleppo, it appears that a quasi-kabbalistic yeshiva was founded there in around 1830. The institution’s habitués prayed in accordance to the RaShaSh’s intentions and copied significant portion of his writings. During this period, the city’s main Sharabian figures were Eliyahu Mishan (ob. 1882) and Nissim Harari-Raful (ob. 1870). The former maintained close ties with Beit El’s practitioners, foremost among them Yedidyah Raphael Chai Abulafia. Harari-Raful possessed exact copies of and engrossed himself in the nuances of the RaShaSh’s siddur. Both of these kabbalists cultivated several disciples. Dweck-HaKohen, who emerged

48 which sages from Aram Şoba sit all day and deliberate over kabbalah books and they [i.e., members of the community] subsist them;” Herschberg, *Mishpat haYishuv heĤadash*, 14. Herschberg, *BeEreş haMizrah*, 430: “I visited the building of the *talmud torah*’s two departments: the Holy Scriptures, [taught] in the grammar of the Hebrew language and also one matter in the Talmud and I found proficiency in their studies. In particular, I was amazed that all the studies learnt in this building are in Hebrew, and their method of learning came out by them not according to [*sic*] an external awakening of nationalists and Zionists – movements that are a great distance from the Bukharians who are radical Haredis predisposed toward the secrets of the kabbalah, but rather simply out of necessity, since the Sephardic teachers do not know the Bukharian that flows from the mouths of the pupils and they do not hear the Sephardic tongue of the instructors.... In its own right this method deserves to be the standard for our generation and our elders themselves particularly in the Land of Israel.” Also see Themanlys, “The Beth El Kabbalist,” 23. The question of whether to teach in Hebrew, Yiddish, or other languages indeed became a bone of contention between the various groups in the Yishuv. In traditional Sephardic society, there were members who adopted the “Hebrew in Hebrew” approach for reasons that diverged from the concerns of the “language’s reformers,” like Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. For precedents of this sort, see Haramati, *Three who Preceded Ben-Yehuda*, among others.

from this same circle,⁴⁹ had another mentor, R. Mordechai Abadi (ob. 1883). Adopting a slightly different kabbalistic approach than his colleagues, Abadi taught a few other students as well.⁵⁰

In around 1890, Dweck-HaKohen arrived in the Land of Israel from Aleppo, along with a group of other sages and kabbalists, where he joined the ranks of the Beit El Yeshiva. A bevy of Aleppo natives, including Yom Tov Yedid Halevi, Ezra Harari-Rafal, Shaul Kassin, Isaac Shrem, and Dweck-HaKohen, were regularly present at the seminary. Within a couple of years, they would become the founding core of the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva. Vidal ben Chanoch Angil described the evolution of this group:

Two individuals from Ḥalab, Rabbi Shaul [Dweck-] HaKohen and Rabbi Yom Tov Levi, reached the community of Hasids [i.e., Beit El]; and they have arrived filled with the eight gates [i.e., HaARI's writings], and they are practiced to some degree in the siddur, and they study with us a bit in a group from the siddur, and they already practically started to pray with *kavvanot*, and we were happy, for it seems that they are holy from the womb and will be frequent [attenders of the yeshiva]; with God's help, may all the *mekhavvnim* from the Sephardic community be upright and worthy of this undertaking.⁵¹

Despite the glowing first impressions, a rift gradually formed in Beit El, due to tension between the younger habitués and the veterans (as evident from several comments in the kabbalist Shalom Mizrahi Adani's 1899 book)⁵² as well as

49 Laniado, *LaQedoshim asher baAReŞ*, 160–161; Sutton, *Aleppo*, 76–79, 275–276, 206–210; Hillel, *Emet meAram Şoba*, 7–9. On the Aleppo center of Sharabian Kabbalah and the dynamics between several kabbalistic traditions therein, see Avraham Hillel, “Midrash Ḥasidim beAram Şoba,” 281–335; idem, “Introduction,” Mishan, *Sefer Sfat Emet*, 21–68. See also Zoher, *Rabbinic Creativity*, 135–136, 162, 166.

50 Among Mordechai Abadi's kabbalah students were a few of Aleppo's brightest, including Yaakov Haim Yisrael Alfiyahh (1862–1923), who joined Beit El in 1890, Yaakov ben Shaul Dweck (ob. 1919), and Alter Noah HaKohen Michalenski (Kaiser). A Hasid, kabbalist, and *ba'al shem*, Michalenski put out a few of Abadi's books with various additions of his own. See Meir, “The Career of a Baal Shem.”

51 From a letter dated June 26, 1890, parts of which were published by Hillel, “The Life of Dweck-HaKohen,” 23–24. For a biographic look at R. Vidal Angil, see Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 110.

52 Adani, *Sefer Shlom Yerushalayim*, 190. Born in Yemen, Adani arrived to Jerusalem and joined the Beit El Yeshiva. On the margins of his writing is fascinating dream material. See Yaakov Moshe Hillel's introduction to the new edition of this book; *ibid*, 9–10.

a disagreement over how to carry out the RaShaSh's intentions during a sabbatical year.⁵³ Whatever the case, the Aleppo contingent ultimately decided to establish a new yeshiva.

Headed by Dweck-HaKohen, the seminary, Rehovot haNahar, was established outside the Old City, in the Bukharan Quarter. Among the regulars at the new institution were, at various stages, Avraham Antebbi, Shaul Kassin, Avraham Ades, Shalom Yosef Alshich Halevi, Eliyahu Yaakov Lag'imi, Yom Tov Yedid Halevi, Eliezer Halevi (Yom Tov's son), Isaac Abadi, Isaac Shrem, Yaakov Lopas, Suliman Eliyahu, Yehuda Fatiyah, Yaakov Chaim Sofer, Eliyahu Moshe Ma'aravi, Haim Ben Sa'adia, Shlomo Mashiach, and many more. Some of these kabbalists even entered into a writ of allegiance obligating them to pray in the same place every day as per the RaShaSh's intentions and to occupy themselves with Talmudic studies.⁵⁴

With Rehovot haNahar's establishment and the standardization of its numerous activities, it became the most important and vibrant kabbalah institution in Jerusalem, accommodating tens of highly influential kabbalists. At the heart of the yeshiva's enterprise stood the works of HaARI and the RaShaSh. Likewise, its regulars strove to enhance the discipline of praying with intention. Yeshaya Asher Zelig (RYAZ) Margalio,⁵⁵ who was on close terms with Rehovot haNahar's sages, including its rosh yeshiva (see the discussion below), shed light on the daily routine at this seminary:

53 For a discussion on why these kabbalists left Beit El, see Kassin, *Sefer Pri Eš haGan*, 26, 59; Sutton, *Aleppo*, 61–64; Hillel, *Sefer yeShavta haAres*, 25–28, 68–71; idem, “The Life of Dweck-HaKohen,” 24–25. Benayahu Shmueli explicates the “sabbatical” controversy in idem, *Quntres haShmita*, vol. 1, 47–50; vol. 2, 117–127. Also see Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, 184–185; Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El*, 71–73, 77. According to one eyewitness, Beit El's sages recoiled from Dweck-HaKohen's way, to the point of telling him that “The crown of *psbat* [the literal interpretation] is enough for you; leave the crown of kabbalah for your superiors;” Laniado, “The Elder of the Kabbalists,” 3.

54 Sutton, *Aleppo*, 63, 413–414; Hillel, “The Life of Dweck-HaKohen,” 28–30. The author furnishes a picture of the writ. Also see the yeshiva's 1911 “learning schedule,” which was divided into shifts. The schedule is signed by Dweck-HaKohen, Yom Tov Yedid Halevi, Haim ben Sa'adia, Shalom Yosef Alshich Halevi, Meir Laniado, and Shlomo Moussaieff. Pozailov, *From Bukhara to Jerusalem*, 369–371.

55 Margalio, *Azamer beShavkhin*. RYAZ merited extensive scholarly attention due to his fanaticism and anti-Zionist activity. See Friedman, *Society and Religion*, 131, 134–136, 141, 142, 279–280, 331; Liebes, “The Haredi Community,” 137–152; idem, “The Messiah of the Zohar,” 116–118; Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, 76–82, 326–328; idem, “Munkacs and Jerusalem,” 98–107; Fenton, “Asher Zelig Margalio,” 17–25; Inbari, *Messianic Religious Zionism*, 146–147. We will return to some of Margalio's writings below.

I also was fortunate enough to see a sun in its season and a moon at its puissance, the great and sacred seminary [that is] the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva here in Jerusalem, in the houses of the Bukharians. The yeshiva was the source of all wise men, my teacher and rabbi, the high priest Rabbi Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen, with the exertions of Nissim Nahum, and the princes of the holy group there were the rabbi R. Avraham Antebbi, and the rabbi Yom Tov Yedid Halevi, and the rabbi R. Shaul Kassin, all of them from among the remnants of Aram Şoba's sages, and the rabbi R. Yaakov Chaim Sofer the author-creator of the book *Kaf haHayim* on the *Shulkhan Arukh*, and more, and another twenty or so sages from the Maghreb and from Babylon [i.e., Iraq] and from Yemen, distinguished-looking elders were with them.⁵⁶

At this point, Margaliot turned to a description of Rehovot haNahar's programs, which were quite similar to those of Beit El:

And this is the yeshiva's schedule, the day and night schedule: on Saturday night following the holy Sabbath, after the *melaveh malkah* meal everyone came to the yeshiva, and there were many rooms set aside there for the sages, as the *mekhavvrim* were at the yeshiva every day of the week; and every midnight, the sexton went with them to the *mikveh* [ritual bath], and upon returning to the holy yeshiva from the immersion, they recited all the morning benedictions and the Torah blessings with all the intentions; and they conducted *tikkun haşot* [the Midnight Vigil] in a sackcloth and ashes, whereupon they would sit and learn until the break of dawn; there were those among them who studied on their own and practiced *yihudim* of HaARI that are brought forth in *Sha'ar Ruakh haKodesh*; and on this basis they later printed the book *Benayahu ben Yehoyada* containing all the *yihudim* of after midnight and other *yihudim* that are succinctly arranged in the order of the RaShaSh so that it will be easy to concentrate. And there were those among them who studied with Torah scholars who came there to the holy yeshiva to learn the wisdom of the kabbalah from them; all night it would shine like the day until the first light; and when dawn broke they wrapped and adorned themselves with a *tallit* and *tefillin* of Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam together. And they prayed with the *kavvanot* in the RaShaSh's siddur, the short siddur, and the Morning Prayer service lasted approximately four hours each and

56 Margaliot, *Sefer Şevi laŞadiq*, introduction, 28. For a picture of Dweck-HaKohen and Margaliot on the steps of the Tomb of the Patriarchs, see Margaliot, *Azamer beShavkhin*, 40.

every day; and after the service, they ate the morning meal, everyone in their [own] room, whereupon they slept and rested until midday thereabouts; and they studied the Mishnah and Talmud and *poskim* until the *mincha* [Afternoon] prayer service.... They worshiped God all week as per this holy schedule; and only on the Holy Sabbath did they return to their home, namely on the day before the Holy Sabbath in the afternoon; and on the eve of the Holy Sabbath and the day of the Holy Sabbath they all prayed together with *kavvanot*; joyous is the eye that has seen the congregation of Hasids blazing in the yeshiva [in] the holy of holies; joyous is the eye that has seen and the ear that has heard the seclusion [i.e. solitary prayers] of my teacher and rabbi the high priest and his colleagues upon inscribing their prayers with intentions, and the rustle of their lucid lips with a holy tune [and] the prolonging of the intentions with sacred movements in the customary melodies back from [the days of] the saintly RaShaSh and the fellowship may their souls dwell in Eden.⁵⁷

As discussed in later chapters, Rehovot haNahar's habitués, along with their counterparts at other seminaries (e.g., Sha'ar haShamayim) and independent kabbalists (e.g., Margaliot), contributed significantly to the dissemination of Sharabi's *kavvanot* and *tikkunim* during the first half of the 1900s. Needless to say, Dweck-HaKohen left his mark on this entire enterprise. Besides his *tikkunim* literature (a corpus that will be expanded on in Chapter 6), Dweck-HaKohen was a prolific annotator of HaARI and the RaShaSh's works. In addition, he took pains to reconcile the contradictions between their thought in a succinct and penetrating manner.⁵⁸ His magnum opus, *Eifa Shlema*, which includes comments on *Sefer Ošrot Hayim*, came out in Jerusalem in 1907. Affixed to this book are words of praise for those studying kabbalah.⁵⁹ What is more, Dweck-HaKohen annotated and helped publish several kabbalah books by sages from Baghdad and Aleppo, including the following: Nissim Harari, *Sefer Alei Nahar* (1903);⁶⁰ Sasson ben Mordechai Moses Shinduch, *Sefer Sdeh Lavan* (1904);⁶¹

57 Margaliot, *Zvi for the Righteous*, introduction, 28. See also Sutton, *Aleppo*, 63.

58 See Hillel, "The Life of Dweck-HaKohen," 39–42. Some of Dweck-HaKohen's annotations were never brought to print and remain in handwriting on the margins of printed books, such as the comments he jotted down on *Sefer Shemen Sasson*. This book was offered at a public auction; Sasson Behar Moshe, *Shemen Sasson* (MS).

59 Hayyim Vital, *Sefer Ošrot Hayyim*. We will expound on the printing of this book and all the surrounding developments in Chapter 5.

60 Harrari, *Alei Nahar*, with annotations Dweck-HaKohen.

61 Shinduch, *Sefer Sdeh Lavan*, brought to print by Ben-Zion Mordechai Hazan. The book commences with wondrous tales about the author and the fate of his writings. For an in-depth look at this figure, see Ben-Jacob, *Life and Writings of R. Sasson Shinduch*.

Eliyahu Mishan, *Sefer S'fat Emet* (1904);⁶² and Avigdor Azriel, *Sefer Zimrat haAreš* (1932).⁶³ This proclamation was appended to *S'fat Emet*: “An awakening to excite the heart of our brethren the Jewish people concerning the reason behind the Exile.” Put differently, Dweck-HaKohen urged his readers to expose themselves to the kabbalah literature and support its practitioners. In the introduction, the book’s release is tied to the founding of Rehovot haNahar:

And on the occasion that a new house of worship has been established within the holy society of Rehovot in the holy community of *ha'buḥaralia* [Little Bukhara]; and regulars in the said house of worship are rabbis studying the wisdom of truth in matters of utmost importance – pure utterances, and their soul wished to drink the waters of the spring of living water, [namely] to release a commentary on the *Pri Eš Hayyim* presented in this book.⁶⁴

Moreover, the revered kabbalist noted that the book’s publishers also possess a number of responsa concerning Jewish mysticism: the second part of Eliyahu Mishan’s *Darkei Emet*; a collection by Moshe Sweid; and a kabbalistic responsum from the pen of Dweck-HaKohen. However, Rehovot haNahar’s sages never managed to publish these books, as they remained in manuscript form for over half a century. In approximately 1910, Dweck-HaKohen also edited and put out *Emet me'Aram Šoba*, a book by his grandfather.⁶⁵ Last but not least, he helped publish the Jewish-Arabic translation of Eliyahu HaKohen of Izmir’s *Shevet Musar* in 1921.⁶⁶

Seventeen years later, in 1938, Moshe David Gaon summed up the figure of Dweck-HaKohen: “In isolation and privation throughout his days this kabbalistic rabbi was estranged and remote from his surroundings, and all that comes into existence outside the kabbalah’s purview did not concern him whatsoever, and was unlikely to distract him from the progression of his thoughts on

62 Mishan, *S'fat Emet*, printed on behalf of the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva. The book was brought to press by Shaul Kassin and Ezra Harari-Raful – two sages that were affiliated with Rehovot haNahar; Dweck-HaKohen’s annotations grace the margins.

63 Azriel, *Zimrat haAreš*. The book came out with the assistance of Rafael Azriel and Yom Tov Yedid Halevi. For a discussion on the multitude of kabbalists in the Azriel family, see Grayevski, *Miginzei Yerushalayim*.

64 Azriel, *Zimrat haAreš*, at the end of the book (*sans* pagination).

65 Shaul Dweck-HaKohen, *Sefer Emet meAram Šoba*.

66 Eliyahu HaKohen, *Atzait al Adev*. Towards the end of the book are a handful of *tikkunim* by Haim Yosef David Azulai (the HIDA) and the RaShaSh; *ibid*, 179a–181a.

the upper realms.”⁶⁷ Gaon’s portrayal notwithstanding, it appears that Dweck-HaKohen was indeed quite active on several disparate fronts, but some of them were far removed from Gaon’s ken. On these and others matters, Rehovot ha-Nahar’s sages were cut from the same cloth as Margalioth and his fellow Hasids-cum-kabbalists. For instance, they opposed all the new and secular trends that were reaching Jerusalem and other Jewish communities. Margalioth indeed attempted to enlist the Sephardic kabbalists for some of his reactionary Orthodox battles. The signatures of the yeshiva’s rabbis, foremost among them Dweck-HaKohen’s, figure prominently on manifestos and letters that were circulated throughout the city on topics like modesty, education, and the independence of the yeshivot within Jewish society.⁶⁸ Be that as it may, Dweck-HaKohen apparently displayed an enthusiastic attitude towards Zionism. Isaiah Shapira, “the pioneer-*rebbe*,” came away with the following insights from a visit to Rehovot haNahar circa 1931: “In the development of the Yishuv in recent years he [i.e., Dweck-HaKohen] saw the buds of the redemption, for you indeed ‘have no end from an exile from the fact’ that the words of the prophet are beginning to be fulfilled, ‘But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel.’” On the other hand, Dweck-HaKohen bemoaned the fact that the Jewish resettlement of the Land was not being carried out in strict conformity to Halakha.⁶⁹ Similar observations were made by Moshe David Laniado soon after Dweck-HaKohen’s passing:

He [Dweck-HaKohen] saw in the new settlement and the return to Zion “the bells of the Messiah and the arousal from below to the redemption above.” In the development of the construction and the planting

67 Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 215.

68 For example, Margalioth and his ilk called upon their followers to resign from Knesset Yisrael (the umbrella organization for Jews in Mandatory Palestine). Moreover, he was vehemently opposed to female suffrage, endorsed bans against modern education and secular schools, protested against immodest dress, and clamored for segregation between the sexes in crowded places. In 1926, Mordecai Atiyah printed Jacob Halevi Lipschitz’s *Makhzikei haDat* (Upkeepers of the Faith), the proceeds from which were earmarked for the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva. Dweck-HaKohen added a letter of recommendation to this work. For more on the seminary’s conservative leanings, see Moskowitz, *Hayei haRashash*, 104–112; Sutton, *Aleppo*, 371–375; Brown, “The Gamut of Orthodox Reactions,” 77–81.

69 Shapira, “The Elder of the Kabbalists,” 6. He also testified to Dweck-HaKohen’s heartfelt prayers at the Cave of the Patriarchs: “I have never seen an adult lose himself in bitter tears to such an extent. He melted in tears, without respite. His entire body convulsed due to unstoppable crying, as though all the sadness and pain that are pent up in the heart of all the people of Yisrael burst out of him.”

[i.e., agriculture] in the Land the fulfillment of the verse “But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel.” That said, he was distraught that not all the kabbuzim abided by the holy strictures of purity and said that we are destined to give an accounting for the fact that we did not secure religious settlements and aliyah on the part of Jews that observed the Sabbath, the sabbatical year, the jubilee, and the tithing of first fruits without any hint of deviancy and of leaving the tradition.⁷⁰

Rehovot haNahar filled a central role in Jerusalem. More specifically, kabbalists from all the Jewish ethnic groups paid courtesy calls to the seminary and were in touch with Dweck-HaKohen, who a few of his contemporaries dubbed “the elder of the kabbalists in Jerusalem” and “*saba de’mishpattim*.”⁷¹ According to one source, “Many have said that there is a spark of HaARI in him.”⁷² Dweck-HaKohen, as Gaon observed, “is deemed to be the rabbi and teacher of the majority of the *mekhavvnim* in Jerusalem, both Sephardic and Ashkenazic alike.”⁷³ From as far back as 1931, Shapira offered a similar description in the Hebrew press: “All the kabbalists in Jerusalem, both Sephardic and Ashkenazic alike, rise early to his gate and partake of his waters. If they come across a complex issue in the wisdom of the truth, they will come to Dweck-HaKohen and subscribe to his view.”⁷⁴

A medley of wondrous stories has been concocted around the unique figure of Dweck-HaKohen. Many of these tales pertain to the blindness that he was stricken with during his final years, which did not prevent him from tending to kabbalah matters, praying with intention, or publishing books (with the aid of a few students). What is more, the rabbi continued to serve as a cantor in the yeshiva. Blessed with a remarkable memory, he was a reservoir of Talmudic knowledge.⁷⁵ Gaon testified that when leading prayer services, for example,

70 Laniado, “The Elder of the Kabbalists,” 3.

71 The title “elder of the kabbalists” stuck to him as early as 1928 in “Moda’a yeAzhara” (placard). In 1931, an observer wrote that “The rabbi R. Shaul Dweck-HaKohen is one of the most beloved of the sages in Jerusalem, a figure wrapped in mystery and riddles, like one of the hidden saints of previous generations. He is deemed to be the elder of the kabbalists that are in Jerusalem.” Shapira, “The Elder of the Kabbalists,” 6. Laniado crowned him with the same title in a 1935 article; idem, “The Elder of the Kabbalists,” 3.

72 Ibid.

73 Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 215.

74 Shapira, “The Elder of the Kabbalists,” 6.

75 Hillel, “The Life of Dweck-HaKohen,” 33–38. For instance, the book *Aifa Shlema* was copied by Yaakov Chaim Sofer and Yehuda Fatiyah. Together with Eliyahu Lag’imi,

Dweck-HaKohen “mesmerized” onlookers, “especially with his agile memory” that “rapidly fired off” the weekly, Sabbath, and holiday prayers from “his pure and encompassing mind.”⁷⁶ Moreover, there are legends about his theurgy. According to a 1931 piece in a local Jerusalem newspaper, “He is also famous as a miracle worker. He writes amulets and gives folk remedies and many come to him to ask for a blessing.”⁷⁷ Lastly, there are reports that Dweck-HaKohen exorcized a *dybbuk* (i.e., evil spirit) on one of his trips to Tiberias.⁷⁸

Dweck-HaKohen was also perceived as a gifted instructor in all that concerns praying with intention, as many students in Jerusalem and beyond learned the secrets of the trade from him. A fine illustration of this skill turns up at the outset of Eliyahu Moshe Ma’aravi’s 1924 book:

From the day I stood by my own opinions, this was my passion to edify my worship of God and religious life; and upon ascending the mountain to Jerusalem I found that which my soul loved: rabbis holding forth in the

Dweck-HaKohen adapted books with *tikkunim* and subsequently brought them to press. Other copies of his original writings, responsa, and annotations were compiled by Jacob S. Kassin, Rachamim Shrem, Yaakov Yosef Munseh, Eliyahu Moshe Ma’aravi, Suliman Eliyahu, and RYAZ Margaliot.

- 76 Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 215. Cf. Laniado’s account from 1935: “And despite the fact that he was destitute of vision for approximately 20 years, he nevertheless did not forget anything from his learnings; and on the High Holidays he would pray from memory before hundreds of his students who would wallow in the dust of his feet [and] partake from his waters with tremendous devotion according to the *kavvanot*.” Laniado, “The Elder of the Kabbalists,” 3.
- 77 Shapira, “The Elder of the Kabbalists,” 6; Laniado, “The Elder of the Kabbalists,” 3. Also see Gepner, *Midrasho shel Shem*, 208–209; Galis, *Migedolei Yerushalayim*, 224–231. Hillel apologetically claims that Dweck-HaKohen “did not use amulets, whisperings, and talisman whatsoever, in accordance with the warning of HaARI of blessed memory who categorically objects to the use of practical kabbalah.” Hillel, “The Life of Dweck-HaKohen,” 53–54. In writing these words, Hillel was apparently coping with his own despair over the inordinate use of practical kabbalah during the latter half of the twentieth and early twenty-first century; Hillel, *Faith and Folly*, 60–62, 65–66; idem, *Ascending Jacob’s Ladder*, 233–236. See Meir, “The Revealed and the Revealed within the Concealed,” 245–255. The same problematic declarations can be found in Bension, *Zohar*, 241. For instance, he wrote that “Practical Kabbalah was completely prohibited” and claimed that amulets were off-limits in Beit El. These accounts notwithstanding, there are dozens of extant talismans that were evidently concocted by the sages of Beit El and Rehovot haNahar.
- 78 Shitrit, “Toldot Yaakov Hai Zrihan,” 20. The book also discusses prayers that were recited at the tomb of R. Meir Ba’al haNess as well as Dweck-HaKohen’s study sessions with Makhluḥ Shitrit and Yaakov Hai Zrihan.

revealed and hidden illuminating its paths, the sages and rabbis of the illustrious yeshiva Rehovot haNahar rise early and stay up late, putting in nights like days, and their prayers merit, with intention according to the *kavvanot* of our master the holy ARI in the siddurs of our teacher and rabbi the RaShaSh; and they work diligently on their studies; blessed be he that has chosen them and their Torah, and among them like a gleaming ember the distinguished eminence, our teacher and rabbi the ingenious rabbi the kabbalist and the like, the honor of the holy name of his glory our honorable teacher and rabbi R. Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen may God protect and rescue him for taking the trouble and toiling with me and giving me a taste of the honey's nectar of the delectable sayings of HaARI and illuminating my eyes with the words of our teacher and rabbi the RaShaSh in his introduction and siddur, may God prolong his days and years, amen may this be His will.⁷⁹

Further evidence of Dweck-HaKohen's teaching skills can be found in the writings of R. Jacob S. Kassin (who will be discussed at length below). The latter mastered the prayer intentions at Rehovot haNahar and can be counted among the leading disseminators of this literature. In a quasi-autobiographical account that Kassin wrote at the age of 31, he unfurls the story behind his development into a *mekhavven*:

In the year 1922, there awoke within me the yearning and passion and desire to enter the wisdom of kabbalah and the secrets of Torah; so I began studying alone in the winter after midnight and in the privacy of my home, without so much as a mentor and instructor; over the course of several months, I saw a good sign, as I was able to comprehend and penetrate the intention of and relation between the things; for the bird in the sky will lead the voice and knows what I am up to in the synagogue – that I am studying kabbalah; from then I would learn [*sic*] for a period of time of no less than a year under the saintly rabbi, the famous kabbalist our teacher the rabbi Shaul Dweck-HaKohen may his name last forever, and also together with his coterie and the Torah scholars that learn there in the Bukharan Quarter; for a period of no more than two years, I assimilated a certain large amount of the writings of HaARI in *Eṣ Ḥayyim* and its trusted gates from the mouth of our teacher and rabbi Hayyim Vital of blessed memory and also the holy book *Nahar Shalom* and the siddurs of

79 Ma'aravi, *Sefer Sama deḤayay*, vol. 1, "Introduction," sans pagination. On Ma'aravi see Sutton, *Aleppo*, 272.

our rabbi Shalom Sharabi; since then, I have begun to pray with intention as per the siddurs of the RaShaSh.⁸⁰

Soon after, Kassin began publishing small booklets of *Kavvanot*, with the permission of his mentor. As an aside, he claimed that Sharabi appeared before Shalom Zofiof in a dream and agreed to pray for his convalescence, “especially because he is among those studying the kabbalah the way it should be, and prays from the RaShaSh’s siddur.”⁸¹

Among those who lionized Dweck-HaKohen as the bequeather of *kavvanot* to the next generation were RYAZ Margaliot and the kabbalists of the Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva. Their interest in Sharabi’s *kavvanot* was encouraged by Dweck-HaKohen and his ilk at Rehovot haNahar. In 1931, the Jerusalem press reported that “Among the Ashkenazim there were quite a few immigrants from Poland who took shelter under Dweck-HaKohen’s shadow; for with their immigration here in recent years, they severed themselves from the courts of the Hasidic *rebbe*s, in the dust of whose feet they wallowed all the days of their life.”⁸²

Despite the generous support from Nissim Nahum and the Bukharan community in Jerusalem, Rehovot haNahar ran into financial difficulties in the midst of the First World War. Consequently, it issued several *kolot kor’im* (calls for submission) to drum up support. One of the flyers that the yeshiva printed out in Hebrew, English, and Yiddish was titled “The Holy Yeshiva of Rehovot haNahar of the Holy Community of *Mekhavnim* may God Protect and Invigorate them” (the English version reads “The Holy Cabbalah College ‘Rehoboth Hanahar’ at Jerusalem University to Study Cabbalah [*sic*]”). According to this pamphlet, the yeshiva’s “goal is to disseminate the Torah of truth the wisdom of kabbalah among the sages of all the ethnic communities without any difference and to pray according to the intention.” Since the institution’s establishment, the document boasts, kabbalists of every stripe have flowed to its doorstep, learnt the works of Luria and Sharabi, and improved their knowledge of the *kavvanot*. In return for donations, the kabbalists will pray for the patron’s wellbeing at the Western Wall and the rest of Palestine’s holy sites. The flyer

80 Kassin, *Sefer Pri Eš haGan*, 58–59. Also see Hillel, “The Life of Kassin,” 35, 74–83.

81 Hillel, “The Life of Kassin,” 53–54. Later on, Kassin received a strange honorary degree from Yeshivat Gan HaLevanon that was formulated in English: “February 2, 1942. This is to certify that our Holy College and Yeshivah, hereby confers upon the great and learned Rabbi-Rabbi Jacob S. Kassin, the Honorary Degree of Doctor and Magistrate in the science of Kabbalah and the Philosophical culture connected therewith and entailed therein, all in accordance with and pursuant to the methods adopted by our great and illustrious Rabbis – known as Ari and Rashash.” *Ibid*, 106.

82 Shapira, “The Elder of the Kabbalists,” 6.

also enumerates the kabbalists' prayers and their various *tikkunim* on behalf of the donors. It also bears noting that the wording of the three editions is unidentical. In the Yiddish and English pamphlets, say, the seminary's kabbalists are said to have perfect attributes and are described as thaumaturges who dispense powerful amulets, remedies, and talisman.⁸³ Another fundraising brochure is addressed to "our brethren the holy community of the sons of Aram Şoba from their brothers dwelling in Jerusalem." Unlike the rest of the city's yeshivot, the document claims, Rehovot haNahar has neither special rabbinical emissaries nor charity boxes throughout the world. Consequently, readers are exhorted to set up such receptacles and loosen their purse strings.⁸⁴ By around 1923, the institution's persistent budget woes led some of its resident kabbalists to transfer to the Oz veHadar Yeshiva (discussed at length below), whose fellows were granted accommodations and a regular monthly stipend.⁸⁵ Rabbinical envoys were subsequently dispatched on Rehovot haNahar's behalf, and they apparently managed to shore up its finances. For instance, Margaliot was sent to Damascus in around 1924, and Kassin evidently raised funds in America.⁸⁶ The next year the yeshiva printed "A General and Private Statement of Income and Expenditure" for its regular contributors.⁸⁷ At any rate, the seminary's financial hardships did not prevent most of Jerusalem's kabbalah practitioners from convening under its roof thanks to the exceptional personality of its leader. According to one eyewitness, besides guests and

83 Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, *Qriya le'Ezra*, 1920 (placard); English title: Urgent Aid Appeal. The signatories on this document are Dweck-HaKohen, Shalom Yosef Alshich Halevi, Meir Ovdia HaCohen Arazi, Nissim Nahum, and Yaakov Chaim Sofer. It also came with letters of recommendation for the institution from both Sephardic and Ashkenazic rabbis.

84 Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, *Qol Qore leAḥinu*, 1920 (placard). Also see idem, *Ish Ḥayil Rav Pe'alim* (announcement), 1920.

85 In time, Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen (Chaim Shaul's son) presented a much more desperate and grim report: "With the outbreak of the world war, the yeshiva nearly was emptied of its students, most of whom were banished from the Land qua subjects of France and Italy. After the war, the yeshiva renewed its operations and even increased the number of students. In 1923, some eighty percent of the students moved to the Porat Yosef Yeshiva, which opened that year in Jerusalem from the funds of the patron Shalom of Calcutta. This seminary attracted many of Rehovot haNahar's students, who were probably lured by the chances for a bigger stipend thanks to the fruit of a permanent fund. However, the rabbi C.S. Dweck brought several new students to the yeshiva, from the nearby lands of the East, and he continued to sustain the yeshiva with the backing of the above-mentioned rabbi Nissim Nahum." Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, *Report*, 1938 (MS).

86 Margaliot, *Azamer beShvakhin*, 47–50 (the author provides a photograph of his emissary letter). For information on Kassin's mission, see Rehovot haNahar, *Report*, 1938 (MS).

87 Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, *Heshbon Klali*.(1935).

“commuters,” Rehovot haNahar boasted sixty full-time resident *mekhavvnm* during Dweck-HaKohen’s tenure.⁸⁸

Oz veHadar and the Branching Out of Rehovot haNahar

Dweck-HaKohen’s influence over Jerusalem’s kabbalists was quite extensive, as many of those affiliated with seminaries other than Rehovot haNahar nevertheless viewed him as their mentor. This was the case for the rabbis of Oz veHadar, which was housed in the Porat Yosef Seminary.⁸⁹ The latter was established in 1923 with funds from the trust and estate of one Yosef Avraham Shalom; among the richest men in Iraq, by that time he was living in India.⁹⁰ Over the years, Porat Yosef produced a long list of famous rabbis. From its very inception, the yeshiva set aside room for those learning kabbalah and established a rich library stocked with relevant material. It also built a kabbalistic synagogue in which worshippers prayed according to the RaShaSh’s *kavvanot*. In addition, the institution’s resident kabbalists received living quarters.⁹¹ Some of its regulars had transferred from Rehovot haNahar, which could not provide fixed support. Oz veHadar’s first two head rabbis were Suliman Eliyahu of Baghdad (1879–1940)⁹² and Ephraim Cohen Zilkha of Baghdad (1885–1957).⁹³ Among the habitués at Porat Yosef was Ben-Zion Mordechai Hazan of Baghdad

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- 88 Mutzafi, *Olamo shel Şadiq*, 85. According to Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, no more than twenty-six kabbalists studied under his father’s wing on a regular basis until 1923; and the yeshiva only expanded during the mid-1920s. Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, *Report*, 1938 (MS).
- 89 For more on the yeshiva and its habitués, see “The Porat Yosef Yeshiva,” 8; Kassin, *Sefer Pri Eş haGan*, vol. 1, 59; Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 1, 146–148; Laniado, *LaQedoshim asher baAReŞ*, 8; Ben-Yaakov, *A History of the Jews of Iraq*, 212, 262, 482–483; Grayevsky, “Yeshivat Porat Yosef,” 65; Pe’er, *HaMore*, 51–59, 131–157; Shrem, *VeYa’al Eliyahu*, 51–55; Drillman-Gefen, *Eved Ne’eman*, 88–89; Cohen, *HaARI baMistarim*, 75–84; Hillel, “The Life of Kassin,” 36–38; Sutton, *Aleppo*, 64–69; Leon, “Yeshivat Porat Yossef,” 15–60. Invaluable material on the yeshiva’s founding has been preserved in Moshe David Gaon’s archive, including original documents that have yet to be discussed in the literature; idem, *Notes and Documents* (MS).
- 90 For more on Yosef Avraham Shalom, see the eulogy by Hazan, *Misped Mar*; Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 668; Munseh, *Pada et Avraham*, vol. 1, 430–431.
- 91 Ibid., 402–403. Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel wrote about the destruction of the yeshiva and its library in 1948; idem, Letter to Yisrael Rosenberg, 1949 (MS).
- 92 Moshe, *QeŞ haYamin*, 108–110; Hillel, “The Life of Suliman Eliyahu;” Cohen, *HaARI baMistarim*, 117–128.
- 93 A disciple of Shimon Agassi, Cohen was crowned “the elder of Jerusalem’s kabbalists.” Levi, *Derekh Şadiqim* vol. 2, 77–78; Cohen, *ibid.*, 24–26, 82–84; Shrem, *VeYa’al Eliyahu*, 66–68; Themanlys, *Siĥu beKhol Niflaotay*, 49–50; idem, *Un itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, 91.

(1877–1952),⁹⁴ a confidante of Dweck-HaKohen who printed many of R. Yosef Hayyim's books. Hazan is also reputed to have exorcised a *dybbuk* in 1904, with the help of Rehovot haNahar's sages and a shelved manuscript written by R. Hayyim Vital on practical kabbalah, which was unearthed from Shlomo Moussaieff's book collection.⁹⁵ In the days to come, the renowned practical kabbalist R. Yitzhak Kaduri (1902–2006) would also come up through the ranks of Oz veHadar.⁹⁶

Some of Dweck-HaKohen's disciples and confidantes went on to establish seminaries of their own. With Dweck-HaKohen's passing, they splintered off and took up residence in various institutions. While Dweck-HaKohen was still alive, a quasi-branch of Rehovot haNahar, by the name of Gan haLevanon (Garden of the Lebanon), was founded by R. Jacob S. Kassin (1900–1994). Reared in Porat Yosef, Kassin married the daughter of the Beit El kabbalist Shalom Hedaya. From 1933 onwards, he lived in New York, where he taught Jewish mysticism to a select few. Gan haLevanon operated from approximately 1923 to 1931. Between these years, it put out a couple of books on the RaShaSh's *kavvanot*, in the spirit and with the consent of Dweck-HaKohen.⁹⁷

From 1933 to 1949, Rehovot haNahar was led by its founder's son: Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen.⁹⁸ The seminary moved from the Bukharan Quarter to Maḥane Yehudah in around 1930. Thereafter, R. Eliyahu relocated the institution to his home in the Ruḥamah Neighborhood. In all likelihood, Rehovot haNahar's student body diminished after the leadership succession in 1933, as quite a few of its habitués left for other yeshivot or new centers that had sprung up in Jerusalem during the 1930s and 1940s. That said, a nucleus of roughly ten kabbalists stayed under Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen's wing.⁹⁹ In Rehovot haNahar's official

94 Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 247–248; Ben-Yaakov, *A History of the Jews of Iraq*, 373–374. Hazan was among the founders of the Shoshanim le'David (Roses for David) Yeshiva (est. 1906) and the Ma'ayan Ganim Yeshiva (1929–1932). Ezra Hamenahem portrayed Hazan in one of his stories; Hamenahem, *Ashmorot*, 104–107.

95 Hazan, *Ma'ase Nora shel Ruah*.

96 Sofer, *HaRav Kaduri: The Life of the Elder of the Kabbalists*, 35–41.

97 Kassin, *Sefer Pri Eš haGan*, 47–62; Sutton, *Aleppo*, 230–242; Hillel, "The Life of Kassin," 50–52, 60–63, 67–68, 79–82; Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 630. In a letter to Gaon, Kassin conveyed important material about his family's history; Kassin, Letter to Gaon, 1931 (MS).

98 For more on Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, see Moshe Dweck-HaKohen, *EDeR haYaqaar*; Laniado, *LaQedoshim asher baAReš*, 16 (picture included); Sutton, *Aleppo*, 171. Eliyahu is mentioned in 1910 in the introduction to Shaul Dweck-HaKohen, *Sefer Emet meAram Šoba*.

99 Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, *Report*, 1938 (MS). Among those who congregated around R. Eliyahu through the years were Eliyahu Moshe Ma'aravi, Yosef Shayo, Yaakov Levi, Yitzhak Levi, Meir Hamo, Shalom Azulai, David Laniado, and Meir Panigel. Another of

missives, R. Eliyahu sought to impart his activities with a patina of continuity by repeatedly evoking the name of his revered father. For instance, a picture of R. Chaim Shaul was added to the top of a 1939 letter; and beneath the photo was a large frame with the following text: “Thus was said by our rabbi of blessed memory [i.e., Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen] before his passing – whoever will maintain and support my yeshiva, the merit of the Tanaic sage Simeon ben Yo-chai and our master the holy HaARI and our rabbi our teacher Rabbi Hayyim Vital and our rabbi Shalom Sharabi of blessed memory, and I too shall advocate on his behalf in the upper world.”¹⁰⁰ A year earlier, a small booklet lauding and burnishing the image of Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen and his son/successor was put out by Eitan haEzrahi. The pamphlet, *ShaHaDI baMromim*, opens with a statement of purpose and exhortation:

Dear honorable lord! Should God so desire, these folios will complete the book *ShaHaDI baMromim* [the planned “sequel” never came out], which will include some of the wondrous deeds and the story of the greatness of the holy grandfather R. Chaim Shaul, may his merit protect us amen, his annals and the enterprises of his holiness, his books, and his illustrious rabbinical lineage; and the proceeds from its revenue will cover the expenses for treating his lone son his successor the true genius, the elder of the kabbalists Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, may he merit longevity and a good life amen, and may his name live on for eternity amen.¹⁰¹

Among the “wondrous deeds” is an incident from 1922 involving R. Chaim Shaul, his students, and R. Eliyahu. While riding to Jericho to conduct the *tikkun* of HaARI, the hired automobile fell into a ravine. However, by virtue of the elder Dweck-HaKohen’s righteousness, HaEzrahi wrote, all the occupants survived. Even the drivers, “brothers from the Palestinian people,” recognized

Rehovot haNahar’s “graduates,” Mordechai Yefet Sharabi, went on to found the Nahar Shalom Yeshiva.

100 Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, Letter to Shmuel Yitzchak Hillman, 1939 (MS). Hints concerning the yeshiva’s activity in 1936 are provided by the yeshiva’s heads in a missive to David ben Solomon Sassoon requesting financial support. Besides Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, the letter is signed by some lesser known figures from the kabbalah world: Ezra Yitzhak Hamawi, Ezra Yosef Abadi, Yeshuah ben Sasson, Yisrael Menachem, and Tzvi Isser Shapira. See Ben-Yaacob, *Chapters of Babylonian Jewish History*, vol. 2, 595–596. Yitzhak HaCohen Rabin, *inter alios*, examines developments at the yeshiva in the late 1930s and 1940s; idem, *Zarah Kokhav miYa’aqov*, 223, 229–230.

101 HaEzrahi, *ShaHaDI baMromim* (1938).

his greatness: upon kissing his feet, they exclaimed “how awesome is this man, for he is none other than a man of God.”¹⁰²

The stress on continuity in various communications that R. Eliyahu released in the aftermath of his father’s death failed to buttress the ailing yeshiva or its diminishing student body. The above-cited letter inviting Gershom Scholem to the seminary in 1938 attests to how different the son was from his father.¹⁰³ From this letter, it is evident that the former sought to “brand” the institution as a global center for kabbalistic enterprise. Atop its official letterhead, the yeshiva was touted as “The Rehovot haNahar Center for Seekers of the Wisdom of the Kabbalah in Jerusalem (Anything Difficult shall be Brought Here).” Moreover, R. Eliyahu assumed the same title that his father had merited years earlier: “Elder of the Kabbalists in Jerusalem.” A verse inscribed on the letterhead also alluded to the new man at the helm: “For the Cohen’s lips should preserve knowledge, and men should seek the law at his mouth (Malachi 2:7).”¹⁰⁴ Other stationery bore the name “The Rehovot haNahar Institute for Questions, for Guidance, and for Instruction in the Wisdom of Kabbalah and a Center for Torah and Prayer.” On one envelope, the son was referred to as “a spiritual leader for the community of kabbalists and the head of the Rehovot haNahar Institute for Pursuing Kabbalah Wisdom.”¹⁰⁵ In reality, though, few people looked up to Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen and the yeshiva’s standing, financial and otherwise, was precarious.

A fundraising drive to shore up the institution was undertaken in the late 1930s and early 1940s. As part of this initiative, the seminary’s top brass conducted a long correspondence with the Jewish National Council (from 1938 to 1940) and the American-Jewish Central Relief Committee (1938 to 1945), both of which supported a number of yeshivot in Jerusalem. A few dozen documents that pertain to Rehovot haNahar – sundry publications that it printed, appeals for support, receipts, and the aforementioned letters – are held by the Central Zionist Archive, the Israel State Archives, and Yeshiva University in New York.¹⁰⁶ All the missives describe it as a “one-of-a-kind” institution. On the

102 Ibid, 3–4.

103 Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, Letter to Gershom Scholem, 1938 (MS).

104 Ibid. Also see Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, “Un Homme,” 51.

105 Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, English Letter Appealing for Support, undated (MS); idem, English Letter Appealing for Support, 1938 (MS). He uses similar language in an approval from 1937: *Tiferet Seivah*, 12.

106 Rehovot haNahar, Letters to the American Jewish Relief Committee, 1938–1945 (MS); idem, Exchange of Letters with the National Council’s Social Welfare Department, 1938–1940 (MS); idem, Exchange of Letters with Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel, 1939–1940 (MS). These correspondences include effusive letters of recommendation for the seminary from

other hand, they detail the tribulations of its resident scholars (the numbers of which are not estimated in these documents). These efforts notwithstanding, the contributions that the seminary gleaned were meager, as donors perceived it as a small and peripheral institution. For example, Moshe Dweck-HaKohen (the yeshiva's secretary and Eliyahu's son) dispatched a letter to the National Council complaining about the paltry support for the 1938 year. He claimed that the Council's report was unfair and entreated the organization to send another official to reevaluate the seminary.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, Moshe rushed off a letter in his father's name to Henrietta Szold, who headed the National Council's Social Welfare Department. In this letter, he argued that the organization's representatives who were charged with ascertaining "the essence of our institution and our ethical and spiritual role and our benefit" to the entire Yishuv never even set foot in Rehovot haNahar. Instead, they sufficed with a visit to the "Bukharan Yeshiva" (i.e., Oz veHadar). "Upon hearing 'explanations' from strangers on the essence of the kabbalah and the like," Moshe wrote, the Council's envoy "frowned and took off. And at this point the question is asked How is it that you have come to embrace the Bukharan way of imbibing explanations that have nothing to do with us?"¹⁰⁸ The secretary's efforts apparently bore fruit. More specifically, a new official was dispatched to reassess the previous findings, and a certain sum of money was eventually forwarded to Rehovot haNahar. Aside for summarizing Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen's version of the yeshiva's history, the new report explicates the institution's gloomy present state and dearth of students.¹⁰⁹

R. Yitzhak Isaac HaLevi Herzog. See *idem*, English Recommendation for the Rehovot haNahar, 1940 (MS).

107 Moshe Dweck-HaKohen, Letter to the National Council, 1939 (MS). Among the tidbits of information that Moshe submitted that "The institution currently maintains, besides for the yeshiva for studying kabbalah which is found in a large room in the director's house, also a synagogue for praying with intentions as per HaARI and the RaShaSh (this sort of prayer lasts about four hours). The synagogue is located in the home of Mrs. Hannah Banin on David Yellin Street near the yeshiva. Furthermore, the number of students and beneficiaries has been increased." For more on Moshe, see Sutton, *Aleppo*, 179.

108 Eliyahu and Moshe Dweck-HaKohen, Letter to Ms. Henrietta Szold and the National Council, 1938 (MS). Moshe also endeavored on behalf of the yeshiva in subsequent years. See, for example, Moshe Dweck-HaKohen, Letter to the Relief Committee of American Jewry, 1942 (MS). Moreover, he is the signatory on most of the yeshiva's letters from this period. E.g., *idem*, Letter to the National Council, 1939 (MS). In the days to come, he would put out a booklet in memory of his father, *idem*, *EDeR haYaqar* (1949).

109 Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, *Report*, 1938 (MS); *idem*, *Supplement to the Report*, 1938 (MS).

During these years, one of Rehovot haNahar's key steps was to enlist the chief rabbi of Mandatory Palestine, Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel (1880–1953), as the yeshiva's president and an active member of its executive committee. From the moment Uziel got on board, R. Eliyahu referred to himself in the yeshiva's official correspondences as merely "the spiritual director."¹¹⁰ The chief rabbi's name indeed graces many of the seminary's letters from 1939 and on. Uziel also wrote to the National Council about the dire straits that he found Rehovot haNahar in towards the end of 1939 and to inform the organization of his decision to take part in its renewal:

After visiting the aforementioned yeshiva, I hereby have the honor of informing you that there are ten Torah scholars here occupied with the hidden Torah and the esoteric wisdom under the supervision and management of the rabbi and kabbalist R. Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, and they are holding the last spark of the kabbalists. I have decided to take upon myself the care of this important institution in all that concerns administrative and financial matters and am thinking about expanding the number of its students and to improve the study methods for the sake of preserving in our midst the source of natural light of the brilliant period from the bygone kabbalists' lives.¹¹¹

Uziel's decision to champion Rehovot haNahar's cause is surprising in several respects. Above all, he was not heretofore a public advocate of Jewish mysticism. In addition, there is no evidence that he openly practiced kabbalah or that it had any influence on his thought. The chief rabbi's report as to R. Eliyahu's small coterie harboring "the last spark of the kabbalists" was not only an exaggeration, but completely ignored what was transpiring in the Jerusalem kabbalah scene at the time. Therefore, we can assume that this hyperbole was intended to rustle up more generous support. A letter that Uziel addressed to the National Council in 1940 reveals that he had grander plans for Rehovot haNahar:

It behooves me to inform you that when I took upon myself the presidency of the above-mentioned yeshiva, I did not plan on continuing with the same dismal format like it is, but my aspiration was and always will be to expand it and aggrandize it, by injecting it with young and fresh forces so that the esoteric wisdom of the Jewish people shall not

110 Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, Letter to the National Council, 1939 (MS).

111 Uziel, Letter to the National Council in Palestine, 1939 (MS).

be forgotten. However, the means that have been placed in my hands over these months since receiving the presidency were very meager and I still have not managed to acquire enough friends and lovers for this Toranic institution to bring it to the lofty point to which I aspire.... I hereby ask of you to be so kind as to give a superlative recommendation for the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva and its director, the aforementioned honorable rabbi [Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen] and to exert influence in the necessary places, so that they will extend them the requisite maximum assistance and give [us] the opportunity to upgrade this institution as befits it.¹¹²

Uziel's salvo of letters paid dividends, as the Central Relief Committee and National Council agreed to sustain the yeshiva at current levels.

For some time, Rehovot haNahar's habitués regularly studied at the chief rabbi's yeshiva, Sha'arei Şion, in the hopes that this step would bolster the kabbalah institution's status and attract more students.¹¹³ However, it seems that Uziel's intensive efforts on the seminary's behalf slowed down by 1940. During that year, Rehovot haNahar's sextons, activists, and leaders once again began to complain about their troubles. The chief rabbi continued to press an assortment of philanthropic organizations to assist the yeshiva, but was unable to fully implement his plans. Likewise, Uziel's attempts to reconcile between R. Eliyahu and his father's disciples who had gradually left the yeshiva came to naught.¹¹⁴

Given the dearth of full-time students and the Relief Committee's subsequent decision to cease its permanent support, Rehovot haNahar's troubles mounted. As Eitan haEzrahi reported in a letter from around this time, "Rabbi Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, who has become completely destitute of vision, has been forced to close the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva whose students have joined the other Sephardic seminaries in Jerusalem, like Porat Yosef. Nevertheless, Sephardic and Ashkenazic rabbis continue to go early in the morning and stay late at night at Rabbi Eliyahu's doorstep to receive instruction and guidance in all the difficult questions regarding the wisdom of the kabbalah and Talmud." HaEzrahi also divulged that the seminary was conducting negotiations with Yaakov Halberstam, the grand *rebbe* of Sanz and the rosh yeshiva of the Darkei Haim Yeshiva in Jerusalem. According to the tentative terms, Halberstam would see to it that Ashkenazic kabbalists attend daily services at

112 Uziel, Letter to Chaim Yefet, the National Council, 1940 (MS).

113 Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, Exchange of Letters with Uziel, 1939–1940 (MS).

114 Ibid.

R. Eliyahu's house, thereby ensuring a *minyán*. Moreover, the grand rabbi would handle Rehovot haNahar's technical and administrative affairs. The talks nearly panned out, but R. Eliyahu's poor health ultimately scuttled the deal.¹¹⁵ In parallel, the yeshiva distributed a flyer promising donors "a great talisman for redemption and success," which was allegedly fashioned by the esteemed Hasid R. Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev.¹¹⁶ The National Council did continue to support the yeshiva in a sporadic fashion and even sent it books on an *ad hoc* basis. However, this largess would not suffice to solve the yeshiva's main problem, namely an inadequate number of students to justify its existence.

Not all the remaining habitués left R. Eliyahu the moment he lost his vision. In fact, some even remained after it dawned upon them that the yeshiva was incapable of providing for their livelihood. The majority, though, took off either immediately or soon after his father's death. In 1933, a large group of Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen's disciples established a kabbalistic synagogue and seminary in the Bukharan Quarter by the name of Emet veShalom (Truth and Peace). At first, they sought to retain the name Rehovot haNahar, but R. Eliyahu took legal measures to thwart this plan.¹¹⁷ In any case, the new yeshiva essentially adopted the same format and traditions of Rehovot haNahar at its peak.

One of Emet veShalom's fundraising pamphlets was almost an exact replica of the aforementioned trilingual flyer. In appropriating this text, the praise for Rehovot haNahar during Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen's lifetime was projected onto the new seminary. The opening sentence in the original declaration, which pertains to the establishment of Rehovot haNahar, was replaced with the following words: "This notice stating that here in the holy city of Jerusalem was established in the year 5656 [ca. 1896] the holy yeshiva of the kabbalists and it has now been renewed under the name Emet veShalom in the holy community of the *mekhavvim* may it be built on justice." Aside for this sentence, the only other discrepancies between the two documents are the name, the picture at the top, and the list of signatories, some of whom also appear on the

115 HaEzrahi, Letter, undated (MS).

116 Rehovot haNahar, *Qupat Eliyahu haNavi*, undated (MS).

117 In 1940, R. Eliyahu described the immediate aftermath of his father's passing: "Wretched days came upon the yeshiva; many of the students left it and even sought to use the name Rehovot haNahar in order to raise funds for another yeshiva. However, under the pressure of legal measures that the founder's son, Eliyahu HaKohen Dweck, the present director, wielded against them they were compelled to surrender the name Rehovot haNahar and called themselves by the name of the Emet veShalom Yeshiva – (today this institution is no longer in existence)." Rehovot haNahar, *Report*, 1938 (MS).

first.¹¹⁸ Affirming the new declaration are several of the era's most important kabbalists who had hitherto been overshadowed by the elder Dweck-HaKohen: Yaakov Chaim Sofer, Eliyahu Moshe Ma'aravi, Abraham Salam, Yechezkel Ezra Yehoshua haLevi, Haim Cohen Traub, Shalom Yosef Alshich Halevi, Refael Menachem Ma'aravi, and Shlomo Mashiach. Given all that the two institutions held in common, Emet veShalom's rabbis felt compelled to print another notice declaring that since Rehovot haNahar moved to Maḥane Yehudah, they have not received any support from it. Moreover, according to the new placard, every other declaration in Emet veShalom's name was a forgery. Last but not least, it proclaims that the signatories adhere to all the practices that were observed during the revered kabbalist's lifetime.¹¹⁹

As of 1936, Emet veShalom was led by R. Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen's loyal disciple Yaakov ben Yosef Rofeh Munseh of Damascus (1877–1944).¹²⁰ Legend has it that when Munseh came to Jerusalem in 1919, R. Hayyim Vital appeared before Dweck-HaKohen in a dream and warned him “to honor Yaakov our Patriarch.” From that point on, the rosh yeshiva entrusted the new student with mysteries of wisdom, for “his soul was worthy” thereof. For his part, Munseh did not budge from Rehovot haNahar.¹²¹ He also persuaded many of the city's Jews to study kabbalah. As part of his campaign to promote Jewish mysticism, Munseh offered “recruits” prayer pamphlets, *tikkunim*, and talisman. In fact, he had a reputation for concocting potent amulets. Some of his handouts (especially the numerous flyers that he distributed on general *tikkunim*) were equipped with flashy titles: “A Closely Guarded Secret,” “A Talisman from a Precious Old Kabbalistic Tool Passed on from Person to Person back to Moses Our Rabbi,” and “Talisman from HaARI,” etc.¹²² Furthermore, he copied a fair share

118 Emet veShalom Yeshiva, *Call for Aid*; cf. Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, *Qriya le'Ezra* (1920). Also see the emissary letter to Ezra Yosef haCohen: Emet veShalom Yeshiva, *Mikhtav Shlihut*, 1937 (MS).

119 Emet veShalom Yeshiva, “Moda'a yeHakḥasha” (announcement). This notice was also reprinted in the newspaper *Doar haYom* (1933).

120 A native of Damascus, Munseh reached Jerusalem ca. 1919 and became Dweck-HaKohen's student. He was a resident scholar at Yagdil Torah, Rehovot haNahar, and Emet Shalom, settling down in the latter from 1936 onwards. For more on Munseh, see Laniado, *LaQedoshim asher baAreṣ*, 90–91 (picture included); Sutton, *Aleppo*, 281; Hillel, “The Life of Dweck-HaKohen,” 12; Mutzafi, *Olam shel Ṣadiq*, 93–94, 104; Hazak, *Shekhunati Rehovot haBukharim*, 75–76; Cohen, *HaARI baMistarim*, 95–113. Also see his son's memoirs; Avraham Munseh, *Pada et Avraham*, vol. 1, 331–474; vol. 2, 346–366.

121 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 401.

122 Some of Munseh's placards were reprinted; *ibid.*, vol. 1, 389–393. For a discussion on the special prayers and *tikkunim* that he disseminated, see Pozailov, *From Bukhara to Jerusalem*,

of Dweck-HaKohen's explanatory notes on books of kabbalah.¹²³ Throughout this period, there was a great deal of tension between Emet Shalom and Rehovot haNahar. In many of his letters, R. Eliyahu excoriated Munseh and the rest of the students that had left the yeshiva upon his father's demise.¹²⁴ According to Moshe Dweck-HaKohen, the head of the rival seminary also had some choice words about the Rehovot haNahar leadership, both past and present. The former recalls a conversation in which Munseh resorted to excessive braggadocio:

If he [i.e., Uziel] is the Sephardic chief rabbi, in Damascus I would sit in a chair studded with precious stones and all the people that came calling would not believe they were fortunate enough to reach me in order to kiss my hand and adorn me with coins. I would occasionally explain not only to your father [R. Eliyahu] but to your grandfather R. Shaul himself kabbalah passages that everyone had a hard time interpreting. They say about your father that the Torah lights a fire underneath him? You should know that he does not have even one percent of what I have! And he [i.e., Munseh] then slammed on the table.¹²⁵

At about this time, a group began to coalesce around R. Yehuda Fetayah of Baghdad (1859–1942), who had taken up permanent residence in Jerusalem circa 1934. He too had been on close terms with R. Chaim Shaul, helping him, *inter alia*, prepare manuscripts of his works.¹²⁶ Fetayah built quite a name for

247–248. Some of those same prayer booklets have been preserved in the Gaon Archive; Gaon, Notes, Placards, and Documents that Pertain to Yaakov Yosef Munseh (MS).

123 Among Munseh's protégés was Suliman Mutzafi. See idem, *'Olamu shel Şadiq*; Gilkrov, *He'ir haMizrah*, vol. 2, 1–51.

124 For instance, according to R. Eliyahu, those who left the seminary after his father's passing were “ungrateful destructive elements who held jobs in Damascus and only in the year 1923 with the opening of the Porat Yosef Seminary (and there was a shortage of students) we brought them from behind the cattle to shepherd in God's law and we withheld from our own mouth and gave them. These provocative elements will not have a foothold in my yeshiva and in the father's lifework, room will not be given except to quiet and productive forces.” Eliyahu Dweck-HaKohen, Letter to Uziel, 1940 (MS).

125 Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, Exchange of Letters with Uziel, 1939–1940 (MS).

126 For more on Fetayah, see Moshe, *Sefer Qeş haYamin*, 47–50; Mutzafi, “Introduction;” Cohen, *HaARI baMistarim*, 47–60; Dvir, *Ish meBeit Lehem Yehuda*. On his ties with Dweck-HaKohen, see Hillel, “The Life of Dweck-HaKohen,” 26, 34, 37, 41; Eliyahu and Yehuda Ovadia, “Introduction,” 1–6; Ben-Yaakov, *A History of the Jews of Iraq*, 368–370. In 1946, the Minkhat Yehuda Seminary was established in his memory; *ibid*, 263. Fetayah is portrayed in Haim Be'er, *Havalim*, 141–144.

himself in Palestine and beyond, as he was both a formidable theoretician and skilled practitioner of the kabbalah. For instance, saints purportedly visited his dreams. Moreover, Fetayah was regarded as a proficient exorcist, and there was heavy demand for his remedies and amulets.¹²⁷

Mysteries of the East and the Rebbe of Munkacs

Many kabbalists in Jerusalem who arrived from both the East and West fully adopted Sharabi's gospel, while others – be it in the Land of Israel or the Exile who reached the RaShaSh's work in one way or the other – integrated his methods into their own. A synthesis between Sharabian thought and East European Hasidism was already introduced in the late 1800s by Yaakov Meir Spielman.¹²⁸ Among the kabbalists in the Land of Israel who subsequently combined the two approaches was Yeshaya Asher Zelig Margalioṭ – the aforementioned confidante of Dweck-HaKohen who was briefly affiliated with the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva. The feeling that the “secret” and “the true and pure” kabbalistic way was to be found in the RaShaSh's thought and in the hands of his disciples motivated Eastern European Jews to fabricate tales according to which Hasids and kabbalists from their own extremities of the Diaspora were in contact with Sharabi. A case in point is myths whereby copies of a hand-written siddur by the RaShaSh himself found their way into the hands of various *rebbe*s (see the discussion in Chapter 5). Similarly, kabbalists in Eastern Europe sought the “seal of approval” from their counterparts in Jerusalem, even when their respective approaches completely differed or were antithetical to one another.

127 A case in point is Fetayah's attempt to rectify the souls of Sabbatai Zvi and Nathan of Gaza. He viewed the latter as the author of *Hemdat Yamim*. Fetayah, *Minḥat Yehuda*, 1933 (also see the English translation; idem, *Minḥat Yehuda*, 2010). There is a wide-ranging literature on Fetayah's handling of demons and spirits: Aešcoly, “The Rectifier of Sabbatai Zvi's Soul,” 214, 238, 243; Ya'ari, *Ta'alumat Sefer*, 13, 150–153; Nigal, *Dybbuk Tales*, 198–227. His mentor, Shimon Agassi, also put an emphasis on dreams and exorcisms; idem, “Visions and Revelations of Elijah.”

128 Spielman, *Tal Orot*, vol. 1, “Introduction,” 1b. Gershom Scholem made the following observations in his personal copy of this work: “And it is a rather wonderful book and most interesting – a Hasidic-psychological interpretation of the words of the Maggid [Dov Ber of Mezeritch] is merged with the RaShaSh's approach and *Emek haMelekh!*!! It is largely based on the b[ook] *Sha'arei Gan Eden* and merges a tradition of the Ba'al Shem Tov's disciples with the disciples of R. Shalom Sharabi.” See Gries, *The Book in the Jewish World*, 81; Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El*, 91. To this day, a few of Spielman's works remain exclusively in manuscript form at the Israel National Library.

Perhaps these stories are tied to the fervent desire of Chaim Elazar Shapira, the rabbi of Munkacs, for an “endorsement” from Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen – the only kabbalist that he deigned to meet in Jerusalem during his famed expedition to the Holy Land circa 1930. The intermediary behind this summit was Margalioṯ, whose descriptions of Shapira apparently caught the imagination of Rehovot haNahar’s head rabbi. The latter circulated a placard throughout the city informing the Yishuv that “the sage of the mysteries is coming to town.” Consequently, “a sacred duty is imposed on all of Jerusalem’s learned and especially our members who are studying the wisdom of truth and those who are familiar with the concealed wisdom to give respect to the Torah by going to the train station to greet the face of the *shekhinah* [divine presence].”¹²⁹ The *rebbe’s* scribe made certain that the Holy Land visit, not least the meeting with the venerated mystic, was well-documented. Above all, he spread the word of, their conversation in the holy tongue regarding the wisdom of Kabbalah. Moreover, the scribe provided colorful descriptions of Rehovot haNahar.¹³⁰ For his part, Dweck-HaKohen asked Shapira to financially strengthen the yeshiva – a request that was quickly fulfilled.¹³¹ It also bears noting that the two rabbis remained in touch via the post until around 1933 – a correspondence that produced several fascinating exchanges.¹³² One of Shapira’s missives refers to a dream that his correspondent shared with him. In this dream, Dweck-HaKohen was instructed to bore an opening through a

129 Rehovot haNahar and Margalioṯ, “The Sage of the Mysteries is Coming to Town” (placard), signed by Dweck-HaKohen. A photo of this document appears in Shimon Margalioṯ, *Azamer beShavkhin*, 78; Goldstein, *Journey to Jerusalem*, 70.

130 Goldstein, *Masa’ot Yerushalayim*, 13b-14a, 31b-32a, 36a (also see the English translation: idem, *Journey to Jerusalem*, 70, 99–101). The primary motive behind this trip might have been a meeting with Solomon Eliezer Alfandari.

131 For more on Shapira’s generous financial support to Rehovot haNahar and its rosh yeshiva, see Margalioṯ’s 1932 letter in idem, *Azamer beShavkhin*, 82. On account of his deteriorating medical condition, Dweck-HaKohen was rushed to Shaare Zedek Hospital. In consequence, the *rebbe* of Munkacs quickly dispatched a letter to Dr. Moritz Moshe Wallach, the hospital’s director, urging him to keep a close eye on the prized patient; Shapira, “Two Epistles,” 58. According to one of his students, a blessing that Shapira received from Dweck-HaKohen right before the kabbalist’s passing left him feeling strengthened. The *rebbe* received these tidings in response to a “*kvitel* [small note asking for a *rebbe’s* intercession] and five hundred crowns” that he had forwarded to Dweck-HaKohen. Yitzhak Adler, *Seder haShana haAḥrona*, 140–141.

132 For example, in a 1932 letter, Shapira crowns Dweck-HaKohen with bombastic titles, asks that the kabbalist pray on his and his family members’ behalf, and shares a novel kabbalistic idea with him; Shapira, *Shealot yeTshuvot Minḥat Elazar*, vol. 5, §17, 9b-10a. Margalioṯ expounds on this matter in idem, *Sefer Hilula deRashbi*, 39–54.

wall in Meron for the purpose of completing a *hakafah* (ritual encirclement) of the site. According to a tradition in Joseph Karo's *Maggid Meisharim*, this custom had the power to end a draught and subsequently became a technique for averting all sorts of disasters.¹³³ What is more, Margaliot depicted Dweck-HaKohen as a wonder worker not only for the Jews in the Land of Israel, but a grand rabbi who tends to requests from suppliants outside his bailiwick. For example, he recounted a wondrous incident that transpired in the 1920s:

A written appeal came from overseas to the holy eminence, our teacher and rabbi the divine kabbalist Rabbi Chaim Shaul HaKohen Dweck that the governor of the city from nearby there [i.e., a Jewish community] is harassing the Jews quite a lot. And the holy rabbi[,] the righteous and saintly person of blessed memory, rode to Meiron for a Shabbat of *slichot* before Rosh Hashanah with twenty of his students, and me, the little one, with them; and we were there five days, and every day we did circuits around the holy gravestone of our distinguished forefathers with the four species of Sukkot from last year, in our hands; and when we returned to Jerusalem, the rabbi found a telegram in his house informing him that the city's governor had suddenly died, and for the Jews there was radiance and joy.¹³⁴

Besides Margaliot, the regulars at Sha'ar haShamayim also helped build ties between Dweck-HaKohen and kabbalists and Hasidim in Eastern Europe. More than all the others, though, it is the bond between the rabbi of Munkacs and Rehovot haNahar's leading light that has spurred on interest in these relationships. The romantic belief among many Ashkenazic Jews that the "secret" was ensconced in the East was certainly one of the prime catalysts behind these ties. As we shall see in the ensuing chapter, though, the relationships were occasionally much more complicated.

¹³³ Ibid, 52–54.

¹³⁴ Shapira, *Shealot yeTshuvot Minhat Elazar*, vol. 5, §16, 9b.

Merging Traditions: The Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva

Criticism against the Sharabian Monopoly

The exclusivity of the RaShaSh's way also drew criticism from some Jerusalem-based kabbalists who espoused different traditions or a new interpretive approach. These factors did not consider the Sharabian meditative prayer to be the center of the kabbalah world, nor did they view the RaShaSh's writing to be the definitive and most accurate reading of the Lurianic mystical tradition. Upon acquainting himself with Jerusalem's kabbalists in 1922, Yehuda Leib Ashlag (1885–1955) excoriated them for, above all, their meager comprehension of the kabbalah's inner meaning. More precisely, he asserted that they were clueless in all that concerns Lurianic knowledge. At the time, Jerusalem had several kabbalah centers, but the brunt of his criticism was apparently directed at the *mekhavanim* that followed in Sharabi's footsteps and interpreted HaARI's kabbalistic works on this basis. Ashlag's contentions turn up in a shelved introduction to one of his books:

Upon finally meeting the most famous among them, namely people that had already spent their [best] years learning the works of HaARI and the Zohar and managed to acquaint themselves with HaARI's books to the point of astonishment, I asked them if they had studied under a rabbi with an understanding of the inner nature of things, and they answered me – I am hesitant to remind you, there is no internalness save for the words as they are written [and] transmitted to us and nothing else. So I asked them if R. Hayyim Vital comprehended the inner nature of things, and they answered me – He certainly did not attain more than we do. I then asked them about HaARI himself, and they answered me – He certainly did not know internalness any more than we do; and everything that he did know, he passed on to his disciple R. Hayyim Vital, and these [insights thus] reached our hands. In consequence, I laughed at them a great deal; for if this is so, how did the insights take shape in HaARI's heart without any understanding and knowledge. And they answered me – the work of the things [i.e., the kabbalah wisdom] he received from the mouth of Elijah, and he knew the internalness because he was an angel.

At this point, I released my frustration on them, for I had run out of patience to stand next to them.¹

By this point in his life, Ashlag had already begun to develop his own unique interpretation of Luria's works, which had a major impact on kabbalists in the second half of the 1900s. Moreover, he saw himself as the current receptacle of HaARI's itinerant soul, so that his commentary was the final word on the distinguished rabbi's gospel. Ashlag attracted a small yet loyal following. In around 1938, he established "*beit ulpana rabata itur rabanim* [the Ornament of Rabbis Great Seminary] for the Study and Dissemination of the Wisdom of Kabbalah in Jerusalem." Operated out of Ashlag's house, this outfit was basically a foundation for advancing the study of kabbalah and publishing the founder's books, which diverged sharply from the Sharabian kabbalah.²

R. Israel Abuhatzzeira (the Baba Sali, 1889–1984), who earned quite a reputation as a miracle worker in the State of Israel, is said to have voiced his own reservations concerning the RaShaSh's approach to kabbalah during visits to Palestine in circa 1922 and 1933.³ Nevertheless, Abuhatzzeira studied this brand of kabbalah while in Jerusalem with Eliyahu Yaakov Lag'imi (the aforementioned sage who was affiliated with Beit El and Rehovot haNahar). In parallel, he took steps to publish the works of his brother David.⁴

Shlomo Elyashiv (1841–1926), a respected kabbalist from Lithuania who provided his own take on HaARI's gospel in *Sefer Leshem Shevo ve-Ahlamah*, also raised concerns about the monopoly of the RaShaSh's kabbalistic thought and the intention-oriented approach. Towards the end of his life (circa 1922), Elyashiv settled down in Jerusalem, where he formed bonds with circles of *mekhavnim*. For a short while, he was a regular and taught classes at Rehovot

1 Ashlag, "Haqdamah Pi Hakham," in *Hakdanot haSulam*, 188. Also see his letters criticizing the Sharabian way and Jerusalem's kabbalists; idem, *Igrot haSulam*, 264–266 (letter 47), 273 (letter 48), 284–285 (letter 52), 333 (letter 62).

2 For a disquisition on Ashlag and other Jerusalem-based kabbalists, see Meir, "Wrestling with the Esoteric;" idem, "New Findings," 345–368; Huss, "Altruistic Communism," 109–130.

3 Abuhatzzeira immigrated to Israel in 1951. For more on this figure, see Abuhatzzeira, *haSaba Qadisha*, vols. 1–2; Rigel, *Abir Yaakov*, 289–395; Harel, *Maor Yisrael*. These qualms are tied to the difference between Sharabi's work and that of the Baba Sali's grandfather, R. Yaakov Abuhatzzeira, also known as *abir yaakov* (Master Jacob). Manor, *Kabbalah and Ethics*, 33–34.

4 Abuhatzzeira, *haSaba Qadisha*, vol. 1, 91–95, 104, 182, 193–194; Rigel, *Master Jacob*, 296–299. Lag'imi wrote (together with the Court of the Holy Community of the Maghrebis in Jerusalem) an approval for David Abuhatzzeira's books that came out in Jerusalem between 1923 and 1928. See Abuhatzzeira, *Petakh haOhel*; idem, *Reisha veSaifa*; and idem, *Seikhel Tov*.

haNahar. Elyashiv even wrote an enthusiastic approval for one of the books on Sharabian intentions that came out under the yeshiva's imprint.⁵ That said, he complained to one of his fellow kabbalists about the dominance of this method in Jerusalem:

And herewith I will not withhold from my friend from offering before him some of what is on my heart. For I have seen with my own eyes that the greatest Sephardic rabbis hold that the gospel of our rabbi, R. Shalom the saint Sharabi is to the gospel of the holy HaARI as the approach of the oral Torah is to the written Torah. This is not my opinion. With respect to the words of the holy rabbi Shalom, I hereby say that they [i.e., the *mekhavrim*] are indeed right that a few of his sacred words are foundations and principles in the depth of the gospel of HaARI without which it is impossible to discern the truth – overall, though, his way is [but] one dimension of the gospel of HaARI. And to the best of my knowledge it is also possible to suitably understand it in other lights as well, for there are several dimensions to the Torah and one mustn't necessarily understand them exclusively according to his way in holiness even if his way in holiness is very very sharp and profound and not every brain comprehends this and one can also understand it in a different, simpler, and less complicated manner as I determined and saw in a couple of places that God deigned to share with me.⁶

A different line of reasoning was put forth by R. Avraham Weinberg (II), the grand rabbi of the Slonimer Hasidism (1884–1933),⁷ who visited the Land of Israel – where his followers had set up communities – in 1929 and 1933. He unfurled his outlook on learning kabbalah before one of his disciples, who wished to advance “to a higher rung” of devotion by embracing the wisdom of kabbalah:

5 Dweck-HaKohen and Lag'imi, *Sefer Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, vols. 1–2. Elyashiv also wrote annotations and footnotes for the RaShaSh's works; Elyashiv, *Sefer leShem shevo ve-Ahlamah, an Explanation of the Words of Our Holy Rabbi Sharabi* (1950).

6 Levin, “Toldot haGaon haQadosh,” iii. For a close look at Elyashiv's attitude towards the kabbalists in Jerusalem, see Meir, “Wrestling with the Esoteric,” 602–604. Part of the problem that Ashlag, Elyashiv, and others had with the RaShaSh's way is tied to sundry kabbalistic conceptions of allegory. Avivi discusses the two contrasting approaches to HaARI; idem, *Kabbala Luriana*, 3, 1052–1055.

7 For more on Weinberg, see Rabinowitsch, *Lithuanian Hassidism*, 161–163; Piekarz, *Ideological Trends of Hasidism in Poland*, 75–76; Nadler, “Slonimer Hasidism,” 402, 410–411.

And take this general rule in your hand, so that you will blossom to the sky; and by dint of this, you will not fall to the bottom of the netherworld – and the study of the *Eṣ Ḥayyim* in this generation is an effective means to faith. You shall do as follows, start learning bit by bit and each and every hidden meaning adds up; and the main thing is that you should start each day off by studying Talmud with Rashi for about an hour, and thereafter you shall study kabbalah; and whether to learn in-depth or in simplicity is up to your desire, each according to his heart's desire; and it seems to me that the crux of the matter is to study in a way that leads to action, namely that you will maximize the things that you are learning so as to place them in words of prayer or Torah. And it behooves you to study *Sefer Sha'arei Gan Eden*, including its arrangement of the prayers that is titled *Kol Yaakov*, and *Sefer Shefah Tal*, and *Zohar* with the commentary *Mikdash Melekh*.⁸

In conclusion, Weinberg averred that the kabbalah is reserved for a select few, who are best-advised to accentuate the work methods, rather than the learning itself – an approach that informed the previous *rebbe*s of his Hasidic court.⁹ The “Slonimer way” runs counter to that of Jerusalem's kabbalists, some of whom Weinberg presumably met on his visits to the Land of Israel. In another letter to that same Hasid (the content of which was expurgated by the book's editor), the grand rabbi strengthened his case:

As hinted to you in my previous letter, it's all in the worship of God. For the sake of not reaching this point, you must avail yourself of Torah scholars a lot [*sic*], and writings: the books of the holy rabbi [Yisrael] from Kozhnitz, *Avodat Yisrael*, the commentary on *Tikunei haZohar*, and *Nezer Yisrael* on the *Zohar* is alluded to a lot; that said all the books of the Ba'al Shem Tov's disciples goes [*sic*] on this point, but there are books

8 Weinberg, *Beit Avraham*, 277, letter 36. This epistle is missing from the book's first editions.

9 Be that as it may, there are researchers who posit that kabbalah played a minimal role in this Hasidic court. See Nadler, “Slonimer Hasidism,” 395–415. Even if kabbalah studies were not an official part of the Slonimer yeshivot' curriculum, the court always had a few members who immersed themselves in this literature and were deemed to be kabbalists, such as Moshe Midner, the *mashgiach* (spiritual supervisor) of Weinberg's seminary, and R. Aharon Yosef Luria (1894–1969), among the important Slonimer Hasids in Tiberias. This trend dates back to R. Avraham Weinberg (1) of Slonim (1804–1883), who wrote a book on kabbalistic matters (*Ḥesed leAvraham*). As per the author's wishes, only a limited number of copies were disseminated. In contrast, Weinberg's *Yesod haAvodah* merited a larger distribution and was indeed more popular. Targeting a wider audience, kabbalistic topics are understated therein.

that raise heads etc., and there are books that went into the depths of the kabbalah and then the way of Hasidism; and the above-mentioned books appear, if I may say so, to indeed be the things that have put the worship of God before wisdom; and on this matter I hinted to you that you should see everything as coming from the arrangement of worship of God; for I have seen the kabbalah's proponents in Eretz Yisrael... It could very well be that in all that concerns the kabbalah they are more proficient than [their counterparts in the Diaspora], but the true path is the way of the Ba'al Shem Tov of blessed memory, and the Ba'al Shem Tov's commentary on the words of HaARI is to bring the wisdom to this enterprise.¹⁰

Save for R. Aharon Roth and Rabbi Alfandari, there is no evidence of who Weinberg met with in Palestine.¹¹ However, his argument against Jerusalem's kabbalists is tied to their eschewal of the Ba'al Shem Tov's approach, on the one hand, and their emphasis on theoretical studies and specific technical prayers, on the other. In the event that Weinberg also paid a visit to Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, his criticism may be aimed at Dweck-HaKohen and his acolytes.¹²

The well-known mystic Hillel Zeitlin (1871–1942) reproached Jerusalem's kabbalists for ignoring the later Hasidic methods, especially that of Chabad and Bratslav. Moreover, he was troubled by the lack of unity among the kabbalists in the Land of Israel. In Zeitlin's estimation, this state of affairs was hindering the redemption.¹³ As we shall see, though, the cooperation between Jerusalem's kabbalists was actually greater than the dissension. In short, he did not view the RaShaSh's gospel to be a solution for the precarious situation of Eastern Europe Jewry at the time. Consequently, he began to formulate his own messianic vision, which drew heavily on Jewish mystical literature.¹⁴

In essence, these critical views of the Sharabian approach represent different kabbalistic schools of thought, with proponents in Jerusalem and beyond. At any rate, each group was forced to contend with the RaShaSh's legacy, which has long prevailed in Jerusalem. Perhaps one of the more riveting developments in Jerusalem during these same years was the adoption of the Sharabian way by Ashkenazic kabbalists who were products of the Lithuanian Talmudic

10 Weinberg, *Beit Avraham*, 278, letter 37.

11 Albert, "Visit to Eretz Yisrael," 46–48; Schwartzman, *Sefer Yehi Or*, 351.

12 For an account of such a meeting, see Pozailov, *Great Rabbis of Syria and Lebanon*, 156. However, there is no trustworthy source on this presumed encounter.

13 Meir, "Wrestling with the Esoteric," 612–615.

14 Meir, *Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav*, 10–39; idem, "Hillel Zeitlin's *Zohar*," 119–157; idem, "The Book of Visions," 149–171.

system or Hasidic courts. This phenomenon, which is exemplified by the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, not only involved the transition of ideas to kabbalists who were reared in other traditions, but also contained the first buds of a merger between the RaShaSh's tradition, kabbalah schools other than Beit El and Rehovot haNahar, and new methods that were introduced during these years.

The Beginnings of Sha'ar haShamayim

Unlike Rehovot haNahar, Sha'ar haShamayim was not an offshoot of the Beit El Yeshiva. Sha'ar haShamayim was established in 1906 by a few kabbalists who had operated outside the borders of a permanent *beit midrash*, even if they were close in spirit to the venerable institution. The new seminary was not the by-product of an ideological or interpretive dispute over the ascendant kabbalistic method in Jerusalem, but took root thanks to a small number of kabbalists (mostly Ashkenazim) who aspired to forge a new organizational structure, mode of study, and outreach apparatus. In fact, Sha'ar haShamayim continued the local practice of studying HaARI's works and praying in accordance to the RaShaSh's intentions. However, the fact that most of its regulars were Ashkenazim was a novelty. Its "student body" was indeed required to "adopt" a path that was unfamiliar to most Eastern Europeans. This Ashkenazi anomaly might explain why Sha'ar haShamayim underscored its cooperation with the more established kabbalah seminaries as well as its detailed curriculum. In any event, the emergent institution also had special departments that set it apart from its senior counterparts.

Sha'ar haShamayim's head rabbis were Shimon Zvi Horowitz of Lida and Chaim Yehuda Leib Auerbach. The former, also known as Shimon Lider and Shimon the Kabbalist (1869–1946), was a non-Hasidic Jew who began spreading the kabbalah at the turn of the century, distributing various booklets and teaching the concealed Torah to individuals and groups.¹⁵ The scion of a Hasidic Polish family, Auerbach (1883–1954), was born in Jaffa and married into the respected Porush family. He oversaw the seminary's programs in Halakhic

15 For more on this kabbalist, see Malachi, "R. Shimon Zvi Horowitz;" 330–331; Meir, "The Eclectic Kabbalah," 411–420; Tidhar, *Encyclopedia of the Pioneers*, vol. 1, 334. According to Tidhar, Horowitz died on the 2nd of Tishrei 5707 (1946) in Motza (a village west of Jerusalem), where he would seclude himself every Rosh Hashanah. Dablitski offers an account of his passing and funeral; idem, *Binu Shnot Dor vaDor*, 69–70.

literature, which was indeed his main area of interest.¹⁶ Sha'ar haShamayim's establishment was facilitated by the broad support of rabbis and kabbalists from diverse backgrounds. In 1927, Auerbach reminisced over its nascent stages:

The virtue of my forefathers stood to my benefit to establish the holy yeshiva Sha'ar Shamayim for the study of the true wisdom of Kabbalah, which owing to our many sins was nearly abandoned in our generation, an orphaned generation; and I was still young in days, less than the age of liability; and I enlisted the renowned kabbalist, the lord of secrets, Shimon Zvi Horowitz, and I appointed him the rosh yeshiva of the holy seminary to teach kabbalah; and from day to day, the number of students gradually multiplied; they are god-fearing and well-rounded Torah scholars among the illustrious of the Jews, and many of them developed and succeeded and also made [*sic*] fruit in studying the holy Torah; and among them were those who entered the orchard of supreme wisdom, through the inner gate, the mysteries of Torah, and the secrets in the prayer intentions according to the kabbalah of HaARI, and they commenced with this work – praying with the holy siddur of the RaShaSh.¹⁷

In essence, Horowitz's arrival set the yeshiva on its unique path. Born in Lida to a family of *mitnagdim*, he reportedly began studying kabbalah as a teenager from books that he found at the Strashun Library in Vilnius. Horowitz reached Palestine in 1887, before turning twenty, where he studied at the Eş Hayyim Yeshiva and apparently Beit El during the tenure of R. Sasson ben Moshe.¹⁸ In 1895, while enrolled at Eş Hayyim, he lent his signature to a notice, which was published in the newspaper *HaBazeleth* expressing support for a couple of the seminary's students, Yehiel Michel Pines and Ze'ev Yavetz, "on the matter of settling the Holy Land by working the soil in adherence to the pure sanctity of Jerusalem's denizens."¹⁹ During this period, Horowitz was already engrossed in kabbalah studies. According to one eyewitness, he pressed the young students at Eş Hayyim to take up Jewish mysticism, albeit

16 Biographical information on this figure is provided by Bath Yehudah, "Auerbach," 45–47; Tidhar, *Encyclopedia of the Pioneers*, vol. 3, 1470. One of his sons was the influential Halakhic adjudicator Zalman Auerbach.

17 Auerbach, *Sefer Hakham Lev*, 1.

18 For more on Sasson ben Moshe, see Tidhar, *Encyclopedia of the Pioneers*, vol. 1, 334.

19 "Ma'asef leKol haMaḥanot," 211–212. Horowitz is one of the signatories. See Malachi, *Studies in the History of the Old Yishuv*, 214–215.

with mixed success.²⁰ Moreover, he gave kabbalah lessons on a regular basis at Jerusalem's "Great Beit Midrash that is in the courtyard of the Elders' Residence [*Moshav Zkainim*]." In 1899, Horowitz and a disciple, Haim Kayam Kadish Halevi, printed *Sefer Ateret Yosef* by the Lithuanian kabbalist R. Joseph of Lesko (A commentary on the first part of R. Imanuel Hai Ricchi's *Sefer Mishnat Ḥasidim*), the two perceived this work as an introduction to and comprehensive review of Lurianic Kabbalah.²¹ Horowitz wrote that it was "the illustrious kabbalists of Beit El's Holy Community of Rehovot [i.e., Rehovot haNahar,]" who spurred him on to print the book (Haim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen and Avraham Antebbi provided their approvals).²² Thereafter, Kadish Halevi published a notice in the daily press lauding the book and Horowitz.²³ The latter continued to teach kabbalah to small groups and individuals in his house. Among his students were renowned rabbis like Isser Zalman Meltzer, the RID-BaZ (Yaakov David Wilovsky), Isaac HaLevi Herzog, and Tzvi Pesach Frank (who lectured on Talmud and Halakha at Sha'ar haShamayim).²⁴ In one of

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- 20 Ḥayut, *Shishim yeShalosh Shana*, 28–29: "Once he even offered to study with me the book *Eṣ Ḥayyim*, which was compiled by the kabbalist rabbi R. Hayyim Vital and from the gospel of HaARI; and he even studied the first page with me, but I said that I still have time for this field of study, and this isn't a field of study for a boy of fifteen; in the meantime, I must acquire a great deal of Talmud; and if I am fortunate, one day I will also find the time for the concealed Torah." Eliezer Raphael Malachi, another "graduate" of this seminary, came away with similar impressions; idem, "R. Shimon Zvi Horowitz," 330–331.
- 21 Joseph of Lesko, *Sefer Ateret Yosef*. Kadish added an introduction containing, among other things, a warning to those who engage in kabbalah studies (5a-6b). Moreover, Horowitz proofread the work and added a booklet of definitions and clarifications; *Shem meShimon*, 70b-77b. The book was reprinted by the Vilna Gaon Institute within the following framework: Emanuel Hai Ricchi, *Sefer Mishnat Ḥasidim*, vol. 2. For a discussion on this book, see Morgenstern, *Mysticism and Messianism*, 123–124; idem, *The Gaon of Vilna*, 11–30; Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, 757–759.
- 22 Horowitz, *Sefer Or haMeir yeQol Mevasser*, 1b. On *Sefer Mishnat Ḥasidim*'s connection to HaARI and the RaShaSh, as well as the hesitation on the part of the latter to using this same book, see Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, 59–64; Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El*, 100–102; Naor, *Post-Sabbatian Sabbatianism*, 53–57.
- 23 Halevi, "Notice," 279. Halevi appears in the general ledgers of the Elders' Residence between 1891 and 1907 (i.e., from the age of 64 to 80). For example, these records summarize his past: "He was a rosh yeshiva and a native of Vawkavysk" (a town in present-day Belarus). See Moshav Zkainim, *Sefer Heshbon*, vol. 11, 14; vol. 31, 56. The latter also records a cash gift that Horowitz received from the institution; ibid, 124.
- 24 Isser Zalman Meltzer (Meltzer, *BeDerekh Eṣ Ḥayim*, 322); RIDBaZ and Yitzhak Isaac HaLevi Herzog (Zussman, *MiBehirei Ṣadiqaya*, 168; Herzog, *SHuT Heikhal Yiṣḥaq*, 21); Tzvi Pesach Frank (Rosenthal, *Mesua leDor*, 33, 51, 170).

his “kabbalesque” books, Shmuel Hominer wrote about the impression that Horowitz had made on him:

The brilliant saint and kabbalist R. Shimon Zvi Horowitz, was known to all as R. Shimon Lider; and he would crank out wonderful Toranic insights on the wisdom of kabbalah in the many classes that he would teach in a couple of synagogues; and Jerusalem’s renowned geniuses and savants would study the wisdom of kabbalah with him; and even the brilliant RIDBaZ whose place of residence was in the holy city of Safad agreed to study kabbalah with him and said that “by R. Shimon we can learn kabbalah;” and R. Shimon would explain quite wonderfully drawing the things closer to the brain with very delectable words for the ears of those who heard them, and he had the good fortune of producing many students; and he was exceedingly humble and patient and does not get [*sic*] angry; and the blessed Lord granted me several occasions to enjoy from the rapture of his pure sayings and from his wonderful explanations which was sweeter than honey and nectar.²⁵

During the yeshiva’s inaugural year, Horowitz published *Sefer Or haMeir*. In this work, he explained “that the brunt of the Exile’s length is due to the eschewal of studying the kabbalah’s wisdom” and backed this claim with quotations from earlier kabbalists and Hasids. Furthermore, the book attempts to inspire traditional Jews to study the rudiments of the mystical literature.²⁶ *Sefer Or haMeir* also contains approvals by rabbis from various ethnic groups and ideological camps (e.g., the RIDBaZ, Haim Berlin, Haim Zvi Hirsch Braude, Yitzchak Blazer, Abraham Isaac Kook, and sages from Rehovot haNahar, like Dweck-HaKohen, Antebbi, and Yedid Halevi) who felt that limitations should be placed on this sort of kabbalistic outreach. All told, the views that Horowitz expressed therein were neither unusual nor innovative; hence, the support from all the Orthodox streams. With the objective of arousing study of Jewish mysticism, Horowitz also exchanged letters with rabbis and kabbalists in Palestine and East Europe. For instance, he corresponded with Hillel Zeitlin, who concomitantly began to disseminate his own brand of kabbalah

25 Hominer, *Sefer Kavanot Niflaot*, 12b-13b.

26 Horowitz, *Sefer Or haMeir*. In this book, he is still referred to as one of “the students” at Eš Ḥayyim, not Sha’ar haShamayim’s head rabbi. Decades later, he published a summary of *Sefer Or haMeir*’s main points on the grounds that copies of this “valuable” book had run out; idem, *Sefer Sanegoriya*, 37–43.

in Warsaw.²⁷ The two met in Jerusalem in around 1925, and Zeitlin churned out enthusiastic reviews of his colleague's output in Poland's daily Yiddish press.²⁸

Horowitz and his confidantes were also quite active in the publishing arena. As discussed in Chapter 5, he orchestrated a couple of large-scale endeavors in this field. The heads of Sha'ar haShamayim also recommended an array of new books, be they products of the Land of Israel or the Diaspora, championing the study and dissemination of esoteric knowledge. A case in point is the approvals of Menahem Menkhin Halperin, Horowitz, and Auerbach for a book by Aryeh Leibish Lifshitz, a Hasidic kabbalist and miracle worker.²⁹ Moreover, the co-*rashei yeshiva* offered similar backing for newly-annotated editions of *Sefer Mishnat Ḥasidim*.³⁰

Horowitz and Auerbach's efforts to spread the kabbalah paid dividends, as their institution steadily grew. According to one estimate, 113 students were enrolled at Sha'ar haShamayim in 1913, a significant portion of whom was apparently occupied with the kabbalah.³¹ One of the yeshiva's communications from around 1932 put the number of affiliated kabbalists at over a hundred.³² About three years earlier, a similar estimate was cited in a fundraising-mission dossier (*pinkas shlihut*). Besides the students in the teachers and rabbinical ordination programs, "over a hundred" – a figure that was subsequently corrected in the manuscript to "tens" of – "rabbis, great sages, and thinkers in God's Torah learn there day and night in the revealed and the concealed."³³ Regardless of the precise numbers, it is evident that dozens of kabbalists received substantial support from the institution and were studying there

27 See Meir, "Zeitlin's Zohar," 119–157; idem, *Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav*, 9–39.

28 The meeting comes up in Zeitlin's letters to Binyamin Lipkin-Horowitz from 1939; Zeitlin, *Letters to Lipkin-Horowitz*, 1939 (MS). Aside for Shimon Horowitz's books, Zeitlin also reviewed works by Kook, Elyashiv, and Ashlag. In the process, he discussed the kabbalah's revival in Palestine; Zeitlin, "Vos geit unz izt Eretz-Yisroel," 4.

29 Inserted on a single sheet in the front of the book, the approval is not found in all its copies. Lifshitz, *Sefer Yismah Ṣadiq*. Horowitz also praised the author for a placard-cum-sermon that he circulated in 1928. This text contains a riveting plan for limited Jewish autonomy in Palestine; Lifshitz, *Igeret Teiman Yiṣmiaḥ Yeshu'a*, 1928 (announcement). On the relationship between Horowitz and Lifshitz, see idem, *Kuntres Yesod leQra*, the part on Histories and Tales, 40–241; Yissachar Dov Lifshitz, *Sefer Divrei Isakhar Dov*, 15. The last two books provide a large selection of wondrous tales about his activities in Jerusalem, along with descriptions of various revelations that he merited.

30 Ricchi, *Mishnat Ḥasidim*, with the commentary *Maggid Sheni*.

31 Freiman, *Sefer haZikharon haYerushalmi*, 51.

32 Sha'ar haShamayim, *Ṣa'at Bnei Yisrael uVaqaṣhat Raḥanim*, 6.

33 Sha'ar haShamayim, *Pinkas Shlihut*, 1929 (MS).

on a regular basis. Among the yeshiva's most prominent resident kabbalists between 1909 and 1932, be it for short stints or extended periods, were Yehuda Tzvi Brandwein, Yaakov Moshe Charlap, Aharon Shlomo Maharil, Aharon Avraham Slotki, Shlomo Wechsler, Menahem Menkhin Halperin, Haim Gershon Vilner, Eliyahu Yaakov Lag'imi, and RYAZ Margalioṭ.³⁴

As part of the seminary's grassroots fundraising campaigns, thousands of copies of assorted "calls for submission" were formulated in multiple languages (Hebrew, Yiddish, English, Russian, Arabic, German, and French) and distributed to prospective contributors via the post.³⁵ Only a few of these communications are extant, but according to the yeshiva's account books they garnered handsome sums.³⁶ Likewise, calendars featuring advertisements for Sha'ar haShamayim and its donor lists were sent far and wide.³⁷ The yeshiva's general ledgers record hundreds of contributors, both regular and otherwise. During the early stages of its existence, the lion's share of the seminary's donations came from Eastern Europe. The most prominent benefactors were Hasidic *rebbe*s who wished to bolster the study of Kabbalah in Jerusalem, but did not share a rapport with the city's other kabbalah yeḥsivot.³⁸ Sha'ar haShamayim's representatives also personally solicited rabbis to donate their books and give regularly to the institution.³⁹ Nissim Nahum, the aforementioned Sephardic

34 A long list of the habitués that were supported by the institution surfaces in the Account Books of the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, 1908–1922 (MS).

35 From a perusal through the institution's general ledgers, it is evident that Sha'ar haShamayim invested a great deal of energy in formulating appeals, translating them into different languages, and delivering them to potential donors. As a rule, thousands of copies were sent of each document. See *ibid.*, part 1, 1 (1909: 2,000 copies in English and French); 9 (1910: 6,000 copies in Russian, English, and German); 26 (1911: 2,000 half-shekel forms); 16 (1910: 1,000 New Year cards, 3,000 *pidyon kaparot* forms, and 4,000 calls for submission); 40 (1911: 1,000 call for awakening letters); 52 (1912: 6,000 half-shekel forms); 54 (letters in German and French); 87 (8,000 calls for submission and 4,000 membership cards), and so on and so forth.

36 Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, "Qol meHeikhal haQadosh," undated (announcement); *idem.*, "Qol Qore," undated (announcement); *idem.*, "Moda'a" (announcement); *idem.*, "haYeshiva haGdola yeḥaQdosh," 1927; *idem.*, "Beshem haShem," 1913 (MS).

37 *Idem.*, *Luah Arṣi Yisraeli* (1930). The calendar includes pictures and letters of support from Abraham Isaac Kook and Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld. In all likelihood, the yeshiva produced a few more calendars. However, these have not turned up in the collections of major libraries. A public auction offered such a calendar for the year 5681 (1920–1921).

38 Among the many Hasidic dynasties that supported the yeshiva on a regular basis were the Safrin and Komarno courts as well as Belz, Gur, and Ruzhin; Sha'ar haShamayim, *Account Books*, 1908–1922, parts 1–4 (MS).

39 A fine example of this is a 1931 letter to Shmuel Yitzhak Hillman of London. Signed by Horowitz, Auerbach, and Moshe Leib Shachor, the epistle was sent after the yeshiva

philanthropist, was involved in Sha'ar haShamayim's founding and contributed generously to the seminary throughout his lifetime.⁴⁰

The yeshiva did not suffice with these economic activities, as it also dispatched rabbinical emissaries to Eastern and Western Europe, the Arab world, and America to drum up support. Two of its envoys' mission dossiers, from 1910 and 1929, are held by the Israel National Library. Though lacking its emissary's name, the first dossier contains the signatures of the heads of both the yeshiva and the Ashkenazic court in Jerusalem. In all likelihood, it was intended for an East European representative.⁴¹ The second file was issued to Suisse Levi for his mission to Arab lands. It includes a recommendation from Yaakov Meir, the Sephardic chief rabbi of Mandatory Palestine, a letter by Abraham Isaac Kook, and a long list of targeted destinations across a wide geographic expanse.⁴² Other envoys were sent to Europe and the Western Hemisphere, but there is scant information about their efforts. The following emissaries are mentioned in Sha'ar haShamayim's account books: Elazar Koenig (1910), M. Miller (1910), Avraham Shlomo Goldman (1913), Shmuel Braverman (1913), Haim Hasid (1914), Elimelech ben Kehat (1914), Shalom Baruch Greenboim (1914), and Zvi Eckstein (1922).⁴³ Aside for these itinerants, "*kollel sextons*" were appointed in various cities outside of the Land of Israel to collect the funds that were pledged in their designated regions.⁴⁴

The impressive scope of its fundraising efforts aside, Sha'ar haShamayim was not immune to the hardships of the First World War. In a 1929 letter to a potential donor in the United States, the *rashei yeshiva* made note of the extensive support that they had merited from rabbis in East Europe "until the terrible world war broke out:"

The bond between us and our throngs of benefactors ceased; however, we naturally expected that soon enough the clouds would scatter and the sword would be reinserted into its sheath, and that true peace would be agreed to across the world; and in the meantime we have amassed expenses and many creditors have surrounded us from every direction,

received a copy of the prospective donor's book; Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, Letter to Shmuel Yitzhak Hillman, 1931. The same can be said for an appeal to the sage David Kapra. Moved by a fundraising pamphlet, Kapara indeed supported the institution; idem, *From Yemen to Shaarayim*, 164.

40 See, for example, Sha'ar haShamayim, *Account Books*, 1908–1922 (MS), part 1, 1, 22.

41 Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Pinkas Shlihut*, 1910, (MS).

42 Idem, *Pinkas Shlihut*, 1929 (MS).

43 Idem, *Account Books*, 1908–1922 (MS).

44 See, for example, Haim, *Documents from the Collection of Elie Eliachar*, 53; Onderyaizer family, *Tiferet Banim*, 52.

to the point where we are tired of bearing [this burden] and our eyes are turned to the sky for pity.⁴⁵

Likewise, Menahem Menkhin Halperin, among the pillars of the Sha'ar haShamayim community, left a personal testimony of the conflict's toll. According to a letter, in Yiddish, sent to family members begging for assistance, Halperin's cupboard did not even contain "bread of privation."⁴⁶

From the 1930s onward, donations flowed into Sha'ar haShamayim from the Western Hemisphere. Auerbach embarked on several fundraising trips to the New World in the early 1930s and in 1952. These visits netted considerable media attention.⁴⁷ His first trip was covered by the Theosophical Society's newspaper, which published an interview with the rosh yeshiva and an accurate description of the seminary's programs and goals. In fact, this account could have easily been pasted from the institution's own communications. Moreover, this piece was intended to draw parallels between what was transpiring in Palestine kabbalah circles and the American group's own esoteric enterprise. Auerbach even gave a lecture to the American theosophists on the soul and the concept of *gilgul* (reincarnation). That said, it is hard to believe that the rabbi truly understood or felt a special affinity for his hosts.⁴⁸ In any event, these trips led to establishment of the American Friends of Sha'ar haShamayim⁴⁹ and large donations from American Jewry's Central Relief Committee between the years 1937 and 1949.⁵⁰

The seminary's fundraising campaigns also targeted ordinary Jews in East Europe. A case in point is a 1913 letter to Sha'ar haShamayim by one R. Shmuel Aharon Miller, the presiding judge of the Jewish court in the town of Lubawa, Poland. Upon reading the yeshiva's anguished cries for help, Miller contributed a modest sum. On account of his "limited and tenuous income," the rabbi was

45 Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, Letter to an Unknown Addressee in America, 1929 (MS). Signing off on this letter were Horowitz and Auerbach. It appears that the co-head rabbis sought to crown the addressee "the holy sexton," namely the institution's fundraising coordinator, in the United States.

46 Menachem Menkhin Halperin, Letter to His Family, undated (MS).

47 For an account of his final trip, see Pardes, "The Distinguished Kabbalist," 41–42; Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, "Qol meHeikhal Hashem."

48 Jennie Wilson, "The Ancient Wisdom in Palestine," 317–318. Also see Huss, "The Sufi Society from America," 167–193; Meir, "The Beginnings of Kabbalah in America," 237–268.

49 Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Bilding Fond Komite* (1952).

50 Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, Letters to American Jewry's Central Relief Committee, 1937–1949 (MS). Furthermore, there are dozens of extant letters by the seminary's administrators and functionaries, along with receipts and approvals (by, say, Isser Zalman Meltzer, Tzvi Pesach Frank, and Charlap).

unable to give more. To make up for it, though, he also sent his own ideas on “the path of the concealed and the revealed.”⁵¹

These fundraising efforts did not always go so smoothly. On occasion, criticism was thrust at the profusion of emissaries whose routes had begun to overlap. For instance, one angry donor, R. Shalom ben Shimon Madhuch, wrote to Chief Rabbi Meir that unfamiliar envoys had suddenly arrived in his town.⁵² In any event, Sha’ar haShamayim enjoyed considerable backing from kabbalists and rabbis from across the Orthodox spectrum and beyond. Over the years, distinguished benefactors lent their signature to the yeshiva’s Toranic publications and appeals.⁵³ Sha’ar haShamayim’s fundraising prowess was tied to its program and activities – the topic of the next section. At any rate, the yeshiva certainly merited extensive support from Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, Palestine, and America until 1948.⁵⁴

Program and Regimen

Sha’ar haShamayim master plan is rather informative. Owing to ideological changes and/or financial hardship, the program was gradually altered; and with it, the seminary’s character. As per the original plan, which was printed in 1912,⁵⁵ the seminary’s goal was to teach and disseminate kabbalah among the most accomplished Torah scholars. To this end, the institution sought candidates that were proficient in the Talmudic literature and offered them

51 Miller, Letter to the Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva, 1913 (MS).

52 Ben-Yaakov, *The Travelling Envoy*, vol. 1, 140–142.

53 For example, see Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva, “Te’udat Rabanim yeGaonim,” 1931 (MS). This document contains words of praise for the yeshiva by Haim Soloveitchik, Haim Berlin, Yaakov David RIDBaZ, Meir Yehiel Halevi Halstock (the rabbi of Ostrowiec), Abraham Isaac Kook, Avraham Mordechai Alter (the rabbi of Gur), Yosef Haim Zonnenfeld, and Judah Leo Landau.

54 The yeshiva underwent a major transformation in 1948. See Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva, Letter to the Department of Social Service, 1948 (MS); idem, *Yipathu Lifneikhem*; Pardes and Elberg, “Sha’ar haShamayim,” 38–40; Rudnitzky, *HaDveiqim baHashem*; Meir, “The Imagined Decline,” 197–220. In around 1948, Shalom Najar and Shimon Goldman (Horowitz’s son in law) endeavored to open a yeshiva by the name *Zikhron Shimon* (Shimon’s Memory) in Horowitz’s memory. See *Zikhron Shimon*, Letters (MS). At the same time, Mordechai Yefet Sharabi founded the Nahar Shalom Yeshiva. This seminary was named in Sharabi’s memory, even though he had never been affiliated with Sha’ar haShamayim. See Sharabi, *Yeshivat haMekubalim* (MS).

55 Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Hotam Tokhnit* (1912). It was released in Hebrew and Yiddish, with the consent of R. Haim Berlin.

stipends on the basis of their “value” and lot in life.⁵⁶ One of Sha’ar haShamayim’s key innovations was its pedagogic structure. Unlike other kabbalah seminaries, it would not accept scholars who had already mastered the esoteric corpus.⁵⁷ Instead, the seminary endeavored to train the next generation of kabbalists and *mekhavvim* by means of a well-structured program, which also included revealed studies. (A contemporary model of this sort can be found in the Ahavat Shalom kabbalah seminary in Jerusalem, under the leadership of Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Hillel.⁵⁸) Although it provides no details of its study regimen, Sha’ar haShamayim’s initial master plan clearly distinguishes between beginners and advanced students. One of the yeshiva’s early mission dossiers articulated its inaugural objectives in a handful of short yet coherent clauses: (a) to teach kabbalah around the clock, including classes for novices; (b) to enlist gifted people who would dedicate their days and nights to studying kabbalah “in purity” and praying in accordance to the RaShaSh’s intentions; (c) to maintain night shifts for learning Torah, *tikkunei hašot* (Midnight Vigils), and prayer; (d) to bring to press Sharabian prayers for distribution in synagogues; (e) to publish books on Jewish mysticism and circulate them among Torah scholars free of charge; and (f) to inspire traditional Jews from diverse backgrounds to study kabbalah.⁵⁹ One of Sha’ar haShamayim’s fundraising letters from around 1914 expands on its schedule and modes of learning, among other topics:

The location of our holy yeshiva is the city of God in which there are hundreds of scholars occupied day and night with studying the full [spectrum of the] Torah in the revealed and the concealed, and their Torah is their craft. And this yeshiva is a treasure house for all the scholars and those that grasp the Torah, elders and the elderly and rabbis and geniuses, and all who seek God’s world in order to finish their lives in the perfection of the Torah and the sacred. And it [i.e., Sha’ar haShamayim] also has a seminary for people of stature who consecrated themselves for the heavens in purity and asceticism [...] and they deal with the sublime mysteries that are entrenched in the holy place Beit HaARI, namely in the court of the holy HaARI’s ruin and the house in which he was born; this lot was set aside for a large and holy *beit midrash*; and surrounding

56 Ibid, 4–8.

57 Luncz, *Netivot Šiyon veYerushalayim*, 165; Ben-Arieh, *A City Reflected in its Times*, 346–347, 413.

58 For a disquisition on Hillel’s approach and the yeshiva that he founded, see Meir, “The Revealed and the Revealed within the Concealed,” 241–258; idem, “The Boundaries of the Kabbalah,” 163–180.

59 Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Pinkas Shliḥut*, 1910 (MS), 4.

it are dormitories, a bath house, a cookhouse, and a dining room for the people of stature who removed themselves from the market of life. And they convene every midnight in Beit HaARI's study hall for a *tikkun haṣot* with *yihudim* and sackcloth [*sic*]. And afterwards they are occupied with sublime mysteries until the Morning Prayer[. The service is conducted] according to the holy names of HaARI's intentions and lasts many hours of the day; and they observe all the devotional fasts that they are capable of pursuant to the kabbalah; and they sit in prayer and in fear day and night and [partake] in the sacred worship like priests in the house of God. They pour out their hearts crying [in order] to awaken heaven's mercies for the exile of the Jews and the exile of the divine presence.... Moreover, we have a seminary for the young sons of Zion who have completed the upper level of the yeshivot; here they are drawn to the devotion of studying Torah assiduously under the supervision of brilliant rabbis who study Torah with them for the sake of training them to be qualified for instruction.⁶⁰

Sha'ar haShamayim's growth appears to have engendered change. In a 1925 program that was released in Hebrew, Yiddish, and English, there was a greater emphasis on the two-pronged system: the revealed alongside the concealed, Halakha alongside kabbalah. The revealed track consisted of several wings: (a) the Young Men's Seminary (*bahurim yeshiva*), which trained "pedagogic instructors;" (b) Rabbinical Advocates; (c) the Department for the Study of Holies and Purities (*kod'shim* and *taharot*) – parts of the Talmudic literature that "have been entirely neglected by most of the scholars" (d) the Department for the Study of Halakhas on the Setting of the New Month (*hilkhot kidush ha'hodesh* and *sod ha'ibur*) Alternatively, the concealed track was comprised of the following units: (a) The Inner Sanctuary [*dvir*] for Kabbalah Study, which offered daily classes on HaARI and Hayyim Vital's works for beginners and more advanced students. Graduates earned the title of "internal influencer" (*mashpia pnim*) and were certified to serve as teachers. (b) The External Influencers (*mashpia hutz*) Department was responsible for the yeshiva's public relations and remote classes. Moreover, this unit edited Sha'ar haShamayim's publications. (c) The Intenter's Department was comprised of experts in the Sharabian prayer style. (d) The People of the Guard and of Stature Department (*anshei mishmar ma'amad*) merged two key elements: a quasi-*beit midrash* aimed at enhancing Torah-literate people's knowledge of the hidden Torah (a sort of institute for continuing education); and as stated in a writ of allegiance, the

60 Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, Letter to Yozpa Saqlosqy, 1912 (MS). Among the letter's signatories are Horowitz, Auerbach, and Halperin.

desire to seed “a holy fellowship of kabbalists and *mekhavvnim* who have undergone a paramount spiritual experience.” The last objective, it bears noting, was commensurate with those of other kabbalah seminaries.⁶¹

As a direct result of this new program, Sha’ar haShamayim expanded its “revealed track” and modified its basic outlook. In roughly 1928, the institution established special *talmudei torah*.⁶² Henceforth, the name that graced its official letterhead was “The Central H[oly] Yeshiva Sha’ar haShamayim Next to the Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai Synagogue, an Assembly of Saints, Torah Luminaries who are Consecrated to Study the Revealed Torah and the Wisdom of the Truth, the Torah of Kabbalah, and to Pray according to Intention.” Alternatively, the English version reads “The Generally Holy Talmudical & Cabbala Academy Shaar Hashamaim & Rabbinical College and Branches in Jerusalem.” The letterhead also notes that “the yeshiva disseminates the Torah of truth, the wisdom of kabbalah, to the most accomplished of God-fearing excellent Torah scholars who are proficient in the *Talmud* and halakhic adjudicators, and those qualified to enter God’s secret.” Moreover, it refers to the two main branches of the institution: “*Kehal ḥasidim* [Community of Hasids] Yeshiva of *Mekhavvnim*” alongside the “*Liskhat Rabanim* [Bureau of Rabbis] who are completing requirements for instruction.” Sha’ar haShamayim also has “other branches in the neighborhoods around Jerusalem [i.e., the Old City].” Lastly, “the yeshiva aspires to blaze paths of the holy study between the Torah scholars abroad, so that they can negotiate with the responsa on the Torah’s secrets” (as discussed below, such responsa were prevalent at the time).⁶³ Separate flyers articulating the yeshiva’s goals and appealing for donations were circulated on behalf of the *Liskhat Rabanim*.⁶⁴ In 1929, the institution even opened a Talmud academy for Sephardic children.⁶⁵

61 Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Hotam Tokhnit* (1925), 5–10; English section, 6–10. The English title is *Ideals and tasks of the holy and great Yeshiva Shaar hashamaim & branches in Jerusalem* [sic]. Accompanying this booklet were approvals by Abraham Isaac Kook and Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld. Also see the English summary of the program in Wilson, “The Ancient Wisdom,” 315–317.

62 For more on these scholars, see the booklet Sha’ar haShamayim, *Mazkeret Brakha: Good Tidings from the Talmud Academy and Holy and Great Yeshiva Sha’ar haShamayim* (1940). The English title is *Remembrance of Love of the Talmud Torah and General Holy Talmudic Academy Sha’ar haShamayim, Jerusalem, Palestine*.

63 Sha’ar haShamayim, Official Letterhead, 1920s (MS).

64 Liskhat Rabanim, *Qol Qore* (announcement). The signatories are Auerbach, “Shimon Lider” (i.e., Horowitz), and Yehiel Michel Horowitz.

65 Idem, *Pinkas Shlihut*, 1929 (MS): “In our yeshiva’s courtyard has been set up an upper Talmud academy for the children of our Jewish brethren the Sephardim – the Exile’s

A number of the official letters that were sent off during this period include a "Summary of the Yeshiva's Plan," in which the aforementioned sections resurface. Especially interesting is the emphasis on the fact that Sha'ar haShamayim's upper echelon, namely its *mekhavvim*, are "saintly rabbis, illuminators of the mysteries that consecrated themselves in accordance with the examinations and instructions of the most illustrious of kabbalists [in order] to direct their prayers with *yihudim* pursuant to the great siddur of the RaShaSh of blessed memory."⁶⁶ Like the yeshiva's earlier communications, the booklet raises the banner of incremental and supervised studies, culminating with a sort of "authorization" for its graduates to deal with esoteric wisdom and assume the title of *kabbalist* or *mekhavven*. In 1940, the heads of the *yeshiva* boasted that to this point in its existence, Sha'ar haShamayim had already trained hundreds of kabbalists, several of whom have reached the level of *mekhavvim*.⁶⁷ This statement attests to the importance that the yeshiva placed on acquiring expertise in the RaShaSh's intentions.

According to one source, Nissim Nahum agreed to back Sha'ar haShamayim on the condition that its candidates for the title of *mekhavven* be tested by none other than Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen at the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva.⁶⁸ This, in all likelihood, refers to the same examination that he used for his own students. More specifically, before they were allowed to serve as cantors, the candidates performed mock services with intentions before Dweck-HaKohen.⁶⁹ Although we lack firm evidence of these kinds of tests at Sha'ar haShamayim, there was indeed a strong link between the two institutions. For

returnees from the lands of the East and the West, who owing to impatience and hard work their children are neglected, left without good manners, and they are liable to fall into the net of inciters and agitators, God forbid." The instructors at this school are depicted as "excellent Sephardic teachers."

66 Sha'ar haShamayim, Official Letterhead, 1920s (MS).

67 Sha'ar haShamayim, *Mazkeret Brakha (Remembrance of Love)*, 1: "Hundreds of scholars having completed all the courses performed [*sic*] in the holy studies in our Yeshiva achieved the title 'Mechavvim.' Many others were awarded the title 'Mekubalim' who offer their prayers in the most passionate spirit in holiness." The booklet contains a brief survey of the yeshiva, in Yiddish and English, along with several accompanying pictures, approvals by Herzog, Frank, and Charlap, and a long list of rabbis who support the institution. Also see the student population numbers cited in idem, Letter to the Department of Social Service, 1940 (MS).

68 Hillel, "The Life of Dweck-HaKohen," 37. This condition is alluded to in Yehoshua, "Fortune Tellers," 225–226.

69 Munseh, *Pada et Avraham*, vol. 1, 401. Also see Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Hotam Tokhnit* (1925), English section, 9: "After being examined by the senior kabbalists, they are allowed to pray all the prayers according to Sharabi."

instance, Sha'ar haShamayim's rabbis would occasionally come to pray at the more established yeshiva. This affiliation was essential because the heads of the former lacked clear traditions on how to perform Sharabian intentions, and the yeshiva only possessed a few manuscripts by the RaShaSh and his disciples. The seminary's general ledgers record outlays for numerous trips of this sort to Rehovot haNahar. For instance, in 1911, "three wagons" were rented "for the yeshiva's rabbis who went to pray with intention at the holy community of Beit El, may it be predicated on justice in Rehovot."⁷⁰

The New Beit El

The rabbis at Sha'ar haShamayim deemed their yeshiva to be the new Beit El. To begin with, the works of HaARI and the RaShaSh stood at the heart of its program, and the same could be said for praying with intentions. Like previous generations at Beit El, the seminary's resident kabbalists entered into "writs of allegiance" among themselves.⁷¹ In 1938, Moshe David Gaon even grouched that "Over the last few years, the Beit El Yeshiva began to serve as a synonym for another kabbalah seminary that was founded in Jerusalem, namely Sha'ar haShamayim."⁷²

As noted, the habitués of Rehovot haNahar had adopted a similar tact after breaking away from the venerable institution. Viewing themselves as either the successors of or the new Beit El Yeshiva, they basically adopted its practices and regimen. This sense of continuity also came to expression in print. In a few of its earlier publications, the seminary referred to itself as, among other things, "Beit El, may it be founded on justice, in Rehovot."⁷³ What is more, a

70 Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Account Books*, 1908–1922 (MS), part 1, 27. Similar trips were taken in Iyar and Sivan 1912, *ibid.*, 64, 66.

71 An abridged copy of a writ of allegiance graces one of the yeshiva's plans; Sha'ar haShamayim, *Hotam Tokhnit* (1925), 19–20 (not included in the English section).

72 Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 1, 141. Important source material concerning Sha'ar haShamayim has also been deposited in the Gaon Archive; Gaon, Notes and Documents (MS). However, his negative attitude towards Sha'ar haShamayim surfaces in a note held by the Eliyahu Eliashar Archive. As per this document, Gaon threw away most of the material that pertains to the "The Ashkenazic yeshiva that took the name Sha'ar haShamayim;" Gaon, Letter to Eliashar (MS).

73 Likewise, the introduction to *Sefer Hayim yeShalom*, dubs the habitués of Rehovot haNahar "the sages and rabbis of the new Beit El which is in the company of Rehovot, may it be founded on justice." In addition, the newspaper *HaBazeleth* ran a notice in the name of the yeshivat Sha'ar haShamayim and "Beit El in Rehovot under the auspices of the

familiar picture of Beit El was added to the introduction of a book, *Sefer S'fat Emet*, that Rehovot haNahar put out in around 1904.⁷⁴

Consistent with this mindset, every kabbalah yeshiva in Jerusalem declared itself to be an inimitable, one-of-a-kind entity. For instance, a 1912 letter by Sha'ar haShamayim's representatives boasted that "experts who merited to enter into God's secret" are on the yeshiva's faculty. Moreover, it enumerates the reasons for the yeshiva's exceptionalism:

And this sacred learning, which over the past few generations had become hidden and was vanishing, on account of our many sins, and those learning Torah did not touch it and this Torah was nearly forgotten among the Jews, and we would have, God forbid, become bereft of and would have lost the Torah's soul – when it is known to those that enter into God's secret that learning the Torah's mysteries [Kabbalah] is the fruit of the attributes and inner soul of the holy Torah; and now by means of the holy yeshiva that we have established in God's city, the place of the treasure and the source of the soul of those that received the Torah on Mount Horeb, as is known according to the secret and by means of the propagation of those learning [kabbalah] and the dissemination of books of study and prayer that are printed by our yeshiva, the holy learning has spread among the Jews in the Land and abroad; and at night, as in the day, the Torah of truth shall be illuminated for us by the light of God in the secret dialogue on behalf of the soul of the *yisraeli* nation.⁷⁵

Similar sentiments as to the uniqueness of the new yeshiva resurface in the introduction to one of its publications from around 1914.⁷⁶ Not surprisingly, this text drew the ire of Rehovot haNahar's habitués. As a result, a quasi-apology was inserted on a separate page at the end of the volume. The correction states that these words refer exclusively to Ashkenazim, who for the most part have limited esoteric knowledge, whereas the Sephardim have engaged in Jewish esoteric knowledge since the days of the RaShaSh:

Bukharians;" Rehovot haNahar and Sha'ar haShamayim, "Qriya Gdola," 1909 (announcement). This sense of continuity is discussed at length in Moskowitz, *Hayei haRashash*, 95–116.

74 Mishan, *Sefer Sfat Emet*, introduction.

75 Sha'ar haShamayim, Letter to an Unknown Addressee (MS). This communication was signed by many of the yeshiva's regulars, foremost among them Shimon Zvi Horowitz, Chaim Yehuda Leib Auerbach, Aharon Shlomo Maharil, and Menahem Menkhin Halperin.

76 *Siddur Hayim yeShalom*, introduction.

On page 2 of the introduction were printed: “These things that were heretofore concealed and abandoned in the corner” [i.e., the kabbalah was neglected until the establishment of Sha’ar haShamayim], and these things were said in haste. For they only pertain to what was customary by us the Ashkenazim that until now this holy learning was but meager there [i.e., in Europe]. And by our brethren the Sephardim this holy learning has not ceased since the days of our holy rabbi R. Master Shalom Sharabi, who founded the holy yeshiva of Beit El, that [*sic*] they pray according to the intentions of the HaARI in the siddur of Rabbi Shalom. And in our time, another holy yeshiva was founded for Sephardic sages and rabbis in the Rehovot neighborhood of the holy community of the Bukharians, a big hall full of Torah Scholars who are wonderful in the kabbalah’s wisdom and pray according to the intentions of HaARI and the siddur by the RaShaSh. And by virtue of this sacred learning, may we merit to see the age of the redemption and the rectification of the worlds swiftly in our time, amen.⁷⁷

Rehovot haNahar’s criticism notwithstanding, its own flyers bear similar claims of exclusivity. For instance,

It is well known to all who come to our city’s gate and its inhabitants who have seen and heard that which was heard in the Land and abroad that there does not exist in another place a yeshiva so abundant in quantity and quality, where they learn day and night, and pray with intention. Our synagogue is the only one of its kind in the world, as is known to all who come to the holy city of Jerusalem, that it is a foundation and a cynosure for all who study the books of HaARI and the RaShaSh.⁷⁸

It would appear, then, that this sort of fanfaronade was commonplace among all of Jerusalem’s kabbalah seminaries, especially in their appeals to the general public.

Between Ashkenazim and Sephardim

In theory, Sha’ar haShamayim can be classified as an Ashkenazic yeshiva and all the others as Sephardic institutions. However, this breakdown does not

⁷⁷ Ibid, omission.

⁷⁸ Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, “Ish Hayil Rav Pe’alim” (1920).

fully capture the situation, as a thicket of bonds were formed between members of the various groups. For example, while most of Sha'ar haShamayim's regulars were indeed Ashkenazic, Nissim Nahum, was among its top patrons. In one of Sha'ar haShamayim's fundraising letters, Nahum wrote that the institution is "the only one of its kind and purpose in the world, and great rabbis have studied kabbalah books and have made great *tikkunim* therein."⁷⁹ At its inception, the yeshiva's stamp included the sentence "The Sha'ar haShamayim Seminary whose purpose is to advance kabbalah wisdom of the community of Ashkenazim." Soon enough, though, the ethnic dimension was obfuscated: "The Ecumenical Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, its purpose is to advance the wisdom of the truth," or plainly put "The Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva and its Branches."⁸⁰ In 1922, the institution printed a special booklet in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic titled *Şa'aqat Bnei Yisrael* [The Cry of the Israelites].⁸¹ Part paean to the yeshiva and part a call for financial support, it is signed by, among others, the leading figures of Rehovot haNahar and Beit El, such as the kabbalists Yom Tov Yedid Halevi, Ezra Harari-Rafal, Shalom Hedaya, Eliyahu Yaakov Lag'im, and Nissim Nahum. In turn, a few of Sha'ar haShamayim's kabbalists, along with various Hasidic rabbis, lent their signatures to fundraising campaigns for Rehovot haNahar. A case in point is a Yiddish-English flyer from the 1920s that raves about the wonders performed and the remedies, amulets, and other talismans concocted by Rehovot haNahar's regulars. This particular appeal is endorsed by, *inter alios*, the kabbalists and/or rabbis Menahem Menkhin Halperin, Yitzchak Zelig Morgenstern, Menachem Mendl of Strikov, Zvi Chanoch Hacoheh Levin, Avraham Mordechai Alter of Gur, and Shlomo Elyashiv.⁸²

Moshe David Gaon and other observers were flabbergasted by this cooperation, as they deemed Sha'ar haShamayim to be a rival of Beit El and

79 Nahum, "Ata Hashem" (undated Placard). For more on this subject, see Munseh, *Pada et Avraham*, vol. 1, 417–418. Auerbach paid homage to Nahum in the beginning of one of his works, alongside a description of the yeshiva's establishment; Auerbach, *Sefer Hakham Lev*, sans pagination. Nahum and his patronage of kabbalah seminaries is discussed in Kassin, *Sefer Pri Eş haGan*, vol. 1, 75–104; Laniado, *LaQedoshim asher baAreš*, 96–97; Hillel, "The Life of Dweck-HaKohen," 25–26.

80 See Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, Invitation to Lag baOmer Festivities, 1913 (MS). In contrast, see idem, Letter to Yuzpa Sachlosky (MS); idem, Letter to an Unknown Addressee (MS).

81 Sha'ar haShamayim, *Şa'aqat Bnei Yisrael* (1922). This work shares a similar name with other books that came out around the same time. Unlike the former, they contain kabbalistic *tikunim*.

82 Rehovot haNahar, "Qriya le'Ezra," 1920 (announcement).

Rehovot haNahar.⁸³ Nevertheless, the main theme of this story is the web of inter-connected kabbalah circles, rather than the “Ashkenazic” Sha’ar ha-Shamayim competing against the “Sephardic” Beit El or the “Bukharan” Rehovot haNahar. The fact that kabbalists from each of the different ethnic groups studied and prayed at all the various seminaries punctuates this show of cross-pollination. For instance, at different stages in their lives Shlomo Elyashiv, Aharon Avraham Slotki, Halperin, and Yeshaya Asher Zelig Margalioṭ were evidently affiliated with Rehovot haNahar and Sha’ar haShamayim. Although they did not necessarily spend each waking hour under his wing and studied in other frameworks, all these figures considered themselves loyal disciples or confidants of Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen.⁸⁴ Not surprisingly, they sought to build ties between kabbalists and Hasidim in Eastern Europe and Jerusalem. In light of the above, one can understand not only the recommendations that were given by Hasidic Ashkenazic rabbis for books espousing the Sharabian way, but the popular stories about Dweck-HaKohen’s interest in Hasidism and Lithuanian strains of kabbalah. For instance, he presumably studied the Zohar with the Vilna Gaon’s explanations and annotated the Lithuanian scholar’s commentary to *Sifra deSeniutha*. One source even claims that Dweck-HaKohen mentioned Elimelech of Lizhensk’s Hasidic booklet *Ṣetel Katan* on a daily basis and sought to publish a new edition of *Sefer Heikhal haBrakha* by the *rebbe* of Komarno.⁸⁵ It is worth noting that Dweck-HaKohen’s actual interest in these schools of thought was by and large superficial. Therefore, they naturally had little impact on his approach or gospel.

The extent of Dweck-HaKohen’s enthusiasm for the “Ashkenazic esotericism” notwithstanding, one of Beit El’s sextons praised the inter-ethnic Jewish relations in 1928: “It can be said that the virtue of the rabbi, Shalom Sharabi, protects this house [i.e., Beit El] in which peace resides, for in this synagogue Ashkenazim and Sephardim pray together; sometimes the *shaliaḥ ṣibbur* [prayer leader] is Sephardic and sometimes he is Ashkenazic; everyone prays in a single *nusah* [version of the liturgy] from the siddur of intentions of the RaShaSh of blessed memory.”⁸⁶

83 Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 1, 141. He made note of flyers praising Sha’ar haShamayim, which were signed by the kabbalists Yom Tov Yedid Halevi, Ezra Harari-Raful, Shalom Hedaya, Eliyahu Lag’imi, and Nissim Nahum.

84 Hillel, “The Life of Dweck-HaKohen,” 27. Yosef Kadish Krishevsky also spent time in both these seminaries during the period in question; see Krishevsky, *Sefer Yosef Qadisha*, 253–262. Sha’ar haShamayim’s records indicate that Menkhin Halperin and Margalioṭ received stipends from the institution; idem, *Account Books*, 1908–1922 (MS).

85 Hillel, “The Life of Dweck-HaKohen,” 39, 46–47.

86 Baruch, “Qehal Ḥasidim,” 300. According to Grayevski, the said author was one of the yeshiva’s sextons; Grayevski, “Mispaḥat Barukh,” 164; Haibi, *Anaq haRuah*, 97–98. That same

These types of statements were commonplace among representatives from all of Jerusalem's kabbalah seminaries. A case in point is the following sequence from an appeal that was made by Rehovot haNahar: "We toil day and night to spread the wisdom of the kabbalah between all the ethnic groups without distinction." These efforts, he claimed, already paid dividends: at all hours of the day, there are dozens of students "from all the ethnic groups" at the yeshiva "apprenticing in the wisdom of the kabbalah and prayer."⁸⁷ This same theme also comes up in a Hebrew-Yiddish-English flyer: "And throughout the years of its existence, Rehovot haNahar gave fruit and its light was spread in the communities of holiness that are found in Jerusalem; Ashkenazim and Sephardim drew from it sweet water from a spring that emanates from its sacred sites."⁸⁸ Sha'ar haShamayim also availed itself of such terminology in later communications. A mission dossier from around 1929 includes the following passage: "Over a hundred rabbis and illustrious sages from all the avenues of our brethren the house of Israel, Ashkenazim, and Sephardim, ponder God's Torah day and night in the revealed and concealed, older rabbis and men of action who focus their prayers using the siddur of our master and teacher Rabbi Shalom Sharabi."⁸⁹

The message of Sephardic-Ashkenazic harmony recurs in an epistle authored by some of Rehovot haNahar and Beit El's kabbalists: "At present when the holy yeshiva Sha'ar haShamayim is known and renowned and the branches of the ecumenical community of Hasids is renowned in its [*sic*] purpose and holiness throughout the world, and more than a hundred illustrious sages from all the avenues of our nation *bnei yisrael* [the Jewish people] are learning therein without any ethnic differences."⁹⁰

Despite these glowing reports, the yeshivot were clearly divided along ethnic lines. On the other hand, there was certainly a substantial degree of cooperation between the many and manifold kabbalists that were united around the RaShaSh's way. As discussed below, this collaboration was exemplified by joint ventures to publish HaARI's works and the RaShaSh's siddur as well as an

year, Grayevski expressed similar sentiments: "And to this day, they [i.e., sages in Beit El] pore over the Torah of kabbalah and prayer according to the intentions, from our sages and rabbis both the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim alike;" Grayevski, "Gedalya Hiyon," 201–202. See also Themanlys, "The Beth El Kabbalist," 23: "Beth El opened its gates to all. It was a gathering of exiles in miniature. Hebrew was spoken here long before the time of Eliezer ben Yehuda." For a literary account of the Beit El Yeshiva's Ashkenazic cantor, see Israel Zarchi, "Iturey Yerushalayim," in idem, *Yalkut Sipurim*, 27–28.

87 Rehovot haNahar, *Qol Qore leAheinu*, 1920 (announcement).

88 Rehovot haNahar, *Qriya le'Ezra*, 1920 (announcement).

89 Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Pinkas Shlihut*, 1929 (MS).

90 Sha'ar haShamayim, *Ša'at Bnei Yisrael uBaqashat Raḥamim* (1922), 6.

appeal to Talmudic scholars from all the ethnic groups to study the Zohar on a daily basis and perform sundry esoteric practices.

The kabbalah seminaries of Jerusalem shared much in common, but one aspect of Sha'ar haShamayim set it apart from the rest. While all the yeshivot had students from all the Jewish ethnic communities, Sha'ar haShamayim attracted members of both major Ashkenazic factions. The consensus view whereby only Lithuanians (*mitnagdim*) attended the yeshiva or that all its programs adhered to “the Vilna Gaon’s kabbalah” is unfounded. As noted in a circa 1884 book by one Yitzchak Kahana, an earlier undertaking to found a Jerusalem-based kabbalistic institution in the spirit of the Vilna Gaon – a sort of Lithuanian equivalent to Beit El, whose regulars would occupy themselves with the savant’s esoteric writings and pray from his siddur – failed to take root. Kahana claimed that none other than Raphael Yedidyah Abulafia, Beit El’s rosh yeshiva at the time, immersed himself in the Vilna Gaon’s books on the kabbalah.⁹¹ Upon Kahana’s passing in 1901, the newspaper *HaBazeleth* wrote that “it was his desire to institute a holy association in Jerusalem to study kabbalah books of the Vilna Gaon, a saint of blessed memory, *en masse*, but he was unable to see it through except with individuals.”⁹² These sort of ideas were also bandied about by the Rivlin family, Although they were not put into practice, in the Rivlins’ fertile imagination and writings, these heartfelt wishes were transformed into historical fact.⁹³

On some matters, Horowitz saw eye-to-eye with Kahana (in one of his books, the former even extolled Kahana’s virtues). Sha'ar haShamayim’s rosh yeshiva also held much in common with the Rivlin family, such as on the matter of the settlement of Palestine and the search for the Ten Tribes. That said, his educational vision contrasted sharply from that of Kahana and the Rivlins. Though a *misnaged* by birth and temperament, Horowitz often cited from Hasidic texts as well as works by the Vilna Gaon and his disciples.⁹⁴ His co-rosh yeshiva, Chaim Yehuda Leib Auerbach, came from a Hasidic family. In fact, the latter often elaborated his signature with his lineage, dating back to his great grandfather – Jacob Joseph of Polonne, the Ba'al Shem Tov’s closest disciple.

91 Kahana, *Sefer Toldot Yish'aq*, 2a; Dablitski, “Dvarim Aḥadim.”

92 Refael Zerah Aryeh Leib of Rakavah, “Alon Bakhut,” 153. The author was Kahana’s brother-in-law.

93 The Rivlins were wont to claim that the kabbalists were united around the Vilna Gaon’s idea of the redemption. Similarly, they asserted that Kabbalah study in Jerusalem was part and parcel of the proactive nationalist efforts to usher in the messianic age. Needless to say, these accounts are tendentious and radical.

94 Horowitz, *Or haMeir*; idem, *Sefer Sanigoriya*.

This Lithuanian-Hasidic amalgam is manifest in one of Sha'ar haShamayim's fundraising appeals. To begin with, the document lionizes both the Ba'al Shem Tov (BeShT) and the Vilna Gaon for publically disseminating the kabbalah – a claim that is far from substantiated. Moreover, the authors contend that the unification of the BeShT and the Vilna Gaon's respective methods will hasten the redemption.⁹⁵ Be that as it may, the seminary's program revolved around Lurianic kabbalah and the RaShaSh's writings, so that it toed the line with the rest of Jerusalem's kabbalah circles. If Sha'ar haShamayim's habitués had indeed been exclusively occupied with the gospel of the two Eastern European luminaries, the institution's fate would have certainly been quite different. By embracing the Sharabian approach, it too was worthy of the label “the new Beit El.”

The Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, the Land of Israel and Rabbi Kook

All the kabbalists in Jerusalem saw the very revelation and spread of Kabbalah as an integral part of an effort to discover the secret of “the messiah's heels” (i.e., the year of the redemption). Needless to say, the Land of Israel and Jerusalem played a key role in these mystical yearnings. The heads of Sha'ar haShamayim introduced another factor into this equation that transformed the widespread hyperbole about “the heels of the messiah.” In several places, they tied his coming to the Zionist activity in Palestine and the idea of settling the Land.⁹⁶ The Zionist movement, Auerbach and Horowitz believed, had created an opportunity to spur on the redemption, which will be brought to fruition by kabbalistic deeds. On this matter, they diverged from their counterparts at the other kabbalah seminaries, who adopted a more conservative outlook. In one communication, Sha'ar haShamayim's heads went so far as to link the yeshiva's establishment to the Zionist idea:

The kabbalah, namely the Torah's soul (which had always illuminated the darkness of the Exile and kindled a holy flame of salvation in everyone's

95 Sha'ar haShamayim, *Pinkas Shlihut*, 1910 (MS). On the small handful of Bratslav prayers that were conducted in Sha'ar haShamayim, see Shmuel Halevi Horowitz, *Sefer Yemei Shmuel*, vol. 3, 5a.

96 For instance, after a philanthropist contributed a handsome sum for this arrangement, the proceeds from the sale of Grayevski's, *Sefer haYishuv* (a book on the Hebrew settlement outside Jerusalem's Old City) were earmarked for Sha'ar haShamayim. However, the rights to reprint and translate the work remained in the yeshiva's hands.

heart), has been neglected and has fallen into decay over the last generation, not only amongst the common people, but the great men of Israel too, so that the rich literature of the kabbalah has become a dead letter. Even the new movement [i.e., Zionism], a product of this generation, which has stirred up among our nation, and the format for the Return to Zion, was devoid of life force and the fire of sanctity, and was unable to attract nobleman, namely the luminaries of Israel, with its strength, exclusively because it [Zionism] is a bride grounded on a foundation of secularism and not an expression from the source of holiness, and did not contain within it the same soul, the soul of the Torah and Israel, which is united in the one secret and is achieved with the wisdom of the kabbalah. The visionaries of the idea of the holy yeshiva Sha'ar haShamayim's establishment saw this and understood that there is no place more fitting than Eretz Yisrael whose "earth is the life of the soul"⁹⁷ and that was the motherland of the kabbalah throughout the generations, in order to establish a central and large yeshiva for the Torah of kabbalah to its fullest extent, and they established the yeshiva Sha'ar haShamayim and its branches for this purpose.⁹⁸

The idea that kabbalistic activity is the engine behind the national awakening and a complement of the "profane" Zionist enterprise was indeed commensurate with the viewpoint of Abraham Isaac haKohen Kook. It is no wonder, then, that Sha'ar haShamayim's leaders backed his appointment as chief rabbi of Jerusalem in the 1920s and honored him with the title of *kehunut rosh* ("top of the priesthood").⁹⁹ Along with other rabbis, they endorsed a placard defending R. Kook against belligerent, false accusations that were disseminated throughout the streets of Jerusalem (even though Sha'ar haShamayim's habitués included kabbalists who took issue with his Zionist positions, such as RYAZ Margalioi).¹⁰⁰

For his part, R. Kook commended individuals and institutions that toiled on the esoteric wisdom in Jerusalem and wrote approvals for many locally-published kabbalah books. However, he was especially fond of Sha'ar

97 This citation is from Yehuda Halevi's poem "To Zion."

98 Sha'ar haShamayim, *Hotam Tokhnit* (1925), 3–4. Also see the English section, 3–4.

99 Shapira, *Igrot laRAIaH*, 162 (letter 103), 165–168 (letter 107), 344 (letter 233), and 477–478 (letter 338). For photos of germane placards and a greeting card, see Raz, *An Angel Among Men*, 52–53, 57, 210. The signatories of the first letter are Maharil, Halperin, Horowitz, and Auerbach.

100 See the placard "Open Protest," in Kluger, *Min haMaqor*, vol. 2, 94.

haShamayim's regulars. Kook heaped praise on the yeshiva on multiple occasions, and his approvals grace many of its publications and communications. After a visit to the seminary, he extolled the "unique attributes of" its "Torah scholars."¹⁰¹ The Zionist thinker described Sha'ar haShamayim as "the only holy yeshiva with such an objective in the world."¹⁰² In a letter to the rabbinical emissary Suisse Levi, which was added to the yeshiva's mission dossier from 1929, R. Kook remarked thus:

Felicitous is he that holds their hand and causes the spread of the holy learning, things that were concealed by God and deserve to be taken and illuminated across the far reaches of the universe for those who enter God's secret, for those who fear Him, and those who ponder his Name [in order] to cultivate the plant of salvation and redemption for the holy people, to hasten the bells of our righteous messiah.¹⁰³

Following public complaints against Sha'ar haShamayim's emissaries in 1925, R. Kook offered solace to the yeshiva's sexton in San Paulo and to one R. Meir Leib Kaufman:

I consider it a sacred duty to tell my distinguished colleagues, not to pay any attention whatsoever to the words of slander that were written by some utterly irresponsible person against the holy yeshiva Sha'ar ha-Shamayim, which is a magnificent seminary where many students who excel in the revealed and in the concealed and in worship reside whilst persevering in our sacred Torah.... And the rabbis R. Chaim Leib Auerbach and R. Shimon Horowitz, they are great in Torah each one in his own field in exceptional greatness, the brilliant rabbi R.C.L. Auerbach in the revealed and the concealed as well, and the great kabbalist rabbi R. Shimon Horowitz in the concealed, in the wisdom of the kabbalah, and

101 Kook, *A Voice from the Holyness: The testimonial and Blessing to the Holy Yeshiva Sha'ar Hashamayim and her branches, from the holy chief Rabbi of the Holy Land* (1920). This booklet was released by the seminary's heads in Hebrew, Yiddish, and English following R. Kook's visit; See Tzuriel, *Ošrot haRAIaH*, 449–450; Kook, *Igrot haRAIaH*, vol. 4, 246 (letter 1/321). We find his approvals in most of the yeshiva's publications and fundraising appeals. On the relationship between Auerbach and R. Kook, see Kinerati, *Or Shlomo*. 11–15. The chief rabbi discusses his attitude towards Horowitz in Kook, *Igrot haRAIaH*, vol. 1, 81–82 (letter 667).

102 Sha'ar haShamayim, "Te'udat Rabanim veGaonim," 1931 (MS).

103 Sha'ar haShamayim, *Pinkas Shlihut*, 1929 (MS).

also in the revealed; and they are both my friends, frequent my home, and are very much adored by me.¹⁰⁴

In addition, R. Kook was in contact with a few of Rehovot haNahar's sages. He even gave a eulogy at Dweck-HaKohen's funeral, during which he was obstreperously heckled by local "zealots."¹⁰⁵

A Torah scholar by the name of Avraham Rabinsky complained to R. Kook about the Land-of-Israel kabbalah seminaries' "exaggerated revelation." He bemoaned the extensive efforts to disseminate the kabbalah, especially the countless flyers that were distributed by Sha'ar haShamayim. In response, R. Kook stressed the importance of conveying esoteric knowledge to the worthy.¹⁰⁶ This issue comes up in many of R. Kook's works; it is even latent in his earlier, pre-aliyah writing.¹⁰⁷ As evidenced, though, from stern communications, which have only recently been published,¹⁰⁸ Kook often placed restrictions on the study and dissemination of kabbalah.¹⁰⁹ For example, he limited in-depth study of the esoteric to halakhic adjudicators and Talmud scholars. What is more, Kook preferred that kabbalah students be wise, mature, and no less than fifty years old!¹¹⁰ From this standpoint, he was on the same page as all the seminaries under review.

Despite the soaring rhetoric, these calls to return to the kabbalah failed to penetrate the borders of traditional Jewish society. Such inroads would only

104 Kook, *ibid*, vol. 4, 245–246 (letter 1/320). That same day, R. Kook also wrote to R. Ephraim Zalman Halperin: "I consider it my soul-bound duty to bolster the hands of His Torah's honor in the matter of a great *mitzvah* involving the maintenance of the holy yeshiva Sha'ar haShamayim here in the holy city, may it be built and completed, which is primarily intended for studying the wisdom of truth and the Torah's mysteries. Moreover, they are preoccupied in bodies of halakhas and revealed matters; and many of the precious Torah scholars residing there are learning Torah in a state of penury, and it is a great *mitzvah* to help them and give sustenance so that they may become stronger in God's Torah and His worship, praise be His name." *Ibid*, 246.

105 Friedman, *Society and Religion*, 339.

106 Kook, *ibid*, vol. 2, 68–70 (letter 414).

107 See, for example, Tzuriel, *Ošrot haRAIaH*, vol. 2, 303–312. A couple of scholars accentuate R. Kook's efforts to spread Jewish mystical knowledge: Schwartz, *Religious Zionism*, 228–232; Garb, *The Chosen will Become Herds*, 21–36.

108 Kook, *Orot haTora/Quntres Pnimit haTora*, 191–242; *idem*, *Pinkasei haRAIaH*, vol. 3, 301–324.

109 E.g., Kook, *Shmona Qevašim*, vol. 1, 82–83.

110 Kook's approval for Horowitz, *Or haMeir* is affixed to this work.

be made during the latter half of the twentieth century, by other kabbalah streams.¹¹¹

The Nazirite's Quest for Prophecy

Another interesting figure with ties to the kabbalah seminaries of Jerusalem was R. David Cohen (the Nazirite), a confidante of R. Kook.¹¹² Cohen, whose father and grandfather were distinguished rabbis in Lithuania, came to Palestine in 1921. From that point on, he wandered between various yeshivot, such as Rehovot haNahar, and was in touch with Sephardic kabbalists in Jerusalem.¹¹³ In a diary entry from 1922, the Nazirite offered an account of a nocturnal visit to Sha'ar haShamayim, which is intermingled with yearnings for prophecy:

Tired, weary, and irreverent, after toiling with sleeplessness most of the nights, right now I am about to fall asleep, and I will [then] get up and go to the *mikve*, as is my habit day in and day out; and following the [morning] prayer I will feel a diminution in the power of thought, and a weakness of the body. I walked a little in the streets of Jerusalem, to knock on Zion's gates, the yeshivot; perhaps the holy sight of the city's visage and its sacred places will have a beneficial effect on me. I was in Sha'ar haShamayim. How lowly and sunken into the ground is this building, a veritable ruin; one must climb up paths [just to get there]; and there [in the seminary] sit the holy ascetic "*mekhavrnmim*," who immerse themselves day and night in the Torah and wisdom of the kabbalah. And behold I will hear from behind me in my ear that they are saying about me, There is a saint and a pure man. I beggeth you God, Lord of Israel and its

111 See Meir, "The Beginnings of Kabbalah in America," 237–268.

112 Cohen's initial encounter with kabbalistic ideas was Adolphe Franck's book (*Die Kabbala, oder die Religionsphilosophie der Hebräer*, Leipzig: H. Hunger, 1844). Moreover, the Nazirite received his first kabbalah books from R. Menachem Mendel Nai of Sandomierz; see Cohen, *Dodi leSevi*, 101–102; idem, *Mishnat haNazir*, 28–29; Bitty, *Philosophy and Kabbalah*, 142–148. For more on the Nazirite's kabbalistic way, see *ibid.*, 172–173, 190–193, 233–255; Cohen, *Or Harazim*; Schwartz, *Religious Zionism*.

113 There is even a picture of the Nazirite sitting together with Shimon Ashriki, Ovadia Hedayya, Eliyahu Yaakov Lag'imi, Yaakov Moshe Charlap, and Shmuel Ezran; see Mutzafi, *'Olam shel Şadiq*, p. 85.

sacred places, if your sons have put an eye on me, I beggeth of you God, help me and give me sustenance.¹¹⁴

As per Cohen's gospel, the return of prophecy and the restoration of the holy spirit in the Land of Israel constitute an integral part of the redemption process. These same ideas also inform R. Kook's vision of his "central yeshiva," not least its educational program, where kabbalah studies assume a principal role. A coherent presentation of this same plan turns up in the Nazirite's mystically-oriented diary, the so-called "Scroll of Secrets." Due to self-censorship, the diary has not been published in full. Besides the author's yearnings for prophecy, it describes his reclusion, exiles, prayers, self-denial, and revelations. The Scroll reveals that Cohen moved to Palestine with the intention of establishing "a central yeshiva, with an all-encompassing and comprehensive learning program." The "raison d'être" behind this hypothetical institution was "the revival of the spirit of prophecy in Eretz Yisrael, under the special influence of our master and teacher the rabbi Kook."¹¹⁵ As averred in the Nazirite's book *Kol haNevuah* (Voice of Prophecy), the road to prophecy runs through prayers, mortifications, and spiritualistic quests as well as "wisdom and science."¹¹⁶ These high hopes were certainly dashed; and save for individual students who fell under his spell at different periods in his life, Cohen failed to attract a large following.¹¹⁷ He undoubtedly found kindred spirits in R. Kook and a couple of Jerusalem's mystics, but these relationships certainly did not spawn a new "kabbalah circle."¹¹⁸ Upon editing R. Kook's *Orot haKodesh* (the Lights of Holiness), the Nazirite felt that he was engaged in true mysteries, as he compared

114 Cohen, *Mishnat haNazir*, 48.

115 Ibid. For a look at the yeshiva's program, see Cohen, *Kol Tsofayikh*, 67–77; idem, *Mishnat haNazir*, 48–52, 54–55, 57, 67–69, 71–73. Also see Mirsky, *Rav Kook*, 178–179.

116 Cohen, *Mishnat haNazir*, 86–87; idem, *Kol haNevuah*; idem, *Kinor David*. For a disquisition on this topic, see Themanlys, "Prophecy Today," 195–201; Bitty, *Philosophy and Kabbalah*, 256–279.

117 On one occasion, the Nazirite even expressed his desire to recruit a small group to restore the prophecy; Cohen, *Kol Tsofayikh*, 55–56, 59–60, 75, 136; idem, *Mishnat haNazir*, 58. Conversely, it pained him to see that R. Kook's new yeshiva was not fulfilling this purpose; ibid., 71–72. In the early 1940s, Cohen attracted a small group of kabbalah students; ibid., 98–99. The esoteric studies at R. Kook's yeshiva in Jerusalem are discussed in Neria, *Hayay haRAIaH*, 168–171 idem, *BeSde haRAIa*, 477–478.

118 Meir, "Light and Vessels," 163–166. In recent years, various writers have created the image of a "circle" or "mystical fellowship" surrounding R. Kook. Moreover, they credit this group with having developed a full-blown "gospel" and a profound mystical vision. However, the existence of this group has no basis in fact.

his labors to those of R. Hayyim Vital with *Sefer Eš Hayyim*.¹¹⁹ The Nazirite's above-mentioned visit to Sha'ar haShamayim and his encounters with Sephardic mystics attest to the dynamism of Jerusalem's kabbalah scene, as many seekers passed through the doors of and were affiliated with its yeshivot on a temporary basis.¹²⁰ In any event, the vision of a few individuals seldom coalesced into a working kabbalah seminary. An exception to this rule will be discussed in the chapter that ensues.

119 Cohen, *Mishnat haNazir*, 92. Also see Mirsky, *Rav Kook*, 180–182.

120 Another confidante of R. Kook, Yaakov Moshe Charlap, moved in these same circles. One of the groups explored the esoteric thought of the Vilna Gaon. Charlap's kabbalah teacher was R. Yehoshua Zvi Michael Shapira, a regular at the Beit El Yeshiva.

The Search for the Lost Tribes

Kabbalah beyond the Sambatyon

By creating a national narrative that integrates elements of Jewish mysticism, Shimon Zvi Horowitz, the co-founder of the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, sought to reach a wider audience than the majority of Jerusalem's Sharabian kabbalists. In certain respects, he was indeed successful. A case in point is his efforts to find the Ten Tribes – an idea that is part and parcel of his kabbalistic approach. Horowitz tried to get Jerusalem's Sephardic kabbalists on the bandwagon, but came up empty-handed. Moreover, his efforts to turn Sha'ar haShamayim into a center for expeditions of this sort drew mixed results. At any rate, this episode sheds light on Horowitz's unusual eclectic worldview.

In 1908, Shimon Menachem Lazar of Drohobycz (1864–1932), an editor and Hebrew scholar, came out with a thick tome on *Hidot haHagadot haNiflaot al Dvar Aseret haShvatim vePitronam* (The Riddles of the Wonderful Myths on the Ten Tribes and their Solution). The journal *HaSchiloah* had published an earlier, serial version of this work in installments between 1902 and 1903. At the end of the book's introduction is a summary of Lazar's approach to these same myths:

And this belief [in the Lost Tribes], which filled the hearts of our nation for some two thousand years, has been suspended in our time, the days of the Jewish Enlightenment, to the point that they have even ceased to think about the Ten Tribes, as though they never existed and were never created. Today, a misguided [sense of] embarrassment will cover the face of a Jew, even from the Orthodox party, on anything regarding the Ten Tribes. Like a nighttime vision in a dream, the memory of the Tribes has abruptly vanished from the congregation of Israel and has become the realm of the Christian English, some of whom are endeavoring to prove that they, of all people, are the Lost Tribes of Israel.¹

1 Lazar, *Hidot haHagadot*, 5. The *HaSchiloah* version of this book does not contain the passage “a misguided [sense of] embarrassment will cover the face of a Jew, even from the Orthodox party, on anything regarding the Ten Tribes.” Lazar, “Aseret haShvatim,” 47. Important material on the book's publication and its ideology is preserved in Lazar's correspondence with Ahad Ha'am (Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg); Lazar, Letters to Ahad Ha'am, 1902 (MS).

As an aside, Lazar noted “that also in our time in the year 1898 a band of Yemenite Jews from Jerusalem went to the deserts of Arabia, to seek out the Sambatyon. One of them indeed boasted that upon travelling from Southern Arabia to Eretz Yisrael its [i.e., the river’s] traces were revealed to him.” That said, Lazar was apparently unaware of two contemporaneous developments: the distribution of the mythical literature on the Tribes in East Europe; and the intensive activity within the heart of the Old Yishuv in Jerusalem to find the lost Israelites. His book falls under the heading of the far-ranging research literature on this topic whose main conclusion was that the Tribes had assimilated and disappeared, so that it is no longer possible to find any remnant of this exile. Moreover, the authors of this corpus posited that these myths lack a solid foundation. As a result, any initiative to find the lost Jews is bound to be a wild goose chase.² This literature put an emphasis on documents that are tied to past efforts to locate the Tribes as well as the outlook of the explorers. Furthermore, they toiled to reconstruct the Israelites’ history in the Diaspora until their extinction. The most prominent and influential of these writers was the Orientalist Adolf (Abraham) Neubauer. In 1888, he published an exhaustive Hebrew anthology on issues pertaining to the Ten Tribes and the Sons of Moses. Soon after, he released an English survey on the various explorers who placed their sights on this elusive prize.³

The Awakening of Explorers in Jerusalem

In stark contradistinction to these firm conclusions, new ideologically-driven explorers surfaced during this period who employed the research literature in

2 Mendel Wohlman also reached this conclusion in his 1907 study; idem, “The Sambatyon and the Ten Tribes,” 279–305. Countervailing this trend was Shmuel Ze’ev Goldman, *Sefer Nidhei Yisrael* (1941). In the introduction (v), he wrote that “the reason that stirred me on to formulate this book: that most of the books that were written on this topic were infiltrated by the spirit of the Enlightenment, and they built a stubborn and treacherous case. Moreover, the occupation with these books has produced a sad result, namely a couple of Torah scholars are talking about the above-mentioned topics as though they were a popular fable that is intertwined in the air.” At any rate, Goldman endeavored to verify the story of the Ten Tribes and the existence of the Sambatyon, not to actually find or support those who were searching for them. In the early 1900s, a couple of booklets focused on tracking the Israelites’ assimilation into various nations; see, for example, Israel Balkind, *Where are the Ten Tribes?* (1928).

3 See Neubauer, “Qvutšim ‘al ‘Inyanei ‘Aseret haShvatim;” idem, “Where Are the Ten Tribes,” 14–28, 95–114, 185–201, 408–423. Later on, the emphasis shifted to describing the worldview of groups that claimed to descend from the Lost Tribes. For a scholarly disquisition on the roots of this myth and its various incarnations, see Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History*. See also Veltri, “The East in the Story of the Lost Tribes,” 246–266.

a selective manner. More specifically, they gleaned texts from this corpus that suited their theories and interpreted slivers of ideas as clues of the Tribes' secret location. The research literature served as a catalyst for their expeditionary activities. Among the new strain of explorers were not only groups from a variety of nations, such as the English and Japanese, but several kabbalists in Jerusalem. At the heart of this newfangled enterprise stood none other than R. Shimon Zvi Horowitz, who attempted to harness the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva to this cause.

A couple of short descriptions of Horowitz's trip were produced by a small handful of researchers and novelists, none of whom provided a full analysis of this episode.⁴ While the kabbalist was still alive, the Hebrew writer Israel Zarchi (1909–1947) condensed the entire trek into a short story, which draws on information that found its way to the Jerusalem-based novelist via conversations with some Kabbalists and sundry books. However, Zarchi described the trip from the vantage point of one Moshe Yehoshua HaKimchi (a figure that will merit our attention below), whereas Horowitz was assigned a secondary role. In other words, he was not portrayed as the initiator or heart and soul of this venture.⁵ Aharon Reuveni (1886–1971) also depicted Horowitz and his expedition in a couple of short stories that were published in the 1930s.⁶ In Reuveni's works of fiction, Horowitz goes by the name of R. Pinhas Vatika, heads an organization by the name of *Shivat Nidaḥim* (the Return of the Exiled), and writes a book about his travels. Zarchi and Reuveni's belletristic stories are not intended to serve as an historical account, as they freely mixed truth with fiction. What is more, the writers did not assemble every last piece of information about the journey, take stock of all the motives behind it, or display an interest in the subsequent attempts to locate the Tribes within the framework of Sha'ar haShamayim. They also gave the false impression that this expedition was a one-time messianic adventure. In reality, it was one of many interconnected chapters in a life-long effort that was fueled by a strong passion to hasten the End of the Days, in conjunction with a desire to spread kabbalah among the masses. Both of these goals stemmed from the belief that Jewry stood at

4 Aešcoly, *Yisrael*, 170–172; idem, “David Reubeni,” 6; Ya'ari, “Emissaries of the Land of Israel to the Lost Tribes,” 480–484; idem, *Shluḥei Ereš Yisrael*, 150–151; Morgenstern, “Meqomam shel 'Aseret haShvatim,” 225–231; Malachi, “Horowitz,” 330–331; Brawer, *Zikhronot Av uBeno*, 461–463; Ben-Ami, *Stories from the Jerusalem Parliament*, 194–195.

5 Zarchi, “The Sambatyon,” 96–148.

6 The stories were part of an uncompleted novel titled *Ruah Kadim* (Easterly Wind). Reuveni, “BeHarḥavat haDa'at [1933],” 346–356; idem, “Pi haGiḥon [1934],” 372–381. For a discussion on this topic, see Schwartz, *Vivre pour Vivre*, 231–234.

the dawn of a new era. In consequence, Horowitz felt that it was incumbent upon him to understand the roots of this development and act accordingly.

Horowitz viewed the search for the Lost Tribes as part of the efforts to accelerate the redemption process in the spirit of the Vilna Gaon, or at least what he and like-minded kabbalists attributed to the savant. It seems that these sort of traditions are late and should be tied to a couple students of the Gaon's later disciples at the end of the nineteenth century. In any event, Horowitz's approach reflects the mature stage of that same "tradition," which was followed by some of the Lithuanian expatriates in Jerusalem.⁷ An early manifestation of this same trend informs R. Moshe Slatky's *Ner Moshe*. Printed in 1882, this book is comprised of several works that are tied to the Polish kabbalah and "an old letter from our brethren the Sons of Moses our Rabbi who dwell beyond the Sambatyon." Slatky also issued a warning: "Don't lean your ear towards the voice faltering like a leaf in freefall saying we have God forbid lost hope, that there is no Sambatyon River and no Ten Tribes."⁸ The author integrated these texts into an all-encompassing vision, which is described at length in the opening pages of his book. In short, Slatky believed that the best way to expedite the messiah's coming is by learning the Zohar. Consequently, the author's objective was to inspire people to study this work, even those without any background in Jewish mysticism. The role of the Ten Tribes in *Ner Moshe* was part of a broader esoteric campaign to hasten the redemption. A few years later, such outlooks would stir new kabbalists into action, some of whom even embarked on missions to find "the lost brothers."

In around 1898, Shimon Zvi Horowitz, along with Moshe Yehoshua HaKimchi and Shlomo Wechsler, released a small pamphlet, *Drishat Kevod Hakhmei haTorah* (Demanding Respect for Torah Scholars) containing a detailed plan for an expedition in search of the Ten Tribes. HaKimchi was occupied with similar projects in Jerusalem even earlier. Moreover, he was active in groups that promoted "the redemption of the Holy Land's soil."⁹ In the early 1890s, he printed two booklets by the name of *Zikhron Yerushalayim* and another one titled *Ma'amar haMuskam*. These works interpret verses and sayings that pertain to the messiah and call upon readers to take practical steps to expedite

7 For criticism of these texts and others like them, see Bartal, *Exile in the Homeland*, 237–295; idem, "Two Schools," 7–22; Meir, "Light and Vessel," 206–207; idem, "The Eclectic Kabbalah," 411–420; Etkes, "The Vilna Gaon," 69–114; Baumgarten, "Messiah ben Joseph in Jerusalem," 17–19. To this very day, there are some Israeli scholars who use these "traditions" for political and religious leverage, in lieu of a sober historical viewpoint.

8 Moshe Slatky, *Sefer Ner Moshe*, 85a–88b.

9 Malachi, "Petah Tiqva," 19–20.

the messiah's coming and avoid behavior that is liable to delay it.¹⁰ These pamphlets, most of which are no longer than four pages, lack so much as a single feasible idea, and their intention is rather vague. Correspondingly, HaKimchi printed an eight-page flyer, "An Appeal," praising the *Zikhron Yerushalayim* booklets by Refael Yitzchak Yisrael. It opens with the words "Pay heed O conscientious ones from among our brethren the Jewish people; now after it was clarified to us by the booklet *Zikhron Yerushalayim* which was printed here in the holy city by Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua HaKimchi, and we have been persuasively convinced that the idea making the rounds among the masses whereby the redemption must come to pass without a conscious effort, is without truth and is riddled with doubts." Therefore, he reaches the conclusion that it is imperative to form "Fathers-to-Sons-Committees" that will inspire "the simple masses" to ratchet up their observance of the commandments and study Torah in synagogues. Moreover, he urged his audience to support a recently established organization, *Anshei Ma'amad*, that he was affiliated with.¹¹ It appears that HaKimchi's plan assumed a completely new form in 1898, as the obscure content of his pamphlets was interpreted as a call to search for the Lost Tribes. Likewise, he recruited the *Anshei Ma'amad* society to help prepare a flyer promoting this idea. As noted, the other signatory of Horowitz's pamphlet "*Drishat Kevod Hakhmei haTorah*" was Shlomo Wechsler – a kabbalist from Germany that settled Palestine and became a Bratslav Hasid. Like several other members of his family, Wechsler was stricken with messianic fever.¹²

10 HaKimchi, *Quntres Zikhron Yerushalayim*, vols. 1–2 (1890); idem *Ma'amar heMesukam* (1890). Some of his notices-pamphlets from around 1930 can be found in Halevy, *The First Jerusalem Books*, items 665, 703–705.

11 Refael Yiṣḥaq Yisrael, *Qol Qore* (1890).

12 Gershom Scholem expounds on the Wechsler family through the generations. Two of its members, who became Bratslav Hasidim in Palestine, possessed a fiery messianic streak and were engrossed with kabbalah literature. Scholem briefly described the outlooks of R. Binyamin and R. Shlomo (whose daughter married R. Yehuda Tzvi Brandwein, a disciple of Yehuda Leib Ashlag), and drew on the memoirs of the latter from the 1930s. However, Scholem put an emphasis on their origins, neglecting their new surroundings in Jerusalem. See Scholem, "Die Letzten Kabbalisten in Deutschland," 218–246. R. Shlomo was, *inter alia*, one of R. Kook's fiercest opponents. For more on this figure, see Strauss, *The Rosenbaums of Zell*, 43–50; Anshin, *Sipurim Yerushalmin*, 73–86; Malachi, "A Voyage to Zion," 391–392 (who described R. Shlomo as a Hasid and activist with a wild head of hair, red curls, and a beard to match); Porush, *Sharsheret haDorot*, vol. 1, 210–211; Goralitz and Bratsaver, "Ḥasid Mufla 'Ala meGermaniya," 84–91. Wechsler frequently comes up in the writing of Bratslav Hasidim, like Yisroel Ber Odesser and Shmuel Horowitz. R. Binyamin encapsulated his own worldview in an exceptional pamphlet that contains hints of messianic issues, calculations of the End for the year 1905, solutions to dreams (including those in which he was a messianic figure) and various matters concerning the Ten Tribes,

Horowitz teamed up with these two figures on the matter of the Ten Tribes, adding the link to the kabbalistic spheres to this collaboration. Although the three largely diverged with respect to the kabbalah, they were united by a fervent desire to find the lost Israelites. Their jointly-written pamphlet relates the chance encounter of a Jew from Sana'a, Aharon HaKohen Sofer, who was among the Yemenite immigrants of 1881–1882, with a Rechabite near the port of al-Ghaydah. Sofer told the authors that this mysterious figure could help them reach the Sambatyon without difficulty. Moved by this story, the activists established a society, *Dorshei Kevod Hakhmei haTorah*, that was devoted to raising funds for a three-month expedition. Included in their budget was the cost of producing a Torah scroll, which the explorers would take with them for the Israelites. Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld's son, Avraham Aharon, was appointed the secretary of this new outfit. According to the three founders, they were supported by Shmuel Salant, the chief rabbi of Jerusalem, and Refael Yitzchak Yisrael. Among the institutional sponsors listed on this pamphlet are *Shomrei Mišvot veAnshei Ma'amad* and *Hevrat Ezrat haKohanim veHalevy'im beEzrat Yisrael*.¹³ While the ideas promulgated therein merited the backing of quite a few rabbis, as discussed below they were also subjected to a great deal of ridicule, both in the Yishuv and beyond.¹⁴

Soon enough, an itinerary was formulated and special flyers were distributed calling on Jews to support this mission. In 1899, Horowitz penned a special appeal titled "*Et le'Vakesh*" (A Time to Ask), which was endorsed by distinguished rabbis in Jerusalem. Among the tens of notables who backed the expedition were the rabbis and kabbalists Shmuel Salant, Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld, Yaakov Moshe Charlap, Yehoshua Tzvi Michel Shapira, Aharon Shlomo Maharil, Akiva Yosef Schlesinger, and Refael Yitzchak Yisrael.¹⁵ What is more, these figures signed an epistle that was addressed to "the Sons of Moshe." According to one tradition, the letter was penned by HaKimchi.¹⁶

which he believed were located in China and Japan; Binyamin Wechsler, *Mizba'ah Bin-yamin*. According to Malachi, he dubbed himself "Benjamin the Drowsy Youth" and proclaimed himself the Messiah ben David at the Sixth Zionist Congress; *ibid.*, 392. See Meir, "Die Letzten Kabbalisten," 243–258.

13 *Drishat Kevod Hakhmei haTorah* (1898).

14 For instance, see the derisive account of the society's establishment in the newspaper *HaMagid* 1898; Ben Yerushalayim, "Letters from Jerusalem," 319–320.

15 "Et leVaqesh! Qra Yesh'a le'Am Nedava," 1899 (announcement). All of these notices called on readers to support the explorers. Years later, Horowitz reprinted them in *idem*, *Kol Mevasser*, 72–77. In the second introduction, he revealed that he was the author.

16 The wording of the letter, along with the rabbis' signatures, was reprinted in Horowitz, *Kol Mevasser*, 75–77. Zarchi's short story "The Sambatyon" beautifully describes HaKimchi writing under the halo of holiness and purity.

The three activists did not suffice with these steps. In 1899, they printed two booklets that are tied to this journey. The first, *Mevaseret Şiyon* (Herald of Zion), does not even allude to the new undertaking, but consists entirely of letters that discuss the Tribes and earlier search expeditions. It is divided into the following short chapters: (a) Précis of the Writ that Jerusalem's Sages Sent to the Cities of the Diaspora; (b) Copy of the Writ Sent by the Sons of Moses beyond the Sambatyon River to the Tribes of Judah and Benjamin in Jerusalem; (c) Précis of the Letter Sent to the Ashkenazic Scholars in the Land of Israel by the Sons of Moses and the Ten Tribes. In all likelihood, the objective behind the publication of these letters was to drum up public support for their trek.¹⁷ The second booklet contains the famous epistle of the Vilna Gaon's student, R. Yisrael of Shklov, to the Ten Tribes. In this letter, the author drew a correlation between the reinstatement of rabbinic ordination (*smikha*) and the finding of the lost Israelites. Most interestingly, this document summarizes R. Yisrael's outlook according to which the Tribes possess esoteric secrets, but are unfamiliar with more recent additions to the body of kabbalah wisdom. With this in mind, the author promised to reveal secrets to the Israelites that he had heard from the Vilna Gaon and forward them his own writings along with those of HaARI.¹⁸ Besides R. Yisrael's epistle, the anonymous editor (none other than Horowitz) added the aforementioned *Et le'Vakesh*, thereby informing readers of the upcoming journey. He also included a few words on a new association, *Agudat Shivtei Yeshurun* (the Association of the Tribes of Jeshurun), "the likes of which has never been." The final item in the booklet was an announcement of a forthcoming work by Horowitz with new information on the Tribes. However, it would only come out in 1923, well after the quest.¹⁹ This is how Horowitz described the preparations for the mission:

In the year 1899 the awakening from below commenced and the Court of Justice and other Jerusalem rabbis swept into action and wrote appeals and letters of awakening to our brethren in the Diaspora. A few

¹⁷ *Mevaseret Şiyon* (1899).

¹⁸ Shivtei Yeshurun, *Igeret* (1899). Horowitz attests to bringing the letter to press that same year; idem, *Kol Mevsser*, 51. A facsimile edition of the first print (1831) came out in 1976; Israel of Shklov, *Igeret haShluha*. For more on this epistle, see Ya'ari, *Igrot Ereş Yisrael*, 342–357; idem, *Shluhei Ereş Yisrael*, 147–148; Morgenstern, *Redemption through Return*, 113–130; idem, *Messianism*, 32–35, 124–132; idem, "Meqomam shel 'Aseret haShvatim," 222–224.

¹⁹ Shivtei Yeshurun, *Igeret* (1899), 14–16. The booklet, to exclude the final part, was reprinted in 1929, together with the notice "*Et le'vakesh*," in Rozenblat, *Sefer Divrei Yemei Yisrael*, 68–81.

men agreed to travel, but ultimately retracted and refused to take upon themselves the voyage and the burden of this long road. In 1900, they turned to me and I acceded to their request, whereupon the rabbis gave me their endorsement, particularly in the said year.²⁰

Shimon Zvi Horowitz's Expedition to the Far East

In 1900, once enough money had been collected, Horowitz set out for the Far East in search of the Ten Tribes. However, his workload was ratched up two-fold. The kabbalist-cum-explorer's mandate was no longer merely to find the lost Israelites, but to fundraise on behalf of institutions in Jerusalem (including the Eṣ Ḥayyim Yeshiva and the Diskin Orphanage). To this end, he was charged with presenting "before our nation's patrons the situation in the Holy Land in general, particularly in all that concerns the strengthening of the pillar of Torah for Zion and for Jerusalem."²¹ Accompanying Horowitz was a Yemenite-Jewish dreamer by the name of Zadok Friedman (an adopted sir name), who in the Old Yishuv was widely believed to have had far-reaching visions – along the same lines of the Yemenite seers and dreamers in Haim Hazaz's stories – about the Tribes and their dwelling place.²² Based on a firsthand acquaintance with Friedman, the explorer-cum-geographer Abraham Jacob Brawer described him as "a religious Don Quixote that set out to find the Ten Tribes." Moreover, he noted that the Yemenite mystic "married an Ashkenazic woman, dressed like an Ashkenazi from the Old Yishuv, and even spoke Yiddish and affixed to his name a typical Ashkenazic sir name." What is more, Brawer witnessed him belittling "the *frankin*" (Franks) – a disparaging term for Sephardim.²³

After several months of wandering between major Jewish communities in the Far East and striking up conversations with people that they happened to come across on the road, the two explorers returned to Jerusalem with handsome sums of money for the city's institutions and its poor, but without

20 Horowitz, *Kol Mevasser*, second introduction.

21 For more on this trip, see Horowitz, *Kol Mevasser*, 74–75; Ya'ari, "Emissaries of the Land of Israel to the Lost Tribes," 482.

22 Zadok Friedman's name comes up in letters of recommendation by Jerusalem-based rabbis, which Horowitz included in *Kol Mevasser*.

23 Brawer, *Zikhronot Av uBeno*, 461–462. An interesting tradition about Friedman has been preserved in the Israel Folktales Archive. However, the author of this source was unaware of the fact that this was the dreamer who accompanied Horowitz to the Far East; Harel-Ḥoshen and Avner, *Beyond the Sambatyon*, 25. Stories and a picture of this figure appear in Getz, *Kakh Nifraṣu haḤomot*, 127–131.

any sensational news concerning the Lost Tribes. From Horowitz's itinerary, it is evident that he did not attempt to venture beyond the large population centers and explore the countryside. At each destination, the kabbalist made do with taking notes and accumulating rumors.²⁴ Years later, he claimed that the trip was cut short due to budget constraints (and perhaps the presence of the Jewish wayfarers raised suspicions among the local authorities).²⁵ In addition, one of Horowitz's relatives told Brawer that "Members of his family turned to a rabbinical court in Jerusalem and by dint of telegrams from the rabbis persuaded the romantic to return from India, but he continued to hold out hope [that one day he would] reach the Ten Tribes. And Reb Zadok came back with him."²⁶

Horowitz and Friedman's inability to make much headway in all that concerns the Lost Tribes only intensified Wechsler and HaKimchi's desire to organize another delegation. In around 1903, they established a society called *Dorshei Tov* (Seekers of Good) for the purpose of laying the groundwork for new search expeditions. Surprisingly enough, Horowitz's name does not come up in Wechsler's and HaKimchi's communications on this matter. On account of the first voyage's shortcomings, *Dorshei Tov* apparently explored different options. In a 1903 notice titled "Mevaseret Yerushalayim," Wechsler and HaKimchi embraced a tradition that is connected to the Vilna Gaon and promoted the book *Dorshei Kevod Hakhmei haTorah*, which had come out earlier. Furthermore, they claimed that "new paths to that river [i.e., the Sambatyon] have come to our attention," so that steps must be taken to drum up financial support for a new expedition. Despite falling short of expectations, Horowitz and Friedman's journey remained fresh in their minds. "Since we regularly speak about it [i.e., the maiden journey], we are also obligated to remind you dear brothers that your pure hearts should not be tempted to say Travelers have indeed already travelled on this matter and did not manage to accomplish their mission. You should also know that another reason for" their failure was "the lack of enough money for the trip's expenses." In the meantime, "clearer, better, and safer routes" have been discovered. The appeal's signatories were HaKimchi, Wechsler, Rephael Mordechai Yitzchak Shapira, and Yehoshua Epstein, all of whom identified themselves as activists of the organizations *Dorshei Tov* and

24 See the short description of the itinerary in Ya'ari, "Emissaries of the Land of Israel to the Lost Tribes," 483–484.

25 Horowitz, *Kol Mevaser*, 51: "Acutely shallow pockets, etc. left [*sic*] me from reaching my desired goal, and I suffered from want from every side and other sorts of delays until I was forced to return against my will."

26 Brawer, *Zikhronot Av uBeno*, 462.

Shomrei Mišvot.²⁷ That same year, they reissued the booklet *Mevaseret Šiyon*, which as above-noted first came out in 1899 and consisted of erstwhile letters with references to the Ten Tribes.²⁸ Once again, the purpose behind the dissemination of this work was to “market” another search expedition. However, this initiative never came to fruition.

Renewed Attempts and the Sha’ar haShamayim Information Center

Notwithstanding Horowitz’s disappointment with the results of the maiden voyage and his exclusion from the second undertaking, he evidently sought to raise funds for another expedition throughout the rest of his life. In other words, the kabbalist’s desire to complete what he had begun never waned. It is with this goal in mind that he published his 1923 book, *Kol Mevaser* (Voice of Annunciation). This work outlines the itinerary of his trip and offers a captivating account of his adventures in the Far East.²⁹ Moreover, it provides information on the Ten Tribes, which draws heavily on the extensive research literature (in Hebrew, German, and English) and various rumors. Horowitz also elaborates on theories concerning the Israelites’ whereabouts and previous attempts to find them. In addition, *Kol Mevaser* includes a detailed English summary of the possible locations, with the following heading: “A Call of Love to all our Brethren the Sons of Israel Awaiting their Speedy Redemption (An Extract from the Book *The Voice of Annunciation* [Kol Mevaser] and a Short Summary of All the Places Mentioned in the Book).” Affixed to the book are riveting approvals by Abraham Isaac Kook and Yaakov Moshe Charlap, who passionately sought to justify the scarce resources that were allocated to these endeavors. Both rabbis stressed that finding the lost brethren constitutes a pivotal stage in the redemption process.³⁰

27 “Mevaseret Yerushalayim” (announcement). The notice also appears in Kluger, *Min haMaqor*, vol. 1, 153, but he mistakenly dates it to 1933.

28 *Mevaseret Šiyon* (1903).

29 Horowitz, *Kol Mevaser*. In all likelihood, the book was written over the course of many years. Part of the text was ready for print back in 1899, before the journey, but the lion’s share was finished in 1911 (*Kol Mevaser*, 116). Alternatively, some of the material was incorporated between 1912 and 1914. Impressions from the maiden journey are scattered throughout the book, above all pages 72–77. Surprisingly, with the exception of the venture’s preliminary fundraising appeals, which were reprinted therein, no mention is made of Horowitz’s travel companion (Zadok Friedman).

30 R. Kook’s approval was reprinted in idem, *Ma’amrei haRAIaH*, vol. 1, 194–196. On his brand of religious Zionism, see Mirsky, *Rav Kook*.

Kol Mevaser reveals the motivations that underpinned its author's public enterprise: the desire to settle the Land of Israel, promote kabbalah study, and search for the Tribes. In Horowitz's estimation, the realization of these three goals was a prerequisite of the "awakening from below" that will precede the redemption. Furthermore, he undertook "to rouse up God's people from their slumber so that they may fully atone for their sins, shake off the dust, and rejuvenate themselves." These steps, he claimed, "must be initiated by us, especially in such a period" when "all the signs that our sages of blessed memory prophesized ahead of time regarding the heels of the Messiah have come to pass." It is clear to him "that the hand of God is touching the global renaissance in all that concerns the building of the Land and the return of the banished." What is more, he urged his readers to uproot the causes that are stalling the redemption by means of "study and action, in word and in deed," namely by learning kabbalah and searching for the Tribes. Horowitz felt that he had fulfilled the first obligation by establishing the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva. Consequently, the time was ripe to tend to the search for the lost brothers with the same energy, while harnessing the seminary to this task.³¹ From Horowitz's standpoint, a Jew must commit himself to delving into the mysteries of the Torah and bracing himself for the End of the Days with equal ardor. "The Jewish people must endeavor with all our might to do things that cause the in-gathering of the exiles. When we unite into one nation, then" the *shekhinah* will immerse itself "and the glory of yesteryear shall be restored."³² Horowitz summed up his words with the following exhortations: "Let us rouse ourselves for the purpose of searching far and wide and finding our brethren, the brave and righteous ones of whom the Vilna Gaon says are none other than the saviors."³³

Aside for recollections of conversations that he had in distant lands and information garnered from scholars and books as to the Tribes' whereabouts, Horowitz's work is saturated with bizarre episodes. For instance, while in Tibet, the kabbalist saw a couple of bearded figures donning long black garments out in the distance. Believing that he had stumbled upon the lost Jews, Horowitz jubilantly ran towards them, only to discover that the monks could not understand a word he was saying.³⁴ Although this exchange can be interpreted in a satirical fashion, Horowitz certainly brought it up in earnest. However, as discussed below, others latched on to these sort of anecdotes for the purpose of disparaging the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva and its ideas.

31 Horowitz, *Kol Mevaser*, author's introduction.

32 Ibid, 9–12.

33 Ibid, 105.

34 Ibid, 100.

Elsewhere in the book, Horowitz describes an encounter with a Rechabite who came to Palestine in 1913 with news that the Lost Tribes were mobilizing. A special assembly was held at Sha'ar haShamayim in honor of this extraordinary visitor. The event attracted throngs of people, including a few of Jerusalem's most respected kabbalists. Among the attendees were Tzvi Pesach Frank, Charlap, Yaakov Meir Zonnenfeld, Horowitz, and Auerbach. The dignitaries signed an epistle that was intended for the Sons of Moses and the Ten Tribes, which was submitted to that same mysterious guest. Be that as it may, according to Horowitz, the hardships of the Great War ultimately thwarted this attempt to contact the lost Israelites.³⁵ These sort of encounters were not alien to the era's readers. At around this time, Akiva Yosef Schlesinger (among the few kabbalists of Beit El who had backed Horowitz's expedition) reported the arrival of a kabbalist from Tibet by the name of R. Eliezer ben Rabbi Shimon Moshe in Eastern Europe. This so-called "disappearing man," showed up in 1865 at the house of R. Hillel Lichtenstein in Kolomyia (a city in Galicia), where he performed marvels in theoretical and practical kabbalah. What is more, this figure was deemed to be an emissary of the Lost Tribes and was thus entrusted with a letter to deliver to his compatriots. However, the Tibetan took off without leaving a word.³⁶ Unlike the well-documented stay of the Rechabite in Jerusalem, though, Schlesinger was the only one to offer testimony of this visit.

Kol Mevasser's readers were also urged to establish chapters in all cities with Jewish communities of an association that would conduct research on and search for the lost Israelites. Dubbed the Tribes of Jeshurun Association, each branch would select "Explorers-travelers, fit and honest people who observe the Sabbath and the law of Torah." If these goals were met, Horowitz averred, the Lost Tribes would eventually be found. Pursuant to this plan, Sha'ar ha-Shamayim would serve as a sort of central data repository.³⁷ The first extant

35 Ibid, 78–84. Also see Weinstock, *Shnem Asar Shivtei Yisrael*, 121–125.

36 Schlesinger, *Quntres Shimru Mishpat* (1912), 70b–73a. Soon after, it was reprinted in Schwartz, *Derekh haNesher* (1928), 24–27; Lichtenstein, *Toldot yeZikhronot* (1931), 50–52. See Gries, *The Book in the Jewish World*, 82–83. As a purported member of the Lost Tribes, Eliezer b. Rabbi Shimon Moshe was deemed to have been privy to kabbalah mysteries; see Goldman, *Sefer Nidhei Yisrael*, 110–112; Weinstock, *Shnem Asar Shivtei Yisrael*, 53. Moskowitz, who reprinted the book in 1954, promised to publish "the manuscript of the author himself [along with] many, wonderful additions to this, what has not [*sic*] been printed until now." Moskowitz, *Ošar haSipurim*, vol. 8, 8–13. However, he evidently never got around to it.

37 Horowitz, *Kol Mevasser*, author's introduction, 10. In Horowitz's estimation, the travelers must have "grown beards, for this can be a hindrance when a good explanation is known

reference to the Tribes of Jeshurun Association dates back to 1899, when the organizers of Horowitz's journey published R. Yisrael of Shklov's famous epistle to the Ten Tribes in the organization's name.³⁸ However, this time around, it seems as though only Horowitz operated within the Association's framework. Over a decade later, the group sponsored a new edition of Moses Edrehi's *Sefer Ma'aseh Nissim* (1911). This edition featured an introduction, "Ma'amar kid-dush ha'shem," on the obligation to search for the Ten Tribes by R. Mordechai Berkowitz.³⁹ Like Horowitz, the writer associated himself with "the Vilna Gaon's traditions." In fact, Berkowitz's father, Avraham Dov, authored a couple of works on the famed rabbi's kabbalistic thought. This introduction also attests to the large network of relations between kabbalists in Jerusalem. Father and son arrived to Palestine in 1899, but the former passed away the next year. Mordechai was among the sages of Sha'ar haShamayim and an active proponent of finding the Ten Tribes.⁴⁰ On the inner cover of Berkowitz's introduction is the following preamble: "We the founders of the Association of the Tribes of Jeshurun ask of our brethren the Jewish people wherever they may reside to found a society like this in each and every city and to unite with our society. In so doing, may we reach our goal of finding our brethren, the Sons of Moses our Rabbi, may peace be upon him and may his virtue protect us."⁴¹

As we shall see, Horowitz was a sucker for any new piece of information on the Tribes' whereabouts that happened to come his way, regardless of the source. It thus stands to reason that Zevi Kasdoi (a scholar who broached many and manifold theories of his own on this topic) was referring to Horowitz in the following passage from his 1928 book, *The Tribes of Jacob and the Preserved of Israel*:

Once while I was heading somewhere for the purpose of my literary work, I lost my way among the winding and crooked alleys of Old Jerusalem, etc. That day there was a downpour. In several places, I could not traverse the puddles that were caused by these torrents of rain, and I did not run

to me, for those with shaven beards will not give permission to engage in dialogue with them;" *ibid*, 52.

38 Shivtei Yeshurun, *Igeret* (1899), 14–16.

39 Edrehi, *Sefer Ma'ase Nisim*, 3–9.

40 Berkowitz, *Sefer Zekher Avraham*. For evidence that he was a regular at the yeshiva in 1914, see Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Account Books*, 1908–1922 (MS).

41 Edrehi, *Sefer Ma'ase Nisim*. The copy in the Israel National Library has been inscribed with the following seal: "The Company of the Tribes of Jeshurun Association with the Sons of Moshe our Teacher, may peace be upon him, may his virtue protect us, here in the Holy City of Jerusalem, may it be built and instituted swiftly in our time amen."

into anyone along the way to ask for directions. Suddenly, there materialized opposite me, as though surfacing from beneath the depths of the earth, a typical Jerusalemite Jew. He urged me to give him a hand, to join him in his search for the Ten Tribes, particularly the sons of Jonadab ben Rechab.... Before I knew it, he had dragged me all the way to the Western Wall, and swore to me time and again that he had seen one of them with his own eyes next to the Western Wall, which we are [*sic*] standing by. And he told me that he ran after me for about a half hour, for this reason[:] “You became an expert, my good man, on trips, etc.” He then turned to me with a beaming face, and he described to me such a trip and its plan etc., like a big and knowledgeable expert. He even learnt Arabic for this sake, and how to dress up as a dervish. However – he added with a sigh – so long as scholars and experts do not partake in this [i.e., the search for the Tribes], they will stigmatize the enterprise even now with tall tales and illusions etc. I indeed promised [to lend] him [a hand], but the World War came and the opportunity fell by the wayside.⁴²

Owing to his expeditions to the Far East (including Japan and China), Kasdoi was probably solicited for advice by members of the Old Yishuv with an interest in the Lost Tribes.⁴³ In a similar fashion, Abraham Jacob Brawer described how a person loosely affiliated with Sha’ar haShamayim turned to him with questions concerning the Tribes’ whereabouts.⁴⁴

In all likelihood, many of Horowitz’s contemporaries were familiar with both his voyage and dreams. Aharon Zeev Aešcoly, who touched on the former in a couple of books, also described the itinerant kabbalist in his 1936 article “The Jews of Abyssinia in Hebrew Literature,” with blatant scorn:

The extent to which the Jewish people is not a widower [i.e., is not the sole believer] in the myths on the Ten Tribes and their eagerness to search for them to this day is evidenced by the story of R. Shimon Zvi Horowitz from Jerusalem (Jerusalem 1923). Horowitz avidly calculates the End and

42 Kasdoi, *Shivtei Ya’aqov veNešurei Yisrael*, 111.

43 Idem, *MiYerkatei Mizrah*. Kasdoi’s book on the Tribes, which was printed in 1914 at Lunz’s press in Jerusalem, netted positive reviews in the press. Orlans skewered “the heads of English society” who claim the crown of the Tribes. In contrast, he praised Kasdoi and agreed with him that search expeditions for the Tribes should be conducted in the Caucasus. See idem, “Aseret haShvatim Ḥayim veQaya’mim.” For more on Kasdoi’s views on this topic, see Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes*, 220–221.

44 Brawer, *Zikhronot Av uBeno*, 462.

toils to bring the messiah. Additionally, he provides information on the Falasha [i.e., Ethiopian Jewry], and he is ready to head off to Abyssinia and find them on his own. From his standpoint, he is certain that the Falasha, some of whom he saw in Jerusalem, are not the same Jews inhabiting Abyssinia that descend from the ten Tribes. They have yet to be found to this day [according to Horowitz] because a clean-shaven Jew was dispatched to them. For his part, Rabbi Horowitz is ready to go there on an expedition.⁴⁵

This passage refers to Horowitz's theory that the Tribes are residing in an unknown location in Ethiopia, which he developed in *Kol Mevaser*.⁴⁶ In fact, the kabbalist took steps to substantiate this new hypothesis. The archive of Jacob Noah Faitlovitch (1881–1955), a Zionist activist who supported Ethiopian Jewry in a variety of ways throughout the early twentieth century, contains a most interesting, circa 1928 letter from Horowitz that sheds light on his outlook towards searching for the Tribes.⁴⁷ Above all, the epistle indicates how its author was galvanized by every last morsel of information that found its way to his doorstep, even if it pointed to a completely different geographic location than the one he had previously considered. The letter was a follow-up to the copy of *Kol Mevaser* that he sent to Faitlovitch:

I am writing to inform your honor that I spoke with a famous doctor and explorer, Dr. Entin, who was a physician in the British Army. Eight years ago, he travelled with a convoy to Abyssinia and wanted to find out the truth about our brethren, the lost Jews. The Dr. passed on to me a true piece of information from what he researched from the Negroes. They

45 Aešcoly, "The Jews of Abyssinia," 433–434. Aešcoly enumerated and rebuked the myriad authors who identified the Jews of Ethiopia with the Ten Tribes. His article concludes on the following note: "The sources that they cite bear witness on themselves. Some are nonsense, in which the thin rumor of truth is nullified by a sea of fantasy. Among them are also texts that have a foundation of truth in their own right – but there is no endorsable truth on Abyssinia's Jews, only on other exiles.... The Jewish sources are the fruit of an ongoing rumor.... None of these travelers were in Abyssinia itself, even David Reubeni, the only one that was suspected of this. In general, this material reflects the Diaspora's attitude towards the exiled of Israel across the generations – and is not reflective of historical material on the history of the Falasha" (433–435).

46 Horowitz, *Kol Mevaser*, 26–27, 35–36, 106–107; English section, 2–3.

47 On Faitlovitch and his contribution to the search for the Sons of Moses, see Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes*, 219–220; Trevisan Semi, *Jacques Faitlovitch and the Jews of Ethiopia*, 1–46.

revealed to him information about every part of the place, including the mountains and the Abtara River. The Dr. himself crossed the Atbara River and wanted to climb the Semien Mountains in order to reach the king of Israel, for the Gentiles themselves told him that they know for a fact that many brave Jews dwell in the Semien Mountains. And they themselves told him that the Sambatyon River is to be found there as well. [The waterway] slings rocks and sand in a raging wind throughout the six days of the workweek, and rests and stops working on the Holy Sabbath. It is quite a difficult path to reach these mountains. [On this note,] he [i.e., Entin] concludes his words. And I [Horowitz] am certain that if they arrange a trustworthy delegation to go there and search for our brethren, they will surely manage to find them. For this Dr. himself crossed the Atbara River and wanted to proceed to the mountains, but the convoy did not want to, and he was left the only one. Therefore, he too was forced to go back. And he set out from the city of Addis Ababa to the desert, which is approximately a 5-day journey. It is best to take donkeys and some camels. And how good and pleasant [it would be] if you had an aeroplane or Zeppelin. Then you could reach [the Sambatyon] in no more than two or three hours. In any event, make an effort and God will come to your aid; and if you exert yourself and don't find [the Tribes], don't believe it. And if you manage to find them, then at the very least ask them to send one person with a bottle of sand from the Sambatyon River to Jerusalem. In consequence, you will earn all the respect in the world from hundreds of thousands of Jews and the honor of kings, may you be happy and content with your lot. From me his friend who awaits his good, accurate, and clear response, *Shimon Zvi Horowitz*.

My address is already written in the letters which you received and in my book *Kol Mevaser*. Please gird yourself and please take courage dear brothers, so that you may see this matter through, for our freedom and the salvation of our souls hangs in the balance. May God stand by your side. What is more, we will pray without pause that the messengers reach their final destination alive and well. May you merit to bring us good tidings and consolation for the Jewish people that are scattered and dispersed amongst the nations. It has also reached our attention that a tribe of Israel dwells 10 days from the city of Harar and all this, as I noted for his honor, is fully explained in my book *Kol Mevaser* in the part on Abyssinia. Throughout this book, his honor will learn about the layout [of the land] and then he will find all the information [he needs] and will understand how to arrange the matter of the mission. Above all, it is incumbent upon you to call an assembly and establish a committee and association for

the purpose of carrying out this great enterprise. Perhaps a fellowship of distinguished lords and some patrons will join the association [and provide] some assistance and aid – how good and pleasant [this would be]. May an answer [be reached] by dint of much planning. In addition [I have a request] of my friend: if there are any developments on your side, any update whatsoever regarding these activities, please inform me of everything. Many thanks in advance.⁴⁸

There is no evidence as to the fate of this plan, or if Faitlovitch, who was quite interested in finding the tribes for his own nationalist reasons, so much as responded to Horowitz's letter. To the best of our knowledge, the Zionist activist did not take this particular matter all too seriously and made no effort to secure a bottle of sand from the fabled river. Once again, a scheme devised by Horowitz went awry,⁴⁹ but there would be others who picked up where he left off.

Following in Horowitz's Footsteps

Horowitz sought to resuscitate the Tribes of Jeshurun Association in 1923 within the framework of the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, but it is difficult to measure the organization's activity level or how many people responded to his calls. That said, one can point to several figures that were moved by Horowitz's efforts and formed ties with him. Furthermore, several books that came out in the late 1800s and first half of the twentieth century are infused with his can-do zeal.

A case in point is R. Jacob Goldzweig's 1896 book *Igeret leQeş haYamin*, which includes various calculations that date the messiah's coming to 1906 and the adjacent years (as discussed below, this forecast was often put forth by Horowitz as well).⁵⁰ According to Goldzweig, he discovered the date of "God's *shabbat* and the messiah's coming in the present" from a shelved manuscript by R. Hayyim Vital, which he came across in Haifa in 1865. Moreover, *Igeret leQeş haYamin* advocates purchasing land in Palestine as a catalyst for the redemption.

48 The section that pertains to Ethiopian Jewry and the Tribes was published by Waldman, *From Ethiopia to Jerusalem*, 130–131.

49 Reuveni portrays such a plan in one of his fictional stories; idem, "Pi haGiḥon [1934]," 372–381.

50 Goldzweig, *Sefer Igeret leQeş haYamin*. First published in Manchester in 1896, the book was quite popular, as new editions came out in Munkacs and Piotrków in 1898 and 1905, respectively.

In a section titled “Wonderful News from the Ten Tribes and the Construction of the Temple,” he claimed that the redemption is drawing near: “The Holy One blessed be He will subsequently open a route between the snow-capped mountains, and the Ten Tribes will be able to go up to the Land of Israel and see the Temple that the Holy One blessed be He will bring down from the heavens and the Holy Land will expand more than it is now.”⁵¹ The book came out, albeit anonymously, a few more times. From 1897 and on, the Munkacs editions of *Igeret leKeš haYamin* included an approval by Shmuel Salant.⁵²

Similar ideas, albeit with a slightly different worldview, turn up in Judah Leib ben Yosef Zeitlin’s 1901 *Sefer Pirqei Neḥamot Şiyon*. This book, which was printed in Jerusalem, is outfitted with approvals from rabbis and kabbalists, a letter by Sons of Moshe, and various calculations of the End.⁵³ Zeitlin proposed the establishment of “holy groups” by the name of *Kiseh Eliyahu*⁵⁴ that would fast, pray, study the Zohar and Psalms, and hold other Lurian-style rituals on a regular basis for the sake of hastening the messiah’s arrival. What is more, he integrated the topic of the Lost Tribes into the kabbalistic yearnings for the redemption.

During the 1930s, the kabbalist Moshe Yair Weinstock, who would eventually become one of Yehuda Leib Ashlag’s top students, put out two small booklets containing, among other topics, information on “the places in which the Ten Tribes are scattered to announce from them [*sic*] wondrous marvels and terrifying deeds.”⁵⁵ In 1956, he wrote a comprehensive work about the obligation to search for the Tribes. While drawing on Horowitz’s enterprise, Weinstock’s

51 Ibid, 25–26.

52 In another edition, which came out in Piotrków 1905, a phrase describing the utopian state in the Land of Israel – “And there the boys and girls will study, Torah and wisdom in three languages” – has been replaced with the following: “And there the boys will study Torah and wisdom.” *ibid*, 19.

53 Zeitlin, *Sefer Pirqei Neḥamot Şiyon*, 10b–12b.

54 *Ibid*, 20b. Zeitlin interspersed passages from rare kabbalah books throughout this work. On the matter of the groups, it appears that he was leaning on Eliyahu Suliman Mani, *Sefer Kise Eliyahu* (1865), 76a: “Let us talk of an attribute of this generation’s savants, as a duty has been imposed on them from heaven’s law to make an effort to conduct this *tikun*. For this purpose, they will appoint six shifts in Jerusalem. Every shift consists of God-fearing men and each shift will fast one day a week, night and day. And they will pray on behalf of the entire Jewish people and for the redemption. Every day they will study Psalms and Zohar in particular. And in his mercy the Holy One will send us a savior quickly in our time amen, may this be His will.”

55 Weinstock, *Sifrei Yisrael (1): Sefer Darkhei Şiyon*; *idem*, *Sifrei Yisrael (2): Sefer Igeret Haqodesh*. The two booklets were printed at the HaYOM Press (the Hebrew acronym of the author’s full name and title). Weinstock’s role as publisher is only mentioned on the

motives for locating the Israelites were completely different than his precursor's, as his largely stem from the Holocaust and the need to bolster the fledgling Jewish state:

I believe that in this epoch which, due to our many sins, we [*sic*] have lost over six million of our brethren the Jewish people, from the cream of the crop, because of the Nazi Holocaust, may their [i.e., the Nazis'] names be eradicated, and our people dwelling in our holy land are surrounded by thirty million Arabs [who are our] sworn haters [*sic*]. Now the time has long come for us, the members of the tribe of Judah and Benjamin and some Levites, to get cracking on the sacred work: to search for our brothers the Ten Tribes and the Sons of Moses.⁵⁶

This militant passage indeed epitomizes the changes to the rationale behind finding the Lost Tribes in the aftermath of the Holocaust and Israel's establishment. Years later, these sort of utterances helped nourish fundamentalist views in the State of Israel.⁵⁷ During the pre-war years, many and manifold reasons were cited for pursuing this goal. For example, in 1935, Tzvi Hirsch Shapira (the aforementioned Hasidic rabbi of Munkacs) stressed that finding our "perfect, pure, and trembling" lost brethren would strengthen the resolve of the majority of the Jewish people against "the secular sinners and the rebels" in their midst:

The *aliyah* of the Tribes – If perhaps, God forbid, the plaintiff will deviate and say that owing to our many sins criminals and rebels came out of *klal yisrael* [the Jewish people in its entirety] and they constitute the majority. Only the minority still strengthen themselves in Torah and the believer's faith. If so, most of the Jewish people, heaven forbid, are bad, and this would push the scales towards a guilty verdict. Therefore, we will duly join forces with the Ten Tribes, who are pure people. All of them are saints and among them are certainly those who will tremble before God and who are believers. They would constitute the majority with which to defeat the evil. And this is an *aliyah*, to expand the population. [In other

back cover of the second booklet. These were the first of over eighty titles that he brought to press in his lifetime.

56 Weinstock, *Shnem Asar Shivtei Yisrael*, 8. In the days ahead, Avraham Eliyahu Zonenshein became involved in Horowitz's enterprise. In 1958, he established an association, "New Light in Zion," that was devoted to finding the Lost Tribes; idem, *Sefer Or H'adash be'Siyon*.

57 See, for example, Halkin, *Across the Sabbath River*.

words,] the Ten Tribes along with the Sons of Moses from beyond the Sambatyon will be untied with Yisrael in the Diaspora. With them, we [i.e., observant Jews] are the majority against the wicked; and together we would be able to push the scales in our favor and for good.⁵⁸

During these same years, David Aharon Wishnevitze's 1930 article on the finding the Ten Tribes was quite popular in Eastern Europe. The book in which it was published merited approvals from Judah Leo Landau, Kook, and other rabbis who were close to Sha'ar haShamayim.⁵⁹ Another book on this topic, *Mešiat Aseret haShvatim* (Discovery of the Ten Tribes), netted a few editions in Hebrew and Yiddish in the early 1900s.⁶⁰ Its cover boasts of huge revelations on the matter of one Uziel Haga's discovery of the Sambatyon River in China, but the work itself is merely a compilation of several earlier texts. Put differently, the promises on the cover were, at best, an exaggerated sales pitch.⁶¹

Horowitz's journey indeed made waves, as many readers adopted his outlook and sought to organize expeditions. Among the "new converts" was the kabbalist R. Menachem Menkhin Rabinowitz. During the 1920s and 1930s, he brought to press about twelve kabbalah-related pamphlets that clamored

58 Shapira, *Quntres Divrei Qodesh*, 6.

59 Wishnevitze, "Mešiat 'Aseret haShvatim," in *Sefer Mate Aharon*, 77a–103b.

60 Haga, *Mešiat 'Aseret haShvatim*. The first edition came out in 1901 in Warsaw. A Yiddish edition, with changes and omissions (mostly references to philosophical works), followed in its wake, idem, *Erfundung die eseres shvotim*. In 1911, the book was reprinted in Hebrew and Yiddish under the title *The New Testament*, or *Sefer haBrit haHadash*.

61 The anonymous publisher fused together several different elements: articles in *HaMagid* on the Jews of China (Haga, *Mešiat 'Aseret haShvatim*, 3–17), the editor's description of Haga ("his soul longs deeply to enter a pact with our brethren, the descendants of the Ten Tribes who were severed from us [by means of] a huge rift that is not healing," *ibid*, 17–18); and an account of China from the writings of the nineteenth century author Shimshon Bloch, which Haga adapted into an epistle (*ibid*, 18–56). The first to take note of the book's peculiarities and uncited sources was Lazar, *Ḥidot haHagadot*, 91: "After the final war between the powerful kingdoms in China, some loafer published a book in Warsaw by the name *Mešiat 'Aseret haShvatim*". On the book's cover, he declared that "the explorer Uziel Haga of Boston got a license from the president of the United States Mc Kinley [*sic*], to go with his army to China in the year 1901. He provides cutting evidence that the Jews in China are descendants of the Ten Tribes and will expand on the matter of the Sambatyon River. However, inside the book, there is nothing on this topic, save for the above-mentioned letters from the year 1868 [which were published in *HaMagid*] and the writing on the land of China as per the book *Shvilei Olam* of Shimshon Bloch]." As opposed to Ben-Dor Benite (*The Ten Lost Tribes*, 215–219), I contend that this entire story is a fabrication; and the same can probably be said for the figure of Uziel Haga.

for repentance. These texts also contain various allusions to the Ten Tribes. In 1928, Rabinowitz merged all the existing pamphlets into a comprehensive book: *Sefer Mevasser veOmer Neḥamat Menaḥem*.⁶² Consisting of Hebrew and English sections, the book offers various details about the Tribes (including a bibliographical list on the pertinent literature and maps), which were gleaned from research and travel books. In so doing, he hoped to reignite the search for the lost brethren. He even called on Jews with a working knowledge of Arabic and Far Eastern tongues to help him assemble a delegation. In parallel, Rabinowitz was involved in calculating the End of the Days. Most of his forecasts gravitated around the year 1930.⁶³ The English section of his book entreats the nations of the world to help find the Tribes. To this end, it provides handwritten maps and directions. It also bears noting that the author placed stock on bizarre theories that were popular at the time, such as the notion that the English descend from the Israelites.⁶⁴

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- 62 Rabinowitz, *Sefer Mevasser veOmer*. The English title of the book is *The Lost Tribes of Israel. Part 1: A Call in Time and the Redemption of Israel, a Critical Analysis, Scientific, Historical and Biblical Investigation*. It also bears noting that the author signs off with the English name “Dr. Menaḥem Mendel Emanuel ben Abraham, Rabbi, Historian and Traveler.” For a short discussion on Rabinowitz, see Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes*, 221–222.
- 63 Rabinowitz, *Sefer Mevasser veOmer*, 25–26. The rest of the calculations are for the years 1931, 1939, 1940, and 1955. Some of these forecasts reprise in another of his books; idem, *Sefer Neḥapesa Darkheinu veNashuva* (1932). Forecasts for these years were rather commonplace. For instance, Yehuda Aryeh Leib Eibenschutz of Warsaw dated the messiah’s coming to the years from 1938 to 1940; *Sefer petiḥat Sefer Daniel* (1937), 13–14. Other examples can be found in Meir, “Wrestling with the Esoteric,” 614.
- 64 For more on these ideas, see, *inter alios*, Lazar, *Ḥidot haHagadot*, 5, 98–101. Adolf (Avraham) Neubauer summarized these theories back in 1899: “At present, we can only say to those who are searching for the lost Tribes in any part of the United Kingdom-England, Scotland, Wales, or Ireland, what we said some years ago to the late great champion of the theory that the Welsh are the lost Tribes. After expounding for more than half an hour his theory that the Cymri derive their name from Omri, and abusing our great Celtic scholar Professor Rhys for taking another view on grounds of philology and ethnology, he asked our own opinion, which we gave him in the following words: ‘My belief is that you are more lost than the Ten Tribes.’” Idem, “Where Are the Ten Tribes,” 423. Hebrew literature is brimming with scorn for the theories that were broached by the English. For instance, Orlans wrote in 1929 that “We are witness to an interesting spectacle whereby an association, which counts many of the heads of English society among its members, posits that the British are descendants of the Ten Tribes. And this association holds congresses from time to time and discusses this matter with utmost seriousness.” In the ensuing paragraphs, he lambasted this phenomenon; idem, “Aseret haShvatim Ḥayim veQaya’mim,” 223–224. None other than Joseph Klausner claimed that “along with many illusions and

Rabinowitz's grand plans were backed by several of Jerusalem's notables. Among those who endorsed *Mevasser veOmer* were Kook, Zonnenfeld, the kabbalist Aryeh Leibish Lifshitz, and the two heads of Sha'ar haShamayim.⁶⁵ According to the introduction, Rabinowitz first met Horowitz in around 1926, and the latter even defrayed some of the book's expenses. In turn, Horowitz asked the writer to incorporate several fascinating pieces of information into *Mevasser veOmer* that had recently come to his attention. A detail of this sort is alluded to in Horowitz's gushing approval of Rabinowitz's book:

I hereby convey to his honor what I received from the mouth of Mr. Tadger, the vice-counsel of the Wahhabi government from Beirut, when he was in Jerusalem during the year 1926. They [i.e., Tadger's words] have yet to be published, for my book *Kol Mevasser* came out earlier, in the year 1923. Among the details that he passed on to me was how to reach the Rechabites' place, as he himself was sent there by the government. I request that his honor print this in his distinguished book.⁶⁶

Despite Horowitz's assistance, Rabinowitz did not accommodate his patron's request. Instead, he promised to include it in a sequel, which never materialized.

Auerbach's lengthy approval of *Mevasser veOmer* is especially interesting, for it contains his first known statements on finding the Ten Tribes. In fact, this text is the only instance in which Auerbach expressly refers to a connection between the dissemination of the kabbalah and the renewed Jewish interest in their vanished brethren:

After they [i.e., the Jews] lost faith in the redemption and the kabbalah wisdom was abandoned in the corner, the sound of throbbing for the redemption is once again heard. The possessors of sacred thought and feeling have awoken and have begun to occupy themselves with the kabbalah wisdom, finding meaning and mystery therein. In addition, the hearts of the Jewish people in all the Diasporas of the Exile have begun to beat and pump for the ancestral land, and the latent aspiration to search for and

banalities," there is "also a kernel of historical-scientific truth" to these suppositions; idem, "Aserert haShvatim," 177–178. Also see Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes*, 187–198.

65 Rabinowitz, *Sefer Mevasser veOmer*, approvals. Horowitz sanctioned (along with the kabbalists Ze'ev Wolf Ashkenazi and Ovadia Hedaya) another of Rabinowitz's books, which interprets certain parts of the Zohar; Rabinowitz, *Sefer Razin Tmirin* (1937).

66 Rabinowitz, *Sefer Mevasser veOmer*, approvals; English section, 5.

track down our lost and banished brothers has also been ignited.... The ones that are most excited with this development are all those envisioning a dream and anticipating the salvation, to strengthen the despondent and resuscitate the laggards.⁶⁷

While evidence on how *Mevasser veOmer* was received is scarce, Rabinowitz evidently gave copies of his book to various figures that were potentially interested in his gospel. Years later, the author recalled sending the book to Japan and China where, in his estimation, it made quite a splash. Inspired by *Mevasser veOmer*, he wrote, “a famous professor from Japan” wrote a lengthy paper demonstrating that “among the Japanese can be found the tribes of Gad and Manasseh.” However, even Rabinowitz, who had no qualms about resorting to his imagination on the subject of the lost Israelites, was hard-pressed to accept this new theory.⁶⁸

As noted, Rabinowitz failed to make good on his promise for an extensive sequel to *Mevasser veOmer*.⁶⁹ He did publish a five-page work titled *Kuntres Dema'ot veNeḥamot Menaḥem veSeder haGeulah* in 1939, but this pamphlet was devoid of new information on the Tribes. Instead it portrays the succession of events that will lead to the messiah's coming in the year 1940, along with another commitment to write a full-length book in the future.⁷⁰ At any rate, these activities exemplify the influence of the ideas that Horowitz advanced within the framework of the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva as well as the new directions that his acolytes took.

67 Ibid.

68 Rabinowitz, *Sefer Neḥapesa Darkheinu veNashuva*, 13. He is apparently referring to the ultra-national syncretist Oyabe Zen'ichirō (1867–1941), who in 1929 published his *magnum opus* on the Japanese and the Ten Tribes; see Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 65–69. For an in-depth look at the theory that Japanese descend from the Tribes, see Lazar, *Hidot haHagadot*, 101–103; Goodman and Miyazawa, *ibid.*, 37–75; Rots, “Ambiguous Identities,” 315–322. This supposition percolated the Hebrew literature in different ways, some of them quite bizarre. In a 1902 book on his visions, Binyamin Wechsler noted that the Tribes are located in China or Japan; Wechsler, *Mizba'ah Binyamin*.

69 Rabinowitz, *Sefer Shuvu el haBore*, 12. In this work, the author expresses his desire to print his book of visions as well.

70 Rabinowitz, *Kuntres Dema'ot veNeḥamot*, 4: “New information on the Ten Tribes, the Sons of Moses, and the Rechabites, in the vicinity of Tibet, the Sahara Desert, and in the heart of Arabia, and dreams and hints, etc. cannot be put into writing. All those interested in this and correspondents are requested to send stamps, etc., to cover the author's expenses.” A forecast dating the messiah's coming to 1940 is also attributed to Dweck-HaKohen; Shrem, *Sefer Sha'arei Raḥamim*, 93b–94a.

A Note on “Traditions” Ascribed to the Vilna Gaon

These messianic explorers also found ostensible clues as to the whereabouts of the Ten Tribes within Jewish tradition. Most of these figures put an emphasis on hints that backed their theories on “the lost brothers” in the Vilna Gaon’s writings or ideas attributed to him and his disciples. As opposed to the considerable Ashkenazic support for the efforts to locate the Israelites, the Sephardic kabbalists rarely displayed sympathy for such plans. In the 1880s, the voyages of one Isaac ben R. Haim Baruch Halevi of Tiberias to the Far East sparked a revival of sorts. Halevi, who believed that the Tribes were tucked away in the vicinity of Tibet, won the confidence of a few patrons in Calcutta and Bombay. While several of the Old Yishuv’s rabbis supported his expedition (e.g., Shlomo Abulafia, the Sephardic rabbi of Tiberias, who gave the explorer a letter addressed to the Sons of Moses), Halevi’s appeal to Jerusalem’s Sephardic rabbis, including the practitioners of Sharabian mysticism in Beit El, fell on deaf ears.⁷¹ The same can be said for the Sephardic kabbalists’ response to Horowitz’s journey at the turn of the century. In fact, there are hardly any references to the question of the Ten Tribes in their writing. This absence may very well stem from various myths concerning the RaShaSh, Haim de la Rosa, and Haim Yosef David Azulai (the HYDA). At a certain point, these figures took various measures to hasten the End of the Days, but received warnings from on high to cease and desist.⁷² These stories were making the rounds in Jerusalem at the

71 This episode is discussed at length in Ya’ari, “Emissaries of the Land of Israel to the Lost Tribes,” 474–480; idem, *Shluḥei Ereṣ Yisrael*, 149–150. Throughout the years of his journey (1883–1886), Halevi was ridiculed in the daily Hebrew press. For instance, Israel Dov Frumkin considered him a “sucker” and a “dimwit who is misled into believing anything,” but also “a pure and God-fearing man.” See the string of articles, along with the editor’s comments, that were run in *HaBazeleth* (1884–1885): (a) “A Remnant of the Ten Tribes;” (b) “A Rabbinical Envoy to the Sambatyon;” (c) “The Rearguard of All the Camps;” and (d) “the Mission to the Sons of Moses.” A neutral account turns up in a letter to *HaZefira*’s editors by Avraham Shalom Chai Hamoi, “Baghdad,” 97.

72 This myth was apparently first published in Ludwig August von Frankel, *Yerushalaima* (1860), 324–326. In 1932, the newspaper *Doar haYom* unfurled another version of this myth; de la Rosa, “HaGoalim,” 7. A completely different version appeared in a local Jerusalem paper in 1939; Asher ben Yisrael, “BeSod Asara,” 2. Also see Bloi, *Yeshivat Zion*, 4a-b; Frumkin, *Toldot Ḥakhmei Yerushalayim*, vol. 3, 119 (“R. Haim de la Rosa is one of the men of renown among the sages of the Torah of the Kabbalah and mysteries. On him, the holy Master Shalom Sharabi, and the HYDA of blessed memory they will tell true stories and also many fabricated stories that get themselves [i.e., the authors] on a high horse [*sic*]; and a sound mind does not accept them. In any event, it is clear that the above-mentioned rabbi was a saint of the first order”); Mutzafi, “Introduction,” 25

very same time other Jewish figures in the city were devising and spreading traditions that ascribed a proactive messianic vision to the Vilna Gaon, which incorporated, *inter alia*, the topic of the Lost Tribes.

These traditions, especially those that are interwoven into messianic questions (the majority of which were crafted by the Rivlin family), come to expression in Horowitz's efforts to decipher kabbalistic hints in *Sefer Kol haTor* and his kabbalistic interpretations of Yoshe (Yosef) Rivlin's *piyutim* (liturgical poems).⁷³ Horowitz's thoughts on these messianic poems are commensurate with his approach to spreading the kabbalah in the Land of Israel and finding the Ten Tribes:

In truth, one must examine his [i.e., Yoshe Rivlin's] deeds according to his hidden spirit. Not many have plumbed the depths of his articles and in particular his holy *pizmonim* [songs], most of which are "a locked garden – a sealed well," which accord with the kabbalah's secrets that are designed to expedite the redemption by means of building Jerusalem and the *aliyah* of the Tribes, etc. He descends and pierces [*sic*] until reaching the depths of the intentions of the prophets and Sages' callings that are in the revealed and in the concealed [Torah] and in wonderful hints in the most profound of secrets. Blessed be He, I took part in the clarification and revelation of many of the intentions and hints in the *pizmonim*. And they contain a great deal [with which] to teach the next generations

("A famous myth also spread in Jerusalem"); Benayahu, "Shivhei haRav HiDA," 178–198 (who copied Frankl's words); Alexander-Frizer, *The Heart Is a Mirror*, 230–235. For different versions of this same deed (including the unearthing of material from a MS), see Morgenstern, *Mysticism and Messianism*, 104–114; Moshe Hillel, "Ma'ase," 813–817. Perhaps RYAZ Margalioṭ was referring to this same episode in his account of a visit to the Beit El Yeshiva with the Chazon Ish. In the building, he wrote, there is a sort of cave in which "the terrible deed" involving the RaShaSh and "his colleagues" transpired, but it is forbidden to publish a word about it. Instead, it is passed on secretly by word of mouth; Moskowitz, *Hayei haRashash*, 93–94. In all likelihood, this story forms the backdrop for Jacob Shaltiel Ninio's reprimand of attempts to hasten the messiah's coming; *Sefer Zer'a Ya'qov* 99b. For a different angle on this story, see Morgenstern, *Return to Jerusalem*, 282–284.

73 Shlomo Zalman Rivlin, *Sefer Kol haTor*, "The First Publisher's Introduction," 16. The editor was assisted by Yitzhak-Zvi Rivlin, Zvi Hirsch Kahana Shapira, Shlomo Luria, Yaakov Moshe Charlap, and Yitzhak Auerbach. The manuscript of part of this work was in the possession of Yaakov Loewy, a Jerusalem kabbalist; *ibid.*, 14. Also see Baumgarten, "Messiah ben Joseph in Jerusalem," 17–19.

[about] the immense power of spirit and deed in the labor of settling the Holy Land in accordance with our sacred Torah.⁷⁴

The Rivlin family's "secrets of the redemption," which the Vilna Gaon had supposedly kept under wraps, reared up again while Horowitz was beginning to articulate his visions. All of these concoctions served as a kabbalistic reaction to secular Zionism. In any event, Horowitz was much more flexible than the Rivlins from a theological standpoint. More specifically, he was willing to extract information from a wide array of "sources" – from Jews to non-Jews, from distinguished professors to complete strangers – so long as it strengthened his hypotheses concerning the Ten Tribes, advanced his claims as to the necessity of revealing kabbalah secrets, and demonstrated that the redemption was near. In essence, he put forth a highly eclectic national-kabbalistic vision that, to some extent, complemented the gospel of secular Zionism and made sense of the emergent New Yishuv in Palestine.⁷⁵

A Few Calculations of the End

Throughout his lifetime, Shimon Horowitz backed certain forecasts of the messiah's coming. Several of the co-rosh yeshiva's books on this topic provide his own calculations and approvals. In *Or haMeir*, he averred that 1906 (the year Sha'ar haShamayim was established) would be an *eit raṣon* (a juncture in which God is willing), thereby adding to a long row of predictions for this year in East Europe.⁷⁶ Horowitz, though, did not suffice with one prediction. Like other apocalypse predictors, he frequently revised his dates over the course of his lifetime. From his standpoint, then, it would seem that the crux of this

74 Yosef Yehoshua Rivlin, *Pizmonei R. Yoshe Rivlin*, 11. Also see Yosef Yoel Rivlin, *Mea Sha'arim*, 19; Vishnetski and Frankentel, *Megilat Yosef*, 18. On the reliability of these "traditions" see Etkes, "The Vilna Gaon," 69–114. Auerbach subsequently put forth his own proposal for re-instituting the Sanhedrin. In essence, the matter of the Lost Tribes forms the backdrop for this idea as well. See Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Letter to Yehuda Yudel Rosenberg (MS); Chaim Yehuda Leib Auerbach, "Teshuva be'Inyan haSanhedrin," 145–156. His approach closely resembles that of R. Kook.

75 See also Meir, "The Eclectic Kabbalah of R. Shimon Zvi Horowitz," 411–420.

76 Horowitz, *Ohr haMe'eer*, 9a. For more on predictions for this year, see Assaf, "A Messianic Vision," 52. There were kabbalists, such as Shlomo Elyashiv, who objected to these calculations; see Dablitski, *Binu Shnot Dor vaDor*, 53. Similar forecasts turn up in Palestine and Baghdad for the year 1908; Hillel, "Aleī Sefer," 258–268; Wechsler, *Mizba'ah Binyamin*.

enterprise was the yearnings for the messiah that led to the calculations, rather than their accuracy.⁷⁷ The 1923 work by Moshe Binyamin (Alter) Barkai, another figure involved in these sort of activities, cites a forecast for the year 1925 that the author heard from Horowitz (it was derived from a verse that alludes to the Sambatyon River).⁷⁸ Many observant Ashkenazic Jews lauded these attempts to expedite the redemption. This interest is epitomized by an odd story concerning the eccentric messianic dreamer Emanuel ben Nissan. In response to the dramatic events of the late 1920s, not least the Arab Riots in Palestine, several kabbalists hung up the following placard in the streets of Jerusalem:

Blessed is God. Return Israel! to the Lord your God, etc. Remember the Torah of Moshe My servant that I commanded him on [Mount] Horeb regarding all Israel's laws and rules. Forthwith I am sending to you Elijah the Prophet in the run-up to the great and terrifying day of God. He [i.e., Elijah] will restore the ancestors' heart to the sons and the sons' heart to the ancestors.

In the holy city of Jerusalem in the neighborhood of Mishkenot [Yisrael] in the Neve Shalom Synagogue of the rabbi R. Shalom Araki, on the 21st of Menachem Av and on the 11th of the month of mercy 5689 [1929], we have decided to determine by means of the kabbalah whether the matter of this decree and these travails, etc. are from heaven or from human beings.

That same day, following prayer and supplications, etc. as per the kabbalah [that were led] by the genius rabbi, the deer, Shimon Zvi son of the illustrious rabbi Meir Leib Horowitz, the rosh yeshiva of the kabbalists of the holy city of Jerusalem, rosh yeshiva of Sha'ar haShamayim in Jerusalem, we conducted dream questions and commemorations, etc. [By dint of these measures,] we received an answer concerning the essence of this decree that it was from God. Furthermore, [we were informed] that if you [i.e., the Jewish people] now repent, God will forgive. Along with the questions and answers we received, we did another confession. The answer that I saw was that you confessed, etc.

A[nswer]. I heard from behind the curtain [that] you do not recall what that same person dreamt in 1929.

77 Haim Hazaz eloquently described the paradoxicality of the calculations of the End in one of his stories about Jerusalem in the 1930s; idem, *Betsilan shel Malkuyot*, 195–197, 216–219.

78 Barkai, *Qol haMevaser yeOr Barqai* (1923). This work was outfitted with approvals from R. Kook and R. Charlap.

Q[uestion]. What was the dream that that same person dreamt?

A. Elijah the Prophet of blessed memory came to him in his dream and took him up steps, upper steps, and he saw in the Land of Yemen a moon that came to him and told him to tell the Jewish people to repent. However, the majority of the Jewish people did not listen. There are those who listened, but I will not be able to write their names.

Q. And what is the dreamer's name?

A. Emanu El [*sic*]. The Lord allowed this person to have this dream. He wrote [about the vision] to the entire world. Why didn't you believe?

Q. Bless us. The Lord, our Father in heaven, will bless everyone and give them courage, eternity, greatness, and glory. The Lord will bless them [with] eternity, greatness, glory, holiness. Glory, greatness, holiness, and what not.

And now we see that there is a great awakening nearly throughout the entire world in repentance, prayer, and charity. There is much hope that the Holy One blessed be He will tear up the verdict against our brothers the Jewish people and will say enough to our tribulations. And we shall be blessed with a good year and felicity, redemption, and salvation swiftly in our day amen.

The above-mentioned words were before the genius rabbi Shimon Zvi Horowitz, rosh yeshiva of all the kabbalists of the city of Jerusalem and Sha'ar haShamayim's rosh yeshiva. Meir ben Haim Andaf. Haim Shlomo Araki. Shalom Nagar. Haim Magoli. Shalom Haim Tzarom.⁷⁹

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The contents of this notice, most notably the reference to a kabbalistic technique that was employed to reconstruct the dream of a Jerusalem visionary, was perceived as so alien and odd that the following year the bibliographical journal *Kiryat Sefer* (published by the fledgling Hebrew University of Jerusalem) ran the entire text under this noncommittal heading: "The placard that ensues we will publish here in full and as is." Although this was undoubtedly a cynical step on the editorial board's part, Horowitz and his ilk took Emanuel's visions with utmost seriousness and collaborated on other ventures aimed at hastening the End of the Days. A couple of months earlier, that same dreamer circulated a placard announcing that Elijah and the Patriarchs had appeared to him in his dreams on several occasions and informed him that if the Jews repent, the messiah is likely to come in the year 1929. Moreover, they revealed

79 "Return O Israel," 1929 (placard).

that the Messiah's name is Ezekiel. The visionary turned to R. Yaakov Meir and R. Kook, who encouraged him to disseminate a notice containing a summary of the dream and various exhortations in the spirit of the prophets.⁸⁰ In sum, Horowitz's second placard basically describes the reconstruction of the mystic's apocalyptic dream.

After the designated year had come and gone, Horowitz committed to various other forecasts. Moshe Skrovn's *Sefer leQeṣ haYamin* (A Book for the End of the Days), which came out in Warsaw in 1933, features calculations for 1934 and onwards. The work's cover notes that it was "Agreed to and sanctioned by the divine genius and kabbalist, head of the kabbalists in the Holy Land, the rabbi R. Shimon Zvi Lider, may he merit salutary longevity amen."⁸¹ Moreover, Horowitz's approval of Skrovn's booklet includes this revealing passage: "Amid the darkness of this great and terrible Exile, it is worthy and meritorious for whoever has any esoteric knowledge and good hints on the matter of the redemption to bring them to press, as this will elicit happiness in a person's heart and strengthening and hope, which is like a [medical] shot to a frail body and like cold water on a weary soul." Throughout *Sefer leQeṣ haYamin*, Skrovn refers to Horowitz's predictions that the redemption will transpire in approximately 1933.⁸² The booklet's content suggests that it constitutes but a tenth of a comprehensive, unpublished work. The full text included chapters on the Ten Tribes and a mysterious epistle containing hints of the messiah's arrival and calculations thereof, which are attributed to the Vilna Gaon. This same letter has sparked a great deal of scholarly conjecture. Horowitz's name

80 Emanuel ben Nissan, "Kol Mevasser, Mevasser veOmer," 1929 (placard); repr. in Kluger, *Min haMeqor*, vol. 1, 109. Also see Hamberger, *Meshiḥei haSheqer uMisnagdeihem*, 641–642. Hamberger, who portrayed Emanuel as a sort of "false messiah," was unaware of Horowitz's second placard. A wealth of material on Emanuel ben Nissan's multifaceted visions, including outlines of his dreams, and copies of the placards and booklets that he disseminated throughout Jerusalem can be found in a file that was kept on this eccentric mystic by Moshe David Gaon; Emanuel ben Nissan, List of Typewritten Dreams, Newspaper Clippings, Notices, and Booklets (MS). Sifting through this material, it is apparent that Emanuel was a known figure who merited the backing of some of Jerusalem's most distinguished rabbis.

81 Moshe Skrovn, *Sefer leQeṣ haYamin*. The author maintains his anonymity, signing off as M.S.M.R.

82 Ibid., 19–20. A folded sheet with other approvals, including one by Menachem Menkhin Rabinowitz, was attached to some of the book's copies. One such edition, which also contains the author's handwritten additions, was put up for public auction: idem, *Sefer leQeṣ haYamin* (MS). Horowitz also sanctioned another book by this writer (Skrovn, *Sefer Masa be'Arav*) on the messiah's coming.

is expressly linked to this epistle in another source – a small booklet that came out in Vilnius in 1937, for which he penned a *haskamah* (approval). Besides a calculation for 1936, this work states that the letter under review will be deciphered in the near future. However, the author never got around to it.⁸³ Elsewhere, Horowitz is credited with a forecast for the years 1948 and 1949, which is also tied to the Vilna Gaon (more precisely, to a late tradition of the Rivlin family).⁸⁴ Horowitz repeatedly found inspiration in these sort of predictions as well as the content of visions, recondite texts, and utterances. More specifically, the co-rosh yeshiva searched for clues in various materials that would buttress his activity to hasten the messiah's coming and buoy his hopes of finding the Lost Tribes.

Two Shelved Letters to the Ten Tribes

As a final coda to this chapter, we will unveil two remnants of Horowitz's extensive efforts to track down the Lost Tribes, which have reached the Schwadron Collection in the Israel National Library. More specifically, the book presents choice excerpts from two heretofore unpublished epistles from 1933 to 1936. Spurred on by the major developments in Europe and Palestine at the time, these manuscripts were addressed to the Rechabites, the Sons of Moses, and the Lost Tribes. Similar letters were written and published in the run-up to Horowitz's first expedition back in 1899, and their dissemination caused quite a stir in Jewish circles. As we have seen, this sort of epistle was also deposited in the hands of a Rechabite who turned up in Jerusalem in 1913.

Given the unlikelihood that Sha'ar haShamayim was organizing a new delegation or expecting an emissary from the banks of the Sambatyon, it is not known how Horowitz and his associates planned to convey these letters to their destination. In other words, the documents reflect a yearning for the Israelites that was elicited by a sense of distress and despair. That said, the

83 Demdus, *Igeret haGRA* (1937). For more on this bizarre episode, see Eliakh, *Sefer haGaon*, vol. 3, 1260–1268. According to a similar account, 1938 and 1939 were also deemed to be fateful years. This prediction found its way into Hedaya, *Sefer haHayim ye'haShalom*, vol. 2, 75b–76a.

84 Zussman, *MiBehirei Şadiqaya*, 168. A similar calculation was already published in 1928 by the Jerusalem kabbalist Isaac Alfiyahh, *HaQuntres haYehiyel*, vol. 1, 97b–98b. It was adapted in Chaim Shvili, *Sefer Hazon haHayim*, 83–84. An apocalypse forecaster in his own right, Shvili added that this date was calculated by the Vilna Gaon, and “this is how it was interpreted by a few of Jerusalem's sages.” Also see Shlomo Zalman Rivlin, *Midrash Shlomo*, 6.

two epistles are not of the same cloth. The first is meant to prod the “lost brothers” into coming to the defense of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. In addition, it was apparently submitted to a messenger who was preparing for a journey. Conversely, the second letter is basically a private prayer of Horowitz’s making.

The first epistle, from around 1933, was a visceral reaction to the plight of Russian Jewry, Hitler’s rise to power, and the hardships in the Land of Israel. It consists of nine typewritten pages, signatures of over a dozen local notables, and approvals by Charlap and the Court of Justice in Jerusalem, which bear a resemblance to those gracing Horowitz’s *Kol Mevasser*.

First Letter

The Wording of an Epistle to the Sons of Moses, may Peace be upon Him, and the Ten Tribes, 1933

With the assistance of the Holy One blessed be He. We the inhabitants of Zion and Jerusalem, Thinkers of religion, His daily delight, People of Israel, believers sons of believers, We have joined forces to write a letter in bitter tears.

To our absolutely precious, righteous, and pious brethren, and to the sacred king at their helm, on the other side of the Sambatyon River where the Sons of Moses our Rabbi, the doyen of all the prophets, may his virtue protect us and all our miserable brothers, are encamped; and to our generous, righteous, and pious brothers, the sons of Jonadab ben Rechab who observe their forefathers’ commandments and as a reward God promised them that “no one will ever wipe out the line of Jonadab ben Rechab” [Jeremiah 35:19]; and to the Ten Tribes of Jeshurun, the saints and foundation stones of the world, our dear brothers, who are scattered in many places, may the Lord’s grace be upon you and may He give the order to gather in your exiles. May God bless them all from Zion and may we merit to see them in the comfort of Zion and Jerusalem, our precious and adored brothers, merciful sons of merciful!

We the undersigned issue forth supplications to arouse utmost mercy for our brothers the miserable Jewish nation, approximately three million wretched [souls] who find themselves in distress and under captivity, to be stomped under the soles of the feet of evil people called *Bolsheviks*, who are akin to the beasts of the forest [Psalm 104:20]. Their main intention is to efface the memory of the Holy One blessed be He and His Torah from His world by claiming that there is no reward for the righteous and no punishment for the wicked, only their might and the power of their

hand succeeds in the world. Owing to our many sins, they have multiplied, succeeded, and killed the king that was in the state of *Russia*, took over the government, and promulgated anti-religious decrees against three million Jews under their rule, forcing them to breach the pact of Abraham our Patriarch, may peace be upon him, and violate the entire Law of Moses our Rabbi, may peace be upon him.

They [i.e., the Bolsheviks] are stocking up all kinds of food in the state so that it will be under their watch. They do not give [any of these supplies] even for the price of money, except to people in their confidence. And the Jewish people who keep the Torah of the Holy One blessed be He are dying of starvation, in nakedness and destitute, without food or livelihood and in the absence of shelter to cover against the current [i.e., wind] and precipitation, for they took all the houses away from the observant Jewish people. Moreover, they burnt all the sacred books in the fire. We have even heard that there are human beings who are eating the flesh of their children on account of the enormity of the hunger that has overcome them. If a Jew should want to escape to another country, they do not allow him to leave except in [return for] exorbitant payments that are beyond their [*sic*] means. These villains want to carry out [the following words of scripture] on the Jewish people: "In this very wilderness shall your carcasses drop" [Numbers 14:29]. Woe be the ears that hear this, woe onto us who have been plundered, for the Jewish people have not been through this sort of tragedy since the day the world was created. In sum, we have touched on the hardships that our brethren the Jewish people in the lands of Russia are being subjected to. They are in distress and in captivity under the soles of the feet of the wicked people called Bolsheviks, may their name be eradicated from the world.

We have recently heard that in the lands of *Ashkenaz* [i.e., Germany], there has also risen an evil figure, a malicious offspring of Amelek's seed, may its name be erased, who goes by the name of Adolf who is known as *Hitler*, the son of Maria, may his name be wiped out. He too has decreed wicked and harsh edicts against all the Jews in the state of Ashkenaz to turn them away from the faith of Moses and Israel like the deed of the Bolsheviks, may their name be effaced. Furthermore, he is committing unprecedented acts of murder. His main intention is for the name of Israel never to be mentioned again in the world. He too prohibits the Jews from escaping to another country. As a result of these sort of bad rumors, a shiver will take hold of anyone who hears, every eye shall shed a tear, and every amusement shall turn into mourning, heaven forbid.

In light of the above, we beg our brethren the merciful sons of merciful to rise up for the sake of the silenced voice of the blood of your brothers, merciful sons of merciful, and please awaken to the voice of our wretched brothers' blood. May you all, the Sons of Moses our Rabbi, God's servant, the sons of Jonadab ben Rechab, and the tribes of Israel, assemble to confer [over] how to save your wretched brothers from annihilation of the soul and the body. The time has indeed come to fulfill that which was written by the Prophet Hosea (number 2 verse 16 and 17): Assuredly, I will speak coaxingly to her and lead her through the wilderness and speak to her tenderly. I will give her vineyards from there, etc.⁸⁵ And the righteous should embrace the way of Jacob our Patriarch, may peace be upon him, upon hearing that the evil Esau is approaching he prepared himself for three things: for prayer, for gift [i.e., appeasement], and for war.⁸⁶ He did not lose sight of what is written in a letter by our dear brothers, the Sons of Moses our rabbi, may peace be upon him in the year 1731 to the sages of Jerusalem: that they are forbidden to leave their border.⁸⁷ Be that as it may, for almost thirty years, we have been hearing a rumor from a person from Jerusalem who by happenstance was at one of the Tribes of Israel that are encamped in the wilderness: their elders told him that there is a tradition in their hands from their forefathers that if a letter were to come from Jerusalem's sages to the Sons of Moses our Rabbi, may peace be upon him, asking them to come to Eretz Yisrael, then they would have permission to leave their border.⁸⁸ All the more so now, when hundreds of thousands are standing, God forbid, before the annihilation of both the soul and the body alike [because] there is nothing that overrides the sanctity of life, especially given that it is a mandatory war of unprecedented magnitude ... for the Creator's honor...

Behold dear brothers, take note of the desecration of the Creator's name, may He be exalted, in the world at this time. For the sake of the Creator's honor and for the sake of the honor of His Torah, do not be silent until the Holy One, may He be exalted, turns over those denigrating His name, may it be exalted, to your hands, just as He handed over the wicked [kings] to the hands of Abraham our Patriarch, may peace

85 The rest of the passage reads thus: "And the Valley of Achor as a plowland of hope. There she shall respond as in the days of her youth. When she came up from the land of Egypt."

86 Rashi on Genesis 32:9; *Midrash Rabbah* 9:28.

87 This letter was reprinted in Horowitz, *Kol Mevasser*.

88 As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, these stories nourished Horowitz's earlier expedition in search of the Lost Tribes.

be upon him. As you know, we [i.e., Knesset Yisrael] lack the capacity to make war and we have done what we can. [More specifically,] we decreed a general public fast on the eve of *rosh hodesh* [the first day of the month] of this past Nisan.⁸⁹ Yet the harvest passed and the summer ended, and we were not saved [Jeremiah 8:20], as we have endured what the author of Lamentations has said, “And when I cry and plead, He shuts out my prayer” [Lamentations 3:8]. And as is written (Psalms song 44[:20]), “Though Thou has cast us in a place of jackals and covered us in the shadow of death,” our eyes are lifted to our Father on high who by virtue and by dint of the Sons of Moses our Rabbi, may his virtue protect us, the Holy One, may his name be exalted, will send us the salvation just as was written by the Hasid, God’s saint, our illustrious rabbi R. Elijah of Vilnius of blessed memory regarding the verse “For liberators shall march up on Mount Zion to wreak judgment on Mount Esau; and dominion shall be the Lord’s” (Obadiah 1:21). It is said apropos of the Sons of Moses our Rabbi, may his virtue protect us, that they are liberators. May it be [His] will that it [i.e., this prophecy] shall be fulfilled soon in our days, and May He Who said to his world Enough, say to our troubles Enough [see Rashi on Genesis 43:14]. Thereafter our eyes shall see and our hearts shall rejoice over the salvation of the divine presence on the part of our exalted Strength quickly in our days, amen.

In light of the above, we ask for mercy from our dear brothers the generous sons of Jonadab ben Rechab to respect the Lord our God and have pity on our wretched brothers [among] the Jewish people. May you endeavor with all your might so that our letter will reach the Sons of Moshe our Rabbi encamped *beyond the Sambatyon River*. If you know the way to the Sambatyon River [and it is only] due to the impediment of the river that you are unable to deliver this letter to them, quickly notify us on this matter, for there are now in the Land of Israel ships that hover in the air beneath the sky like eagles. Therefore, if the delay is because of the River, we can send Jews with a ship that floats in the air, which can fly

89 The fast was proclaimed in an open letter; “Hitorerut,” in Kluger, *Min haMeqor*, vol. 2, 68. A public fast was indeed declared in 1932 by a couple of Jerusalem’s kabbalists, on account of the travails of “our Brethren the Jewish inhabitants of the land of Russia and Yemen who are under the pressure of a *shmad* [anti-religious] decree, may the Merciful One save us.” Moreover, 72 men participated in a 72-hour speech moratorium, with the objective of cajoling God’s attribute of *CheSeD* (the Hebrew word for mercy, which equals 72 in gematria) into action. Among the signatories on this placard are Haim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen, Aharon Shlomo Maharil, Shimon Zvi Horowitz, Haim Gershon Vilner, and Yosef Rachamim Mizrachi.

two hundred parsangs in a half hour. All we need to know is the way and where to fly.⁹⁰

We heard that a couple of times our precious brethren the Sons of Moshe our Rabbi, may his virtue protect us, mobilized to leave their border and come to the aid of our brothers, only to hear at the midway point of the journey a *bat kol* [divine voice] saying that the Jewish people have sinned and for this reason turned back. Pay heed this step is against the law of our holy Torah, for a halakha has already been ruled in a couple of places in our holy Talmud that with respect to something that is explicitly stated in the Torah, one does not give credence to a *bat kol*....⁹¹

To this point, we have written to you in brief about the indigent and morbid state of our wretched brothers overseas. Our situation[, namely that] of Eretz Yisrael's [Jewish] inhabitants [also leaves much to be desired] owing to our many sins. Destitution and paucity have heightened very very much in the Land of Israel and exceedingly so for those studying Torah. In fact, several hundred families are suffering the indignity of hunger. The reason for this is that heretofore there was a crutch of bread for the poor of Eretz Yisrael from our generous brethren abroad. As it now stands, owing to our many sins, the edicts and religious persecution against our brothers overseas have swelled [and] God has broken the crutch of bread in the Land of Israel. What is more, we have troubles from the *Arabs* in Eretz Yisrael who aspire to [shed] Jewish blood. In 1927, they began to perpetuate pogroms against the Jewish community, and a couple of times they accosted the Jewish people and spilled Jewish blood as though it were water. In the year 1929, they ratcheted up their evil to a very large degree and took in Jerusalem and its environs thirty saintly lives, in Hebron, the city of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's tombs they took sixty-six saintly lives in cruel executions and harsh and severe forms of torture. Furthermore, they burnt a few Torah scrolls, and all the houses of worship and Torah were destroyed by them. In the rest of the cities of Israel, they took thirty-six lives, plundered their property, and destroyed their homes. All told, one hundred and thirty-two holy lives were taken by the Arabs, may their names be effaced. All this was done under the counsel and at the behest of their chieftain [i.e., Grand Mufti Haj Amin

90 In an earlier letter, Horowitz also claimed that he has access to a "ship that floats in the air." Both references come up in similar contexts; see Waldman, *From Ethiopia to Jerusalem*, 130–131.

91 At this point in Horowitz's epistle, there is a complex and rambling Halakhic argument as to why it is incumbent on the Rechabites to come to the aid of the Jewish people.

al-Husseini] in Jerusalem. On top of these misfortunes, great trepidation and terrifying fear has befallen us that, heaven forbid, the reign of the fiends known as Bolsheviks will spread to Eretz Yisrael as in the land of Russia, for some of them are already to be found in Eretz Yisrael. However, they still do not have the power to rebel against the government, but who knows what the new day holds in store.

In light of the above, our brethren, merciful sons of merciful, tarry not in arriving and do not distance yourselves from it, for great are the troubles closing in on us, troubles of both the soul and the body alike, our own troubles and the troubles of our brothers. The spilling of their [i.e., the Jews'] blood cries out to us from the lands of our enemies. [As a result,] we have begun to fulfill the words of the sages of blessed memory [...]. If heaven forbid, due to some barrier, you will not be able to scale the wall, it would nevertheless bring a little joy to our depressed souls if the Sons of Moses our Rabbi, may his virtue protect us, were to dispatch righteous and brave people in whom the spirit of God bestirs, who can distinguish between truth and falsehood, to teach the errant the spirit of understanding and straighten the hearts of the wayward. Furthermore, the skeptics will strengthen themselves and the irreverent will gain courage, and these people will [subsequently] clamor in the city gates to teach ways of *tshuvah*. All of us will form a single association to carry out the desire of our Father on high. By virtue of this *tshuvah*, we shall merit a full redemption, as is written: "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins, declares the Lord" [Isaiah 59:20].

These are the words of your brethren who have written and signed [this epistle] with broken and despondent hearts, who wait with bated breath for your swift response through the good offices of this messenger and to see your holy face in the consolation of Zion and Jerusalem quickly in the immediate days ahead. Setting our hands, here in the Holy City, may it be built and completed swiftly in our time[, on] the 19th to the moon of mercy and *selichot* [penitential prayers] in 1933.⁹²

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A handful of the letter's signatories (e.g., Yaakov Meir Zonnenfeld, Shlomo Wechsler, and Yaakov Moshe Charlap) were in close contact with Horowitz

92 Horowitz, Draft letter to the Lost Tribes, 1933 (MS). This is a copy of the letter that was typed up by one of Horowitz's relatives. It also bears noting that the epistle was signed by 15 rabbis and/or kabbalists.

years earlier, during his own expedition in search of the Tribes. A couple of these figures (e.g., Mordechai Berkovitz and Menachem Menkhin Mohilever-Rabinowitz) consulted with the kabbalist regarding their own ideas on this subject. The involvement of R. Shlomo, the grand rabbi of Zvhil, is surprising and points to an unknown facet of this purported saint and miracle worker's public enterprise.⁹³ The epistle's desperate plea for help against the backdrop of ominous developments throughout the Old World and the belief that the Tribes had the wherewithal to remedy this situation engendered a paradox. Despite formulating a long, detailed, and harrowing letter, the authors had no idea where it should be sent.

In several respects, the second epistle differs from the first. A draft of a short letter from the year 1936 in the handwriting of Shimon Zvi Horowitz, it too was written in the context of tragic events. However, instead of seeking tangible assistance, this communication entreats its phantom addressees to reveal secrets and vigils:

Second Letter

Blessed be He here in Jerusalem, may it be built and completed, on the lunar month of Menachem Av, in the year 1936.

Dear brethren the Sons of Moses, may peace be upon him, and the rest of the tribes. O Lord, by such things men live [Isaiah 38:16]. We the undersigned are reaching out to you, O holy community, with an enormous request [and] with a broken heart in the name of all Jerusalem's sages, all [the Jews of] Eretz Yisrael, and the hundreds of thousands of Jews living in the Diaspora. Please listen to the cry of your wretched brothers, the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and half the tribe of Levi, that is breaking through firmaments. The voice of your brothers' blood is screaming from the earth about our terrible situation and our bitter fate. Where is the person who shall count and where is the person who shall weigh of our travails and our humiliations, of which a couple of folios will not suffice to explain. Only the aforementioned messenger will [be able to] explain to you everything in detail. We the sons of Eretz Yisrael are constantly occupied with *tshuvah*, prayer, and charity on behalf of all our brothers in the Diaspora. Our request is that you join us in asking for mercy and

93 Upon coming to Jerusalem in ca. 1926, Rebbe Shlomo of Zvhil (ob. 1945) kept a low profile. At some point, though, he began to be associated with all sorts of wondrous stories, many of which tend towards the bizarre. For a hagiographic account of his life, see Werner, *Ṣadiq Yesod 'Olam*.

supplicating on behalf of your brothers, just as we also continuously pray on your behalf that the Holy One blessed be He absolve you of the oath of the Exile and that you too shall merit to come to Jerusalem the holy city before the Western Wall, from which the divine presence has not budged. Even if you were to hear a *bat kol* [issue] some plaint against the Jewish people that they have sinned, do not pay heed to it. Instead, promptly offer a defense of the Jewish people, for we have found several times in the Babylonian and Jerusa[lem] Talmud the words of the hallowed *tanna* R. Yehoshua whereby credence should not be placed on a *bat kol*. Why, then, do you stand opposite and refrain from mentioning the Jewish people's virtues, from commending them, and giving them the benefit of the doubt, which is the desire of the Supreme Being.... We also request that you send at least one person from among you, for we must speak confidentially with you regarding prayers, vigils, and *yihudim* that pertain to the ascension of the *shkkinah* of our Might in order to lift the *shkkinah* from the dust. In summation, please closely consider the words of our request and rally behind our cause by sending us a good and correct answer as to which rituals we should perform in all that concerns our redemption and the salvation of our soul. Furthermore, we expect, wish, and yearn to see you and hear good tidings about them [i.e., the Ten Tribes], and look forward to their response in their sacred handwriting. From your brethren Judah and Benjamin encamped in the holy city of Jerusalem who hereunto set our hands.⁹⁴

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There is no record of the personages that signed this letter. Additionally, we do not know if a messenger was entrusted with this mission. In any event, the lack of either a military objective in this communication or a desire to actually find the Lost Tribes speaks volumes. In this hour of need, Horowitz suffices with a heartfelt request that the Tribes dispatch an emissary to Jerusalem for the sake of revealing secrets to Knesset Yisrael. The age-old myth of the Ten Tribes rallying to the defense of their co-religionists takes the form of a vision in which a savior reveals esoteric knowledge.

In sum, the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva and its leadership ranks created and buttressed a modern narrative that revolves around hastening the settlement of the Land of Israel, the ingathering of the exiles, and the redemption. It bears noting that this vision was unfurled concomitant to the narrative that was

94 Horowitz, Draft of a Letter to the Lost Tribes, 1936 (MS).

gradually devised by Zionist thinkers. Horowitz and his ilk revised the long-standing objective behind the search for the Ten Tribes. From physically locating the Israelites' descendants or identifying this or another nation with one of the Tribes, they now wished to ascertain kabbalah secrets in the possession of their "lost brethren." Put differently, their main objective was to secure hints that pertain to the End of the Days. According to Horowitz, the renewed interest in both the Tribes and the kabbalah was part of a requisite awakening from below that would help usher in the messianic age.

Concealment and Revelation: The Print Revolution

The Dissemination of Kabbalah via the Printing Press

The desire to spread Jewish mystical knowledge for the sake of hastening the redemption was shared by all of Jerusalem's kabbalists. Back in 1904, the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva circulated a notice in this very spirit. The authors clamored for "an awakening to excite the heart of our brothers the Jewish people as to the cause of the Exile" and urged them to study kabbalah on a daily basis.¹ In fact, it seems as though every kabbalah book that was printed in the early twentieth century, even outside the borders of Palestine, contained such statements. Histrionics are blended with ideology to the point where it is difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. In the final analysis, this exhortation was directed primarily at Torah scholars.

The kabbalah seminaries in Jerusalem put out a wide assortment of books that were written by its resident scholars and past sages from Beit El on, above all, the creed of HaARI and the RaShaSh. The targeted audience was the yeshivot's habitués, who occasionally received the publications free of charge. Moreover, each of the institutions printed out small booklets containing prayers and rituals. At times, they were texts of one-time prayers that had been held on special occasions. They also distributed calendars with advertisements for the seminaries and fundraising appeals. If this was the extent of these activities, there would be nothing extraordinary about them. However, several major shifts or revolutions in the kabbalah circles' printing output transpired during these years: (a) The printing of the RaShaSh's siddur and parts of the Lurian corpus was a *shared* enterprise carried out by both Ashkenazic and Sephardic sages alike from all the yeshivot as well as unaffiliated kabbalists. (b) A concerted effort was made to print from the *tikkunim* literature and motivate the Orthodox public to perform various kabbalistic rituals. In general, these exhortations were put forth by the seminaries under review and ultimately bolstered their standing as institutions of public import. Parts of this corpus were also tied to Lurianic and Sharabian thought. (c) Attempts to convince Torah scholars to embrace the wisdom of kabbalah, especially HaARI's approach. (d) Innovative interpretations of Lurianic thought by individual

¹ This statement also appeared at the end of Mishan, *Sefer Sfat Emet* which was intended for Rehovot haNahar's sages. The book includes a foreword by Dweck-HaKohen. Also see Moskowitz, *Hayei haRashash*, 117–120.

kabbalists who sprouted up in Jerusalem at the time. Before elaborating on each of these clauses, let us first take stock of the printing vision of the key figure in this enterprise.

The Printing Vision of Sha'ar haShamayim

Finding the Ten Tribes remained a declared objective of the Sha'ar haShamayim leadership, even after its sundry failures in this area. Conversely, the yeshiva was rather successful in all that concerned the dissemination of kabbalah, both in Jerusalem and beyond. Given its exoteric perspectives, the institution was eager to take advantage of the printing press. In this respect, Sha'ar haShamayim modelled itself on the rest of the city's kabbalah seminaries, but added a new wrinkle of its own. Horowitz crafted a grand vision for publishing the works of HaARI and the RaShaSh according to which the savants' output would be divided into various entries. This kabbalah encyclopedia or primer would take up several volumes. Moreover, the project would include commentaries and comparable works by other sages. The defining elements of this plan were a "simple interpretation" of the homiletic corpus and an anthology of commentaries on the kabbalah literature, with "notes by the yeshiva's rabbis."²

Years later, Horowitz apparently wrote an introduction to Jewish mystical knowledge, which he titled *Sefer Yesodei haKabbalah* (The Principles of Kabbalah). However, the primer never came out and its whereabouts are unknown.³ According to one source, he authored a book on the kabbalistic spheres, *Ilana d'Hayay* (The Tree of Life), which may very well be that same closeted manuscript.⁴ Moreover, he compiled annotations for the RaShaSh's siddur that have also remained in manuscript form.⁵

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- 2 Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Hotam Tokhnit* (1912), 5–6. Horowitz mapped out his vision as far back as 1899, in his introduction to Joseph of Lesko, *Sefer Ateret Yosef*.
 - 3 The book is mentioned in Horowitz's approval for Rabinowitz, *Mevasser veOmer Nehamat Menahem*. In the mid-1920s, Levi Isaac Krakovsky, a disciple of Yehuda Leib Ashlag, similarly endeavored to publish a sort of concordance of the kabbalah wisdom, with definitions and explanations. Krakovsky's plans are evidenced by Ashlag's closeted letter of approval from 1936 (MS). See Myers, *Kabbalah and the Spiritual Quest*, 22–31, 34–37; Meir, "The Beginnings of Kabbalah in America," 237–268.
 - 4 Tidhar, *Encyclopedia of the Pioneers*, vol. 1, 334. Moreover, Tidhar noted that many of Horowitz's notes and explanations on kabbalah books, as well as letters to researchers on the matter of the Ten Tribes, remain in the co-rosh yeshiva's literary estate, the whereabouts of which are unknown.
 - 5 See, for example, Dablitski's use of these annotations; idem, *Petaḥ 'Einayim haHadash*, vol. 5, Introduction.

Horowitz conceived of several other major projects in the field of publishing. To begin with, he planned to establish a highbrow journal on Halakhic and kabbalistic issues by the name of *Pardes*.⁶ Furthermore, he launched a venture aimed at printing hundreds of kabbala manuscripts that had reached the yeshiva's library. In fact, Sha'ar haShamayim aspired to collect every work of kabbalah ever written, thereby amassing the largest collection of Jewish mystical literature in the world. At one and the same time, Gershom Scholem began to articulate a similar project, which ultimately came to fruition within the framework of the Hebrew University.⁷ Owing to budgetary constraints, Sha'ar haShamayim's sages were forced to give up on many of these ideas. That said, they managed to complete a few large enterprises and collaborated on multiple printing projects with other seminaries, foremost among them Rehovot haNahar.

Three Kabbalah Primers

Of particular interest are several booklets that endeavored to prod Jews into studying Jewish esoteric knowledge. Circulated by the seminaries under review, these works also offered introductions for those entering the gates of Jewish mysticism. Put differently, these texts not only motivated people to embrace kabbalah, but sought to prepare them for this undertaking, warn them about the hazards involved, and lay down the necessary ground rules and borders. Most of these pamphlets were released by Sha'ar haShamayim. In these works, the dynamics between revelation and concealment assumes center stage; this within the context of preparing the individual for incremental study, rather than struggles for power, authority, or ownership over the kabbalah. As noted, Horowitz was planning to release a book that focuses on the essentials of the kabbalah literature. Conversely, the objective behind the booklets in question was twofold: on the one hand, they were meant to be studied and memorized by novices with the requisite tools for immersing themselves in Kabbalah; and

6 Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Hotam Tokhnit* (1912), 5.

7 Ibid, 6. Sha'ar haShamayim's "library project" was but a partial success. Likewise, financial woes prevented the institution from printing the manuscripts that it had acquired; see Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Hotam Tokhnit* (1925), 10–11. A couple of the yeshivot in Jerusalem had substantial collections. For instance, Beit El was known for its extensive kabbalah holdings. See Ben-Nae, "The Yeshivot in Jerusalem," 337–339; Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 287–288; Bena-yahu, "Osafei Sefarim," 243–247, 313–321; Schidorsky, "Cultural Agents," 377–380. On the development of Scholem's book collection, see Dan, "Introduction," in *The Library of Gershom Scholem*, 13–27; Beit Arie, "Yaḥaso shel Gershom Scholem lesefer ye'leSifriya," 63–70; Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory*, 591–598; Campanini, "Alu 'im Shalom," 73–96.

on the other hand, these pamphlets would also benefit seasoned kabbalists by helping them memorize the principles of the concealed Torah. Like many of the kabbalah works that were put out in Jerusalem during this period, the pamphlets were faithful to the exegetical tradition of HaARI and the RaShaSh.

In 1911, Sha'ar haShamayim printed the first work of this kind – *Quntres Shuvi Shuvi haShulamit* by R. Yosef Hayyim of Baghdad (HaBen Ish Hai) – which Horowitz defined as a primer for Jewish mysticism. This work includes three introductions that were copied from *Sefer Da'at uTvunah*, a well-received kabbalah primer that Ben-Zion Mordechai Hazan printed that same year.⁸ *Shuvi haShulamit* opens with a warning to beginners not to enter the Kabbalah before reading the “introductions seven times.” Having completed this step, the reader “will begin to study the words of our rabbi HaARI in the chapters that we copied in this book, which are organized before you in the right order.”⁹ Yosef Hayyim, who is discussed at length below, considered this work a replacement for Yosef Irgas’ *Sefer Shomer Emunim*, a summary of and introduction to the kabbalah. The author instructed novices to go over its content 15 times; and “after filling his stomach with them,” the student will be ready for *Sefer Eš Hayyim*. These steps should be taken “regardless of whether he [i.e., the beginner] is knowingly smart and wise, regardless of whether he studies by his rabbi’s side, regardless of whether he studies with friends.”¹⁰ As Yosef Hayyim explained, his intention was not to dampen the spirits of those taking up the concealed Torah, but to adequately prepare them for this odyssey. The introduction concludes with a warning that aptly reflects the dynamics between the obligation of studying the kabbalah, which was imposed on each and every male Jew, and the necessary preparations for this arduous task:

The reader should not think that I wrote these things in my introduction in order to cause apathy among those dealing with this wisdom, God forbid. This is not my intention. Instead, all I mean to do is standardize the study of this wisdom for the educated who will learn this wisdom out of fear and trepidation and trembling and quaking. And he who learns should not be unripe concerning this wisdom. Moreover, he should not be smart in his own eyes to say I have studied all the books of HaARI,

8 Yosef Hayyim, *Quntres Shuvi Shuvi haShulamit* Not all the copies of this pamphlet identified Sha'ar haShamayim as the publisher. For this reason, it stands to reason that they were concomitantly printed for multiple audiences; see Ben-Yaakov, *Rabbi Yosef Hayyim*, 79–80. The work also heaps praise on HaARI and the RaShaSh.

9 Yosef Hayyim, *Sefer Da'at uTvunah*. The book opens with these introductions, 1a–11b.

10 Ibid, “Author’s Introduction.”

so that, I am today like our mentor and rabbi R. Hayyim Vital and like the RaShaSh. Furthermore, do not rely on the most recent authors of the marginalia [i.e., commentators] who cite the words of our rabbis and note to see here and see there; in this manner, they intend to solve the difficulties that lay on the main road, which the student is bound to have trouble with. It is possible that they are mistaken and that they draw a conclusion from the unknown to the known, even though it appears that the name of the place and the name of the face are the same. As a rule, one who thinks that he knows – does not know; and one who thinks that he does not know – can be said to know. [...] As King David, may peace be upon him, said, Open my eyes, that I may behold the wonders of your teaching.¹¹

These basic requirements for entering the realm of the Kabbalah are undergirded by the imperative to strike a balance between revelation and concealment – a goal that was shared by all of Jerusalem's kabbalists during this period.

Shortly after *Quntres Shuvi Shuvi haShulamit* came out, Sha'ar haShamayim printed an abbreviated version of Haim Vital's introduction to *Sha'ar haHakdamot*, along with plaudits for those learning kabbalah.¹² Moreover, Aharon Shlomo Maharil, among the yeshiva's sages, put out a new edition of Meir ben Judah Leib Poppers' *Sefer Mesilot Hokhma*. As stated on the cover, it was printed "by the hands of the awakening and at the request of the administrators of the holy yeshiva Sha'ar haShamayim in the holy city of Jerusalem." A lengthy foreword by Maharil expounds on the importance of studying kabbalah in these times, before ending on the following note: "And even with respect to those who lack the strength to come and enter [in order] to permanently reside inside, he must study from this small book the minimum amount for fulfilling his obligation of this study, until the Holy One shall help him and he will want to permanently occupy himself in the writings of HaARI, or the rest of the kabbalists' books."¹³

These publications, especially the dynamics between revelation and concealment, duly reflect the spirit of the kabbalah seminaries in early twentieth-century Jerusalem. More specifically, while readers were called upon to take up Jewish mysticism, the authors reiterated the need for incremental progress. For the purpose of assaying the unique qualities of these institutions, it is incumbent upon us to examine two large ventures that involved Sephardic and

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Haqdamat Rabbi Haim Vital*.

¹³ Maharil, *Sefer Mesilot Hokhma*, 8b.

Ashkenazic kabbalists from all the yeshivot: the first print version of the RaShaSh's siddur; and the new release of most of the kabbalistic works that are attributed to HaARI. These undertakings divulge the objectives behind these institutions' efforts to spread Kabbalistic literature.

The *Mekhavnim* and the Dissemination of the RaShaSh's Siddur

The printing of the RaShaSh's siddur, which was hitherto confined to manuscripts and a small cadre of kabbalists, was a quasi-revolution. Over the generations, dozens of manuscript copies of this book were produced by intenter-kabbalists. Not only was this the first time that this prayer book was brought to print, but the kabbalah circles hitherto felt no need to do so, for it was exclusively intended for a small handful of experts in the art of praying with intentions. The various manuscripts contained a bevy of different intentions, all of which derived from one source – Shalom Sharabi. Every time a manuscript was rendered, the copyist added annotations, new versions, and corrections.¹⁴ At the turn of the twentieth century, though, kabbalists began to print extensively from the siddur. The initiators cited numerous reasons for embarking on this task, many of which are intriguing. At any rate, this project divulged the closely-held text and basically established a uniform, standardized version of the book, which ostensibly supplanted the plethora of manuscript editions. This was indeed the first attempt to canonize the RaShaSh's siddur, which had undergone many changes over the years due to the scores of handwritten copies.

The first to systematically print various parts of this book were Sha'ar haShamayim's kabbalists. They drew primarily on its “short version,” which was held by the sages from Allepo, rather than “the long version,” which was in the hands of the Beit El Yeshiva. From 1911 onward, the siddur was printed in nine installments by Reuven Haas with the help of Sha'ar haShamayim's

14 The Israel National Library's Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts possesses nearly two hundred copies of multifarious parts of the RaShaSh's siddur, most of which are from nineteenth and twentieth-century manuscripts. Some of them merited microfilmed versions in the latter half of the 1900s. For a description of these rudimentary manuscripts, see Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, 202–238. The Moussaieff Collection abounds with manuscripts that pertain to the Sharabian kabbalah, including many copies of the long and short versions of the RaShaSh's siddur and explanations thereof; see Avivi, *Ohel Shem*, 167–190.

regulars. The project was completed and printed anew within approximately five years.¹⁵

Gracing the first volume were approvals by Haim Berlin, Tzvi Hirsch Shapira of Munkacs, and Menahem Menkhin Halperin, among others. They effusively commended Reuven Hass and Sha'ar haShamayim's kabbalists for toiling to bring the siddur to press. According to the publisher's foreword, this initiative was undertaken due to the inability to meet the swelling demand for this book via handwritten copies. It also notes that the book was printed "in holiness, in ritual immersion, and in purity." This explanation befits the habitués of this particular institution, for they did not have manuscripts of the siddur at their disposal. "In Jerusalem," the newspaper *HaBazeleth* reported, "the concealed light, a manuscript that was stored and hidden away for roughly 150 years, was published." Readers were also informed of the address at which the book could be purchased, namely the home of Reuven Haas.¹⁶ Following the siddur's release, Sha'ar haShamayim circulated notices on kabbalah matters, one of which included "a pre-prayer prayer" authored by the RaShaSh.¹⁷

On the face of things, it would appear that the sole executor of this project was Sha'ar haShamayim. This is the impression not only from siddur's approvals, but the title page of the first volume:

The siddur by our teacher and rabbi, the holy rabbi Shalom Sharabi, who imbibed the milk and honey from the sacred works of the master rabbi of the Jewish people our teacher the rabbi Hayyim Vital, who is faithful to

15 Sharabi, *Siddur Tefila*, vols. 1–2 (1911–1912); vol. 3 (1916). In the days to come, several facsimile editions of these sections were published. Some of them were brought to press by Mordechai Attiya, within the framework of Yeshivat haHaim ve'haShalom (Jerusalem, 1974). Elegant editions of the first two volumes, which were found in Moussaieff's library, were put out by Bar-Ilan University's Moussaieff Center for Kabbalah Research (Tel Aviv, 2006). Dablitski discusses how the siddur's approval was copied to another version; idem, "Hashmatot," 77. A wondrous tale about the peregrinations of a manuscript copy of the siddur across wide swathes of Europe before it was finally published is related by Getz, *Beyn Yerushalayim vechaGola*, 108–207. This story intermingles a smattering of truth with a great deal of imagination. Also see Mondschein, "Gilgulo shel Siddur." A major impetus behind the fabrication of these later myths was to excuse the Hasidic grand rabbis' unfamiliarity with the Sharabian way and to exude a semblance of uniformity between the liturgies of the various kabbalah streams. Among the authors of these same tales was RYAZ Margalio; for example, he is cited on this topic in Moskowitz, *Ošar haSipurim*, vol. 4, 3–4.

16 Haas, "Or Hadaš."

17 Haas, "MeSiddur Tefila;" idem, "Mašati Katuv baMenora." As we shall see, Haas also played a role in the publication of HaARI's works.

the holy edifice of our divine holy rabbi, the one-of-a-kind phenomenon HaARI. He [i.e., the RaShaSh] arranged for us a siddur with true intentions for the entire order of prayers for the entire year. In their written form, they constitute a very great and terrifying work. In the meantime, this part was released by the awakening of the sages of the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, which was established for learning the wisdom of truth. May it be God's will that just as we merited these rays of light, so may we merit the entire great light.¹⁸

It also bears noting that the publishers solicited rabbis in East Europe who did not adopt the RaShaSh's way. This suggests that Rehovot haNahar was uninvolved in the task at hand. On the other hand, the decision to print the short version bears the hallmark of the Allepo tradition, which had many followers in that yeshiva. As discussed earlier, Sha'ar haShamayim's kabbalists apparently learnt the art of the intentions from Dweck-HaKohen. Consequently, it stands to reason that they adopted the siddur that he preferred – the short version.

Notwithstanding the lack of acknowledgment in the siddur's approvals, introduction, or cover, there is reason to believe that Rehovot haNahar's kabbalists played a significant role in preparing the book for print. First, Dweck-HaKohen anonymously contributed short annotations to the opening pages of the first volume, under the title "Ḥesed veEmet."¹⁹ Second, the compositor (or one of the compositors) was apparently Eliyahu Yaakov Lag'imi of Morocco (1871–1927), who was a habitu  of Beit El and Rehovot haNahar as well as a confidante of Dweck-HaKohen.²⁰ In addition, the second volume includes corrections and remarks by Yom Tov Yedid Halevi of Allepo (ob. 1923), who was also one of the important scholars and a founder of Rehovot haNahar. His explanations are longer than Dweck-HaKohen's in the first volume, and they occasionally refer to the wording of the "long siddur."²¹

18 Sharabi, *Siddur Tefila*, vol. 1 (1911), 1a.

19 Ibid, 2a–8a.

20 Lag'imi's name comes up several times in the book's marginalia; *ibid*, 76b: "And I proposed these ideas before the friends, the *mekhavanim* in the holy community of Beit El in the society of Rehovot [i.e., the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva], in whose company I learn and who I feel an affinity for. And without mincing words, they said that this is indeed the case." Some of his comments employ abbreviations: "the compositor E[liyahu] Y[aakov] L[eg'imi] H[aCohen];" *ibid*, 78a, 94b, 105b. For more on Lag'imi, see Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 82; Yehoshua, "Fortune Tellers," 225–226; Hallamish, *Kabbalah in North Africa*, 27; Munseh, *Pada et Avraham*, vol. 1, 418, 417.

21 See, for example, the comments that Halevi made under his full signature; Sharabi, *Siddur Tefila*, vol. 2, 13a, 17b. Thereafter, he uses many more abbreviations, like "the compositor

Nevertheless, Dweck-HaKohen, Lag'imi, and Halevi's names are completely absent from the introductions and approvals to the first two volumes. Only a more comprehensive version of the siddur, which was printed in 1917, expressly mentions two of Rehovot haNahar's sages, Yom Tov Yedid Halevi and his son Eliezer (in their capacity as the authors of various annotations and as the print producers), alongside Shmuel Kirshenbaum, Yaakov Meir Zonnenfeld, and Reuven Haas (as print producers). While the new siddur included the old approvals, their dates were erased. Moreover, it acknowledges the contributions of both Sha'ar haShamayim and Rehovot haNahar's rabbis. According to one source, Nissim Nahum provided the financial backing for its printing.²² In summation, even if it is not explicitly stated in the first volume and the initiative behind this venture came from Sha'ar haShamayim's kabbalists, who entreated the yeshivot possessing the manuscripts to duplicate them, the print version of the RaShaSh's siddur constituted a full-fledged collaboration between Ashkenazic and Sephardic sages.²³

All told, this particular edition constituted but a modest portion of the *kavvanot* corpus, and resources were allocated to printing the other books as well. For instance, Rehovot haNahar simultaneously put out another part of the RaShaSh's siddur (on the bedtime *Kriyat Sh'ma*), with Nissim Nahum's support. The foreword contains a predicatable reason for its publication:

We have duly seen the magnitude of the longing of God-fearing sages, who are already used to concentrating on matters of utmost importance. Moreover, their soul yearns and pines to have a completed siddur of the bedtime *Kriyat Sh'ma* that was formulated by the RaShaSh, from the words of HaARI, and they have not managed to write a siddur in manuscript [form]. In addition, the siddurs of the *Kriyat Sh'ma* are scarce, namely they are in the hands of a few *yod'ei hen* [kabbalah insiders], and this too is a pittance out of a pittance, which are largely misleading due to the copying of copyists as is known by *yod'ei hen*. Moreover, secondly [*sic*], there are many among our brethren, the Ashkenazic sages and rabbis, who began to enter the holiness and learn the wisdom of

Y[om Tov] H[alevi];" *ibid*, 24b, 25b, 27b, 33a. Biographic details on Yom Tov Yedid Halevi and his son Eliezer can be found in Laniado, *LaQedoshim asher baAreS*, 50–52; Zakai, *Segulot uTefilot*, 13–25; Gepner, *Midrasho shel Shem*, 206; Munseh, *Pada et Avraham*, vol. 1, 415–419.

22 Kassin, *Sefer Pri Eš haGan*, 81.

23 The involvement of Rehovot haNahar's sages in this venture is discussed by Hillel, "The Life of Dweck-HaKohen," 43; *idem*, *Ahavat Shalom*, 228–229; Moskowitz, *Hayei haRashash*, 36.

kabbalah, and they asked us to make an effort to print the aforementioned siddur.²⁴

In sum, there were few copies of the full siddur among the Ashkenazim, who do not possess manuscripts of their own. Therefore, Sha'ar haShamayim insistently pleaded with the older institution to bring the siddur to press.

Spurred on by the Ashkenazim's requests and the general objective of spreading kabbalah learning and the prayer intentions, the same version of the siddur on *Kriyat Sh'ma* was reprinted, albeit with corrections and a new introduction by Sha'ar haShamayim's kabbalists.²⁵ This edition also included a discussion on the schedule at the said yeshiva and its "revelation of HaARI's gospel." That said, the publishers made note of the fact that they did not operate alone. "Credit" was given to those "in the holy fellowship, the sages and rabbis, the great kabbalists who have prayed with intention using the holy siddur of our rabbi, the master RaShaSh for quite some time in the Society of Rehovot, which endeavored with us to release it to the light of the world." Moreover, they acknowledged Nissim Nahum's contribution to this enterprise. In brief, this project also stemmed from a collaboration with Rehovot haNahar's sages, who had printed this section of the RaShaSh's prayer book a short while earlier. This edition opens by warning readers that not "everyone should seek out the holiness of praying with intention with this holy siddur. Only those who have already immersed themselves in the writing of HaARI and the sacred book *Nahar Shalom*." These prerequisites betray an attempt to maintain certain borders even after the siddur's release. Be that as it may, the introduction declares that the boundaries have been upended by this very act of revelation:

And this is, with the Lord's assistance, an explanation of the hope for redemption and pity thanks to the sacred fellowship of the holy HaARI and his student R. Hayyim Vital, and every one of the sacred band of holy prophets and the divine *tanna* RaShBY [R. Simeon bar Yochai] who left us from their good treasury a treasure of the holy attributes that were heretofore stored away and placed in the corner. In its time, by dint of the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, the light was revealed and the great yeshivot in the holy city assemble day in and day out to study, to investigate the

24 *Sefer Hayim yeShalom* (1914). There is no date of publication. As per Kassin's testimony, the book has been dated to roughly 1898; Kassin, *Sefer Pri Eš haGan*, 81. However, it is more logical that it was printed around 1914. The introduction brings up the revival of kabbalah study at Sha'ar haShamayim.

25 *Siddur Hayim yeShalom* (1914).

path of the concealed Torah, to learn the secret discourse of the holy seraphs. And we hand out kabbalah books to yeshiva students free of charge, and many have set aside time for this study in their homes. And this holy yeshiva, Sha'ar haShamayim, and the branch Kahal Ḥasidim released kabbalah study from the prison cell and will disseminate this wisdom like a shining light.²⁶

Sha'ar haShamayim printed yet another portion of the RaShaSh's siddur that same year. Here too, they discussed the essence of the revelatory act: "Until now [the siddur] was only [available as] a handwritten copy by two or three exceptionally holy people; and we have latterly been fortunate enough to print it from our holy yeshiva Sha'ar haShamayim. It is as though the heavens have opened, and all those seeking God's words will come and see the feats of the Lord and the torches of fire that are blazing in each and every letter."²⁷ Besides the adulation for the yeshiva and its schedule, the publishers reiterated that "It is a good sign for the Jewish people that the sources of light are drawing closer to us in our generation, one step after the other, and the longing to study the wisdom of the truth intensifies." All these developments are "harbingers of the redemption."²⁸

Kavanot for the Select Few and Criticism of the Siddur's printing

In all likelihood, hundreds of the printed siddurs were distributed in the Land of Israel and abroad (this estimate is deduced from, among other things, Sha'ar haShamayim's general ledgers, which account for the shipments to East Europe). Regardless of the exact number, more than a few observers were up in arms over this enterprise. This criticism reverberates in the following words of Moshe David Gaon from 1938: "Beit El's Hasids, all of whom are Sephardim, have special prayer arrangements that Ashkenazic kabbalists printed in the year 1916, but the *mekhavvnim* pray specifically out of handwritten siddurs, as the forerunners decreed that it is forbidden to pray with intentions from a printed book."²⁹ Notwithstanding several inaccuracies, it is clear from Gaon's

26 Ibid, "Introduction."

27 *Siddur Kavanot Sefirat haOmer* (1914).

28 Ibid.

29 Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 1, 141. Gaon reiterated and expanded on this point elsewhere in his book: "As per a known tradition, the Sephardic sages in the holy city do not customarily pray with intentions out of a printed prayer book, but solely out of a manuscript; and

words that there were Sephardic rabbis who objected to this undertaking. Some viewed the attempt to canonize the manuscripts via a print edition to be such a huge failure that these editions were unsuitable for praying with intentions. Gaon was obviously referring to discrepancies between the printed siddur and the long version, which Beit El's sages used for their prayer services. According to one tradition, the venerable yeshiva refused to hand over its manuscripts of the RaShaSh's siddur to the publishers "for a couple of undisclosed reasons." Therefore, the printed siddur is largely based on the short version that was in Rehovot haNahar's possession.³⁰

Other sources claim that Dweck-HaKohen had reservations about the mass distribution of this prayer book. He opined that it should be printed on a one-time basis for a limited audience. A couple of witnesses stated that the rosh yeshiva was afraid that the siddur would reach the hands of "strangers" (i.e., secular Jews) and "would bounce around and end up in the universities and the homes of Drs. [*sic*] and professors."³¹ In fact, a few manuscripts of the siddur indeed found their way to academic researchers during this period.³² Another cause for concern was that the books would fall into the hands of those erroneously claiming to have the requisite knowledge for praying with intentions, thereby causing serious harm. In 1935, local newspapers reported that the printing of the siddur "roused up noise in various circles, which saw" the circulation of "the sacred names [of God] that are written in holiness and purity in regular print" to be a desecration. What is more, they feared that in so doing, "mysteries of the Torah would reach people that are not yet worthy of praying in this fashion."³³

this custom is maintained by them to this day [1938]" (ibid, 684). Also see Gepner, *Midrasho shel Shem*, 53: "And from the outset, they would see to it to pray from a manuscript and nothing else." The Beit El circle also passed on a tradition according to which the RaShaSh recited the intentions by heart and merely compiled the siddur as a memento. There is a possibility that this story was only introduced in the early twentieth century, amid the objections to the siddur's printing; Afi'g'in, *Divrei Shalom*, vol. 2, 123.

30 Alfiyahh, *Reiyah leYis'haq*, 166b. See Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, 266, 269–270; Margalio, *Sevi laSadiq*, 25–26.

31 Moskowitz, *Hayei haRashash*, 36; Hillel, *Ahavat Shalom*, 229; idem, "The Life of Dweck-HaKohen," 42–46. Also see Shmueli, *VeZarah haShemesh*, 82; Meshi Zahav, *Yerushayim*, 90–95.

32 For example, a manuscript of the siddur reached the Israel National Library from the estate of R. Aharon Bachar Isaac Perera in 1921. It was described nine years later by Gershom Scholem, *Catalogus codicum cabbalisticorum*, 167–169. Likewise, Shmuel Yosef Agnon, who was close to a few of Beit El's kabbalists, held a part of the RaShaSh's siddur, which was copied in Jerusalem circa 1920.

33 Laniado, "The Elder of the Kabbalists," 3.

The objections to the dissemination of HaARI and the RaShaSh's intentions, which had begun to be heard years before the printing, were now voiced with all the more vigor. Be that as it may, the naysayers themselves undertook to spread the kabbalah to gifted individuals. In all likelihood, this criticism was tied to the view that the RaShaSh's writings were esoteric. This outlook gained momentum in the immediate aftermath of the esteemed kabbalist's passing. A case in point is a response by Hezekiah Isaac Mizrahi Sharabi, the RaShaSh's son, to a question concerning his father's thought in 1790:

And his words are ambiguous and sealed without being understood, even though one or two that served before him and drank of his water, and they knew the way in which he tread his feet. Nevertheless, my rabbi, father, was wont to say throughout his lifetime that all his paths that were put in writing are nothing but hints and chapter headings. In general, he reveals a handbreadth and shrouds hundreds of thousands of handbreadths.... What is more, even though we all pray with *kavvanot* [intentions], each of us according to his measure, we do not know the meaning of the *kavvanot*, what it is and what is the interpretation of what the rabbi [i.e., the RaShaSh] wrote on the matter of the prayers, the *kriyat sh'ma*, the blessings, and the *yihudim*, be it on the weekday, the Sabbaths, the festivals, or the high holidays, where he wrote to pray with *kavvanot* like this and this. What is the meaning of praying with *kavvanot*? and what is *kavvana* [intention]?³⁴

Later on, some of the printing enterprise's detractors assumed a critical tone towards reputed outsiders. Consequently, attempts were made to limit the intentions to a handful of exceptional kabbalists. In 1865, Elyahu Suliman Mani (ob. 1899) defended these restrictions: "You should know my friend that I have seen only a few *mekhavvnim*. Not everyone that wants to take up the Name should do so. Only those that have been graced by God, That said, not every mind can carry the burden of praying with the appropriate intentions. In this generation, I am doubtful if there is anyone capable of praying with the established intentions" in an "appropriate and fitting" manner. Alluding to the RaShaSh's intentions that were circulated in manuscript form (some of which were in his possession), Mani wrote that "the observer will see how profound the intentions in the holy book *Pri Eš Hayyim* are," and ever more manuscript copies of this book are currently available. "Nevertheless, who is the one that

34 Cited in Gepner, *Midrasho shel Shem*, 70. A different version of this excerpt can be found in Sharabi, *Sefer Divrei Shalom*, 14b.

will sacrifice himself to this great fire? Even if there are a few sages [who] in their own eyes [have the necessary background] and pray with the intentions from the manuscript and print version, we have no desire to talk about them here.”³⁵

Yosef Hayyim, Kabbalistic Customs and the RaShaSh's Intentions

R. Yosef Hayyim (the Ben Ish Hai), the “leader of the Kabbalists of Baghdad,” copied Mani’s resolute words in a book that he anonymously printed in 1870. The work consists of several excerpts and intentions from the RaShaSh’s siddur along with descriptions of several kabbalistic rituals. Moreover, the Baghdad native distinguished between the art of intentions, which is designated for a select few, and the *tikkunim* literature, which was adapted for a wider audience. He also disseminated numerous pamphlets featuring *tikkunim*.³⁶ In one of his kabbalistic responsa, which came out in Jerusalem circa 1903 (well before Sha’ar haShamayim printed the RaShaSh’s siddur), Yosef Hayyim once again limited the intentions to a select few. More specifically, a scholar turned to him for advice as to whether the suppliant is worthy of praying with Lurianic intentions, to which the rabbi answered:

Between my eyelashes, it is evident from your letter that you have decided and have an urge to pray using the siddur of intentions by our rabbi HaARI or the siddur of the RaShaSh, the details of which have proliferated. Moreover, it appears that in your mind since you pray with the siddur of intentions of our rabbi HaARI and of our rabbi the RaShaSh, your prayer becomes like the prayer of [these figures]. If you shall say, what is the difference between myself and them given the fact that everything is arranged before me and I see all the names and monikers [of God] that are written in the book before my very eyes. To be honest, someone who thinks like this is completely mistaken, for it is indeed known that our rabbi HaARI, may he be remembered in the afterlife, did

35 Mani, *Sefer Kise Eliyahu*, 81b. The book came out anonymously in Jerusalem circa 1865. After spending a couple of years in Beit El, Mani established a yeshiva along these same lines in Hebron, where he instituted kabbalistic customs and prayer services that revolved around the RaShaSh’s intentions; idem, *Quntres Minhagei Q’Q Beit Ya’aqov*. Extant manuscripts, which were penned by Mani, offer many explanations and innovations regarding the long version of Sharabi’s prayer book; idem, *Sefer Me’il Eliyahu*.

36 Yosef Hayyim, *Seder haYom*, 43b–44a.

not, [and] justifiably so, reveal a handbreadth of the intentions that one must concentrate on in the prayer blessings, but revealed and covered four handbreadths, as there are specifications and details to this. Having seen the specifications that our rabbi the RaShaSh detailed in his siddur, and there are also ten corroborations for specifications regarding what is written in the siddur of the RaShaSh and an expansive explanation on the intentions that must be used. Moreover, these are oral ones that were not interpreted in the book of intentions. Our rabbi HaARI only revealed what the people of his generation and those that come [*sic*] after them could bear, for he saw that the hearts have diminished and there is no heart wide enough to bear and contain all the things that must be concentrated on and pondered. Therefore, be brief on matters of the intentions as much as possible.³⁷

Yosef Hayyim thus praised kabbalists who cut back on Lurianic intentions, for he believed that fully comprehending this liturgy was beyond the intellectual means of the vast majority of sages. If this were not enough, he castigated those who delve into the RaShaSh's siddur without sufficient preparation:

In my eyes, insincere is the way of those same people who make a mockery of the kabbalah wisdom and set out to grab the siddur of our rabbi the RaShaSh and concentrate with it by keeping their eyes on the siddur. Of course, this prayer shawl of the intentions is pleasant, for it gives the impression that the esoteric Torah is their livelihood, that they have no dealings with profane matters, and toil in the study of this wisdom in an assiduous fashion and do not merely recite [the words]. Every person must examine himself, recognize his worth, and put himself to the test of long intentions, where an entire page can be found for every word. If he is capable of arranging a quarter of the page or a half with his eyes shut [then he may be suited for this sort of praying]. If he sees that he is not even capable of completing two lines by heart [and] needs to see [the words] laid out before his eyes in the book he is holding, how will he prod himself and wear this prayer shawl which is unbecoming of him.³⁸

In addition, the Ben Ish Hai emphasized the importance of finding a rabbi and/or guide who is willing to personally teach the suppliant the art of the intentions. He then concluded by citing similar warnings from a letter that Mani

37 Yosef Hayyim, *Rav Pe'alim*, vol. 3, "Sod Yesharim," §13, 12a.

38 Ibid, 11b.

sent him in 1859. Eleven years later, Yosef Hayyim anonymously circulated another pamphlet, *Sefer Tiquin Tefila*, that was above all a collection of intentions (some of which were drawn from a manuscript version of the RaShaSh's words) targeting the Jewish masses. According to its cover, the text consists of the following:

True *tikkunim*, versions, formulas, and customs of utmost importance that have been gathered and collected from *Sefer haKavvanot* of our illustrious rabbi HaARI, which he received from the prophet Eliyahu, and all the more so from the siddur of our rabbi the RaShaSh, whose every word is grounded exclusively on the true kabbalah of our rabbi HaARI.³⁹

That said, the Baghdad leader did not limit his public outreach to vigils. From the pamphlet's introduction, it is evident that he also sought to run a major campaign aimed at disseminating intentions to the general public:

May Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad [Psalms 14:7] upon the revelation of revelations of the true kabbalah's precious light that the saint, the foundation of the world, our teacher and rabbi HaARI received from [the prophet] Eliyahu. It is also worth noting that not every mind can bear this and not every person is fortunate enough to plumb its depths and understand its mysteries. However, may it be our consolation upon tasting a morsel, according to our value, of its sweats and its honey in the good and precious customs that exist therein.... For this reason, to benefit the masses, I made a sacrificial blessing and have called it *Tiquin Tefila*, and it is gleaned and collected from *Sefer haKavvanot* by our rabbi HaARI, and from the siddur of our rabbi the RaShaSh.... Therefore, the advice that is given to every Jewish man is that he should write on his prayer book all the practices and *tikkunim* that are found here in order that they will serve him as a constant reminder.⁴⁰

The pamphlet also included the text of a Sharabian *tikkun haṣot* (Midnight Vigil) and confession. As per Yosef Hayyim's outlook, kabbalistic practices had indeed become mainstays of Jewish religious life and were perceived as obligatory customs for all Jews (see the discussion on the *tikkunim* literature in the next chapter). Towards the end of *Sefer Tiquin Tefila*, in a discussion on *VaYehi*

39 Yosef Hayyim, *Sefer Tiquin Tefila*. See the announcement of this treatise's publication in *ha-Dover* (Tishrei 11, 1871); Hillel, *Ben Ish Hai*, 403–405, 542.

40 Ibid, "Introduction."

No'am, a prayer recited on Saturday nights, we get an inkling of his fervent desire to embed Lurianic esoteric customs into mainstream Judaism. In the rabbi's estimation, these practices have already been widely accepted by the people:

The customs of our rabbi [i.e., Luria] have now spread throughout the world and most of the customs that were hitherto practiced according to the *pshat* [i.e., in a non-kabbalistic fashion] have been changed by the masses, and everyone practiced [*sic*] pursuant to the kabbalah of our rabbi HaARI. Needless to say, this custom [reciting *VaYehi No'am*] must also be done according to HaARI. In all the synagogues, one must practice thus because it is the truth.⁴¹

Aside for taking kabbalistic customs, such as Sharabian *tikkunim*, mainstream, Yosef Hayyim integrated elements from Kabbalistic knowledge into Halakhic rulings. His practices indeed had a substantial impact on Jewish communities in Iraq and beyond, especially the Old Yishuv of Jerusalem. One of the prayers or, to be more accurate, supplications that he composed, exemplifies the mindset of the kabbalists under review. In 1898, Yosef Hayyim published his *magnum opus*, *Sefer Ben Ish Hai*, in Jerusalem. This book includes an Aramaic supplication that was meant to be recited on a daily basis before *shaharit* (the morning prayer).⁴² Soon after, the request was printed on a lone sheet in Baghdad, so that it could be stored inside one's prayer book. Additionally, it was put out several times by kabbalists in Jerusalem. Within a year of its coinage, then, attempts were made to integrate this work into the accepted liturgy.⁴³ Another book by Yosef Hayyim, *Sefer 'Od Yosef Hai*, which was printed in Jerusalem 1910, contains "The Wording of a Notice and Public Announcement" and the following preliminary instructions: "Every person should take the trouble to recite this declaration every day, both on weekdays and on Shabbat and festivals before the [regular] portion from the *akedah* [Isaac's binding]."

41 Ibid, 39b. Hallamish discusses this addition to the Saturday evening prayers; idem, *Kabbalistic Customs*, 464–468. Also see the English translation in Kassir, *Till Eternity*, 250–252. Evidence of the kabbalah's spread in Baghdad and its influence on prayers turns up in David Saliman Sassoon, *Massa Bavel*. For a disquisition on this topic, albeit an apologetic one based on contemporary Halakhic decisions as well as Haredi and Sephardic polemics, see Hillel, *Gevurat ha-Ari*, 13–14; idem, *Ben Ish Hai*, 182–192, 383–384.

42 Yosef Hayyim, *Ben Ish Hai*, "Mikes," §12, 22b–23a.

43 Yosef Hayyim, *Nosaḥ Bakasha* (1898). Also see Ben-Yaakov, *Rabbi Yosef Hayyim*, 67, 107–110; Hallamish, *The Kabbalah in North Africa*, 117; Hillel, *Ben Ish Hai*, 382, where the page is reprinted.

There is a great need for this in esoteric circles.” The content of this declaration is interspersed with scathing kabbalistic expressions and quasi-religious tenets that were meant to be repeated by the faithful. The announcement opens with the following words: “Behold, I wholly and enduringly believe that the Lord our God is the cause behind all causes, the operator of the ten *sefirot*.... His great light is en clothed in the ten *sefirot* of *atzilut* [courtliness]. We raise up the *kavvanot* of prayer, blessings, praise, and study of the holy Torah.” In other words, the worshipper is being asked to recite a daily affirmation of the essential principles of kabbalah, even if he refrains from personally studying this body of wisdom.⁴⁴ From 1912 onwards, the supplication and declaration were combined into one and printed in this format time and again, either as a special pamphlet or within the framework of various siddurs. These contexts betray the fact that the two prayers were directed at the general public, not just kabbalists. Like his entreaty to conduct special *tikkunim*, Yosef Hayyim’s call to recite these prayers on a daily basis was commensurate with his burning desire to tighten the average Jew’s bond with the kabbalah literature.⁴⁵

There were those who ridiculed the Ben Ish Hai’s efforts to promote the concealed Torah, including the RaShaSh’s works, among the Jewish hoi polloi. Perhaps his harshest critic was one Jacob Obermeyer, a German-Jewish expatriate who taught French in the Baghdad residence of Abbas Mirza, an exiled Persian prince, and at the city’s French-Jewish school, Alliance Israélite Universelle.⁴⁶ In a long account on religious life in Baghdad, which the Hebrew newspaper *ha-Magid* published in installments over the course of the 1876 year, Obermeyer disdainfully likened Hayyim to a typical Polish *rebbe*. To begin with, he claimed, the rabbi exploited his ascetic lifestyle and external consecration (*Verkheiligkeit*) to win hearts among the masses. Additionally, he instructed his followers to adopt kabbalah practices, such as fasting on a regular basis and praying with intentions.⁴⁷ According to Obermeyer, a fair share of

44 Yosef Hayyim, “Kuntress Hut ha-Meshulash,” 24b; idem, *Moda’a ve-Gilui Da’at* (1912). A similar entreaty turns up in idem, *Emunat Itecha*, 11–14. Also see Meir, “Toward the Popularization of Kabbalah,” 148–172.

45 As he explicitly stated in a letter to David Saliman Sassoon, Bension Mordekhai Hazan was apparently one of the main distributors of the prayer from 1912 onwards. The epistle was printed for the first time in Nurit Veizer, *Naim Zmirot*, 390 and was subsequently included in a handful of books, such as *Tikkun Hazot* (1913); ha-Levi, *Pithei Teshuva* (1926).

46 On Obermeyer’s involvement in Jewish studies, see Markon, “Jacob Obermeyer,” 8. R. Yosef Hayyim’s relationship to Alliance Israélite Universelle was complex. See, among other sources, Regev, “Babylonian Rabbis,” 97–118; Yehudah, “Babylonian Jewry,” 45–49; Harel, *Between Intrigues and Revolution*, 315–317.

47 Obermeyer, “Baghdad,” 58.

Iraqi Jewry idolized Yosef Hayyim and spread fabulous tales about their spiritual leader. “We can only hope that the masses do not anoint him the second Baal Shem Tov.”⁴⁸ Obermeyer drew an analogy between Iraqi Jewry’s reverence for Yosef Hayyim and the public standing of the Baal Shem Tov and other Hasidic “saints” that eschewed an official position in the community.⁴⁹ Taking a page out of the Eastern European Jewish Enlightenment, the peripatetic Maskil accused the Ben Ish Hai of forsaking his duties as a Torah scholar by emphasizing mystical literature and practices at the expense of Talmud, Halacha, and Bible. This line of argument imparted Obermeyer’s screed with the semblance of a religious dimension, which was largely eschewed in his later description of this episode in a German language memoir.⁵⁰ The brunt of Obermeyer’s attack was directed at the fact that Hayyim dared to obligate the masses to engage in *yihudim* and *kavvanot* that were hitherto the sole preserve of experts: “What would the early kabbalists, who were exclusively concerned with secrecy and modesty, say if they saw such things of utmost importance being given to the mouths of all the ignorant.” For instance, the German Jew pointed out that the RaShaSh’s *tikkunim* were meant for a smaller cadre of “Hasids in the city of Jerusalem, may it be built and instituted swiftly in our day.”⁵¹ Needless to say, Obermeyer was not looking out for the best interests of the kabbalah literature, but wished to stanch the proliferation of this knowledge and hoped that it would eventually fall into oblivion. The reaction of Baghdad’s rabbis to this assault was harsh. Not only did they unite to defend the Ben Ish Hai’s honor, but excommunicated the intruder for his “libelous words.” More specifically, they prohibited the German Jew from attending synagogue and warned the community about him in several newspaper articles.⁵²

48 Ibid, 85.

49 Interestingly enough, Avraham Yaakov Brawer made a somewhat similar, though favorable, comparison: “The Baghdadis praise his name (the Ben Ish Hai) the same as the Lithuanian Jews do the name of the Gaon of Vilna.” Brawer, *Avak Derakhim*, vol. 1, 156–157. Thereafter, he described R. Eliyahu Mani as a miracle worker.

50 Obermeyer, “Baghdad,” 77; idem, *Modernes Judentum*, 43–46.

51 Obermeyer, “Baghdad,” 66. Later on, he took issue with the changes that Hayyim implemented in various *piyutim* and prayers as well as the ordinances and practices that the rabbi instituted in the Baghdad Jewish community, to the point of comparing the kabbalist with Abraham Geiger, the founder of Reform Judaism. Obermeyer couched his rebuke as God-fearing criticism. On the other hand, he accused the Ben Ish Hai of belittling Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Judah Halevi, and other illustrious Jewish poets of yesteryear by casting doubt on the quality of their writing. Also see *ibid*, 58.

52 Sassoon, Somekh, Nissim, “Baghdad,” 207, 214–215, 224–225; “Baghdad (supplement to ha-Levanon),” which was endorsed by several Baghdadi rabbis. In turn, Obermeyer sought

In any event, Obermeyer's words shed light on the figure of the Ben Ish Hai, who filled an outsized role in the dissemination and popularization of Jewish mystical literature. By dint of these steps, the Iraqi rabbi helped expand the circle of both kabbalah scholars and lay practitioners alike. That said, he placed clear restrictions on the distribution of this corpus and distinguished between practices that are suitable for the general public and those reserved for a small elite. For instance, Hayyim limited the full repertoire of *kavvanot* to a select few and the distribution of the RaShaSh's siddur to manuscript copies. This intricate balancing act between stint and dissemination and between concealment and revelation were embraced by the ensuing generation of kabbalists in Jerusalem and beyond.

The Borders of Dissemination and the Expansion of the Circle of Intenders

Criticism against spreading the Lurianic and Sharabian intentions, which was also voiced years before the siddur's printing, was now targeted at those possessing the manuscript copies. The dissemination of the RaShaSh's siddur in both manuscript and print form was greeted by numerous attempts to limit their distribution or to warn the book's recipients that it takes considerable time and effort to reach the rank of *mekhavven*. Not only did these efforts fail to prevent the outspread of the *kavvanot*, but it was the very critics who spearheaded the printing enterprise. For instance, Dweck-HaKohen backed the first printed edition of the siddur, which he graced with annotations titled *Hesed veEmet*. However, these comments were absent from the ensuing volumes. According to a later tradition passed on by his students, the revered kabbalist distanced himself from the sequels because he was unsatisfied with how the distribution process had played out.⁵³ Correspondingly, small prayers for special occasions were released in booklet form, albeit without the publisher's name or the year of publication (though it is obvious that they were printed

to issue a public apology, but the newspapers refused to run his statement. He was ultimately forced to plead guilty before a local Jewish court and publically ask Yosef Hayyim for forgiveness. For an in-depth look at this episode, see Ben-Yaakov, *The Jews of Iraq in Modern Times*, 196–202; idem, *Rabbi Yosef Hayyim*, 28–29; Snir, "Arabic Journalism," 223. For an apologetic discussion, see Hillel, *Ben Ish Hai*, 182–219–206; Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*, 153–156.

53 Hillel, "The Life of Dweck-HaKohen," 43.

in Jerusalem by intenter-kabbalists). These pamphlets were tailor made for kabbalistic synagogues dedicated to Sharabian prayer services.⁵⁴

In light of the above, Dweck-HaKohen endeavored to restrict these siddurs to outstanding Torah scholars. This message comes across loud and clear at the outset of *Sefer Benayahu ben Yehoyada* (1911), which includes Lurianic and Sharabian *yihudim*, prayers, *kavvanot*, costumes, and *tikkunim* “for the soul.” Rehovot haNahar’s founder expressly prohibited owners of the RaShaSh’s prayer book from selling, exchanging, or transferring it without permission. Moreover, he warned that “the spirit of the sages will not rest from” anyone that violates this injunction⁵⁵ Approvals for the book were provided by Shlomo Elyashiv, Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld, and Menahem Menkhin Halperin. The latter two praised those who conduct Sharabian *tikkunim* and stressed the importance of disseminating the kabbalah. Moreover, they urged those “who have already learnt *pshat*” to attend a kabbalah lecture on a daily basis.

In 1914, Rehovot haNahar put out another version of the RaShaSh’s siddur with, among other components, his intentions for the bedtime *Kriyat sh'ma*. The foreword included a word of caution to those who have yet to master the gospel of HaARI and the RaShaSh: “It is forbidden for them to take this book and pray with the intentions in it. Not everyone who wants to wield the name [of God] should come and take it lest he will, heaven forbid, chop down saplings.”⁵⁶ Later that year, Sha’ar haShamayim released a new edition of this same siddur in which these same restrictions were expressed in softer terms: “Not everyone should proceed to the holiness to pray with intentions from this holy siddur, only one who has already delved into the works of HaARI and the holy book *Nahar Shalom*.”⁵⁷ In sum, the talk of widely expanding the ranks of kabbalah students and practitioners was hedged with qualifications as to who was eligible to pursue the labor of intentions.

Around fifteen years after Sha’ar haShamayim printed the first edition of the RaShaSh’s siddur, and perhaps in response to this, Yaakov Chaim Sofer (1870–1939), among Rehovot haNahar’s sages, asserted “that not every man can

54 See, for example, the pamphlets under the heading *Regel Ta'aniyot; Tokhen Kayanot*. These works do not include the year of publication, but the print style attests to the fact that they came out in post-1910 Jerusalem. Scholem added the following handwritten remark on his own copy of *Tokhen Kayanot*: “Printed in approximately 1930, and it is a precious finding, very much.” Lastly, it appears that Jacob S. Kassin had a hand in bringing this work to press.

55 Dweck-HaKohen and Lag’imi, *Sefer Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, vol. 1.

56 *Sefer Hayim yeShalom* (1914).

57 *Siddur Hayim yeShalom* (1914).

pray with intention, only the Hasids that are in Beit El, may it be grounded on justice, in our holy city of Jerusalem, who properly learn the liturgy from the mouth of authors and from the mouth of books, and they pray from the siddur of the RaShaSh, and none except for them, for there is a possibility that it will lead to damage, God forbid. Instead, they [i.e., the masses] should pray with intentions in a general fashion.”⁵⁸ These admonishments notwithstanding, the reality throughout the early twentieth century was more complex. At the time, there were several kabbalists who undertook to print collections featuring parts, rather than full sections, of the RaShaSh’s siddur. The focus of this enterprise was on special *tikkunim* and customs, some of which had already come out earlier. In 1911, for example, Dweck-HaKohen and Eliyahu Lag’imi (who as above-mentioned arranged the first volume of the siddur), printed a series of books on the prayer intentions that were partially based on the RaShaSh’s siddur.⁵⁹ Among the most prominent compilers of these types of works were Jacob S. Kassin, Noah Gad Weintraub, and Yeshayah Asher Zelig Margalioṭ, all of whom hewed to the spirit and received the permission of Dweck-HaKohen.⁶⁰

In parallel, various comments, annotations, and in-depth studies on the RaShaSh’s siddur and intentions were brought to press. Witten in the centuries following Sharabi’s passing, most of the authors of these works were affiliated with Beit El and/or Rehovot haNahar.⁶¹ Some of these projects merited Dweck-HaKohen’s support.⁶² Books of this sort were printed earlier, but this wave appears to have been informed by greater urgency. Perhaps this activity was fueled by the expansion of the circles of *mekhavvnim*. Whereas the earlier works (e.g., editions of *Sefer Shemen Sasson* by Sasson ben Moshe) were earmarked for seasoned intenter, the new round of books also targeted less proficient audiences. Rahamim David Shrem (1869–1934), a habitué of Rehovot haNahar, toiled to collect kabbalistic responsa that pertain to the RaShaSh’s

58 Sofer, *Kaf ha-Hayim: Orat Hayyim*, §61, 101a. For more on warnings of this sort, see Benayahu, *Azulai: Studies and Texts*, 136–137; Hallamish, *Kabbalah in Liturgy*, 81, 99.

59 Dweck-HaKohen and Lag’imi, *Benayahu Ben Yehoyada*, vols. 1–2; idem, *Sefer Kayanot Pratiyot*; idem, *Sefer Sar Shalom*.

60 Kassin, *Sefer Or haLevana*; idem, *Quntres Pri Eš haGan*; Weintraub, *Quntres Tiquṇ haYesod*; Margalioṭ, *Sefer Yashev Ruḥo*; idem, *Sefer Tiquṇ Ḥaṣot*. Also see Hillel, “The Life of Kassin,” 50–52, 81–82.

61 E.g., Azriel, *Zimrat haAreš*; HaLevi, *Sefer Simḥat Yom Tov*.

62 For instance, Dweck-HaKohen annotated a book of this sort in 1903. According to its cover, the work’s “benefit is quite lofty for those worshipping God with intention [who would like] to understand the siddur of the RaShaSh, may his virtue protect us amen, [along] with *Nahar Shalom* and *Rehovot haNahar*’s introduction;” Harrari, *Sefer ‘Aleṭ Nahar*.

siddur and HaARI's oeuvre. Most of the answers that he cited were formulated by his close associates Dweck-HaKohen and Avraham Antebbi. The purpose behind this initiative, according to Shrem, was to pave the way for beginners entering "the wisdom of truth."⁶³ In 1921, Massoud Alhadad HaKohen also printed kabbalistic responsa on, *inter alia*, the RaShaSh's siddur, but his work was not intended for novices. Instead, it catered specifically to kabbalists involved in reconciling contradictions between Luria and Sharabi's thought. Surprisingly, most of the questions that Beit El's rosh yeshiva included in his responsa were not posed by his seminary's regulars, but a Hasid-cum-kabbalist in Eastern Europe.⁶⁴ Needless to say, there would not have been a market for these comprehensive responsa were it not for the dissemination of the siddur, which was prompted by the growth of the circle of Sharabian intenters and a general increase in kabbalah students.

Some observers felt that the publication of these collections attests to a drop off in the number of *mekhavvrim*. For instance, Pascal Themanlys, a disciple of the Polish occultist Max Théon,⁶⁵ wrote about an encounter with the Jerusalem kabbalist Yaakov ben Yosef Rofeh Munseh. "When I got to Jerusalem,"

63 Shrem, *Sha'arei Raḥamim*, vols. 1–2 (1926–1928); idem, *Sha'arei Derekh haHayim* (1931). The books were outfitted with approvals from Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, Yosef Yedid Haveli, Dweck-HaKohen, Aharon Shlomo Maharil, Yaakov Chaim Sofer, Hezekiah Sabtai, Shalom Hedaya, and Jacob Kassin. That said, one tradition casts doubt on the quality and trustworthiness of these responsa. Nonetheless, they constitute a treasure trove of significant information. This comment pertains to the first volume, but not the second. The latter seems to have been arranged by Jacob S. Kassin, so that its content is more accurate. See Hillel, "The Life of Dweck-HaKohen," 13–14, 37–38; idem, "The Life of Kassin," 63–68. For more on Shrem and his books, see Ben-Yaakov, *The Travelling Envoy*, vol. 1, 20–23; Shrem, *Sefer Raḥshai Lev*, 10–12; Laniado, *LaQedoshim asher baAReS*, 178–179.

64 HaKohen, *Sefer Simḥat Kohen*. In his introductory words, Alhadad HaKohen wrote that most of the questions were put forth by the kabbalist Gedalya Ehringer from Kolomyia. The relevant passages in the book imply that the Eastern European had a copy of the siddur. See, for example, *ibid*, 73a.

65 Pascal Themanlys (1909–2000) founded the Argaman circles in 1980. Nearly fifty years earlier, he wrote a book in French on the wonders of the Ba'al Shem Tov. A self-proclaimed adherent of the kabbalah way, Themanlys personally met numerous kabbalists in the Land of Israel (Themanlys, *Siḥu beKhol Niflaotay*, 48–49, 62; idem, "The Bett El Kabbalist," 22–25; idem, *The History of Beit El* (MS); idem, "Bethel Foyer du Hassidisme Sefardi," xxv–xxvi; idem, *Un itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, 90–92; idem, "Prophecy Today," 195–201). He was critical of how Jewish mysticism was being taught in Haredi society and cast doubt on the approach of Buber, Scholem, and the like (Themanlys, *Siḥu beKhol Niflaotay*, 53–55). Lastly, he claimed to have spoken with David Ben-Gurion in various settings. During these conversations, the former tangentially brought up the importance of the Zohar

Themanlys quotes the kabbalist, “I met people who were like prophets. Shortly after, there were other teachers who conversed with angels. Now there are obviously sages, but nothing more than this.... Only a number of years ago, there were over a hundred *mekhavvnm* in Jerusalem, and today there are but a few. In order to counteract this shortcoming, we must compile a prayer book with simple intentions for use in many groups.”⁶⁶

Zvi Meroni conveyed similar sentiments that he had heard from “one of Jerusalem’s elder kabbalists:” “In the worldwide war [i.e., the First World War], many kabbalists died of hunger and very few of the elders of this wisdom are still alive. In Safad, the bygone cradle of the kabbalah, you will barely find so much as a single kabbalist, what compels us to make an effort to secure the kabbalah’s future and pass it down to the next generations.”⁶⁷ These worries aside, Jerusalem was, as Meroni himself testified, teeming with kabbalists. At any rate, the stewards of Jewish mysticism began to conceive of printing as a new way to bequeath this knowledge to posterity and newcomers in the field, like the younger sages at Sha’ar haShamayim. As is known, the popularization and dissemination of the kabbalah literature divulged only one facet of this corpus. Along with an increase in students, the need for revelation was tied to the paucity of *mekhavvnm* and the necessity of training a new generation. The publication of the above-mentioned collections and books was meant to persuade and serve as a gateway for serious candidates weighing the possibility of dedicating their lives to Jewish mysticism.

The printing of different parts and editions of the RaShaSh’s siddurs between 1911 and 1930 was the catalyst behind the publication of dozens of similar books – an undertaking that has endured into the present era. As Yaakov Moshe Hillel put it in an approval for a manuscript version of the siddur that was finally published in the early 1980s, “Since the sages allowed” the siddur to be disseminated, “great geniuses in the revealed and concealed occupied themselves with and helped print” the first edition; “in any event, from that point on, the siddur has already merited exposure and publication, and we

(ibid., 52). Also see Molho, “Pascal Themanlys: Un grand Mystique séfardi nouveau style,” lxxii–lxxv.

66 Themanlys, *Siḥu beKhol Niflaotay*, 49, 62; idem, *Un itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, 91. In this context, the words of the journalist Yitzchak Nahum Levi (also known as Levi Yitzchak Yerushalmi) bear noting. His 1948 book offers a romantic description of the Beit El Yeshiva, which ends on a pessimistic note: “However, the number of *mekhavvnm* is steadily dwindling, and who knows if others from the new generation will come to fill their position.” Levi, *Shabatot biYerushalayim*, 41–46. No mention is made of the other kabbalah seminaries that followed in the intenter’s footsteps.

67 Meroni, *The Dreamers in Jerusalem*, 72.

rely on them and their permission.”⁶⁸ Once the borders came down, there was nothing to stem the tide of new print versions of this book. Each edition reflects the contents of another manuscript. In this respect, the attempt to canonize the siddur failed, but the number of people praying with intentions was on the rise.

Menahem Menkhin Halperin and the Printing of the Lurianic Corpus

The second milestone of this “print revolution” was the publication of the Lurianic kabbalah literature on the basis of manuscripts and first print editions. Some of these same texts were already printed in Jerusalem between 1863 and 1873 by Beit El’s sages, who indeed took advantage of their seminary’s manuscripts. This earlier wave catered primarily to the extended Beit El community. It is also worth noting that a few of the books were correspondingly printed in Salonica.⁶⁹ From 1875 to 1885, Yechezkel Shraga Halberstam, the grand rabbi of Sieniawa, presided over a similar venture in Eastern Europe (Krakow and Premishlan).⁷⁰ The market could not keep up with the demand for copies

68 Hillel, “Introduction,” *Siddur Nahar Shalom*, vol. 1, 2. For more on the printing of Sharabi’s prayer book, see Meir, “The Boundaries of the Kabbalah,” 163–180.

69 Ben Menachem, “Kitvei Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital;” haLevi, *The First Jerusalem Books*; Gries, “The Part of the Printing,” 162–168; Ben-Nae, “The Yeshivot in Jerusalem,” 339–340. The lion’s share of this printing enterprise can be attributed to the grand plans of the Beit El Yeshiva. The final books in this quasi-series were Vital, *Sha’ar Ma’amrei RaSHBI* (1898); idem, *HaSha’ar haShmini, Sha’ar haGilgulim* (1903). The printing of kabbalah and theurgist books in the Land of Israel during these years is discussed in Kandelshein, *Printed Publications*, 184–275, 323–327. For a look at this activity in the broader context of the printing industry throughout the 1900s, see Gries, “Copying and Printing of Kabbalistic Books,” 204–211.

70 Ben Menachem, “Kitvei Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital.” Some of the manuscripts that undergirded Halberstam’s editions were purchased by the rebbe in the Land of Israel. To the best of our knowledge, he wrote approvals and introductions to kabbalah books until the 1890s. Some of these works were assembled under a single heading; see Halberstam, *Sefer Divrei Yehezqel heHadash*, 132–133, 229–235. In one letter, the grand rabbi clamored for the publication of an array of kabbalah books; *ibid.*, “HaRAMAQ,” 101–106. That said, Halberstam apparently limited the study of kabbalah to a small cadre of his Hasids; *ibid.*, *Sefer Divrei Yehezqel ‘al haTorah*, 68–69; Rabinowitz, *Sefer Meorot haARI*, 4; Wagschal, *Sefer 13 Orot*, 204. As per a later tradition, “they did not hear about ‘Zohar’ in Sieniawa, namely they did not speak of kabbalah issues;” *ibid.*, 120. In all likelihood, then, the books that Halberstam printed or recommended were of more use to kabbalists and Hasids outside

of the earlier Eastern-European and Land-of-Israel editions, which served the RaShaSh's acolytes and Hasids in these "markets." Due to the kabbalah's resurgence in the Land of Israel (and perhaps overseas as well) there was a palpable need for new books. The manuscripts of these same Lurianic works were once again copied in large numbers by kabbalists, but not all the relevant institutions had the means to fund these projects. Against this backdrop, it is evident that HaARI's works were eagerly studied, copied, and printed during the second half of the nineteenth century. By the early 1900s, the supply of this commodity was outpaced by demand.⁷¹ This corpus was the ballast for the Beit El-inspired kabbalah revival in the Land of Israel. The impetus behind the printing of its works was the fledgling Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, which rallied the kabbalists of Rehovot haNahar, among others, to join the cause.

The prime mover and shaker of this early twentieth-century enterprise was R. Menahem Menkhin Halperin from Grodno (1834–1924), one of the more influential kabbalists in Sha'ar haShamayim.⁷² Following the path of Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, he established *Hevrat Dorshei Şiyon ve'Yerushalayim* (Well-wishers of Zion and Jerusalem Society) – an association in Grodno with the mandate to acquire property in Palestine.⁷³ During this period, Halperin built a close relationship with Shlomo Elyashiv. While still in Hrodna, he was recognized as a kabbalist and "wonder worker," who is even said to have exorcized a *dybbuk*.⁷⁴ In 1901, he moved to Jerusalem where he forged close ties with sages of Rehovot

his court. The *rebbe's* activities in this field were informed by a dynamic that would loom large throughout the twentieth century and beyond: appreciable dissemination of the kabbalah literature coupled with statements limiting its study to those with the requisite qualifications. See, for instance, the Biala-Lugano *rebbe's* approach; Meir, "The Revealed and the Revealed within the Concealed," 231–241.

- 71 Many of Hayyim Vital's works were copied over the course of the nineteenth century in Palestine and abroad. Some of these manuscripts reached the Israel National Library between 1924 and 1930, following a spate of printing in Jerusalem. See Scholem, *Catalogus codicum cabbalisticorum hebraicorum*. During that same period, some of Beit El's manuscripts were sold by Isaac Gagin, "Hasfarim" (1920); reprinted in Kluger, *Min haMeqor*, vol. 4, 115. On this collection and its sale, see Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 187–188; Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, vol. 2, 683; Schidorsky, "Cultural Agents," 378–379.
- 72 Ben Menachem, "Kitvei Rabbi Hayyim Vital," 278–279.
- 73 Established in 1872, the name was subsequently changed to *Shutafut shel Yishuv Eres Yisrael de'Hrodna* (the Hrodna Partnership for Settling the Land of Israel). Miler, "Horadna," 13–14; Kalischer, "Shlom Yerushalayim," 379. Also see Halperin's letters. These documents were preserved in manuscript form and later came out in print editions; Klausner, "From Kalischer's Archive," 452–457; idem, "Hevrat Yishuv," 323–330.
- 74 Şurba, *Shlosha Hema Niflau Mimeni*, 18–20; Tidhar, *Encyclopedia of the Pioneers*, vol. 2, 689–690.

haNahar and became one of Sha'ar haShamayim's most distinguished figures. Yet another of his confidantes was Abraham Isaac Kook.⁷⁵

On his personal copy of *Sefer Eš Hayyim* (Warsaw 1891), Gershom Scholem added a few handwritten biographical details about Halperin: "Rabbi Menahem Menkhin Halperin was the head of the Ḥevrat Elshikh Beit Midrash in Grodno for many years; and was considered a holy man of God owing to the fact that he did not want to derive pleasure from a penny that is not his; and his livelihood was from the sale of the books all year long and from Etrogs in their season; and nearly every year he travelled to Palestine to bring them."⁷⁶ Some of the books in Halperin's personal library (among them *Sefer Etert Yosef*, Zhovkva 1778; and *Sefer Sha'ar haGilgulim*, Zhovkva 1772) eventually found their way into Scholem's collection.⁷⁷

Halperin is best known for his book *Kvod Ḥakhamim*, which justifies the study of the Lurianic work *Ḥemdat Yamim*. More specifically, it contends with the assertions of R. Jacob Emden and the research of David Kahana whereby *Ḥemdat Yamim* was a Sabbatean book and should thus be banned.⁷⁸ Halperin's book was pummeled by several figures, including Mordechai ben Moshe Luria who penned a double-edged critique.⁷⁹ Be that as it may, most kabbalists in the Land of Israel agreed with him on the merits of *Ḥemdat Yamim*.⁸⁰ For instance, the Hasid and kabbalist Elazar Mordechai Koenig, one of Sha'ar haShamayim's

75 Shapira, *Igrot laRAIaH*, 162 (letter 103). Halperin wrote that R. Kook's small kabbalistic book, *Rosh Milim* (London 1916), is "marvelous, the marvel, and a marvel;" *ibid*, 211–212 (letter 131). See the photo of this epistle in Neria, *BeSde haRAIa*, 252; Halperin, "Letter to R. Kook," 34.

76 *The Library of Gershom Scholem*, vol 2, 322. Similar biographical details on Halperin turn up in Mordechai Gimpel Berg's letter to Abraham Schwadron (MS). The Schwadron Collection houses a 1904 letter from the Menachem Šiyon Beit Midrash, signed by Halperin. See Beit Midrash Menahem Šiyon, Letter (MS). In addition, he was involved in the sextonship of a few other Toranic institutions in Jerusalem, such as the Torat Hayyim Yeshiva.

77 Halperin's seal graces his items in this collection. Likewise, Scholem attained the books from the library of another Sha'ar haShamayim habitué, Aharon Shlomo Maharil, whose signature is inscribed on the covers. E.g., the books *Nosaḥ Moda'a* (1912); Hazan, *Sefer Tiqun haKlali* (1902).

78 Halperin, *Kvod Ḥakhamim*. He reprised these claims in Vital, *Sefer Eš Hayyim* (1910), 31b.

79 Luria, "Emet LeYa'aqov," 67a–68b; *idem*, *Sefer Milḥemet Ya'abeš*. For a discussion on the twentieth-century version of this debate, see Ya'ari, *Ta'alumat Sefer*, 12–31; Scholem, "Milḥemet Ya'abeš," 17–18; Jacobs, *Their Heads in Heaven*, 170–171.

80 See, for example, Yisrael Berger's article, which is predicated on a letter he received from Halperin; Berger, "Ma'amar Qinat haEmet," 55a–59b. Also see the pertinent information in the following anthology of Hasidic hagiography: Yelin, *Derekh Šadiqim*, 10b–12a.

rabbinical emissaries in Eastern Europe and the father of Gedaliah Aharon Koenig (among the most important twentieth-century Bratslav Hasids in the Land of Israel) wrote in approximately 1925 that “Here in the Holy Land all the kabbalists study *Ḥemdat Yamim*, as this is a precious book, whose author was righteous and sublime.”⁸¹ The kabbalists in the Land of Israel not only continued to study this work, but derived various rituals from its content and put out a new edition thereof. In any event, Halperin defended his approach in correspondences that he maintained with Hasids and kabbalists throughout Eastern Europe.

The nub of Halperin’s printing enterprise was the publication of R. Hayyim Vital’s works. The Sha’ar haShamayim regular began putting out kabbalah texts back in Warsaw. To begin with, he published a new edition of Vital’s *Eṣ Ḥayyim* in 1891, together with Aaron Walden (1835–1912) – a Hasidic book merchant and bibliographer.⁸² In the opening pages of this edition, Halperin wrote that he availed himself of a manuscript belonging to R. Alexander Ziskind of Grodno (the author of *Yesod Veshoresh Ha’Avoda*) as well as annotations by Elyashiv. He also incorporated the RaShaSh’s commentary on *Eṣ Ḥayyim*, which is called *Emet veShalom*. Moreover, the distinguished intenter’s books *Rehovot haNahar* and *Nahar Shalom* were affixed to this publication, each with their own pagination. In so doing, Halperin emulated a previous Jerusalem edition of *Eṣ Ḥayyim* from 1866. Lastly, he clarified and proofread the text to the best of his ability and included his own annotations and explanations. This edition, which was surely intended for Hasids and kabbalists in Eastern Europe, offered a comprehensive and novel blend between literature from the Sharabian school of thought and other kabbalah streams.

81 Blau, “Ḥemdat Yamim,” 161–166. According to one tradition, Koenig studied under Dweck-HaKohen at Rehovot haNahar. *Ḥemdat Yamim* maintained its relevance in the early twentieth century; Ya’ari, “Sifrei Tiqunim veTfilot,” 103–104. A contemporary kabbalist claims that “I heard from the kabbalist R. Shalom Hedaya, who heard from his father, that all the sages of Beit El studied the book *Ḥemdat Yamim*,” Afg’in, *Sefer Divrei Shalom*, vol. 10, 171. Mordechai ben Moshe Luria argued that the hypothesis according to which the book is “kosher” because it was commonplace among Sephardim does not hold water. As he wrote in “Emet LeYa’aqov,” 67b: “It is obvious that one must not bring evidence from the Sephardic sages on this matter because the book *Ḥemdat Yamim* spread among them before the books of Jacob Emden. Moreover, Israel Baal Shem Tov and the holiness of his disciples were unknown to them.” In any event, there is little doubt that the book was also popular among Ashkenazim. See, for example, the Hasidic notice: Ḥevrat Ḥafes Ḥayim, *Moda’a ’al Ta’anit* (1933).

82 Walden is best known for the Hasidic hagiographies that he wrote and published. For more on this figure, see Zederbaum, *Keter Kehuna*, 105–106; Nigal, *The Hasidic Tale*, 36–37; Meir, *Michael Levi Rodkinson and Hasidism*, 124–125.

Upon moving to Jerusalem and joining the ranks of Rehovot haNahar and Sha'ar haShamayim, Halperin ratcheted up his efforts to print and disseminate the Lurianic corpus. From 1902 onwards, he put out seven volumes of HaARI's writing, some of which contain the publisher's own notes and explanations on the margins. Buoyed by the unparalleled success of the said Warsaw edition, he published a new edition in the same format in 1910.⁸³ Halperin's foreword to his 1909 edition of *Sefer Sha'ar Hahaqdamot* divulges a few of the motivations behind his labor:

I thank God for granting me [the privilege of] publishing *Sefer Sha'ar Hahaqdamot* and serving as a messenger for the holy commandment of disseminating the kabbalah study, and slaking the thirst of the Torah scholars who are pondering the true Torah. Hark, if the shortage of books in kabbalah studies was indeed evident in earlier periods, recently the void indeed feels even more greater [*sic*]. Since then by means of the illustrious yeshiva Sha'ar haShamayim for the Study of the Kabbalah, which was founded with the help of God in the holy city for the Ashkenazic rabbis, the elders of instruction, and the greats of Torah. From season to season, the members of the seminary increase to the point where the study of the true Torah is commonplace among all the Torah scholars; and this study has spread so much to the point that the yeshiva Sha'ar haShamayim inside the [walled] city has given birth to another branch in the large settlement outside the city as well. There are many for whom the way is too far to come. For this reason, we established for them within their settlement a second yeshiva for learning kabbalah by the name of Kahal Hasidim, a branch of the yeshiva Sha'ar haShamayim. A river emanates from Eden and spreads out and expands to the point where our holy city of Jerusalem is filled with people studying the Torah of kabbalah; and what this means for the rectification of the nation and the rectification of the upper spheres is already known to those familiar with the concealed wisdom.⁸⁴

83 Vital, *Eṣ Hayyim* (1910). This edition was published at the behest of R. Moshe ben David Aligula and Moshe Haim Manshvari. The rest of the books that Halperin printed are as follows: Vital, *Sha'ar haKavanot* (1902); idem, *Sefer Mavo She'arim* (1904); idem, *Sefer Oṣrot Ḥayyim* (1907); idem, *Sefer Sha'ar Hahaqdamot* (1909); idem, *Sha'ar Ruaḥ haQodesh* (1912); idem, *Sefer haLiqutim* (1913). Many of the volumes merited facsimiles in Israel during the second half of the twentieth century; some were brought to press by Mordecai Attiya within the framework of the Haim veShalom Yeshiva.

84 Vital, *Sha'ar haHahaqdamot*, Introduction. He printed the book with the assistance of Rafael Schwilli and Moshe ben David Aligula.

A few insights into Halperin's world, not least his ties with various kabbalists in the Land of Israel, can also be gleaned from his introductions to the other works that he brought to press. For instance, *Sefer Sha'ar haKavanot* (1902) opens with a discussion on the Land of Israel and the kabbalah secrets that he believed reveal themselves exclusively in the Land. Moreover, the author paid tribute to Shlomo Moussaieff for granting him access to his library and its manuscripts.⁸⁵ *Sefer Mavo She'arim* (1904), which was proofread by Halperin and brought to press by Shlomo Baruch ben David Tzofioff HaCohen and Moshe Pinchas Tzofioff HaCohen, also begins with words on the dissemination of Jewish mystical knowledge. Shlomo Baruch Tzofioff's foreword states that his father, R. David, had hoped to print all of HaARI's works, "to hand them out to [the seed of] Jacob, and to distribute them in Israel free of charge in an eye-pleasing and choice print cleansed of every error and mistake that befell, as is known, the previous runs."⁸⁶ There were certain discrepancies between some of the copies of *Mavo She'arim* with respect to the cover page, introduction, and conclusion. For example, the Tzofioff brothers' introduction was replaced by that of Halperin, in his capacity as "the author, compiler, and typesetter of the annotations and explanations." In addition, it included a debt of gratitude to R. Ze'ev Wolf Ashkenazi and Ezra Raful.⁸⁷

Three years later, Halperin edited and printed Vital's *Sha'ar Ruaḥ haQodesh* (1912). Words by the publisher's confidante and fellow Sha'ar haShamayim habitué, R. Aharon Shlomo Maharil, who helped bring the book to press, were incorporated into this work. Moreover, it begins with, *inter alia*, encomia for the seminary's resident kabbalists.⁸⁸ At the time, Maharil was involved with

85 Ibid. Attached to this publication is Shlomo ben Yehuda HaCohen's *Sefer Yafa Sha'a*, which comes with its own pagination and a new cover. Moreover, it was distributed as a separate volume.

86 Vital, *Sefer Mavo She'arim*. Similar information is provided by Munseh, *Pada et Avraham*, vol. 1, 426. Shlomo Tzofioff was married to Haim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen's daughter. For more on this, see the introduction to his grandfather's book: *Sefer Emet meAram Šoba* (1910).

87 The two copies are held in the Gershom Scholem Collection at the Israel National Library. It stands to reason that while the book was in press, Halperin realized that he lacked the means to foot the entire bill. Therefore, he worked out a deal with the Tzofioff brothers according to which some of the copies would be printed in their name. Another possibility is that to begin with, these were two separate versions for different audiences: Halperin's readership consisted of Sha'ar haShamayim's kabbalists and their supporters in East Europe; the Tzofioff brothers catered to the Sephardic kabbalists in the Land of Israel. A list of corrections was added solely to Halperin's version.

88 Vital, *Sha'ar Ruaḥ haQodesh* (1912). Also see R. Kook's plaudits for this edition; Kook, *Igrot*, vol. 2, 82.

the dissemination of collections of and commentaries on the Lurianic literature, most notably his thick tome *Sefer To'ameiah Hayim Zakhu*.⁸⁹

Another instance of such cooperation between kabbalists is the printing of Hayyim Vital's *Sefer Ošrot Hayyim* (1907). Dweck-HaKohen provided his commentary *Eifa Shlema*, while Halperin proofread and typeset the book. Furthermore, this work was studied with enthusiastic approvals from Tzvi Hirsh Shapira (the grand rabbi of Munkacs) and Shlomo Elyashiv. At an earlier date, Halperin had indeed raved to Elyashiv about Dweck-HaKohen and the sages of the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva. All those studying kabbalah were commended in these approvals for hastening the redemption, but their focus was on Dweck-HaKohen's additions. In essence, the Grodno native formed ties between kabbalah practitioners in Eastern Europe and the RaShaSh's acolytes in the Land of Israel.

Some writers contend that Dweck-HaKohen was in need of these external approvals because of complaints that his interpretations strayed from the path of the righteous.⁹⁰ However, it appears that the main reason Halperin incorporated these recommendations was to bridge the gap between kabbalists from different ethnic groups and streams. As noted, collaborative efforts stood behind the printing of *Eš Hayyim* in Warsaw and the first edition of the RaShaSh's siddur in Jerusalem, both of which also required approvals from Eastern European sages. With respect to this edition of *Sefer Ošrot Hayyim*, kabbalists from the various streams agreed that every Torah-educated Jew is obligated to study kabbalah: "Not like those same fools who exempt themselves from learning kabbalah, on the grounds that they have yet to fill their stomachs with the six books of the Talmud and the Halakhic adjudicators. On this [matter] one of the great sages said, A person who openly abrogates the concealed, the presumption is that he will furtively abrogate the revealed."⁹¹ In

89 Maharil, *Sefer To'ameiah Hayim Zakhu*, vols. 1–3; idem, *Sefer Birur haMidot*; idem, *Pirquei Avot ha'Olam haQadmonim*; idem, *Sefer Mesilot Hokhma*. For more on this figure, see Ben Menachem, "Kitvei Rabbi Hayim Vital," 309; Eliakh, *Sefer haGaon*, vol. 2, 813. His approvals surface in many of the kabbalah books that were printed in Jerusalem during these same years.

90 According to Hillel, "One day, two sages from the cult of the Talmudists came up to Rabbi Nissim Nahum and heaped scorn on our rabbi Dweck-HaKohen, saying that he is a modernizer, is turning all the conventions and norms on their head.... And they told him that it is forbidden to publish a subversive book of this sort, and its absence is better than its existence." As a result, Hillel continued, Dweck-HaKohen decided to turn "to the most important kabbalists in the Diaspora, for approvals. In all likelihood, this quaint story is unfounded," Hillel, "The Life of Dweck-HaKohen," 42.

91 Vital, *Sefer Ošrot Hayyim*, Introduction. The book was republished in Tunisia 1913, *sans* most of Dweck-HaKohen's annotations and explanations. That said, some of his words

the preface, Dweck-HaKohen lauded the members of the Bukharan community in Jerusalem. For instance, praise is given to Shlomo Moussaieff for covering the print costs, maintaining the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva, “and looking out for the rabbis and their students who are occupied with this wisdom, namely the wisdom of truth, and by virtue of their lobbying, their alacrity, and their diligence founded a synagogue within their society for sages that pray according to HaARI’s intentions as per the arrangement of the RaShaSh of blessed memory.”⁹² On these topics, then, Rehovot haNahar and Sha’ar haShamayim were of one mind.

Halperin also played an instrumental role in other ventures of this sort. Among the books that he brought to press was a manuscript edition of David ibn Zimra’s commentary *Peirush Klaley Qişur Sefer haPlia*, which was housed in Moussaieff’s library.⁹³ In another initiative, he attached a few of HaARI’s works to the Ashkenazi kabbalist Jacob Judah Levy’s commentary on *Pirkei Avot*. This work also included the notes of the ascetic R. Yehoshua Tzvi Michal Shapira. Both Levy and Shapira were among the resident scholars of the Beit El Yeshiva.⁹⁴

The links between various kabbalists and their publishing collaborations also surface in approvals that Halperin wrote for other works. A case in point is a recommendation that he co-authored with R. Yosef Haim Zonnenfeld in 1911 for one of Dweck-HaKohen’s books. After praising the dissemination of kabbalistic knowledge, they proclaimed “that in the End of the Days, those learning the Torah of kabbalah will multiply.” What is more, the two authors “gave sound advice to the students who have already learnt the *psbat* [literal explanation], that they should also give [*sic*] a lesson every day for the study of the kabbalah wisdom.”⁹⁵

from the Jerusalem edition, including a prayer with intentions that is meant to be recited before learning Torah, can be found towards the end of this one.

92 Vital, *Sefer Oşrot Hāyyim*, Introduction.

93 Halperin, *Peirush Klaley Qişur Sefer haPlia*. On his personal copy, Scholem added some handwritten information: “Printed from a single manuscript in the hands of the rabbi/kabbalist Shlomo Moussaieff’s inheritors and it was there [i.e., Moussaieff’s library] that I saw it in 1927. And they did not manage to add a cover to the print [edition] and the entire book remained closeted for ten years and was not published.”

94 Levi, *Sefer Bait leAvot*. In the introduction, Levi describes his relationship with Raphael Yedidiah Abulafia, the head of the Beit El Yeshiva, under whose mentorship he studied Sharabian kabbalah for fifteen years. Dablitski avers that Levi would execute the RaShaSh’s intentions using the Ashkenazic prayer book; Dablitski, *Biurim leKitvei haRashash*, Introduction.

95 Dweck-HaKohen and Lag’imi, *Sefer Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, vol. 1.

On a Few Disseminators of Lurianic Kabbalah

The printing of these texts was hardly a one-man show that transpired in a vacuum, for it encompassed tens of collaborators and was intended to serve the existing needs of kabbalah seminarians. In Jerusalem, there were other agents of Lurianic literature besides Halperin, all of whom worked along the same lines. Most of their enterprise consisted of proofreading and printing – be it alone or *en masse* – the works of HaARI and Hayyim Vital. The following players bear mention:

- [a] R. Ze'ev Wolf Ashkenazi (1865–1945). A native of Pinsk (a city in modern-day Belarus), Ashkenazi spent time in Safad before enrolling in Jerusalem's Eṣ Ḥayyim Yeshiva. Like Halperin, he put out new editions of works by HaARI, Vital and Moses ben Jacob Cordovero (the RaMaK), which included Ashkenazi's own notes and innovations. At times, the activist drew on odd manuscripts and versions that he happened upon.⁹⁶ In the introduction to Ashkenazi's 1905 edition of *HaSha'ar haḤamishi, Sha'ar haMiṣṣot*, the publisher thanks his friend Halperin for goading him into improving the text and helping him finish the proofs.⁹⁷ This partnership between the two kabbalists endured, as Halperin's annotations and corrections were added to Ashkenazi's 1907 edition of *Sefer 'Olat Tamid*. A couple of insights on Ashkenazi's ideology and his motivations for spreading Lurianic thought may be gleaned from the foreword to *HaSha'ar haRev'i, Sha'ar haPsuqim*, where he referred to HaARI's writing as a tool for understanding the Zohar and to the importance of reading the Zohar even without understanding it, "as the very language of the Zohar is capable of cleansing the spirit and consecrating his soul in purity."⁹⁸ What is more, Ashkenazi brought to press two other popular kabbalah books: Hayyim Vital's *Sefer Sha'arei Qedusha*; and *Sefer Tomer*

96 He prepared the following editions: Vital, *HaSha'ar haḤamishi, Sha'ar haMiṣṣot* (1905); idem, *Sefer 'Olat Tamid* (1907); idem, *HaSha'ar haRev'i, Sha'ar haPsuqim* (1912); idem, *HaSha'ar haRev'i, Sefer haLiqutim* (1913). The last two books were brought to print by Reuven Haas. For more on Ashkenazi, see Ben Menachem, "Kitvei Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital," 220–221, 306, 308, 318.

97 Vital, *HaSha'ar haḤamishi, Sha'ar haMiṣṣot*, Introduction; *HaBazeleth* also published this work, along with praise for its compiler: G., "Sha'ar haMelekh!" 238.

98 Vital, *HaSha'ar haRev'i, Sha'ar haPsuqim*, Introduction. On the genesis of the idea that reciting the Zohar without a deep understanding of its content purifies the soul, see Huss, *Like the Radiance of the Sky*, 251–254, 261–271; Dan, *History of Jewish Mysticism*, vol. 11, 17–20.

Dvora by Cordovero. These works, which are interspersed with the agent's annotations and insights, certainly merited a wider distribution.⁹⁹

- [b] The Hasid R. Zalman Leib Halevi Leventhal (1876–1942).¹⁰⁰ Born in Jerusalem, Leventhal was a resident scholar of the city's Ḥayeī Olam Yeshiva and was on close terms with kabbalists at Beit El. In 1906, he printed the second part of R. Hayyim Vital's *Sefer 'Eṣ haDa'at Tov*, on the basis of a manuscript that he purchased from the Gagin family. Leventhal intended to put out other volumes that he gleaned from this source; however, his plan was thwarted by financial difficulties.¹⁰¹ Among the many approvals that Leventhal's edition garnered is one by Jacob Elyashar and Yitzchak Blazer. Moreover, an approval by R. Kook, which was penned at the beginning of his tenure in Jaffa, waxes poetic on the kabbalah and its revival in the Land of Israel.¹⁰² This book also warrants attention due to the long list of subscribers – most of whom were residents of Palestine – that graces its appendix. The list is comprised of Ashkenazim and Sephardim, Hasids and *misnagdim*, along with a handful of kabbalists, among them Shimon Zvi Lider (Horowitz), Yaakov Moshe Charlap, Shlomo Moussaieff, Shlomo Wechsler, and Yom Tov Yedid Halevi.
- [c] Reuben Haas. Aside for the RaShaSh's above-noted siddur, Haas teamed up with Ze'ev Wolf Ashkenazi to bring several of HaARI's works to press.¹⁰³ Moreover, he printed another edition of *Sefer Sha'ar haGilgulim*

99 Vital, *Sefer Sha'arei Qedusha* (1926); Cordovero, *Sefer Tomer Dvora* (1928).

100 For bibliographical information on Leventhal, see Tidhar, *Encyclopedia of the Pioneers*, vol. 9, 3255–3256; Ben Menachem, "Kitvei Rabbi Ḥayim Vital," 281–282.

101 Vital, *Sefer 'Eṣ haDa'at Tov* (1906). The publisher unfurls all the details behind the manuscript's procurement in the opening pages of the book. Only a few years ago, the manuscript was re-discovered and published *in toto*: *Sefer 'Eṣ haDa'at Tov 'al Masekhet Avot* (2007); *Sefer 'Eṣ haDa'at Tov* (2008).

102 Vital, *Sefer 'Eṣ haDa'at Tov* (1906). The following passage captures the essence of R. Kook's approval: "And the merit of our holy master, the rabbi Hayyim Vital shall stand behind all those advancing this labor of the heavens to shine a new light, a light that already was over Zion, for all its beauty, from the most delightful and beloved Torah of Eretz Yisrael that emanates from the Holy of Holies, our divine rabbi of blessed memory who is a resident of honor in our Land, the coveted Land, may it be built and instituted in our day amen. May these new rays of its light join the myriad brooks of sacred anointing oil that have been stockpiled among us from time immemorial, to add precious light of honor on Zion and its scriptures; and all the prophets are destined, without exception, to recite a song in unison, as it is said Hark! Your watchmen raise their voices, as one they shout for joy [Isaiah 52:8]."

103 Vital, *HaSha'ar haRev'i, Sha'ar haPsuqim* (1912); idem, *HaSha'ar haRev'i, Sefer haLiquitim* (1913).

with Sasson ben Moshe's comments, only ten years after Beit El released an identical one.¹⁰⁴

- [d] R. Uri Isaac Kadish (ob. 1911). A Hasidic kabbalist, Kadish was among the students of Yehoshua Rokeach (the grand rabbi of Belz) and taught in Jerusalem's Ḥayei Olam Yeshiva. He anonymously printed *Minhagei haARI* as well as a compendium of texts from various books on the kabbalah.¹⁰⁵

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Massoud Alhadad HaKohen's *Sefer Simḥat Kohen* (1921), which includes responsa on the output of HaARI and the RaShaSh, epitomizes the importance of these same texts to the city's kabbalists. With the objective of enhancing his book, Beit El's rosh yeshiva incorporated a manuscript containing a homiletic work on Lurianic thought that he found in the seminary's archives: "And to adorn my book," Alhadad wrote on the cover, "I presented in the beginning the holy book *Drosh Heftziba* by our holy rabbi, Hayyim Vital, which was hitherto stored in a manuscript that an eye has not gazed upon."¹⁰⁶ *Sefer Simḥat Kohen* includes approvals by its publisher's colleagues at the Beit El Yeshiva (one bears the signatures of Nahman Angil, Avraham Bijajo, Avraham Azriel, Yitzchak Alfiyah, and Shalom Hedaya). It also merited approvals from Rabbi Sonnenfeld and the tandem of Halperin and Ashkenazi. The latter two expressed feelings that were certainly shared by all the players who endeavored to bring these sort of manuscripts to light: "In this orphaned generation, the last of an orphan among orphans, [God] went out of His way to astonish and injected in the heart of kings, [the will] to publish mysteries of wisdom from the wisdom of truth."¹⁰⁷

Not only were works by HaARI published anew in Jerusalem during the years in question, but a wide range of commentaries on his thought made their debut in print. For example, in 1910, R. Isaac Suisse put out a manuscript of Moshe ben Yitzchak Tzur's *Sefer Ma'arat Sde haMakhpela*, which was proofread by

104 Vital, *Sefer Sha'ar haGilgulim* (1912); idem, *HaSha'ar haShmini, Sha'ar haGilgulim* (1903). Haas essentially printed the same exact book, without the approvals.

105 Kadish, *Sefer Petora deAba veHu Minhagei haARI* (1905); idem, *Sefer Meorei Sīyon* (1911). See Porush, *Ensiqlopediya leḤasidut*, vol. 1, 246–247; Margalioṭ, *AZaMeR beShavkhin*, 5–7. Among his students at Ḥayei Olam was RYAZ Margalioṭ.

106 *Drosh Heḥṣiba* was spread out over two manuscripts, which were held in the yeshiva's archives and in the Moussaieff collection, respectively; *Sefer Simḥat Kohen*, 1a–20b. Gershon Scholem demonstrated that it was written by Josef ibn Tabul: Scholem, *Lurianic Kabbalah*, 282–283; Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, vol. 2, 289.

107 HaKohen, *Sefer Simḥat Kohen*, Introduction.

R. Yom Tov Yedid Halevi. Tzur (ob. 1706), one of the more distinguished Moroccan kabbalists, also authored other works that pertain to Jewish mysticism, such as a book of poetry in the kabbalah spirit. Some of these texts are only extant in manuscript form.¹⁰⁸

Taking the form of a poem with 138 stanzas, *Sefer Ma'arat Sde haMakhpela*, is an abridged version of the introduction to Hayyim Vital's *Sefer Ošrot Hayyim*; it also features two commentaries. Attached to the beginning of this work is a poem titled *Eš Hayyim* beseeching the Almighty to lend a hand to anyone that delves into the kabbalah literature, particularly this book. Among the many figures to contribute approvals were the heads of Rehovot haNahar (Dweck-HaKohen, Lag'imi, Antebbi, and Yom Tov Yedid Halevi), Yosef Haim Zonnenfeld, and Halperin. All of them deemed the book to be a fine introduction to and trustworthy summary of the kabbalah that facilitates the immersion of advanced practitioners.¹⁰⁹ Against this backdrop, it comes as no surprise that the book was reprinted that very same year, albeit in an abridged format, "without its commentaries, so that it will be easy for a person to carry it in his bosom for the sake of recitation on Shabbat and festival eves."¹¹⁰

Dweck-HaKohen, Antebbi, and Halevi co-wrote an approval for this edition that sings Tzur's praises: "In his esteemed and elevated wisdom, he incorporated the wisdom of the kabbalah's guidelines in the refinement of poetry and music." Leaning on the kabbalist Mordechai Abadi's book of poetry, *Sefer Dirvrei Mordekha* (Şoba, 1873), they gushed at the wherewithal of kabbalistic poems to "do away with the peals [i.e., spiritual impurities], the dark side, and all the abominable spirits."¹¹¹ Abadi, who was one of Dweck-HaKohen's

108 One of the more interesting works that he authored is a book of poetry by the name of *Sefer Şilşelei Shem'a* (Alexandria, 1892). Many of its poems adhere to the principles of kabbalah. On the author and his books, see Toledano, *Ner haMa'arav*, 157–158; ben Nayim, *Malkhei Rabanan*, 91b–92a; Zafrani, *Hebrew Poetry in Morocco*, 72–78, 83–84, 129–134; Ben Menachem, "Kitvei Rabbi Hayyim Vital," 383–386; Hallamish, *Kabbalah in North Africa*, 50–51. The Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts holds quite a few of Tzur's own works as well as Lurianic texts that he copied.

109 Tsur, *Sefer Ma'arat Sde haMakhpela*, with two Commentaries. In his approval, Elijah Moses Panigel wrote that the book's "guidelines to the true wisdom" are arranged with "marvelous wisdom and robust brevity." There is no doubt that "they will become the shoptalk of those who understand a thing or two about this sacred wisdom – the Torah of kabbalah." In the same breath, he also recommends that beginners acquire this work.

110 Tsur, *Sefer Ma'arat Sde haMakhpela*. This citation is taken from an approval in this edition by rabbis from Allepo.

111 Ibid., 2–4. This is a paraphrase of a known article by Joseph ben Abraham Gikatilla ("Sha'are Orah," 3b–4a). It homiletically interprets the religious songs (*zmirot*) that King David composed as pruning shears (*mazmerot*) for cutting down the forces of evil.

kabbalah teachers, expounded on “the virtue” of these sort of poems *vis-à-vis* popular love songs. Likewise, he repeatedly cited excerpts from R. Nahman of Bratslav glorifying music and poetry.¹¹² Thereafter, Abadi drew a correlation between “the holy poetry” and HaARI’s writing.

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In researching the dissemination of the Lurianic corpus in the early twentieth century, it is incumbent upon us to take full stock of all the germane output on HaARI and Hayyim Vital – be it collections of their own works, books citing their thought, or commentaries – that were compiled and/or penned during these years by the likes of Shlomo Elyashiv, Shlomo Maharil, Yehuda Leib Ashlag (who has already merited an exhaustive study), and Yehuda Fetayah. In fact, the latter saw his commentary on *Sefer Eṣ Ḥayyim* as a sort of Rashi-like exegesis on Lurianic thought. In Fetayah’s estimation, such a work had yet to emerge because most of the books on this topic are rife with sophisticated interpretations solely intended for savants:

Even, all those learning [kabbalah] do not find peace of mind in the words of the commentators, for their [i.e., the commentators] entire objective is merely to reconcile those places that appear to contradict one another, such as the *Tosafot*. In those few places where they do explain the intention of the rabbi [Luria], it is not enough for beginners. And from the days of the rabbi to the current era, we have not merited a single exegete that will interpret for us the content of this sealed book in a coherent and pithy manner like Rashi. And this reason caused, due to our many sins, the abrogation of this great commandment and the [interminable] length of this poignant and precipitous exile. In consequence, the true wisdom went missing, thrown in the corner, and not one student reaches the end of the staff in his hand so as to taste its sweet nectar.¹¹³

In writing his commentary, Fetayah laid the groundwork for a more coherent understanding of the Lurianic gospel, thereby distancing himself to some extent from the intenders that followed in the RaShaSh’s footsteps.¹¹⁴

112 Abadi, *Sefer Dirvrei Mordekhai*, 25b–28a. Also see Pozailov, *The Great Rabbis of Syria*, 127–147.

113 Fetayah, *Sefer Beit Leḥem Yehuda*, vol. 1, 1a.

114 See *ibid*, 1b–2a. He approached the Zoharic literature in a similar fashion; *idem*, *Idra Raba ’im Peirush Yeyn haRoqah*. This outlook had a substantial impact on R. Daniel Frisch (1935–2005), the author of *Matok miDvash* – a commentary on the Zohar. In recent years,

Most of the agents of this culture indeed refrained from constructing systematic explanations of their approach. That said, their extensive efforts to print HaARI's works shed considerable light on the dissemination of kabbalah wisdom in Jerusalem during the early 1900s and on the importance of this corpus to the seminaries under review. The Lurianic literature was intended for Torah scholars that immersed themselves in the concealed Torah. For his part, Halperin operated within the framework of and put out the books primarily for the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva. Nevertheless, his enterprise reverberated well beyond this institution's walls. As is evident from the introductions and approvals to these works, Halperin was in touch with scores of kabbalists around the world. The printing of the RaShaSh's siddur and writing by Hayyim Vital catered, both in theory and in practice, to all of Jerusalem's kabbalists. Put differently, they were all dependent on and availed themselves of these texts, which dovetailed neatly with their circles' ideology. In 1923, Horowitz summarized his and Sha'ar haShamayim's cumulative achievements as a success. Among the key factors behind this upbeat assessment were the aforementioned printing projects:

And behold, with the help of God, to this day I have given everything I have to my enterprise concerning the holy matter of kabbalah study. I compiled works to cajole my brethren in all the places of their dispersion to take up this sacred learning, and I established regular classes to teach this sacred wisdom to Torah scholars, geniuses, and saints, rabbis and sages – we founded the holy yeshiva of Sha'ar haShamayim for this sacred end. Blessed be God that this sacred wisdom has grown in all the circles of Torah scholars, in the Holy Land and abroad as well, by means of the holy books that we printed and distributed free of charge.¹¹⁵

The printing enterprise in question was not only unprecedented in scope, but was animated by a conspicuous intensity of purpose. In many respects, its output heralded the printing waves during the latter half of the 1900s and the concomitant and equally determined efforts to produce commentaries and render translations of the Zoharic and Lurianic corpora as well as the RaShaSh's works. The early twentieth-century works were essentially rejuvenated; and in the days to come would transcend the borders of Judaism. Although the dynamics between revelation and concealment have always been the preserve of

this work has triggered unprecedented interest in the Zoharian literature; Frisch, *Sefer Sha'arei haZohar*, 239–240.

115 Horowitz, *Sefer Qol Mevasser*, Introduction.

the kabbalah leadership, the printing initiatives in the early twentieth century brought down the barriers separating the elite from the masses. As a result, it will no longer be possible to stash away the entire corpus of Jewish mysticism in the vaults of a single yeshiva in Jerusalem's Old City. This undertaking was not only an expression of its publishers' authority, but a capitulation of that same power, for the kabbalah was released into the public domain.

Practicing Kabbalah: The Tikkunim Literature

The RaShaSh's devotees, in Gershom Scholem's estimation, had brought the kabbalah back to square one: "a genuine esoterism, a kind of mystery-religion which tries to keep the *profanum vulgus* at arm's length." Accordingly, he claimed that one would be hard-pressed to find so much as a single work by kabbalists from "the lands of the East that someone from the outside is likely to comprehend."¹ These statements accurately reflect the intricate explanations on Lurianic and Sharabian thought and the literature surrounding the RaShaSh's siddur, but miss the mark in all that concerns these same kabbalists' attitude towards the general public. Their attempts to persuade traditional Jewry to embrace the Zoharic literature and attend *tshuva* vigils and other rituals also shed light on how the former viewed themselves. While part of the kabbalah indeed remained the sole preserve of a select few that devoted most of its time to studying this body of knowledge, some facets of this wisdom were channeled to the "*profanum vulgus*." The main protagonists of this story were an insular elite that was neither bent on returning the kabbalah to its esoteric "ivory tower" nor inclined to wipe its hands clean of responsibility for the community at large. Instead, the kabbalists of Jerusalem genuinely sought to involve the average traditional Jew in deeper strata of Jewish life. Over the course of this chapter, we will focus on three aspects of this outreach: the call to study the Zohar; the dissemination of the *tikkunim* (rectification or, more generally, vigil) literature; and the holding of special prayer ceremonies. To begin with, though, we will take stock of another major element of the yeshivot's turn to the masses – fundraising.

Support for the Kabbalah Seminaries and the Turn to the General Public

The Land-of-Israel kabbalah seminaries adopted, what was for them, unprecedented means for disseminating Jewish esoteric wisdom and interacting with the outside world. All the yeshivot's leaders clamored for the traditional public to return to the Zohar and take part in a *mélange* of *tshuva* vigils. However, these calls were not tantamount to unfettered exotericism. On more than one

¹ Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 329.

occasion, it even appeared that their ultimate goal was for Jews to support full-time kabbalists and *mekhavnim*. In essence, there were two dimensions to the seminaries' outreach: the solicitation of financial support; and the dissemination of various rituals and vigils that the hoi polloi were asked to perform.

All of the seminaries under review promised donors a long row of wonders and miracles. For instance, as we have already seen, Rehovot haNahar and the Emet veShalom Yeshiva made reference to various talismans, cures, and special prayers in their fundraising appeals. In 1921, the Yagdil Torah Synagogue and Yeshiva for Damascus Jews in Jerusalem, which had several resident kabbalists who were close to Dweck-HaKohen, offered similar services.² Sha'ar haShamayim promised to pray on behalf of regular supporters and annually commemorate the memory of those who had passed on. Moreover, they tendered special prayers at holy sites and issued "membership" cards in return for largess.³ The masses were also invited to take part in the seminary's Lag baOmer festivities: "It is a holy *yoma de'hillulah* [anniversary of the death] of the divine *tanna* Simeon bar Yochai" on which special prayers will be held by the tombs of the prophets, Sanhedrin members, and the rest of the "world's forefathers. At the hour of the judgement's arousal, all the sextons, members, and supporters of our yeshiva will be remembered in the prayers of saints, each person by name, in order to awaken on their behalf mercy from the source of mercy by virtue of their ardor for this holy commandment."⁴ The seminary's general ledgers indeed record expenditures on trips to Rachel's Tomb and the Western Wall for the purpose of reciting prayers. Moreover, these sources account for outlays that pertain to various requests from donors: the preparation of charms and remedies; the shipment of kabbalah books, etrogs, and silk prayer shawls; and the conferral of various gifts, such as maps of the Land of Israel and calendars.⁵ Some of the appeals that were regularly sent to Europe and America contained talismans. "Attached to the letter of testimony," one

² Ma'aravi, *Beit haKneset yeYeshivat Yagdil Tora*, 10–13.

³ Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Hotam Tokhnit* (1912), 149; idem, *Account Books*, 1908–1922 (MS), vol. 1, 6.

⁴ Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Invitation to the Lag baOmer Festivities* (MS).

⁵ The yeshiva's general ledgers shed light on all these activities. On trips to holy places, see Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Account Books*, 1908–1922 (MS), vol. 1, 3, 41, 56, 84. For the preparation of amulets and talismans, see *ibid.*, 12, 31, 49. On the shipment of kabbalah books, see *ibid.*, 12, 31, 35, 49. On the fulfilment of various requests, see *ibid.*, 41. On gifts to donors, see *ibid.*, 3. Even before Sha'ar haShamayim's establishment, Horowitz wanted to print a book containing "marvelous *segulot* [talsimen or folk remedies] and cures for all sorts of ailments, heaven forbid, from sacred manuscripts," but he did not manage to see this plan through; Horowitz, *Or haMeir yeQol Mevasser*, introduction.

such request declared, “is a potent amulet [devised] in accordance to sacred writings by the greatest of the kabbalists, which must be stored like articles of holiness, and it is conducive to peace and success in his home, physical health, and longevity until the coming of Yinon [i.e., messiah] swiftly in our time amen.”⁶ In addition, the yeshiva sent copies of *Tfilat Sha’ar haShamayim* (Prayer of Sha’ar haShamayim, a compendium of prayers) to 700 addresses in Europe along with a request for support.⁷

The notion that the general public is obligated to help the seminaries was epitomized by *Sefer Yiśakhar uZevulun* (Issachar and Zebulun), a book that was circulated among Jerusalem’s kabbalists in 1913.⁸ The anonymous author is Aharon ’Eli ha-Kohen Tawil of Aleppo (ob. 1916), who reached Palestine towards the end of his life and joined the ranks of Rehovot haNahar. Moreover, there is reason to believe that he temporarily served as a resident scholar at Sha’ar haShamayim.⁹ The preamble well reflects the book’s content: “Words from the holy Zohar, *Tikkunei Zohar*, and midrashes in praise of one that reaches the stature of holding the hand of those studying Torah. How great is the attribute of righteousness of those toiling on the Torah, the praise of the kabbalah wisdom, the praises of the holy HaARI, and the praises of our mentor and rabbi, the rabbi Master Shalom Sharabi.” *Sefer Yiśakhar uZevulun* stands out not only for its broad call to assist the kabbalah seminaries in Jerusalem, but its plaudits for the RaShaSh. That said, its main objective was to drum up support for Torah scholars, along the lines of Jacob the Patriarch’s son Zebulun (the rich merchant), who according to *Genesis Rabbah* provided for the livelihood of his brother Issachar (the sage). In this respect, the book resembled a slew of others that came out at around this time, like *Sefer Shalom laAm* (Shalom for the People) by the kabbalist Shalom Hedaya (who went on to head the Beit El

6 Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva, Letter, 1912 (MS).

7 Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Account Books*, 1908–1922 (MS), vol. 1, 4.

8 Tawil, *Sefer Yiśakhar uZevulun*; reprinted in Kassir, *Quntres Pri Eš haGan*, 1–22, 51–56.

9 The book’s author was revealed by Kassir in *ibid.*, 56: “Even if it is not mentioned on the book’s cover, we nevertheless assuredly knew that he [the writer] was the rabbi and Hasid our honorable teacher and rabbi, the rabbi R. Aharon ’Eli ha-Kohen Tawil, and he was among the rabbis of Aleppo. Towards the end [of his life], he established his residency in Jerusalem. [He spent] many years and [earned] adoration in the community of Hasids in the synagogue of intenders from previous generations in the days of our forefathers. Owing to his ample modesty, he did not want to mention his good name and use the title ‘author.’” For more on Tawil, see Laniado, *laQedoshim asher baAReš*, 54; Sutton, *Aleppo*, 345–346. According to Sha’ar haShamayim’s financial statements, he received support from the institution at around the year 1914; Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Account Books*, 1908–1922 (MS), vol. 1.

Yeshiva).¹⁰ As previously noted, the seminaries' turn to the public at large had many other facets.

The Call to Study the Zohar and Conduct the Zemah Tikkun

In contrast to the warnings and restrictions for those praying with intentions or immersing themselves in the works of HaARI and the RaShaSh, every individual with a Toranic background was exhorted to study the Zohar while hewing to a simple and coherent reading of this work. It is in this spirit that Horowitz wrote his earlier, 1906 book *Or haMeir yeQol Mevaser* as well as his last one, *Sanigoriya*, which came out in 1940. Both works urge traditional Jews to occupy themselves with kabbalah literature, not least the Zohar, for at least one hour a day.¹¹ In this context, Auerbach's encomium of the translation and abridged version of the Zohar that was produced by one Yehudah Yudel Rosenberg bears notice. The latter endeavored to spread a particular facet of the Zohar among the masses. Rosenberg's rendering comported with Sha'ar haShamayim's exoteric objectives, the purview of which extended beyond the limited circle of kabbalah seminarians in Jerusalem.¹² In this context, Horowitz's yeshiva planned to publish a translation of the entire Zohar, which would be targeted at readers unfamiliar with the Aramaic language in the original. For reasons unknown, this project was ultimately shelved.¹³

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- 10 These books are discussed in Zohar, *Tradition and Change*, 64–68. *Shalom laAm* was reprinted, along with biographic details about its author, in the early twenty-first century; *Shalom laAm* (2004).
- 11 Horowitz, *Or haMeir yeQol Mevaser*; idem, *Sanigoriya*, 37–43. This call resurfaces in a citation of Horowitz's words in Shrem, *Sefer Sha'arei Rahamim*, 4a. A similar motive can be discerned in a call of awakening that Rehovot haNahar released back in 1904. See the end of Mishan, *Sefer Sfat Emet*.
- 12 The scope may be discerned from between the lines of Shlomo Zalman Auerbach's letter to Rosenberg in 1935: "I hereby pay thanks to him on his copying of the sacred Zohar into the holy tongue and also on his beautiful arrangement according to the portions. My father and illuminator [R. Chaim Yehuda Leib Auerbach], when he was in the US received them as a present; and whenever I read from them, they cause me great pleasure," Auerbach, Letter to Rosenberg (MS); Robinson, "Halakha," 46. For more on Rosenberg and his translation of the Zohar, see idem, "Kabbalist and Communal Leader," 41–58; idem, "Literary Forgery," 61–78; Huss, "The Translations of the Zohar," 73–75, 81; Meir, "Hillel Zeitlin's Zohar," 145.
- 13 "Yerushalayim Yom Yom," 3. In 1931, Ben Hillel HaKohen, a secular Zionist, suggested that the Hebrew University should help the Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva carry out this project. Furthermore, the academic institution would commission scholars to translate

Throughout the first half of the 1900s, many parts of the Zoharian literature were brought to press in Jerusalem. However, with the exception of a vocalized pocket edition of the Livorno Zohar by B. Cohen (1928)¹⁴ as well as the unabridged editions of Yehuda Leib Ashlag (1943–1953) and Reuven Margaliot (1940–1946), the city's publishers refrained from putting out the text in its entirety throughout these decades. It is evident, then, that most kabbalists were availing themselves of earlier, widely-available print editions from abroad.¹⁵

In early twentieth-century Jerusalem, many kabbalists urged the *hoi polloi* to learn a few pages of the Zohar on a daily basis. To this end, various learning groups took form. The main catalysts behind this enterprise were the sages of Rehovot haNahar and their ilk. A 1921 notice informs the Jerusalem public of the establishment of *Ḥevrah Mezakeh haRabim* (the Privilege the Majority Association), whose mandate was, *inter alia*, to spread the Zohar among traditional Jews. Furthermore, it undertook to have this book studied from cover to cover 1,000 times within a single year, on the assumption that the redemption is tarrying due to neglect for the concealed Torah:

All learning of the Zohar arouses mercy and the soul of the Messiah [*sic*]. He will be revealed and build the Temple, and the Jewish people will dwell securely. In addition, one who studies it is certain not to endure suffering from the pangs of the Messiah. For this reason, we the sages and rabbis of the holy city of Jerusalem, and [Jewish] courts have roused up to lay the foundation for learning the Zohar in the Land and overseas for the purpose of completing the Book of Zohar. The consummation is called for the 22nd of Elul – the day of the world's creation – may it bring us good tidings. They shall learn the Zohar and the *Tikkunei Zohar* a thousand times as per the secret of the thousand for you [King] Solomon [Song of Songs 8:12]. Therefore, we call upon you our brethren – sages, rabbis, merchants, householders, craftsmen – to strengthen and muster courage [in order] to take part [in this enterprise] with us. The weak shall say Brave am I and join this group, and everyone will snatch up a piece of

the Zohar and write popular introductions to the kabbalah literature; Ben Hillel HaKohen, *Atkhalta*, 175.

14 The publisher's activity in the field of Jewish esoteric wisdom is discussed in Meir, "Hillel Zeitlin's *Zohar*," 150.

15 For criticism of narrow socio-cultural readings on the basis of sundry local print versions, see Yudlov, "Al Sefarim," 548.

the Zohar and learn some pages as per the arrangement given to you by the sextons.¹⁶

Affixing their approvals to this communication were Yitzhak Yerucham Diskin, Abraham Isaac Kook, Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld, Haim Moshe Eliashar, and Yosef Chaim HaCohen. In all likelihood, this undertaking was initiated by the sages of Rehovot haNahar; and as usual, Nissim Nahum covered the printing expenses.¹⁷ That same year, another notice of this sort was released, containing new approvals from Diskin, Kook, Zonnenfeld, and Chief Rabbi Yaakov Meir.¹⁸ Mizakeh haRabim's heads could vouch for 600 "completions" of the Zohar. Hence, the society rushed to print out a second notice cajoling devotees to finish the remaining 400. In parallel, Yehuda Hadad (Porat Yosef Yeshiva's spiritual guide) oversaw the formation of a similar group, *Ḥevrat Rashbi* (the RSBY Society), whose denizens – merchants, shopkeepers, and laborers – dedicated four hours every Sabbath to studying the Zohar.¹⁹

Another group, by the name of *Ḥevrat Tikkun Zemah* (the Zemah Tikkun Society), whose sextons included several of Rehovot haNahar's kabbalists (Yom Tov Yedid Halevi, Aaron Harari-Rafal, and Haim ben Sa'adia) reprinted *Sefer Şemah Şadiq* in 1911.²⁰ First published in Izmir back in 1734, new editions of this book were released throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Salonica and Livorno. Drawing heavily on a learning arrangement put forth in *Sefer Ḥemdat Yamim*, this venerable work is, first and foremost, a compendium of passages from the Zoharian literature on the concept of the *şadiq* (saint or righteous person). This collection targeted the members of special reading and study groups that convened on *leil shishi* (the night before Friday).²¹ In the introduction to the new edition, the above-mentioned sextons heaped praise on

16 "Tikkun laGeula haAmitit," 1921 (announcement); reprinted in Kassin, *Sefer Pri Eş haGan*, 83–85.

17 It stands to reason that the catalyst behind this initiative was R. Avraham Ades (1858–1925), a habitu  of Rehovot haNahar. For on this figure, see Kassin, *ibid*, 63–74; Gaon, *Oriental Jews*, vol. 2, 497; Munseh, *Pada et Avraham*, vol. 1, 418–419; Gilkrov, *Heh'ir haMizrah*, vol. 1, 11–53.

18 "Tikkun laGeula haAmitit (2)," 1921 (announcement). Reprinted in Kassin, *Sefer Pri Eş haGan*, 85–87; Kluger, *Min haMaqor*, vol. 4, 62; Tzurriel, *Oşrot haRAIaH*, vol. 2, 257.

19 Munseh, *Pada et Avraham*, vol. 1, 433–434; vol. 2, 348. R. Dovid Mordecai Robinfein headed up a similar association: *Ḥevrat Zohar veTehilim*; see *Sefer haTqanot shel Ḥevrat Ahavat Re'im*, (1932).

20 *Şemah Şadiq: Seder Krī'a* (1911).

21 *Leilot shishi* are literally "Friday nights." Since Hebrew days commence at nightfall of the previous day, these groups convened on what is usually referred to as "Thursday nights."

those studying the Zohar. Unlike all the previous editions, though, no trace of *Sefer Hemdat Yamim* was left on the book's cover.²² It stands to reason that the polemics over this source a couple of years earlier is responsible for the lack of a citation. Be that as it may, Jerusalem's kabbalists not only continued to study this controversial work, but held vigils that derive thereof. In the foreword to *Şemaḥ Şadiq*, the publishers referred to the duty of learning on *leil shishi* as per the framework established by Jacob ben Hayyim Zemah. Moreover, this custom was tied to the old-new learning arrangement from *Hemdat Yamim*: "The students will consecrate themselves via and the listeners will comprehend the learning on *leil shishi* when everyone has already been accustomed to recite the Zemah Vigil and there [in Jacob Zemah's *Nagid u-Mezawweh*] the extent of the utility of studying early Friday morning within the framework of the *tikkun brit kodesh* [holy covenant vigil] is explained."²³

Regardless of the template, Thursday-night learning was indeed commonplace in Jerusalem.²⁴ In around 1909, the kabbalist Yitzchak Alfiyah established a society by the name of Or Hadash ve'Zemaḥ Şadiq in which householders read from the Zohar on a regular basis and conducted the Zemah Vigil (*tikkun zemah*) once a week.²⁵ As Alfiyah put it, "Thank God, our plans has [*sic*] come to fruition and the students who learn the Righteous Zemah Tikkun [at our program] every night, especially on *leil shishi* have multiplied. Thanks to the exalted Lord, from then and until now, we have remained on our guard."²⁶ According to a 1922 pamphlet describing the activities of Sha'ar haShamayim's resident kabbalists, they "cogitate day and night over kabbalah books and hold important *tikkunim*," including "the Zemah Vigil every Thursday."²⁷ Alternatively, some *leil shishi* groups eschewed *Sefer Şemaḥ Şadiq* for sections of the Zohar

22 Various editions of *Şemaḥ Şadiq* are discussed in Ya'ari, "Sifrei Tiquim," 100, 256–258. Ya'ari did not list the 1911 edition, but pointed to the fact that some of the earlier print versions were intended for these sort of groups; *ibid*, 103–104.

23 *Şemaḥ Şadiq: Seder Kri'a* (1911), Introduction. For more on *leil shishi* programs, the Tikkun Zemah, and the book under review, see Hallamish, *Kabbalistic Customs*, 67–71. Several of these *tikkunim* will be explored in the next section.

24 The Beit El Yeshiva's *leil shishi* programs are discussed in Afg'in, *Divrei Shalom*, vol. 4, 148–151; Moskowitz, *Hayei haRashash*, 90–91. Antibbi cites evidence of Zemah Vigils that were conducted in Baghdad in Antibbi, *Sefer Hokhma yeMusar*, 6.

25 Hēvrat Or Hādash ve'Şemaḥ Şadik, Official Letter (MS). For more on this association, see the words of David Yehudayoff in Alfiyah, *Sefer Or Hādash ve'Şemaḥ Şadiq*, 11–47; Kashani, "ve'haMequbalim Hayu baAres," 17; Haibi, *'Anaq haRuah*, 97–98. Ezra haMenahem portrayed this group in one of his stories; *idem*, *Sipurei halr haAtiqa*, 88–89.

26 Alfiyah, *Sefer Siyah Yişhaq*, 47.

27 Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Şa'aqat Bnei Yisrael uBaqaşat Raḥamim*, 6.

that are included in different versions of *tikkun karet* and *tikkun ha'yesod* (both of which are examined in the next section).

It is against this backdrop that the Bukharan sages brought to press the following works: *Hoq leYisrael*;²⁸ parts of the Zoharian literature and commentaries that were customarily read out loud on, say, different holidays (above all, various editions of the *Idarot*, “exultations,” and collections in the run up to Lag baOmer);²⁹ some Kabbalistic works by Yehuda Fetayah, Yeshaya Asher Zelig Margalioṭ, and Ashlag;³⁰ and several unabridged editions of *Tiqunei haZohar*, annotated or otherwise.³¹ The intended audience for these books was the Jewish community in both the Land of Israel and the Diaspora. As stated on the cover of the 1897 Jerusalem edition of *Tiqunei haZohar*, the book was produced “in large, square letters and exclamation marks so that” the reader, be it “a youth or elderly person, a learned person or a simpleton, darkness and light are the same, shall run.”³²

Of particular note is an edition of *Tiqunei haZohar* with a Lurianic commentary by Khalfa ben Eliyahu Guedj (ob. 1916), who arrived in the Land of Israel towards the end of his lifetime and studied at the Beit El Yeshiva until

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- 28 *Hoq leYisrael* (1919). Before bringing this book to press, Avraham Aminoff circulated a fundraising appeal. Among the financial contributors were the Moussaieff, Davidoff, and Tzofioff families. Aminof, “Shalom Rav,” 1910 (announcement). For information on *Hoq leYisrael*, see Gries, *The Book*, 79–80; idem, “Copying and Printing of Kabbalistic Books,” 210–211.
- 29 For instance, *Hadrat Zkeinim* (1913), including the *Idrot*, and *Seder Tikkun Ḥaṣot* were reprinted in the same volume. Yitzhak Nissim put out a small booklet (8 cm) on fine paper. The work contained *Seder Idra Rabba* – a program for the night of the Festival of Weeks – and *pizmonim* in honor of Simeon bar Yochai; see *Seder Idra Raba yeHi Nisdera leLeil Shavu'ot* (1910). Likewise, the Bukharians put out a collection titled *Zohar leShabat* (1938).
- 30 Fetayah, *Zohar Saba deMishpatim*; Margalioṭ, *Sefer Idra Qadisha*; Ashlag, *Sefer Idra Zuta*. The latter was printed especially for pilgrims to Meiron on Lag baOmer.
- 31 *Tiqunei haZohar*, with the commentary Benayahu, was printed in 1903, thanks to the lobbying efforts of the brothers Yisrael, Nethanel, and Binyamin Shauloff. The book was brought to print by Ben-Zion Mordechai Hazan. Another edition of *Tiqunei haZohar* was printed at the Shmuel Zukerman Press in Jerusalem 1909 by Yisrael, Binyamin, and Yaakov Haim Shauloff. By virtue of its ample font size and diacritical marks, this edition is eminently readable. According to the publishers, the Benayahu commentary on the *Tikkunim* was next in line for publication, but they were unable to honor their commitment. In 1903, the same brothers also printed a vigil, *Pri Eṣ Hadar*, that is also based on *Sefer Hemdat Yamim*. See Ya'ari, “Sifrei Tiquanim,” 99–100, 254.
- 32 *Tiqunei haZohar* (1897). For more on this edition, see Pozailov, *From Bukhara to Jerusalem*, 44–45.

his passing. Published in Jerusalem between 1907 and 1909 under the title *Sefer KeGAN haYaraq*, the book merited dozens of approvals from the rabbis of Jerusalem, Hebron, Kushta (Istanbul), Salonica, Pressburg (Bratislava), Tunis, Vienna, and Cairo. Among the rabbis who contributed approvals were the sages of Beit El and Rehovot haNahar as well as Menahem Menkhin Halperin of Sha'ar haShamayim and the Hasid-cum-practical kabbalist Alter Noah HaCohen.³³ Upon its release, a notice was circulated in Jerusalem informing residents of the new book. In addition, the authors claimed that studying the Zohar would hasten the redemption and that every Jew is obliged “to study from this book of Torah by the RSBY, be it a genius, great rabbi, scholar, one of the masses, or a little boy that has reached the [age of] education.”³⁴ The host of approvals for *Sefer KeGAN haYaraq* is indicative of the popularity of Lurianic commentaries on the Zohar and of the cooperation between disparate kabbalists on the printing enterprise under review. These calls for the general public to “return” to the Zoharian literature and the attendant developments illustrate how Jerusalem’s kabbalists perceived the other members of traditional society.

The Tikkunim Literature and the Midnight Vigil

The kabbalah seminaries’ turn to the public at large included many and manifold elements. All the yeshivot exhorted traditional Jews to learn Torah and perform various rituals, including those that the institution hosted, such as public vigils and prayers. Shimon Zvi Horowitz put out a few pamphlets containing the liturgy of vigils and prayers that were held within the framework of Sha'ar haShamayim.³⁵ Likewise, Rehovot haNahar’s sages, particularly Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen and Eliyahu Yaakov Lag’imi, printed a substantial number of *tikkunim* that drew heavily on the output of HaARI and the Ra-ShaSh.³⁶ The most notable vigils were *tikkun karet* (the Excision Vigil), special rectifications for the first day of a new month, Lag baOmer, and the Festival of Weeks, *tikkun haṣot* (the Midnight Vigil/Prayers), *tikkun ha'brit* (the Covenant

33 Guedj, *Sefer KeGAN haYaraq*. Years later, his grandchildren put out another volume of this work. Taken from a manuscript version, this volume includes commentaries and homiletic interpretations on the Lurianic approach to kabbalah; idem, *Sefer keGAN Raveh*.

34 Guedj, “HaYom Yom Besora,” undated (announcement).

35 See *Sefer Ṣa'aqat Bnei Yisrael Kolel Slihot yeTfilot* (1910); *Tefilat Sha'ar haShamayim, Sod Baqashat Raḥamim* (1910); Horowitz, *Seder Pidyon Shvuim haKlali*; idem, *Sod Haqafot Yehoshua*; idem, *Sanigoriya*.

36 Dweck-HaKohen and Lag’imi, *Sefer Sar Shalom*; idem, *Sefer Kayanot Pratiyot*; idem, *Sefer Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, vols. 1–2.

Vigil), and those for *yemei ha'shovavim* (the consecutive Sabbaths in which the first six portions the Book of Exodus are read). A full description of the era's popular *tikkunim* is beyond the scope of this book. However, we will expand on several of those that shed light on the prevailing atmosphere at Jerusalem's kabbalah circles.³⁷

One of Jerusalem's best attended *tikkunim* was the Midnight Vigil. The various arrangements of this ceremony were printed, above all, by the city's kabbalists.³⁸ Zvi Meroni testified in 1938 that on a daily basis, some 500 kabbalists conducted the *tikkun ḥaṣot* in Jerusalem – a figure that does not cover those held by Hasids and others. Furthermore, Meroni provided a romantic description of Midnight Vigils that he observed on a tour that he gave of the Old City. In the process, he breaks down the *tikkun's* various parts and cites at length from a conversation he had with an elder kabbalist.³⁹ Correspondingly, a few local novelists penned descriptions of these ceremonies in Jerusalem. For instance, a “miraculous tale” that Asher Ben-Israel heard from “the elders of the Sephardim” in 1913 revolves around a *tikkun* that was presided over by the RaShaSh at the Western Wall.⁴⁰ The Midnight Vigil is also the subject of one of Israel Zarchi's fictional works about local Bratslav Hasids.⁴¹ “Different are the ways,” he wrote, “that lead to the *tikkun* prayer and different are the venues of the *tikkun*, but one are the intentions of the heart that seek to draw the redemption closer. In the corner of ancient houses of worship and in inner rooms, in public, and a niche within a niche, each person according to his liturgical style, each person according to his siddur, everyone rectifies themselves with the rectification of midnight.”⁴²

Tikkun ḥaṣot was undoubtedly a major practice, especially among Jerusalem's kabbalists. For instance, societies were established to conduct these vigils

37 On the origins and meaning of the *tikkunim* literature, see Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, 187–258; Nabarro, *Tikkun*.

38 For more on the meaning and provenance of *tikkun ḥaṣot*, see Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, 146–150; Nabarro, *Tikkun*, 85–87, 93–97; Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi*, 140–141; Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 308–320; Magid, “Conjugal Union,” xvii–xlv; Zohar, *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry*, 204–205; Faierstein, *Jewish Customs of Kabbalistic Origin*, 91–93. Also see the English translation and explanations of the practice in Kassin, *Till Eternity*, 400–415.

39 Meroni, *haHolmim beYerushalayim*, 65, 72–74, 95–96, 105–118.

40 Ben Yisrael, “Agadot Yerushalayim: Tiquṅ Ḥaṣot,” 17–18. Myths concerning the RaShaSh's Midnight Vigil were also spread by idem, *Agadot haAreṣ*, vol. 1, 135–138; Alnadaf, *Sridei Teiman*, 5b; Gepner, *Midrasho shel Shem*, 29–36.

41 Zarchi, “Iturey Yerushalayim,” 31–34.

42 Ibid., 32.

and newly-edited versions of their text were brought to print, some of which centered around the RaShaSh's intentions. From the end of the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, numerous editions came out in Baghdad, Livorno, Aleppo, Tunis, Djerba, and various places in East Europe, thereby attesting to the wide scope of this custom. Our chief concern is in the arrangements of this vigil used by Jerusalem's kabbalists and several editions that they brought to press.

One of the most commonplace versions of the Midnight Vigil was arranged by R. Nissim Harari and first published in Jerusalem circa 1878. The book was subsequently printed a few times in Aleppo and Jerusalem, but the most interesting came out in the latter city some three years before the turn of the century. Comprising hundreds of pages, this edition was printed with the support of Beit El's sages.⁴³ Reedited by Yehoshua Tzvi Michal Shapira, a resident kabbalist at the venerable yeshiva, the work includes a sizable commentary.⁴⁴ In an approval by Jacob Saul Elyashar, mention is made of Beit El's kabbalists and the *Ḥevrat Shomrim laBoker* (the Society of Guards for the Morning), which they founded for the purpose of studying and conducting the Midnight Vigil. Most of the known members of this fellowship were part of the nucleus of kabbalists that subsequently founded the Rehovot haNahar Yeshiva: Dweck-Ha-Kohen, Yom Tov Yedid Halevi, Ezra Harari-Raful, Eliezer Mizrahi, Isaac Shrem, and Avraham Azriel. From the introduction of this edition, it is clear that this arrangement was not merely intended for a select few:

We the [spiritual] guides and managers of *Ḥevrat Shomrim laBoker* [are] noticing that our brethren the Jewish people are overburdened with their affairs of making a living by fault of their sin of being plebeians. Their basic foodstuffs are steadily dwindling and are as difficult [to attain] as crossing the Sea of Reeds. One rises early to set out on his way and the other to open his shop in order to see from where his aid will come. Hence, free time does not agree with them [so they are hard-pressed] to set aside regular intervals for Torah. To this end, we have arisen and have motivated ourselves to prod the hearts of our brethren the Jewish people to make this association for the purpose of setting aside [time] for learning from midnight until the day shines through and gathering them to the

43 *Seder Tiqun Ḥaṣot* (1897). Dablitski compiled an expanded second edition; *Seder Tiqun Ḥaṣot*, vols. 1–2 (1972). Beit El's Midnight Vigil customs are discussed in Afg'in, *Sefer Divrei Shalom*, vol. 1, 33–74.

44 For a look at Shapira, see Gepner, *Midrasho shel Shem*, 230–231. Among his most distinguished students were Akiva Porush and Yaakov Moshe Charlap.

great synagogue. For the sake of sparking the students' desire, we have endeavored with all our might to bring text books and [works of] Maimonides, the *Shulhan Arukh*, the Zohar, Mishnas, and Psalms so that everyone will be able to set his [course of] studies in what his heart desires. Moreover, God in heaven will beneficently see to it, in an hour of grace, that students' hearts are aroused. Their hearts will be open like the door of an auditorium to merit the Torah's crown; each person is tested according to his praise – one achieving more, one doing less. All [we ask is] that he direct his heart to the heaven to give satisfaction to our Creator, to lift up the *skhinah* from the dust.⁴⁵

Thereafter, the introduction's author gives thanks to those who foot the bill for candles and “heat coffee and sugar to make things comfortable for the attendees.”

A couple of other fellowships of this sort were established in Jerusalem. Moreover, the vigils were conducted on an individual basis as well. Each group had its own version of the *tikkunim* and suitable learning arrangements. For instance, Sha'ar haShamayim's 1925 program depicts the yeshiva's own framework:

A *minyān* [quorum] of *mekhavvnim* is alternately chosen each and every week. During this time, they remain within the walls of the yeshiva's court, live a life of asceticism and solitariness, and are occupied with Torah and worship. Three times a day, these *mekhavvnim*, who are called “Anshei Mishmar uMa'amad,” recite their prayers in accordance to the siddur of our rabbi, Shalom Sharabi of blessed memory. At midnight, they get up, dip themselves in a kosher *mikveh*, conduct the Midnight Vigil with intentions and *yihudim* and mortify [themselves] over the distress of the *skhinah*'s exile and the exile of the Jewish people. In addition, they recite special prayers with utmost fervor and devotion for the Jewish people's redemption and the coming of the Messiah our savior swiftly in our day amen.⁴⁶

From this account, it is evident that a distinction was made between the *tikkunei ḥaṣot* that were popular among traditional Jews (be it alone or *en masse*) and special Sharabian versions that were held exclusively by a quorum of *mekhavvnim* within the yeshiva's gates. This distinction aside, the kabbalists

45 *Seder Tiquin Ḥaṣot* (1897), document in the beginning of the book.

46 Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Ḥotam Tokhnit* (1925), 10.

urged the masses to conduct the vigil. Among the texts from this corpus that Horowitz disseminated was “Seder Tikkun ḥaṣot,” which is intended for lay Jews.⁴⁷ Similarly, the co-rosh yeshiva presided over “a general *pidyon shvuyim* [ransoming of captives]” for the greater Jewish community. Requiring a quorum of worshippers, this ceremony consisted of “an annulment of vows, the pledge of the Exile, and abrogating evil decrees from all our brethren from the House of Israel in all the lands of their dispersion.”⁴⁸ The Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva also held Midnight Vigils at the Western Wall. Year later, Auerbach recounted that during Abraham Isaac Kook’s first years in Jerusalem, the chief rabbi “participated without fanfare in Sha’ar haShamayim’s *tikkun ḥaṣot* next to the [Wailing] Wall for about two hours.”⁴⁹

Rehovot haNahar printed the RaShaSh’s version of the *tikkun ḥaṣot*, copies of which were widespread in Jerusalem.⁵⁰ The *tikkun* was often affixed to siddurs or pamphlets containing Zoharian literature. Furthermore, tens of booklets providing certain parts of the Vigil, as well as pertinent halakhas, explanations, and comments, were distributed to the hoi polloi.⁵¹ In 1916, “an arrangement of the *tikkun ḥaṣot*,” along with various *kavvamot* of Hayyim Vital and others, was brought to press in Nah-Amon (Alexandria). Once again, it appears that Jerusalem’s kabbalists and their confidantes were involved in this endeavor.⁵²

In 1925, the kabbalist Yeshaya Asher Zelig Margalioṭ, with the support of Rehovot haNahar’s sages, printed a booklet, *Qumi Roni*, comprising an arrangement of the Midnight Vigil as well as introductions and explanations.⁵³ According to Margalioṭ, this publication was possible thanks to the assistance of a sexton from Ḥevrat Leil Shishi (the Friday Night Society) – an organization that he also belonged to. In an expanded edition of *Qumi Roni*, which came out in 1959, Margalioṭ noted that “Here in the holy city of Jerusalem, it is a custom of many people, Torah scholars and kabbalists, to wear sackcloth and [put] dust on their head while saying the *tikkun ḥaṣot*. I indeed saw my teacher and rabbi, the divine holy genius Rabbi Chaim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen and his holy colleagues” donning “sacks while reciting the Midnight Vigil.”⁵⁴ It also bears

47 Horowitz, *Sanigoriya*, 28–36.

48 Horowitz, *Seder Pidyon Shvuyim haKlali*.

49 Zvi Yehuda Kook, *LiShlosha beElul*, vol. 1, 31.

50 Dweck-HaKohen and Lag’imi, *Sefer Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, vol. 2, 3b–16a.

51 See, for example, *Hadrat Zkainim: Idra Raba veIdra Zuta/Seder Tiqun Ḥaṣot* (1913).

52 *Seder Tiqun Ḥaṣot* (1916).

53 Margalioṭ, *Sefer Qumi Roni* (1925).

54 Margalioṭ, *Sefer Qumi Roni* (1959), 26a. A similar description was provided by another figure who was close to Rehovot haNahar: Krishevsky, *Sefer Yosef Qadisha*, 255–256. As evidenced by a photo in the hagiographic book by his grandchild, Margalioṭ personally

noting that among the yeshiva's expenditures for the year 1913 was a special outlay for "the sewing of sacks for *tikkun ḥaṣot*."⁵⁵ In the introduction to the first edition of *Qumi Roni*, Margaliot describes how he took it upon himself to establish a Midnight Vigil fellowship:

And how good it would be if in every synagogue a group were to gather and recite the Midnight Vigil *en masse*, just as we see here at a few of the synagogues of our brothers the Sephardim, may they live, or at the very least once every week a group should assemble to say the *tikkun ḥaṣot* together, for it is with a mass spectacle that the king is exulted. And thank God that I established Ḥevrat Leil Shishi [the Friday Night Society] at the synagogue of Leibleh Sachatashoevsk, here in the holy city of Jerusalem in [the neighborhood of] Beit Yisrael where every *leil shishi* my holy comrades gather and learn until midnight and [then] recite *tikkun ḥaṣot* in a sackcloth and ashes as per the arrangement of HaARI, whereupon they recite Psalms until the light of morning and pray on behalf of all our brethren the Jewish people wherever they may be.⁵⁶

The 1921 guidelines of the Yagdil Torah Synagogue and Yeshiva, whose members included several of Dweck-HaKohen's disciples (e.g., Yaakov Munseh and Eliyahu Ma'aravi), make note of similar practices: "Every day, the Torah scholars get up at midnight precisely when the clock strikes twelve [*sic*] and read the Midnight Vigil *en masse*. Afterwards, they learn until the morning from the words of our rabbi HaARI."⁵⁷

These testimonies attest to the magnitude of this rite in Jerusalem as well as the pursuits of the city's kabbalists. By printing material on and organizing appropriate frameworks for the Midnight Vigils, they ratcheted up its popularity within the community. As we have seen, all members of traditional Jewish society were obliged to perform this *tikkun*. However, the leading kabbalists distinguished between the Sharabian version, which was limited to members of their inner circle, and a more basic configuration for the masses. The groups

adopted this custom; *AZaMeR beShavkhin*, 138–140. For more on these practices, see Dweck-HaKohen and Lag'imi, *Sefer Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, vol. 2, 4b–55b (according to *Sha'ar Ruah haQodesh*).

55 Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Account Books*, 1908–1922 (MS), vol. 1, 120.

56 Margaliot, *Sefer Qumi Roni* (1925), Introduction. Among the habitués of R. Leib's synagogue was the grand rabbi of Barniv. For more on this house of worship, see *AZaMeR beShavkhin*, 26.

57 Ma'aravi, *Beit haKnesset yeYeshivat Yagdil Tora*, 9.

that the yeshivot established for the purpose of conducting *tikkunei ḥasot* did not evolve into central or mandatory frameworks. On the other hand, some of the other vigils cemented the bonds between kabbalists and the greater community, as the seminaries became the primary venue for these services. A case in point is the *yemei ha'shovavim* vigils.

Tikkun ha'Brit, Bratslav Hasidism and Yemei ha'Shovavim

In disseminating the vigil literature among traditional society, Jerusalem's kabbalists put a special emphasis on the *pidyon nefesh* and vigils during *yemei ha'shovavim-tat* (depending on whether it is a leap year, the six to eight weeks from the portion of Shemot to the portion of Tešaveh in the Book of Exodus) – a ritual that is connected to the aforementioned *tikkun ha'brit*. Deriving from ancient sources, these customs merited renewed attention in the Lurianic discourse and various innovations in the *tikkunim* literature, to which they belong. The defining elements of *yemei ha'shovavim* are *tikkunei tshuva*, attendant learning arrangements, and the requirement of observing 84 fasts.⁵⁸ In early twentieth-century Jerusalem, a flurry of preparations could be felt during this period. For instance, many *tikkunim* books were printed in the run-up to these six weeks. Although various texts of this sort came out in previous generations, a resurgence of this custom was apparently underway in the city during the years under review. A unique aspect of the era's *yemei ha'shovavim* was the collaboration between Ashkenazim and Sephardim and the occasional fusion

58 For a disquisition on the *ha'shovavim* vigils and its expansive literature, see Scholem, *Pirquei Yesod*, 151; Cohen, *Sources and History*, 107–129; Hallamish, *Kabbalah in Liturgy*, 567–594; Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 290–297, 936–939; Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, 179, 408–409; Weinstein, *Kabbalah and Jewish Modernity*, 8–9, 422, 474; Idel, “The Tsadik,” 215–216: “The above passage describes a practice that has been established since the late sixteenth century and is known as the *Tikun shovavim*, the ascetic practice of repentance during Mondays and Thursdays of some weeks during winter. This practice was disseminated in larger audiences, especially by the popular book of kabbalistic ethics of Lurianic extraction but written in Sabbatean circles, titled *Hemdat yamim*; it is still in vogue in some circles of Orthodox Jews today. Though the term *shovavim* is actually an acronym for the initial letters of the weekly pericopes of those weeks, the name also has something to do with the struggle with the inclination. Already in the Babylonian Talmud the term *shovav* is interpreted as ‘he turned his inclination aside.’ Thus, the externalization of the sexual sins that was generated by kabbalistic speculations starting with the book of the Zohar created a new ritual intended to counteract those personal enemies.” Yehoshua describes this time of year in Jerusalem; idem, “Fortune Tellers and Soothsayers,” 237–238.

between the RaShaSh's prayer intentions and Hasidic practices. What is more, attempts were made to transform this practice into a series of extensive public and civic ceremonies in which the host seminary and individual kabbalist leading a service would assume center stage.

The RaShaSh himself established special *kavvanot* for the Midnight Vigil, which were integrated into a couple works, most notably *Emet leYa'aqov* by Jacob Shaltiel Ninio (Livorno, 1843).⁵⁹ Following in Sharabi's footsteps, kabbalists gleaned rectifications and special prayers from earlier books to produce new arrangements for this service. *Tikkunim* booklets, which consisted primarily of rectifications and prayers for sexual transgressions, became popular over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some of these rituals were meant to be performed by the individual after a misdeed, while others were designated for particular days, like *yemei ha'shovavim*.⁶⁰ Among the more influential works of this sort that came out during the second half of the 1800s was the pamphlet *Seder haYom* (Baghdad, 1870); the book *Refuat haNefesh* (Babylon, 1870); *Lashon Hakhamim* (Jerusalem, 1905–1910) by Yosef Hayyim; and *Kranot Šadik* by Eliyahu Suliman Mani (Baghdad, 1867). Over the years, these same texts were incorporated into new books that were printed in Jerusalem.⁶¹

As Pinchas Giller noted: "The rectification of sexual sins was an important part of the atonement process for the Beit El [i.e., Sharabian] kabbalists."⁶² Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the Bratslaver *tikkun ha'klali* (General Remedy) seized the limelight in the religious experience of Sharabi's Jerusalem-based adherents. They adopted R. Nahman of Bratslav's version of the *tikkun ha'brit* as well as many dictums from the rebbe's books – this at an hour in which Bratslav Hasidism had yet to catch on in the Ashkenazic world. From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, R. Nahman's *tikkun ha'klali* was

59 Gepner offers a portrait of this figure; see *Midrasho shel Shem*, 230. For the content of Sharabi's *tikkunim* in *Emet leYa'aqov*, see Nabarro, *Tikkun*, 164–166.

60 Another vigil that was reprinted in Jerusalem was Jacob ben David Pardo's *Sefer Tiqun Shovavim* (1897), which first came out in roughly 1830.

61 For more on the *tikkunim* literature that was arranged by Yosef Hayyim, see Nabarro, *Tikkun*, 174–179; Meir, "Toward the Popularization of Kabbalah," 147–172. The vigils in Hayyim's *Lashon Hakhamim* and similar works that were arranged by Haim Palaggi appear practically without omissions in Yechezkel Ezra Yehoshua Halevi, *Sefer Pithei Tshuva*. Halevi, a regular at Rehovot haNahar, also published another book, which includes a prayer by Yosef Hayyim for the enshrinement of souls; *Sefer Shirot yeTishbaḥot*. For passages from *Lashon Hakhamim* in various siddurs, see Ben-Yaakov, *Rabbi Yosef Hayyim*, 103–129.

62 Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El*, 69.

printed dozens of times in Eastern Europe. In Jerusalem, the vigil netted six editions during the early 1900s. These works were brought to press by the city's small Bratslav community, whose members had a direct influence on their neighboring kabbalists. Oddly enough, their sway was not necessarily bound by geographic propinquity. As early as the 1850s, several Bratslav works were copied in Baghdad and the sect's practices were evidently integrated into the writing of Sephardic kabbalists even at this early stage.⁶³

In collections on *tikkun ha'brit* that were assembled by Jerusalem's kabbalists, we find a synthesis between Bratslav thought and versions of *tikkun ha'klali*, on the one hand, and vigils of the RaShaSh, Yosef Hayyim, and Eliyahu Suliman Mani, on the other. Examples include Ben-Zion Mordechai Hazan's *Sefer Tiqun haKlali* (1903), which the author described as a compilation of "various rectifications for the sin of masturbation and wasted seed," and a similar book, *Sama deHayay* (1923), by Eliyahu Moshe Ma'aravi.⁶⁴ Affixed to Yosef Hartman's third edition of Mani's *Qarnot Šadiq* (1904) – a book on various *tikkunim* for the "damage to the bond" – was R. Nahman's *tikkun ha'klali*.⁶⁵

The above-noted unique and expansive activities, especially public vigils, that were held during *yemei ha'shovavim* imparted Jerusalem with a special flavor. In 1912, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's newspaper *HaOr* reported on the feverish preparations at this time of year:

Yemei ha'shovavim. – In the beginning of last week, the Jerusalemite kabbalists started to fast and abstain from pleasures via the *shovavim* mortifications, which according to the Torah of kabbalah is a great rectification for the sin of masturbation. The big promoter promoting this is the Lord Nissim Nahum. It has come to our attention that Lord Nahum managed to establish a large society to this end, the number of whose members has risen to a hundred men. During the first week, more than forty "householders" fasted each day. Even among the Ashkenazim, there

63 See Benayahu, *Hebrew Books*, 215. It is not known how the books reached Iraq, or on behalf of whom the manuscript was produced. On the *tikkun ha'klali* see Green, *Tormented Master*, 169, 180, 207–212; Schleicher, *Intertextuality*, 49–50; Mark, *The Revealed and Hidden Writings of Rabbi Nachman*, 139–190.

64 Hazan, *Sefer Tiqun haKlali*, 44–64; Ma'aravi, *Sefer Sama deHayay*, vol. 2, 37b–39a.

65 In Mani, *Sefer Qarnot Šadiq 'im Or Šyon*, the *tikkun ha'klali* has its own pagination and cover. Moreover, it was distributed on a separate basis. The book is accompanied by approvals from Elijah David Rabinowitz Teomim (the ADeReT), the Jerusalem Court of Justice, and Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld. Hartman printed a couple of pamphlets in Jerusalem on the topic of collections that pertain to Hasidism, ethics, and *segolot*.

are “kabbalists” who abstain from worldly pleasures during these same days, and they are headed by R. Isaac Eliezer Harlap.⁶⁶

This news item was a stepping stone for a blistering attack against Sha’ar haShamayim’s *shovavim* vigils and fasts in one of the ensuing issues of *HaOr* (further criticism in the Ben-Yehuda family’s papers is discussed in the next chapter). The author of this piece, which appeared under the innocuous title “Among Jerusalem’s Affairs,” went by the pseudonym A. Sulami. Following a description of the notices that Sha’ar haShamayim circulated to promote its activities, he reproached “those that mortify themselves during *yemei ha’shovavim*” and described the changes to this rite over the years:

The readers may recall that in one of the previous issues, we informed [them] of those mortifying themselves during *yemei ha’shovavim* (in acronyms it is: Shemot, Va’eira, Bo, Beshalah, Yitro, and Mishpatim and in a leap year they also continue to mortify themselves in *tat*: Terumah and Tešaveh). During these same days they fast, immerse their bodies in cold water, and the like, and the most dedicated Hasids also take breaks [from eating] and roll in the snow while naked. The secret of mortification and cessation stems from the kabbalah, as is noted: to rectify the mischievous soul that was defiled by the sin of masturbation, God forbid, “for obviously there is no person in the world that is unblemished by this sin.” Therefore, during the days of these [Torah] portions, the evil inclination is in the ascendancy, heaven forbid, on an equal footing with the exile to Egypt – the proprietors of the kabbalah issued the decree to mortify oneself and fast during these days in particular and to get up on Monday and Thursday of these same weeks and recite *selichot* [penitential poems] and prayers during the [early] morning watches. This is according to the kabbalah. However, the true moralists object to this method, and they say that it is completely forbidden to mortify oneself and fast.... However, the practitioners of the kabbalah do not heed the sages’ words and do everything according to their opinion and delusion, as [it is] for this reason that they are possessors of the kabbalah. And many years ago, “the select few” from the different ethnic groups in our city and from those that [recently] entered “the kabbalah” would customarily mortify themselves during these days, concentrate intentions, intertwine names of God, etc. all in the way of the kabbalah. However, [back] then, they would do all this modestly, *sub rosa*; one of the members would go on duty and

66 Ben Avi, “Yemei haShovavim,” 3.

circle the others, and one by one they would enter the designated place, at times by “the Western Wall,” and they would say the *selichot* and the prayers, and no one knew about this. Nearly all the original [members of the] “select few” have died and in their place have come others – midgets, men who “installed the unclean into the fear [of God].” This entire matter is solely a matter of money.⁶⁷

The epithet of “midgets” indeed refers to the heads of the Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva (along with all the newfangled promoters of *yemei ha’shovavim*) who, in A. Sulami’s estimation, are entirely motivated by lucre. He attributed the growth and extroverted nature of this activity to the slippage of his generation’s kabbalists, not that he was especially fond of their predecessors. At any rate, the author duly captured the changes that had transpired to the custom at hand. *Yemei ha’shovavim* was no longer the sole preserve of individuals or small groups, but a major outreach effort on the part of the seminaries, which reaped a windfall of donations from the laymen attending their events.

A year before this article came out, Dweck-HaKohen and Eliyahu Lag’imi printed the opening part of a collection of Sharabian *tikkunim* under the heading *Sefer Benayahu ben Yehoyada*. This book also includes *shovavim* vigils, some of which came out earlier in *Sha’ar Ruaḥi haQodesh* and Ninio’s and *Sefer Emet leYa’aqov*.⁶⁸ Accompanying *Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, which was widely distributed in Jerusalem, are lengthy approvals from Shlomo Elyashiv, Menahem Menkhin Halperin, Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld, and other rabbis. The book itself opens with the words “It is known how there is no righteous person in the Land who will do good and will not sin as well, in this incarnation or other incarnations. Rectifications must be done for the sins in order to raise up the sparks of holiness that have fallen.” In the introduction, there is a description of the chain of events that led to the arrangement of the *tikkunim*: “Given the fact that our rabbi HaARI, compiled a set of rectifications for iniquities that make a number of fasts according to the *tikkun* covering each sin. In this generation, infirmity has descended on the world and not every person has the good fortune of observing a number of fasts as [per] what was established by our rabbi HaARI.” For this reason, the kabbalah circles turned to a new enterprise – publishing collections of these works.⁶⁹ The publishers also took it upon themselves to refurbish their editions, *vis-à-vis* the earlier ones by Yosef Hayyim.

67 Sulami, “MeInyanei Yerushalayim,” 3. For more on the printing of these sort of announcements in 1912, see Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva. *Account Books*, 1908–1922 (MS), vol. 1, 52.

68 The content of this book is discussed in Nabarro, *Tikkun*, 180–181.

69 Dweck-HaKohen and Lag’imi, *Sefer Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, 1a.

A case in point is the new, Jerusalem edition of *Lashon Hakhamim*, which came out in 1905. Besides containing Sharabian vigils, it unfurls the liturgy of fast days and *pidyon nefesh* ceremonies for certain sins, including those that are emphasized in the *tikkunim* literature for *yemei ha'shovavim*:

Behold, we have found and seen that the brilliant rabbi the famed genius [and] rabbi, the sage, our rabbi, Yosef Hayyim, a righteous and saintly person of blessed memory, a rabbi from Babylon, in his book *Lashon Hakhamim*, Part I, from page 118 to page 160 made a suitable arrangement for rectifications of the sins to relieve the person who did not store [enough] energy to fast all the number of fasts, namely he should fast one day and all the rest of the fasts he can discharge by giving [donations] in return for each day of that same *tikkun* he is occupied with.... He [Hayyim] also set the order of learning, the fast days, [and other] matters that pertain to the rectification of that sin. Everyone will be able to do the above-mentioned *tikkun* because given the fact that the said rabbi, a great kabbalist, in his marvelous wisdom included and arranged secrets and mysteries of *tikkunim*, *yihudim*, and prayers which belong to that same vigil and donned them with verses and prayers, so that even the simpletons will be able to do them, for all of them are constructed in accordance with the words of HaARI.⁷⁰

While the compilers indeed praised the Yosef Hayyim edition that came out a short while earlier, their objective was to assemble a collection of *tikkunim* that is based on Lurianic and Sharabian thought. To this end, they apparently vetted the collection into a dual-purpose tool: on the one hand, a work outfitted with full prayer intentions, which was slated for the new wave of *mekhavvim*; and on the other hand, a guide for those seeking to absolve themselves of the fasts by observing the RaShaSh's vigils within the framework of the kabbalah seminaries. Here is their description of the two options:

However, those entering God's secret and seeking to act in accordance to the collection of prayers that our rabbi the RaShaSh, may his virtue protect us, arranged as per the order of HaARI, and given [the fact] that the said prayer arrangements of our rabbi the RaShaSh are only to be found in the possession of certain extraordinary individuals and many yearn for them [i.e., these texts] and they are not within their reach, with this in mind we have copied them from appropriate siddurs of *kavvanot* that

70 Idem, 1a–4a.

are in our possession. We also wanted to make them for one that does not store energy to fast and wants to absolve himself of his fasts. With this in mind, we made a mark in this issue like this * and below we wrote a version that pertains to one who discharges his fast [*sic*].⁷¹

In light of the above, the *shovavim* vigils are indeed showcased in this book, as they take up several pages, replete with prayer intentions. A case in point is the RaShaSh's version of the prayer *Aneinu* (Answer Us), which was held in Rehovot haNahar and other Jerusalem kabbalah seminaries during this period.⁷²

Even if *HaOr's* invective was not targeted at these specific customs, *Benayahu ben Yehoyada* certainly epitomized the desire to spread *tikkunim* that were extracted from manuscripts among the traditional masses – a trend that was prevalent among all Jerusalem's kabbalists, regardless of ethnic background. For instance, the vigils in Dweck-HaKohen and Lag'imi's book were immediately reprinted in scores of booklets (some of which included revisions and supplements), like Rehovot haNahar's 1914 pamphlet *Shem miShemen*. Needless to say, these publications exposed the vigils to an even wider audience.

The *tikkunim* literature was grounded on the realization that even though HaARI had "commanded" the Jewish people to observe 84 fasts, the majority were incapable of abiding by the letter of this law. In consequence, different alternatives were created, including the option of substituting the fasts with charity. There was also flexibility with respect to the versions of the *tikkunim*, as the public could adopt either Yosef Hayyim or the RaShaSh's arrangements. For their part, the kabbalah seminaries took the initiative of coordinating the prayer schedule on *yemei ha'shovavim* and disseminating the texts.

In 1935, this same Sharabian vigil was reprinted in the book *Tiqun haYesod* by the Hasid R. Noah Gad Weintraub. The compiler leaned on the previous edition of Dweck-HaKohen; and RYAZ Margalioth helped him with the typesetting.⁷³ According to Weintraub, he launched this project because copies of *Benayahu ben Yehoyada* had run out. Moreover, he was motivated by "the

71 Ibid, 1a–b. Most of the manuscripts of the RaShaSh's siddur that we are privy to were copied by R. Nissim Harari, the author of *Alei Nahar*. Of course, the vigils' compilers preferred devotees who fully observed the fasts. The latter were also entreated to study the sources of the *tikkunim* as presented in *Sha'ar Ruah haQodesh*, *Nahar Shalom*, and other pertinent works.

72 Dweck-HaKohen and Lag'imi, *Sefer Benayahu ben Yehoyada*, vol 1, 6a–15a, 75a–76a.

73 Weintraub, *Quntres Tiqun haYesod*. Moskowitz refers to Margalioth's assistance; *ibid*, 3. In 1924, Noah Gad Weintraub arrived from Poland to Palestine. This figure printed several kabbalah books that were largely unknown to the general public, among them *Sefer Zrubavel veNevuat Yeled* (1938). Dweck-HaKohen endorsed one of his books (*Sha'ar Boaz*, 1934) as well as a book by his father Yaakov David Weintraub (*Avnei haMakom*, 1926).

holy community that regularly fasts on all the Fridays of *yemei ha'shovavim* (Friday is known to be the fundamental element, for it is most capable of implementing this rectification).” As noted on its cover, *Tiqun haYesod* contains the following parts:

The *Aneinu* Prayer for *ha'shovavim-tat* and the unabridged *Aneinu* Prayer with all the *yihudim* for *tikkun ha'yesod* that is cited in the sacred writings of our rabbi HaARI, which is found in handwritten texts in the holy siddur that our rabbi Master Shalom Mizrahi known as Sharabi, arranged, devised, and instituted, and the order of *pidyon* [redemption] of the 84 fasts that were arranged by the kabbalists' sages in Jerusalem.

In the introduction, Weintraub describes the local versions of the *tikkun*:

It is known that for every single time and every single individual case of the sin of spilling seed in vain, we are required to fast 84 fasts. In this generation in which a weakness has fallen upon the world it impossible for each person to fast the number of all these fasts that must be fasted. Therefore, the sages among the kabbalists have arranged, as is written in the introduction of the said b[ook] *Benaiah*, and as is thus done in Jerusalem, to nevertheless fast one day in every week of the *shovavim* weeks (in a leap year, *tat* as well). Here in the holy city, there are permanent and known synagogues, study halls, and seminaries of Sephardim and Ashkenazim that have allocated compartments [for these prayers]. All those who fast assemble on that same day to pray the Afternoon Prayer [*mincha*] there, whereupon they absolve themselves of the 84 fasts with a monetary *pidyon* of five pounds, which is the monetary value of the *pidyon* of 84 feasts. And the poorest do the *pidyon* [by] giving 3 half-shekels on Purim. Before the *pidyon*, they recite the *Modim* [We Thank] Prayer that is printed here at the outset [of] the book; and afterwards, in the Afternoon Prayer, they say the blessing *shomai'ah tefilah* [who listens to prayer], the unabridged *Aneinu* Prayer with the [RaShaSh's] *yihudim* that is [*sic*] printed here.⁷⁴

Put differently, the *tikkun* is not solely intended for the handful of intenter-kabbalists. Moreover, substitutes were instituted for those incapable of either performing the sophisticated prayer intentions or enduring the bevy of fasts:

On the son's relationship with Dweck-HaKohen and the meetings between them, see *Be-Yeshishim Hokhma*, 143–144.

74 Weintraub, *Quntres Tiqun haYesod*, “Several Words from the Publisher.”

One that does not enter the secret of God and has no hand in the wisdom of kabbalah will say during the whispered prayer [i.e., the Silent Amidah], in *shoma'ah tefilah*, the abridged *Aneinu* which is printed here and has been arranged especially for the *shovavim*. Afterwards, he will hear during the repetition of the *shliach tzibur* [i.e., the service leader] (which is arranged each and every day at a permanent venue for the Afternoon Prayer of *shovavim* [and led by] a permanent and known *shliach tzibur* – one of the kabbalists' sages, who says during the prayer's repetition) the unabridged *Aneinu* Prayer with the intentions and the *yihudim* and intends to exempt the congregation of listeners, and with the monetary *pidyon* of the 84 days and the unabridged *Aneinu* Prayer (whether he [i.e., the average Jew] himself knows how to say [it] or hears [it] from the *shliach tzibur*). [In so doing,] it is considered as though he fasted 84 days.⁷⁵

According to Weintraub, one can also participate in a vigil without physically attending the service: “Even those far from Jerusalem can join with the said holy communities and send his [*sic*] name and money for the redemption of his soul to the permanent places noted above each and every day via his acquaintances in Jerusalem. He [i.e., the *shliach tzibur*] will pray in his stead.”⁷⁶ As such, people outside of Jerusalem also leaned on the city's yeshivot. The strenuous rectifications and long fasts were replaced with general vigils, which were administered by several kabbalists. Although this idea of substituting fasts with monetary contributions was frowned upon by some kabbalists in Jerusalem and beyond, it appears that the custom was widespread and had many advocates.⁷⁷ Among its fiercest supporters were R. Yosef Hayyim of Baghdad and the sages of Rehovot haNahar and Sha'ar haShamayim.⁷⁸ However, there are vast differences between these and the earlier allowances, as Jerusalem's

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

77 According to RYAZ Margalio, Dweck-HaKohen expressed discomfort with the practice of substituting a fast with a *pidyon*; Moskowitz, *Seder Shovavim*, 36; idem, *Ošar haŠipurim*, vol. 3, 28. However, this testimony runs counter to Dweck-HaKohen's own words in the beginning of the first volume of *Benayahu ben Yehoyada* as well as the accounts of his other disciples. See, for instance, the next footnote.

78 The prevalent view on this topic was put into writing by one of Dweck-HaKohen's students, Eliyahu Moshe Ma'aravi: “We have found from among the first and last [adjudicators] that a man can fast a certain number of days for the sin of spilling seed in vain and absolve himself of the rest of the days with money;” Ma'aravi, *Sefer Sama deHayay*, vol. 2, 19b. A similar conclusion was reached by Sofer, *Kaf haHayim*, 185a–186b. This matter is discussed at

kabbalah seminaries came to depend on the income from such public activities for their daily operations.

Sha'ar haShamayim adopted the vigils that were brought to press by the Sephardic kabbalists and immediately began to disseminate them among traditional Jews. According to the seminary's financial records, every year it circulated announcements that pertain to *yemei ha'shovavim*. Moreover, a feast was thrown for the yeshiva's inner core at the end of this period.⁷⁹ It is no wonder, then, that *HaOr's* inflammatory article on Sha'ar haShamayim highlighted these activities. The paper's accusation that the primary reason behind the genesis of the *shovavim* vigils was "to give publicity to" the seminary's "business in order that the money would start flowing into their pocket" managed to enrage its community. Soon after the article was published, an anonymous notice was circulated in Jerusalem under the heading "On the Matter of *shovavim* and *tat*. Signed by "N. one of the anchorites," the pugnacious statement was clearly penned by someone close to the yeshiva.⁸⁰ The author(s) was not above taking personal shots at Ben-Yehuda and his family. For instance, he claims that the secular ideologue and his kin were supported by Christian missionaries and that they hold a "merry feast" every Yom Kippur. In any event, the communication was largely aimed at defending the *shovavim* vigils. Besides quoting from *Sefer Şa'aqat Bnei Yisrael, Hitorerut haTshuva veSlihot veTfilot* (1911),⁸¹ the writer informs his readers that there is no need to get all worked up about "the buffoonery of Ben-Yehuda and his friends for what can these worms that creep, crawl, and rummage through the garbage do to hurt you? Who is moved by their words?" This diatribe is perhaps the lone existing reaction of Sha'ar haShamayim's habitués (or at least one of their confidantes) to the criticism that was hurled at them from outside the borders of the Old Yishuv. Regardless of the author's identity, the statement demonstrates that the yeshiva's supporters were none too pleased with such charges of quackery.

Needless to say, the slap on the face from *HaOr* did not alter the kabbalists' path. Books containing *shovavim* vigils netted scores of different editions

length in the responsa of Yosef Hayyim who, unlike Yehuda Fetayah, permitted this indulgence. See Yosef Hayyim, *Emunt Itecha*, 63–68; Hillel *Takanat haShavim*, 96–108.

79 See, for example, the institution's expenses for the 1913 year; Sha'ar haShamayim Yeshiva, *Account Books*, 1908–1922 (MS), vol. 1, 97.

80 "BiDvar Shovavim," 1912 (announcement). The notice was reprinted, albeit without any background information, in Kluger, *Min haMeqor*, vol. 2, 117.

81 In all likelihood, the author is referring to *Sefer Şa'aqat Bnei Yisrael, Hitorerut haTshuva*. Discrepancies aside, this book is virtually identical to those bearing the same title from the previous year. The latter works were published with the support of Sha'ar haShamayim's regulars.

from that year on. An illustrative example is one of the aforementioned *Shem miShemen*, which came out in 1914. It includes two “*tikkunim* that are useful for fixing the known defect, none other than the *shovavim* fast and the bedtime *Kriyat Sh'ma*.” This book came out “with the permission of the kabbalists’ supreme Hasids of the holy city of Jerusalem, of the holy community of Rehovot haNahar, for the public’s benefit to arouse a listening ear, to call everyone’s attention [to the need] of rectifying their soul, spirit, and essence.”⁸² In the book’s introduction, there is a detailed explanation of *yemei ha’shovavim* and the evolution of the *tikkunim* as well as citations from *Benayahu ben Yehoyada*. After commending Yosef Hayyim on his vigils, the writers noted that the Iraqi rabbi’s successors have “instituted a great and awe-inspiring matter, that is to fast and convene assemblies in synagogues and study halls every single day during these *yemei ha’shovavim-tat*.”⁸³

As far as can be seen, these rectifications also had an effect on Aharon Roth – the founder of the Hasidic court Shomer Emunim, who was often unsettled by the *tikkun ha’brit* service. The *rebbe* was well-acquainted with Jerusalem’s kabbalists. His first book, which came out in Satmar in 1933, merited a lengthy approval from Dweck-HaKohen, who he had met in Jerusalem. The approval includes plaudits for Roth as well as his Hasids residing in the holy city.⁸⁴ After reading *Benayahu ben Yehoyada* a few months later, Roth wrote a letter to RYAZ Margaliot informing the latter that he would like to print a work containing *tikkun ha’yesod* and the RaShaSh’s *Aneinu*, even though these rectifications hardly aligned with his worldview. To this end, he asked Margaliot to send him the version that Weintraub had published.⁸⁵ Two years later, Roth printed a book that is grounded on *tikkun ha’yesod* and largely consists of prayers he

82 *Shem miShemen*, 1a.

83 Idem, 9b. These same *tikkunim* and the introduction were printed anew, along with a row of additions, in *Sefer Sha’aqat Bnei Yisrael* (1924). Several nearly identical vigils came out in another book displaying practically the same title – *Sefer Sha’aqat Bnei Yisrael, leTiqun haBrit* (1915) – which merited several editions. Another collection was printed in Nah-Amon by Rehovot haNahar’s sages in 1915; and a Jerusalem edition was brought to press in 1922 by the aforementioned Hēvrah Mizakeh haRabim.

84 Roth, *Shulhan haTahor*. The Hasidic *rebbe* crowned Dweck-HaKohen with the title “the renowned saintly rabbi, the holy grandfather, illuminator of mysteries, high priest, the head and our blessed rabbi of the kabbalists and intenders of our holy city of Jerusalem.” Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, Menahem Nahum of Rachmastrivka, Elijah Klatzkin, and Moses Kliaras’ approvals were also included in this edition. However, the approvals were omitted from the majority of the book’s later incarnations.

85 See his letter to Margaliot from around 1933; Bloom, *Toldot Aharon*, vol. 3, 113–114. That same year Roth printed his book *Shulhan haTahor* and sent a copy to his correspondent.

wrote during his stay in Jerusalem. However, the work lacks any noticeable Sharabian influences.⁸⁶

Every year, notices and announcements of *shovavim* vigils were dispersed throughout Jerusalem. In 1922, an appeal titled “Shuvu Banim beYemei Shovavim Tat,” made the rounds. This notice called on devotees to fast and take part in *pidyon nefesh* ceremonies at a couple of synagogues and yeshivot, like Sha’ar haShamayim. Signing off on the communication was Hēvrah Mizakeh haRabim, which was also responsible for a couple of other statements along these lines. Moreover, it appears that Nissim Nahum, who helped print the notices exhorting the flock to read through the Zohar on an annual basis, was involved in this endeavor as well.⁸⁷ According to one eyewitness, “For many years [Nahum] printed announcements [concerning] the arrangement of the *shovavim* vigils in their season and gratuitously distributed them in the Land and throughout the cities of the Diaspora in order to benefit the public.”⁸⁸ That same year, Sha’ar haShamayim disseminated a couple of flyers about its resident kabbalists. One of them noted that these figures conduct huge vigils. “Especially on *yemei ha’shovavim*, they take to fasting and perform a *pidyon nefesh* by means of a vigil of the 84 fasts and *tikkun ha’yesod*.”⁸⁹

During this time of year, Yitzchak Alfiyah clamored for speech moratoriums within the framework of the aforementioned group Ohr Samai’aḥ ve’Zemaḥ Şadik. Moreover, he purported to have conducted such a vigil “before an enormous crowd, with the splendor of a king.”⁹⁰ The *tikkun ha’yesod* was copied

86 Roth, *Sefer Tahart haQodesh*. Roth’s songs-cum-prayers are discussed in Peli “Shomer Emunim,” 20–21. On his later theological thought, see Magid, “Modernity as Heresy,” 74–104; Greenberg, “R. Araleh Roth’s Pristine Faith,” 72–88; Meijers, *Ascetic Hasidism in Jerusalem*.

87 “Shuvu Banim beYemei Shovavim,” 1922 (announcement); reprinted in Kluger, *Min haMeqor*, vol. 1, 102. A short while earlier, a similar announcement was released by the same association, but it made no mention of Sha’ar haShamayim; “Shuvu Banim beYemei Shovavim,” 1920 (announcement).

88 Kassin, *Sefer Pri Eş haGan*, 81.

89 Sha’ar haShamayim, *Şa’aqat Bnei Yisrael uBaqashat Raḥamim*, 6–7.

90 Alfiyah, *HaQuntres haYeḥiyeli*, vol. 1, 67b–74b; Hēvrat Or Ḥadash veŞemaḥ Şadik, Official Letter (MS). See Cohen, *Sources and History*, 127–128; Hallamish, *Kabbalah in Liturgy*, 581, 589. Meroni alluded to Alfiyah in the following passage: “They [i.e., the kabbalists] also have radicals and moderates. For instance, in the days of the Arab riots, one of them published this notice in Mea Shearim: Given the fact that in the heavens they have already grown accustomed to the prayer *Avinu Malkainu*. Therefore, he proposed to engage in a daring activity involving a row of different mortifications (speech moratoria etc.). This will reach new heights in its novelty and will have an effect on high. This sort of issue is called in the language of our secular concepts: a stormy and daring demonstration from

and distributed in a variety of ways to myriad destinations, including Tunis in 1935.⁹¹ According to Moskowitz, Dweck-HaKohen regularly printed exhortations for “awakening on the matter of *shovavim-tat*.”⁹² These sort of appeals were also disseminated on an annual basis by Yaakov ben Yosef Rofeh Munseh, one of Dweck-HaKohen’s leading disciples. Above all, Munseh invited the public to take part in special Sharabian prayers at the Emet veShalom Yeshiva during *yemei ha’shovavim*.⁹³

In 1924, Eliyahu Moshe Ma’aravi, among the sages of Rehovot haNahar, reprinted the content of several ethical pamphlets and information on “this dangerous ailment, that is the defect of the bond,” in *Sama deHayay*. The second part of this thick tome contains full excerpts from Eliyahu Suliman Mani’s *Sefer Qarnot Şadiq* and letters by Yosef Hayyim. Furthermore, Ma’aravi made reference to the Vilna Gaon, copied R. Nahman of Bratslav’s *tikkun ha’klali* and Elimelech of Lizhensk’s *Şetel Katan*, and suggested a handful of other vigils for *yemei ha’shovavim*. He also harped on the need to bolster these vigils. While emphasizing the importance of the 84 fasts, he mentioned the possibility of releasing themselves from this duty with cash donations. In the process, he described the evolution of Jerusalem’s *tikkun* customs, which combine activities involving the greater public with those reserved for “the select few.” Aside for this *mélange* of suggestions and excerpts, Ma’aravi also provided the following introduction:

Given the fact that this sin [i.e., masturbation] is very grave, how good and how pleasant it would be if individuals whose hearts are beset by a dearth of fear of God were to convene for a rectification of their soul at a prayer house on a fast day for [*sic*] the Afternoon Prayer. They will say *selichot* and *Aneinu* in the [blessing] *shome’ ah tefilah*, and they will take

the stand point of the esoteric, for this activity only came from the most mystical among the mystics;” Meroni, *HaHolmim beYerushalayim*, 77.

- 91 Ben Atar, *Tiqun haKlali leYemei haShovavim*. The cover reads thus: “Behold, this is the new book that came out for the first time on the altar of the press overseas, here in the city of Tunis, which I have copied from the book *HaQuntres haYehiyeli*. I have assembled it and compiled it into a book small in quantity and great in quality.” The pamphlet was reprinted in Tunis, yet again, in 1941. In this work, all the different mortifications are replaced with a speech moratorium.
- 92 Moskowitz, *Seder Shovavim Tat*, 36; idem, *Oşar haSipurim*, vol. 3, 28.
- 93 E.g., Munseh “Pirsum Eloquto Yitbarekh,” undated (announcement); idem, “yaTihi Rual Ya’aqov,” undated (announcement); “Lekhu Nelkha yeNashuva el Hashem,” undated (announcement). For more on these rituals, see Munseh, *Pada et Avraham*, vol. 1, 404–405.

out the Torah scroll and read *va'Yeḥal* [the prayer Moses recited in the aftermath of the Golden Calf episode] (as per the instruction of Rabbi Yosef Yedid Halevi, in a ruling that he made on this), for in mass convocations rest the glory of a king. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all the yeshivot's sextons and rabbis who stand in the breach between the Jewish people, to appoint people who will gather the signatures from Jews [who commit] to do [i.e., show up to a planned vigil] on [a certain] day, like Mondays and Thursdays, the eve of the beginning of a new month, and the Ten Days of Repentance, so that the individuals will convene for the prayer and *selichot* as noted above, [and] cry out to God. Of course, God will hear our screams and speedily redeem us. In the holy city of Jerusalem, and in the cities of Egypt, Beirut, Damascus, and the rest of the places in the Land of Israel, holy people have already stirred up and printed such notices to arouse the hearts of the Jewish people in the thousands. What does not enter the human mind, for there were also the more simple people that did this *tikkun* [merely] because it was scheduled for them [by the kabbalists] in advance. There is no crime in the matter [i.e., this sort of outreach]. For this reason, we considered it a personal obligation to cajole [the masses].⁹⁴

As part of his attempt to stir up the people, Ma'aravi put a priority on getting out a book consisting of various penitence vigils (e.g., *tikkun ha'brit*, *tikkun karet*, and the Midnight Vigil), rather than intricate explanations on Lurianic and Sharabian thought.

In a book featuring a selection of the RaShaSh's intentions for *yemei ha'shovavim*, Gamliel HaKohen Rabinowitz (Rappaport), a present-day kabbalist at Sha'ar haShamayim, writes that the first intenters were "like angels" and "had enough [skills] to comprehend the *yehudim* as they were printed in *Sefer Emet leYa'aqov* [Jacob Shaltiel Ninio's book] and *Benayahu ben Yehoyada*" by Dweck-HaKohen and Lag'imi. "However, as the years march on, the hearts have shrunken, and it is very difficult to pray with intentions and fully understand their *kavvanot*."⁹⁵ Put differently, it was RYAZ Margalioṯ and other acolytes of Dweck-HaKohen who laid the groundwork for understanding the *tikkunim* as per the RaShaSh's way and transmitting them in a digestible manner to the hoi

94 Ma'aravi, *Sefer Sama deḤayay*. vol. 2, 19b–20a. For information on Ma'aravi, see Laniado, *LaQedoshim asher baAReS*, 94; Sutton, *Aleppo*, 272.

95 Rabinowitz, *Seder Tiqun*, Introduction.

polloi. It behooves the kabbalists, Rabinowitz asserts, to continue down this road and publish explanations of the Sharabian intentions and *yihudim*.

In sum, the dissemination of *tikkunim* in the early twentieth century embedded kabbalistic customs among traditional society. On the other hand, though, it changed how the masses viewed sophisticated mortifications and fasts involving profound *kavvanot* for a select few. As part of their commitment to the general public, the kabbalah seminaries assumed the helm in all that concerns the *shovavim* rituals. Even if a distinction was made between vigils performed by seasoned intenters and those done on behalf and/or on the part of a wider segment of the populace, the efforts to promote these customs were directed outwards. In so doing, Jerusalem's kabbalists paved the way for similar *tikkunim* that are observed with considerable pomp and fanfare in the present era.⁹⁶

Special Prayers and Tikkunim during the Holocaust

The kabbalah seminaries hosted not only regular *tikkunim*, but special prayers in response to the exceptional events of the day. Following the local outbreak of meningitis in 1909, Sha'ar haShamayim and Rehovot haNahar jointly announced a special prayer in the daily press.⁹⁷ Approximately twenty-three years later, several of Jerusalem's kabbalists held a vigil on behalf of "our Brethren the Jewish inhabitants of the land of Russia and Yemen who are under the pressure of an anti-religious decree, may the Merciful One save us." More specifically, 72 men took part in a speech moratorium over three straight days (72-hours), with the objective of triggering God's attribute of *hesed*

96 Nowadays, the best known public *shovavim* vigils are presided over by David Shalom Batzri at the Shalom Yeshiva in Jerusalem. These sort of rituals are also held at Yaakov Moshe Hillel's Ahavat Shalom Seminary, albeit with less hoopla. Consistent with his dialectic approach to revelation and concealment, Hillel criticizes the public *tikkunim* in his book on *yemei ha'shovavim*; idem, *Takanat haShavim*. Intended for the general public, this work is primarily distributed on the occasion of these same vigils that Hillel conducts; ibid, 153–166. On the public *tikkunim* in Ahavat Shalom, see idem, *Takanat haShavim/Pode u'Mašil*, 5–7. Over the latter half of the 1900s, Sha'ar haShamayim occasionally printed the arrangement of the RaShaSh's *shovavim* vigils. See Porush and Shotland, *Seder Tiqun Shovavim*; Rabinowitz, *Seder Tiqun*. In the introduction to the latter book, Rabinowitz describes the contemporary vigils at Sha'ar haShamayim.

97 Sha'ar haShamayim and Rehovot haNahar, "Qriya Gdola." A booklet containing these sort of prayers was printed on behalf of the seminary the following year; *Tefilat Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* (1910).

(the Hebrew word for mercy, which totals 72 in gematria). Among the participants in this *tikkun* and signatories on its announcement in the media were Haim Shaul Dweck-HaKohen, Aharon Shlomo Maharil, Shimon Zvi Horowitz, Haim Gershon Vilner, and Yosef Rachamim Mizrachi.⁹⁸

These sort of events were held with increasing regularity upon the arrival of rumors concerning the Final Solution, as kabbalists in Palestine convened for *yehudim*, fasts, mortifications, and prayers in the hopes of saving their co-religionists from the Nazi scourge. Suliman Mutzafi elaborated on several of these events. In 1942, around 150 people gathered at Rachel's Tomb for a prayer to rescind the evil decree against European Jewry. Similar services were held at the Western Wall and the city's synagogues.⁹⁹ Alfiya even travelled to Egypt for the sake of praying at Yaakov Abuhatzzeira's grave.¹⁰⁰ Yehuda Fetayah devised a special prayer for his endangered brethren, which was distributed via pamphlets in around 1940. At a ceremony in which this supplication was recited, kabbalists were said to have filled up plates with tears.¹⁰¹ That same year, Shimon Horowitz printed a *tikkun* for revoking a charge against the congregation.¹⁰² Moreover, his signature, along with those of many other Jerusalem-based rabbis, turns up on an announcement calling for "a general day of prayer" in light of the bitter news from Europe.¹⁰³

98 "Hitorerut," in Kluger, *Min haMeqor*, vol. 2, 68. Ben Nae discusses these sort of ceremonies; idem, "Religious Life," 326–327. Also see Meir, "The Eclectic Kabbalah of R. Shimon Zvi Horowitz," 411–420.

99 Mutzafi, *Olamo shel Şadiq*, 106–108. For an eye-witness account of these prayers, see Shmuel haLevi Horowitz, *Sefer Yemei Shmuel*, vol. 3, 3–4, 29, 317–338.

100 Alfiyah, *Sefer Or Haddash yeŞemaĥ Şadiq*, 42–43; Abuhatzzeira, *haSaba Qadisha*, vol. 2, 104–107. The latter discusses the prayers of R. Israel Abuhatzzeira; *ibid*, vol. 1, 236–240; Harel, *Meor Yisrael*, 209–211.

101 Fetayah, *Maĥberet Asirei Tiqva*. This topic is expounded on in the forewords by Yehuda Ovdia Fetayah and Mordechai Eliyahu to *Idra Raba 'im Peirush Yeyn haRoqahm*. For an account of the vigils that Fetayah conducted with Yaakov Munseh during this period, see Munseh, *Pada et Avraham*, vol. 1, 404–405. As far back as 1933, Fetayah opened his book *Minĥat Yehuda* on the following note: "Please God, may Your mercy and kindness awaken, and please saveth the remnant of your nation the Jewish people who are dispersed throughout the four corners of the Earth. Rescue us from the clutches of all those who rise up against us. Foil their plot and muddle their thoughts. Carry out on our behalf the writ from the Scripture, We are like birds escaped from the fowler's trap – [the Hebrew phrase for] the can was broke [is] gematria [for] Hitler – and gather us from the four corners of the earth to our Land speedily in our time."

102 Horowitz, *Sanigoriya* (1940).

103 "Yom Tefila Klali," 1940 (announcement); reprinted in Kluger, *Min haMeqor*, vol. 1, 146.

A rich array of wondrous tales was concocted around these services. For instance, years later, Gershom Scholem's wife Fania recalled a peculiar meeting in Jerusalem involving her husband: "During the Second World War, a few kabbalists came here and asked him to teach them how to activate forces that would annihilate Hitler. Scholem told them that it is forbidden to awaken such elements. They nevertheless tried; and after Rudolf Hess fell in England, he said that they nearly succeeded."¹⁰⁴ Even if Scholem was being ironic, his spouse's account certainly reflects an interesting reality. Similar tales were spun about the resident kabbalists of Sha'ar haShamayim. A letter by R. Moshe Yair Weinstock to Yehuda Zev Leibowitz (both students of Yehuda Leib Ashlag) recounts the efforts of Horowitz and Moshe (Yemini) Skrovon, a kabbalist and apocalypse forecaster, to save the Jews of Europe. Among the measures that they adopted was to issue death sentences against Nazis, which the rabbis punctuated by sounding a shofar. According to Weinstock, believers were startled to discover that German generals whose names were announced in tandem with their mothers indeed perished.¹⁰⁵



In sum, *tikkunim* and special prayers for the general public were integrated into the wide-ranging activities of Land-of-Israel kabbalists at the beginning of the twentieth century. This outreach was part and parcel of the concomitant "renaissance" of Jerusalem's kabbalah seminaries. The figures under review no longer just paid lip service to exotericism, but sought to turn their institutions into "vigil centers" that the public would depend on in various ways. Although these yeshivot mainly catered to a select few that were engrossed in Jewish mysticism, they also offered the general public a peak at this world and created a new dynamic of mutual responsibility between their sages and every member of traditional Jewish society.

104 Harpaz, "Metil Şel 'Anaq," 50. R. Moshe Mordechai Biderman of Lelov also composed prayers for the sake of European Jewry; Henig, *Moshe Ish haEloqim*, vol. 1, 144–155.

105 In this ca. 1967 letter, Weinstock also told Leibowitz of such prayers at the grave of Ḥayyim ben Moshe ibn Attar. See Leibowitz, *Qol Yehuda*, 178–179. This particular story assumes a different form in the Bratslav tradition. While resorting to similar measures in this version too, Horowitz recoiled from the actions of "the proprietors of practical kabbalah;" Schechter, *Leqet Amarim*, vol. 1, 59. Yehuda Leib Zusman, a disciple of Charlap, provides roughly the same account; Zussman, *MiBehirei Şadiqaya*, 168. Also see Ben Ami, *Stories*, 195. A belletristic description of such activities by, *inter alia*, the Grand Rabbi of Husiatyn and Reb Shlomo of Zvhil, was crafted by Haim Be'er, *El Makom She'Haruah Holekh*, 413–414.

Censure, Parody and Debate

The distinctiveness of the kabbalah seminaries did not elude the attention of the Yishuv's secular inhabitants. A case in point is the caustic remarks about Jerusalem's kabbalists, especially Sha'ar haShamayim's habitués, that were scattered throughout the pages of the local Hebrew and Yiddish daily press. If the Beit El Yeshiva was emblematic of the putative decline of Jewish esoteric wisdom (as discussed in the opening chapter), then Sha'ar haShamayim was a symbol of corruption. Likewise, the city's newspapers portrayed the rest of the kabbalists as cultural degenerates espousing a host of primitive beliefs that must be uprooted from the world. This perception rears up time and again in all of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's newspapers. However, these depictions tended to conflate the differences between folk beliefs, customs, the daily functioning of the yeshivot, and various kabbalistic outlooks.

Valley of Demons

Back in 1885, Suliman Menachem Mani (the son of the above-mentioned kabbalist Eliyahu Suliman Mani) published a satirical piece, "Emeq haShedim" (the Valley of Demons), in the newspaper *HaSevi* about a purported exorcism in the Yishuv.¹ Among other things, the author condemned the belief in demons and the indulco. As Patai described at length, the indulco is a ceremony in which exorcists (usually female theurgists) blandish an invading spirit into leaving the host:

[It] was a popular ritual intended to give something sweet to the demons and thereby propitiate them. This conforms to the principle employed throughout the ritual: everything sacred or holy is removed from the house in which it is performed, the patient himself (or herself) must refrain from uttering any word of prayer, from reciting any Biblical passage, and from going to the synagogue during the period of his "cure."

1 Mani, "Emeq haShedim." This story and the life of its writer are elaborated on in haLevy, "HaMishamrim Hevlei Shay," 33–60; Yardeni, *The Hebrew Press*, 296–297; Hakak, *Modern Hebrew Creativity*, 94–107, 265–268; idem, *The Emergence of Modern Hebrew Literature*, 163–167. The latter two authors reprinted the deed. An abridged version of this episode appears in Yardeni, *Sal ha'Anavim*, 45–53.

The intention of the ritual is thus clear: to propitiate, appease, the demons who are believed to have caused the disability, to appeal to their goodwill, sympathy, pity. The *indulco* therefore stands in sharp contrast to the customary methods of protecting a person against the demons or of exorcising them.... In the case of the *indulco*, the demons are treated gingerly, they are almost cuddled, everything unpleasant (such as words or emblems of holiness) are carefully removed from their way. The effort is directed, not toward keeping them out or expelling them, but toward inviting them, making their temporary stay as “sweet” as possible, and then, groveling before them, imploring them to return whatever they robbed from the patient. It is, in a word, a treatment of demons in exactly the same manner in which orthodox religion treats God. No wonder that rabbis found the *indulco* more abhorrent than any other “superstitious” practice.²

Mani was a regular contributor to the Hebrew press during this period and even composed a wide assortment of poems. He was moved to write this article by an earlier piece on the *indulco* ceremony in Ben-Yehuda’s newspaper, which cited the grievances of different rabbis against this technique.³ In this context, reference was made to a book by Abraham Moses Luncz (1856–1918) on “the ludicrous beliefs” maintained by inhabitants of Jerusalem that offers an accurate description of the *indulco* exorcism.⁴ Ben-Yehuda added that “the nonsense of the *indulcah* [sic] is customary among our brethren the Sephardim, but among our brethren the Ashkenazim there are also things of this sort.” Similar criticism, both lay and clerical, can be found in other contemporaneous newspapers.⁵ Mani’s account includes quite a few elements that are highly reminiscent of the anti-Hasidic satirical literature of nineteenth-century Maskils in Eastern Europe, such as the work *Emeq Refa’im* (Valley of the Ghosts, 1823) by Isaac Baer Levinsohn and Joseph Perl’s book *Megalleh Temirim*

2 Patai, *On Jewish Folklore*, 302–308; idem, “Indulco and Mumia,” 3–11. On the *indulco* and its scope, see Matras, *Hebrew Charm Books*, 332; Naḥmias, *Ḥamsa*, 36–37; *inter alios*.

3 Ben Yehuda, “MeQerev haAreṣ,” 125–126. See haLevy, “HaMishamrim Hevlei Shay,” 36.

4 Luncz, “Minhag Aḥeinu,” 20–28. See haLevy, “HaMishamrim Hevlei Shay,” 36–37.

5 Hutsin, “Bagdad,” 2–3. Following in his footsteps was Somekh, “Bein Aḥeinu haRḥoqim,” 445–446. On Hutsin’s crusade against “superstitions” in the Hebrew press and the influence of the European Enlightenment on his worldview, see Hakak, *The Collected Essays*, 41–42, 52, 184, 230–231.

(Revealer of Secrets, 1819). Therefore, it stands to reason that the author was nourished by this corpus.⁶

The ensuing years bore witness to other descriptions of the indulco ceremony. For instance, *haShiloah* published a long article, “meḤaye haSfaradim,” by Avraham Elmaliach in 1911.⁷ “The scope is too narrow,” the writer opened this piece, “to contain all the stories, fables, and vapid beliefs that are found among our Sephardic brethren as well as the tales of demons.”⁸

It bears noting that these popular folk beliefs and practices do not fall under the purview of Jewish esoteric wisdom. In consequence, erstwhile rabbis and kabbalists, including Mani the older, also objected to this phenomenon.⁹ As early as 1874, a resident of Jerusalem by the name of Menashe Sithon (ob. 1876) put out a book, *Knisiya leShem Shamayim* (Gathering for the Sake of Heaven), which was entirely devoted to abolishing this custom. This work netted quite a few approvals from major kabbalists in the Land of Israel and beyond, including Aharon Azriel, Raphael Yedidyah Abulafia, Eliyahu Mani, and Haim Palaggi.¹⁰ Within the framework of this polemic, Yitzchak Eisik Yehda Yechiel Safrin (the Komarno Rebbe) formulated a letter on the boundaries of the practical kabbalah. Moreover, the grand rabbi fulminated against the indulco, which he defined as idol worship, but did not completely repudiate the existence of demons.¹¹

On the basis of the content they published, Ben-Yehuda and other secular newspaper editors apparently did not believe that there was a difference between the indulco ceremony and, say, the Midnight Vigil or, for that matter, any other kabbalah practice. Even if Menachem Mani would never have dreamed of finding fault with the kabbalah, his above-mentioned piece on the exorcism was certainly perceived by several of its readers as an attack on this entire body of knowledge, as many secularists placed all these activities under the same heading of “superstitions” that must be eradicated from the world. This sort of obfuscation between kabbalah and folk beliefs also informs

6 HaLevy, “HaMishamrim Hevlei Shay,” 49–50.

7 Elmaliach, “meḤaye haSfaradim,” 260–269, 354–359. At the time, the journal was published by Joseph Klausner in Odessa.

8 Ibid, 353–354.

9 Gaon, “The Fight of Sephardim and Ashkenazim against the Indulco,” 104–107; idem, “Emunot veTrufot Elil,” 36–37.

10 *Knisiya leShem Shamayim*. See Sutton, *Aleppo*, 339–340, 409–411; Patai, “Indulco and Mumiya,” 3–4. Mani cites from this book throughout his article “Emeq haShedim.”

11 Safrin, *Imrei Qdesh*, 74–83.

the early twentieth-century coverage of a supernatural visitation in the daily Jerusalem press.

A Wondrous Tale: Coverage of a Dybbuk in the Jerusalem Press

Ma'ase Nora (A Wondrous Tale), which Ben-Zion Mordechai Hazan put into writing in 1904, includes the exorcism of a *dybbuk* in Jerusalem with the help of Rekhovot haNahar's kabbalists, who availed themselves of a closeted manuscript of Hayyim Vital on practical kabbalah.¹² That same year, the chief rabbi's account was run in Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's newspaper *Hashqafa*.¹³ The editor prefaced Hazan's story with the following words: "The Land has yet to run out of suckers and swindlers. Some time ago, the booklet *Ma'ase Nora* was printed in Jerusalem, which is worthy of being published in public, so that the readers will see until where the belief in nonsense reaches and how great is the power of the swindlers. Here, then, is the content of the pamphlet word by actual word."¹⁴ The deed was indeed copied in its entirety, without significant changes, on the assumption that there is no greater derision than the hard facts. In line with Ben-Yehuda's Maskilic crusade against "the ludicrous beliefs," *Hashqafa* repeatedly mocked the kabbalists of the Land of Israel in all the newspaper's sections throughout the rest of that year.¹⁵ For example, one of the paper's announcements opens with the following words: "Not only in Jerusalem are there weeds. This grass will also grow and blossom, praise be He, in all the climes, and not only the sacred soil of E[retz] Y[israel], but even the defiled soil of heretical France. There too was an episode involving a spirit."¹⁶ From the secular ideologue's standpoint, then, Jerusalem's kabbalists were in thrall to more or less the same kind of superstitions that plague every society on Earth.

Sha'ar haShamayim in the Eyes of the Local Jerusalem Press

A number of Sha'ar haShamayim's activities caught the eye of the Jerusalem press, which indeed produced in-depth accounts that cut to the heart of the

12 Hazan, *Sefer Ma'ase Nora*. The booklet was reprinted several times in the latter half of the twentieth century as part of an effort to promote kabbalah seminaries that deal with exorcism.

13 Ben Yehuda, "Ma'ase haRuah," 110–111; 134–135.

14 *Ibid.*, 110.

15 Yardeni. *The Hebrew Press*, 241–243.

16 Ben Yehuda, "Ba'alat Ov shel Merly (beŠarfat)," 127.

yeshiva's essence. In a cynical yet detailed 1911 article in *HaOr*, Itamar Ben-Avi (Ben-Yehuda's son) and Salomon Israel Cherezli surveyed the annals of this yeshiva. Given its importance to understanding the negative, secular outlook on the kabbalah, we will cite from this piece at length:

From the kabbalists' camp. Since the day the Beit El Synagogue was established by Master Shalom Sharabi of blessed memory – it was always full of people, Torah luminaries, who had a hand in the wisdom of truth [i.e., the kabbalah]. For this reason, they always had a special right to send dispatches among themselves, as though the Beit El Synagogue was a special “kollel.” And so long as the h[oly] c[ommunity] of Beit El is steadily emptying itself of its content, behold we have seen that a movement of this sort [i.e., a kabbalah revival] has arisen among the Ashkenazic community, with all the more vigor and by dint of those young in days. It is now some four years since the establishment in our city of a yeshiva, by the name of Sha'ar haShamayim, where every day young *avrekhim* [young, married seminarians] from the Ashkenazic community gather. Little by little, a few elders have joined them, as well as Sephardic, Bukharian, and Georgian colleagues. There they are studying kabbalah books in piecemeal fashion. They placed at their head the rabbi/kabbalist Menahem Menkhin Halperin and the rabbi Shimon Horowitz of Lida, who travelled great distances with the renowned Jerusalemite delegation to search for the Ten Tribes and the Sambatyon. *Avraikhim* train in the *kavvanot* and *yihudim*. To this end, they managed to reprint *Sha'ar haHaqdamot* and *Eṣ Ḥayyim* by our teacher the rabbi Hayyim Vital with “beautiful commentaries.” Upon reaching the high level of beginning to pray according to the siddur of R[abbi] S[halom] Sharabi of blessed memory, at this point was mounted before them, at Satan's behest, the big obstacle of a shortage of such prayer books, which until now were in manuscript form in twelve parts or more. Merely writing them would have cost hundreds of francs. This [sum] is not within every person's reach. And behold, with God's will, they pulled it off and with the assistance of R. Reuven Haas and other patrons and friends, they also managed to raise this large siddur, with all the additions and *yihudim*, onto the “printing rollers.” And they have already printed until *barukh she'amar* [Blessed is Thee who Said – part of the morning prayer], 143 beautiful and illuminating pages. That said, with this [publication], they [i.e., the seminary's detractors] organized opposition against them on the part of the more fearing [Orthodox elements], as they said that holy names and terrifying additions like this cannot be printed at all.

What is more, they [i.e., Sha'ar haShamayim] also managed to establish a chapter outside the city by the name of Kahal Ḥasidim. Little by

little, a number of Sephardic youth are commingling with Ashkenazic youth. Of course, the patrons overseas are aware of this by means of the dissemination of letters in every tongue. [These Jews are driven to contribute] without any other motives, except simply helping these students and *mekhavvnim*. It is hoped that with the passage of time, a new generation of “*mekubalim* [kabbalists]” will sprout up within our nation that are occupied with combining names, *yihudim*, and *kavvanot* as per the various methods of our teacher, the rabbi, Moshe Cordovero and our mentor, the genius, R. Hayyim Vital. And with this also [a new generation of] “*mekablim*” [recipients of largess] and panhandlers... May they be joyous [O] Israel!¹⁷

Ben-Avi and Cherezli’s survey broaches a few key topics that concerned the regulars of the Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva: the Ten Tribes; the printing of the RaShaSh’s siddur; and sources of income with which to fund their various programs. Of course, the two authors naturally derided all of these undertakings. The same can be said for the following excerpt from the 1912 story in *HaOr*, which was discussed in the previous chapter:

Those same people, like the rabbi from Hrodna [i.e., Halperin], like R. Aryeh [*sic*] Leib Auerbach, and like R. Shimon Lider (a few years ago, the latter went to search for the Ten Tribes and the Sambatyon River), sat down, they sat and thought of how to get publicity for their business so that the money will begin to flow into their pocket? – Seven days and nights they kept their nose to the grindstone and begot a great idea – to call their business by the name of the Sha’ar haShamayim Yeshiva. Can you come up with a finer name for a business like this? This is how the seminary was born.¹⁸

The article ends with a description of a flyer on *tikkun ha’brit* that was circulated in the woman sections of prayer houses. According to Sulami, these notices “explained to the righteous women the entire matter of masturbation with a thorough explanation. All [this was] for the money, to prod and encourage the righteous women to give their pennies to the rabbis and the kabbalah practitioners like them.”¹⁹ As we have seen, the kabbalists formulated a scathing reply to these accusations, which was circulated throughout Jerusalem in the

17 Ben-Avi and Cherezli, “MiMaḥane haMequbalim,” 3.

18 Sulami, “MeInyanei Yerushalayim,” 3.

19 Ibid.

form of a notice. The respondents' objective was not to protect the yeshiva *per se*, but the ascetic customs during *yemei ha'shovavim*.²⁰

In 1918, another newspaper survey by one of "Jerusalem's Maskils" produced a similar account of the local kabbalah scene. Signing off with the pseudonym Megalleh Temirim (the name of Joseph Perl's above-cited anti-Hasidic satire), he deemed the public enterprise of the city's kabbalists to be nothing more than a fundraising ploy, and the same can be said for Horowitz's expedition in search of the Lost Tribes.²¹ From the writer's standpoint, there was no difference between the eighteenth-century Hasidic figures that are ridiculed in *Megalleh Temirim* and the kabbalists in his midst.

Mendele Moykher Sforim, the Sambatyon and the Kabbalists of Jerusalem

Horowitz's famed voyage was also pilloried in earlier works. As far back as 1899, one Mordecai Monosovich published an ironic account titled "The Trip to the Sambatyon River." Although he quotes from the organizers' own description of their trip, Monosovich felt that they were motivated to disseminate this notice by financial considerations and nothing else.²²

Shortly after, we find references to the voyage in the writing of Mendele Moykher Sforim (the pseudonym of Shalom Ya'akov Abramovitsh). In 1903, the pioneering Yiddish and Hebrew author published "Agadot haAdmonim" (Myths of the Admonites, a moniker for the Sons of Moses) – a quasi introduction to a sequel of his parodic work *Mas'ot Binyamin haShlishi* (the Travels of Benjamin the Third), which debuted in Yiddish back in 1879. Predicated on one of the announcements that were circulated by Horowitz and his cohorts in the run-up to their trip, Abramovitsh's story expressly mentions the names of all the kabbalists who were involved in this undertaking.²³ In the 1903 introduction, the protagonist, Benjamin, joins forces with them and heads out, once more, into the great yonder. While some contemporaneous observers viewed the kabbalists' renewed interest in the Lost Tribes to be a Romantic-utopian

20 "BiDvar Shovavim Tat," 1912 (announcement); see the discussion on this topic in the previous chapter.

21 Megale Temirin, "Kabala Ma'asit," 1.

22 Monsovitsh, "HaNesi'a leNahar Sambatyon," 290.

23 Abramovitsh, "Agadot haAdmonim," 145–149. His words are predicated on the kabbalists' notice; *Sefer Drishat Kvod Hakhmei haTora*. On this parody and its connection to this particular source, see Werses, "Midrashei Parodiya," 145–164; Malachi, "R. Shimon Zvi Horowitz," 331.

manifestation of their “age of national revival,”²⁴ Mendele’s sequel unequivocally lambasted both the organizers and their champions.²⁵ That said, the acclaimed writer did not suffice with this barb.

The second (and final) Hebrew version of *The Travels of Benjamin the Third*, which came out in 1911, was augmented with a single page that bears the title “To become Known and be Revealed” along with the fictional date of “1898.”²⁶ On account of the latter, some researchers saw this addition as a criticism of Theodor Herzl. In their estimation, this date hints to the First Zionist Congress (another “victim” of Mendele’s “abuse,” which was held a year earlier).²⁷ Even if this hypothesis is correct, the objective behind “To become Known and be Revealed” was certainly to disparage the kabbalists’ journey, as evidenced by its reference to their known booklet on the expedition, which also came out in 1898. As in “Agadot haAdmonim,” here too Benjamin III leads the kabbalists of Jerusalem on their quest for the Lost Tribes:

While busy publishing my story *The Travels of Benjamin the Third*, the newspapers have passed on the rumor that our adventurer, Benjamin is now off for the second time, heading up a band of explorers in those same distant lands and faraway islands beyond the Mountains of Darkness. Here is what transpired. Making the rounds of the Israelite camp is a book, *Sefer Drishat Kvod Hakhmei haTora*, by the pure-minded functionaries here in the holy city of Jerusalem, may it be built and completed, [which came out in] the year 5658 [1898]... Benjamin answered the call. He rushed off with Dame Sendrel, his prayer shawl, phylacteries, walking stick, and satchel and accompanied those same pure-minded

24 Werses, “Legends about the Ten Tribes,” 45–47, 57–59.

25 Idem, 48–52. The only scholar who praised Mendele’s re-acquaintance with Benjamin was Meir Wiener, who viewed it as a critique on “the national romanticism” of Jewish sages and the “national revival movement;” Werses, “Midrashei Parodiya,” 145. On Mendele’s complex attitude towards Zionism, see Goldenberg, “Mendele Mokher Sfarim and the Zionist Idea,” 31–53.

26 On the assorted versions of this book, see Werses and Shmeruk, *Mendele Mokher Sfarim: Bibliography of his Works*, 8, 15–16, 36–37. The supplement appears in all the Hebrew editions of *Mas’ot Binyamin haShlishi* from 1911 onwards. This Hebrew addition was also incorporated into English renderings of *Mas’ot Binyamin haShlishi*. (The latter, though, hews closely to the Yiddish version, and the translator took the liberty of adapting its content); Abramovitch, *Tales of Mendele the Book Peddler*.

27 See, for example, Miron and Norich. “The Politics of Benjamin III,” 104–105; Perry, Menachem. “HaAnalogiya,” 86; Mer, “Afterword,” 277–278.

and dignified functionaries. He is guiding them like a horse through the terrible wilderness – the home of serpents and despotic Gentiles, like Prester John and the heretic el-Torek.²⁸

In sum, Mendele dusted off the age-old satires on Jewish expeditions in search of the Ten Tribes. Against the backdrop of Horowitz's voyage, *The Travels of Benjamin the Third*, which debuted over twenty years before this episode, took on a whole new meaning. Like Monosovich's work and the short parody by Megalleh Temirim, this take on the kabbalist's trip draws on the 1898 notice by its organizers, who are mocked as unrealistic adventurers or money-hungry schemers. It is only natural, then, that the yeshiva Horowitz subsequently founded was the target of similar accusations.

The "Last" Adversaries: Deinard's Burial of the Kabbalah and the Yihyah Qafih Polemic

Thanks in part to some of their own public communications, Jerusalem's kabbalists were perceived as both slackers and active panhandlers. Less pejoratively, they were also viewed as hallucinators futilely chasing far-fetched dreams. Be that as it may, by the early 1920s, the torrent of criticism against them had slowed to a trickle. The most outspoken and persistent detractor was the author, traveler, merchant, and bibliographer Ephraim Deinard (1846–1930), who waged a quixotic struggle against any expression of mysticism in Jewish literature, for all its hues and genres.²⁹ Deinard only calmed down after completing a book in which he symbolically buried the

28 Abramovitsh, *Mas'ot Binyamin haShlishi*, 87. Reports to the contrary notwithstanding, this passage is excluded from the 1896–1897 edition of the book.

29 For a synopsis of his views on the kabbalah and Hasidism, see Deinard, *Alatah/Am To'ei Levav*. Gershom Scholem wrote the following observation inside the cover of his personal copy: "A wondrous book! Almost every line is a lie – and everything he says with added assurance, with 'facts,' dates, interconnections – is all bastardized, incomprehensible, or simply fabricated, and it is impossible to criticize sentence after sentence. Such a waste of fine paper!" *Gershom Scholem Library Catalog*, vol. 1, 38. In a letter to Schwadron, Deinard wrote that he intended to write a book by the name of Forgeries in Jewish Literature that would focus on kabbalistic works; Deinard, Letter to Schwadron (MS). For an in-depth look at Deinard, see Schapiro, "Ephraim Deinard," 149–163, which includes a list of his publications; *ibid*, "Efraim Deinard," 622–623; Berkowitz, *Ephraim Deinard (1846–1930): A Transitional Figure*; *ibid*. "Ephraim Deinard: Bibliophile and Bookman," 137–52; Meir, *Michael Levi Rodkinson*.

kabbalah in Meiron – the burial site of R. Simeon ben Yochai. Fittingly, this work ended with a *Kaddish* for Jewish mystical literature:

The (practical and theoretical) kabbalah has taken its last breadth and reached the end, of this there is no doubt... Anyone connected to literature knows this. The [Jewish] people have ceased to even mention the word kabbalah, as though it never existed. It died forty years ago, in the previous generation of the Haskalah. All this time, it was lying in the coffin and nobody came to see it, no one made an effort to bring it to burial... to give a eulogy, to weep over its passing. Upon reaching the autumn of my life, I said that I would do some good deed for my people, to bring it [i.e., the kabbalah] to a proper Jewish burial.³⁰

In making this case, Deinard was completely oblivious to the traditional kabbalah's renaissance then underway in the Land of Israel as well as similar developments in various streams, both within and outside the fold of Judaism. The scores of books that he published notwithstanding, Deinard's polemics largely fell on deaf ears. In fact, they are akin to a desperate, futile, and poorly-attended demonstration against the emergence of an all-too-real new world order in which the concealed Torah was indeed blossoming.



The era's kabbalists also faced adversaries from within traditional society. Objections raised in a couple of books by Yihyah Qafih (1850–1931), a Yemenite rabbi, kicked up a fierce storm that would last for several decades³¹ Until then, the kabbalists had by and large ignored the derisive barbs against their way of life in the Land-of-Israel press (save for the above-mentioned article on *shovavim-tat*). This time around, though, the criticism came from an Orthodox figure and was directed at Toranic institutions and the very essence of the kabbalah. As a result, the kabbalah elite felt compelled to break their silence and bare their knuckles. The controversy in Yemen reached the gates of Palestine as early as 1913, where it caught the eye of local journalists. As expressed in the following, 1914 announcement, Jerusalem's kabbalists decided to excommunicate Qafih and his allies:

30 Deinard, *Alatah*, 111–112.

31 For more on this debate, see Meir, "Wrestling with the Esoteric," 615–619. The following works should be added to the bibliography therein: Wagner, "Jewish Mysticism on Trial in a Muslim Court," 207–231; Eraqi Klorman, *The Jews of Yemen*, 26–73; idem, "Enlightenment," 133–180.

We the undersigned, the sages and rabbis of the holy city of Jerusalem, may it be built and completed, upon hearing [of] the scandal in the land of Yemen [where] the sons of Belial set out to dig broken pits and have abandoned a source of invigorating water, leading the residents of their city astray and hitting the hearts of the innocent who are faithful to God and his sacred Torah. They opened their mouths to denigrate the sacred Zohar and the holy divine *tanna* RaShBY, may his virtue protect us amen, and the books of the kabbalists, may their virtue protect us amen, which were published and accepted in all the Diasporas of the Jewish people, and the holy books of the *Shulḥan Arukh*. Woe onto them for this affront to the Torah. Remove the turban and lift off the crown [Ezekiel 21:31], [stuff] their mouth with soil. We heard [their accusations] and our stomachs are raging, our face has fallen, and our knees have buckled. We are languishing in our humiliation and are covered by our indignity, for this major impediment and weakness has arisen in our day. We stand trembling with a frightened and defeated heart from trepidation of God and the splendor of his brilliance amid the jealousy, the jealousy for the honor of the sacred Book of the Zohar and its author the RaShBY may his merit protect us. With the assemblage and gathering of the rabbis, we have taken to our feet with one heart. The Almighty will protect them. Our feet once stood in Your gates of Jerusalem – lower Jerusalem, as opposed to Jerusalem on high. And we opened the Holy Ark and excommunicated the inveterate sinners who impugn the sacred Zohar and the like. Therefore, upon the arrival of this letter to their lands and places, every Jew is duty bound to stand before the ark of God and excommunicate these transgressors.

This call to arms is followed by the text of the excommunication itself and the signatures of dozens of rabbis from, *inter alia*, Rekhovot haNahar and Sha'ar haShamayim, most notably Dweck-HaKohen, Yom Tov Yedid Halevi, Shalom Hedaya, Ben-Zion Mordechai Hazan, Shaul Kassin, Horowitz, and Auerbach.³²

In turn, Qafiḥ put out a rejoinder by the name of “Amal yeRe’ut Ruaḥ yeḤaramot yeTshuvatam” (Toil and Comradery, Spirit and Excommunications and the Answer to Them), which includes the text of the excommunication.

32 Qafiḥ, *Amal yeRe’ut Ruaḥ yeḤaramot yeTshuvatam*, 3–5. A photo of the excommunication decree appears in Sharabi, *Quntres Magen yeṢena*, 55–61. Sutton translates the document into English; idem, *Aleppo*, 377–380. Bar Maoz elaborates on the involvement of Eretz Yisrael’s rabbis in this polemic; idem, *Justice at All Costs*, 218–230, 260. Also see Hillel, “The Life of Kassin,” 56–58, 106.

Printed in Jerusalem circa 1914, his response opens by invoking the words of the Prophet Isaiah: “Alas, she has become a harlot, Jerusalem the faithful city that was filled with justice, where righteousness dwelt, but now murderers, with excommunications and banishments that countervail His will and the will of those who fear Him. They knew not with what to obstruct him [i.e., the author].”³³

In 1931, Qafih’s *magnum opus*, *Sefer Milhamot Hashem* (God’s Wars), came out in Jerusalem and was instantly banned in Yemen and Palestine.³⁴ This work excoriated kabbalah theology, the use of the spheres, and the esoteric literature in general. Qafih’s objective was to present kabbalah as an invasive species in the ecosystem of Judaism as well as a form of idolatry and outright heresy. Put differently, it was a corpus that should be personally avoided at all costs and a phenomenon that should be rooted out of traditional Jewish society by any and all means. After the rabbi’s demise the following year, some of Yemen’s sages penned a response to his outlook on the kabbalah. Their words were incorporated into the 1938 book *Emunat HaShem* (Beliefs of God), which was printed in Jerusalem. Tens of rabbis and kabbalists prefaced the book with approvals, both short and long. *In toto*, these approvals offer the most lucid reflection of what was going on at the time in the field of kabbalah. For instance, they demonstrate the extent to which Jewish esoteric knowledge had gained a foothold in traditional Jewish society. Apart from condemning Qafih, the book’s endorsers praise the kabbalah and stress the importance of studying this body of knowledge. Among the book’s champions was Shimon Zvi Horowitz, whose approval excoriated the kabbalah’s detractors: “And it is worthy to fight against them, to defeat them, and humiliate them, etc. until they fully repent, regret their bad deeds and false views, and condemn to incineration all the distorted books that are rife with heresy for the sake of preventing them from misleading innocent people.” He then signed off with the title “R[osh] Y[eshiva] of all the kabbalists in the city of Jerusalem, may it be built and completed/RY of the seminary Sha’ar haShamayim and the head of the kabbalists in J[erusalem], may it be built and completed.”³⁵ The Qafih debate would reverberate powerfully among the Yemenites in later years as well. However, it had no real implications on the kabbalah circles in the Land of Israel, as the seminaries continued along the same path. Moreover, it barely echoed in traditional society. For all intents and purposes, the thundering voice of the kabbalah’s critics was muffled and vanquished.

33 Qafih, *Amal yeRe’ut Ruaḥ yeḤaramot yeTshuvatam*, 9.

34 Qafih, *Sefer Milhamot Hashem*.

35 *Emunat HaShem* (1938). For a discussion of this work, see Tobi, “Who Was the Author of *Emunat HaShem*,” 87–98.

Afterword

A large share of the diverse output of Jerusalem's kabbalah seminaries was gradually acquired by Gershom Scholem and is now held by the collection at the Israel National Library. The scholar occasionally jotted down relevant comments on the margins of personal copies of these works. Over the course of his lifetime, Scholem also met a considerable number of the city's kabbalists. Although he commented on these encounters on the said margins and in personal documents that were left in his estate, none of Scholem's many and manifold published works survey his impressions of these figures. Until recently, living kabbalists continued to be ignored in the research literature. The consensus surrounding Jewish esoteric wisdom and its dissemination in the early twentieth century is undoubtedly in need of major revisions. It is no longer plausible to speak of "the remnants of the kabbalists" or ponder "the last survivor" of this fellowship. Moreover, theories whereby Jerusalem's kabbalists were few in number and far from innovative have been thoroughly debunked. On the other hand, canvassing a few exceptional personages, like Yehuda Leib Ashlag and Abraham Isaac Kook, on the grounds that they embody the kabbalah enterprise of the period under review is an ill-advised strategy as well. To a certain extent, Ashlag and Kook were marginal figures in their own lifetime. It was only years later that their direct and secondary disciples, as well as those riding on their coattails, managed to shift the spotlight onto these two figures.

Working on the assumption that they were in the midst of an age of revelation, early twentieth-century kabbalists in Jerusalem, foremost among them the RaShaSh's acolytes, endeavored to spread the learning of Jewish esoteric wisdom to all members of traditional society using the limited tools at their disposal. In this respect, Rekhovot haNahar and Sha'ar haShamayim are indicative of the substantial changes in the approach to the kabbalah and its dissemination during the period in question (even if they ultimately refrained from expanding its borders beyond their greater community and the lion's share of their printing enterprise was channeled inward to a select few). The plans of these kabbalists were indeed greater than their actions, but these shortcomings, *inter alia*, reflect the state of the Kabbalah in the beginning of the 1900s. The search for the Ten Tribes was largely the preserve of a couple of Sha'ar haShamayim's habitués, as this quest was not universally embraced by their fellow kabbalists. At any rate, the quest to find the Sons of Moses betrays an attempt to integrate a religious narrative into the Jewish national revival. In essence, the foundations that were laid by the kabbalah seminaries during the first half of the twentieth century is primarily responsible for the kabbalah's

contemporary blossoming among Orthodox Jews. In sum, a reassessment of what transpired in the Land of Israel's kabbalah circles during the early 1900s is a prerequisite not only for improving our picture of the past, but for understanding current developments in this field. However, this is but a single part of a wider story. Besides the stirrings among the traditional masses, Jewish esoteric wisdom penetrated beyond the borders of Judaism. This turn of events would also have major ramifications on "old-school" kabbalists during the latter half of the twentieth century.

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