

# The *Tsadik* and His Soul's Sparks: From Kabbalah to Hasidism

MOSHE IDEL

## WHAT IS NEW IN HASIDISM

THERE ARE FEW SERIOUS SCHOLARS who would claim that East European Hasidism as a mystical movement is replete with conceptual innovations. Indeed, there are many who would argue that there is very little new in Hasidism as mysticism that cannot be traced to its kabbalistic sources.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, while accepting this perspective in the main, there are also scholars who have suggested the existence of some topics that represent substantial Hasidic innovations. This is, for example, the case for two leading scholars of early Hasidism, Joseph Weiss and Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, who saw quietism to be at once an important component of Hasidism and a novel addition to Jewish mysticism.<sup>2</sup> Gershom Scholem, who repeatedly spoke about the conservative nature of Hasidism, nonetheless identified three main conceptual innovations in the writings of early Hasidic masters. The best known among those alleged innovations consists in a new evaluation of the value of *devekut* (attachment, cleaving) as a neutralization or liquidation of a “true” messianism in favor of a more individualized form of redemption. The second innovation relates to the unprecedented theory and practice of the *tsadik* as a

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1. See, e.g., Buber's approach that envisioned Hasidism as a mode of life and not a new teaching in Martin Buber, *Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, ed. and trans. M. Friedman (New York, 1966), 24–29, esp. 25: “The Baal-Shem did not have new theological concepts to impart to him [to the Great Magid] but a living connection with this world and the world above.” On 36–37, he speaks, in a manner closer to other statements of Scholem's, about a new mode of life that is characteristic of Hasidism. Cf. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1995), 342.

2. See, respectively, *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, ed. D. Goldstein (Oxford, 1997), 67–94, and *Hasidism as Mysticism: Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth-Century Hasidic Thought*, trans. J. Chipman (Princeton, N.J., 1993).

spiritual leader. And, finally, we notice the novelty of a topic that will concern us here: the assumption that the *tsadik* is responsible for the redemption of particles or sparks of his own soul, believed to be spread in various beings, and sometimes described as found in his immediate surroundings.<sup>3</sup> This investment in the existence of innovation and originality hidden in Hasidism's basic conservatism was part of the scholarly effort to isolate the factors that contributed to the great success of Hasidic ideas among East European Jews in a short period of time following the activity of the movement's founder, R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov (the Besht). In the case of the first of these alleged innovations, a closer investigation of earlier material reveals that the contribution of Hasidism to this theme is much less pronounced than assumed by scholars.<sup>4</sup> This, in my opinion, is also the case for the third topic, as I aim to demonstrate in this essay.

Let me first succinctly describe the way in which the first topic has been presented in the extant scholarship on early Hasidism. In a seminal passage on the emergence of Hasidism, Scholem has discerned what he calls "an entirely new direction."<sup>5</sup> From the phenomenological point of

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3. The three conceptual characteristics of Hasidism have been enumerated in a concise manner in a list compiled by Scholem, printed for the first time by Jonathan Meir, "Ginzei Shalom" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 78 (2009): 269–70. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, 330, 344. As J. Meir pointed out ("Ginzei," 270), over the years, Scholem did not change his mind on issues related to Hasidism; his many polemics with other scholars such as Martin Buber, Ben-Zion Dinur, or Isaiah Tishby have only strengthened his earlier views.

4. Abraham Abulafia's approach to *devekut* does have clear redemptive and messianic implications. See his *Maftelah ba-tokbehot*, ed. A. Gross (Jerusalem, 2001), 78. For more on this issue, see M. Idel, "Multiple Forms of Redemption in Kabbalah and Hasidism," *JQR* 101.1 (2011): 39–44.

5. *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, trans. J. Neugroschel, ed. J. Chipman (New York, 1991), 215. See also Buber, *Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, 60, who speaks about Hasidism as striving for a "revolution of values." For another example of a sharp emphasis on the conceptual innovations that created what was called the "Hasidic revolution," see Rachel Elijor, *The Mystical Origins of Hasidism* (Oxford, 2006), 74–84. For another type of emphasis on innovation, see Haviva Pedaya, "The Besht, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, and the Maggid of Mezeritch: Basic Lines for a Religious-Typological Approach" (Hebrew), *Daat* 45 (2000): 25–73. Compare also to Jean Baumgarten, *La naissance du Hasidisme, Mystique, Rituel, Société* (Paris, 2006), 265–72, 283. I propose to use more modest terms: Hasidism as a spiritual movement—unlike the social one—embodies an "experiential turn," or a mystical reform of Jewish life, on the basis of certain transformations of kabbalistic traditions, or alternatively an orientation that puts new accents on much older themes, or a rearrangement of existing models. See, e.g., *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany, N.Y., 1995), 172, or my "Adonay Sefatay Tiftah: Models of Understanding Prayer in Early Hasidism," *Kabbalah* 18 (2008): 78.

view, the difference between Hasidism and Kabbalah consists, according to him, in a divergence that is formulated in quite a distinct manner:

Man's *devekuth* with God (whose significance in Hasidism I have analyzed more precisely elsewhere)<sup>6</sup> is a spiritual act performed through means of concentration and contemplation.<sup>7</sup> All spheres of human life, even the most mundane, should be so thoroughly imbued with an awareness of God's presence, that even ordinary and social activities reveal an inward, contemplative aspect. This twofold meaning of human actions, as simultaneously visibly external and as carrying a contemplative aspect, added an additional tension to religious life . . . In many cases the religious tension aroused by the demand for *devekuth* must have been resolved in passivity—which, to be sure, was a facile simplification and misinterpretation of this doctrine. But despite its basically contemplative character, the ideal of *devekuth* had a strong element of spiritual activism for the Baal Shem and his disciples . . . Hasidism emphasizes the special character of activity demanded of human beings. The active aspect of contemplative life finds its finest expression in the Hasidic teaching of the "raising of the holy sparks" which also sheds new light on the doctrine of the soul sparks . . . The term "raising of the sparks" *originates* in Lurianic Kabbalah but *no connection* is drawn there between this notion and that of *devekuth*. *In contrast* to the Hasidic writings in which the two ideas are often associated, in Lurianic writings they always appear separately and the uplifting of the sparks is *invariably* related to the process of *tikkun*.<sup>8</sup>

Scholem's assertion that in Hasidism a sharp separation exists between the ideal of *devekut* and the process of *tikun* (repair) as a cosmic operation (though not a theurgic operation, as characteristic of Lurianic Kabbalah) is no doubt grossly exaggerated. For, according to at least one important

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6. He refers here to his article dedicated to *devekut*. See Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1972), 203–36. See also M. Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven, Conn., 1998), 279–80.

7. See also elsewhere in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 185, where Scholem wrote as follows: "Devekut is clearly a contemplative value without Messianic implications and can be realized everywhere and at any time." See also *ibid.*, 216, for a similar statement and the Hebrew formulation of this view as "inner contemplation" in his description of *devekut* in the thought of the Great Maggid, in *Devarim be-go* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 1976), 340, and now repr. in *Ha-shbalav ba-aharon*, ed. D. Assaf and E. Liebes (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2008), 249.

8. *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 216. Emphases added. See also Scholem, *Major Trends*, 329, 330, 335, and his *Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 176–202.

and explicit Lurianic statement (by Hayyim Vital), which reverberated also in other writings from this school, the act of *devekut* is understood to be instrumental in causing the perfection of the supernal anthropos:

Concerning the study of Torah . . . the quintessence of his intention must be to link his soul and bind her to her supernal source by the means of Torah. And his intention must be to achieve thereby the restoration of the supernal anthropos, which is the ultimate intention of the creation of man and the goal of the commandment to study Torah . . . As when studying Torah man must intend to link his soul and to unite it and make it cleave to its source above . . . and he must intend thereby to perfect the supernal tree [of *sefirot*] and the holy anthropos. And all the aim of the creation of man and his preoccupation with the Torah is [intended] solely to repair and to perfect the tree and the supernal anthropos when their souls are repaired, returned and integrated there.<sup>9</sup>

Vital resorts to five different verbs in the same passage, only a part of which has been quoted here, in order to convey the imperative to *cleave* to the source, as part of a process that culminates in *tikun*, or repair: *le-yahed*, *le-ḥaber*, *le-kasher*, *le-dabek*, *le-bikalel*. Their occurrence together in a rather short passage, which does not have a parallel in any other kabbalistic passage I am acquainted with, does not leave any place for doubting the existence of an affinity between cleaving and repairing or amending in Lurianic Kabbalah. Thus we have a combination of two different activities, cleaving and repairing, that are presented as strongly related to each other long before Hasidism.

Moreover, according to Scholem, the Lurianic process of *tikun* by elevating the sparks, which were related in Lurianism to the *Adam kadmon*—namely, to the restoration of the divine or supernal anthropos shattered

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9. R. Hayyim Vital, *Sha'ar ba-mitsvot* (Jerusalem, 1905), fol. 33a. The text occurs there in two slightly different versions. See also Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, Conn., 1988), 57, 300, n. 155, where other parallel Lurianic texts are cited. See also below the passage to be quoted from Vital's *Likutei Torah*. It should be pointed out that the nexus between *devekut* and *tikun* is found explicitly already in Cordovero. See his *Or yakar*, vol. 13 (Jerusalem, 1985), p. 56: מפני שהעון הוא פגם המפריד, והתיקון ברבקות הוא הפך העון "The transgression is a blemish which is separating, and the amendment is by [means of] *devekut*, which is the opposite of the transgression." To be sure: the *tikun* here is not a cosmic event but an individual amendment of the soul, which cleaves to its source after some form of asceticism, but this vision brings Cordovero's passage closer to Hasidism even more than Lurianic Kabbalah.

by the breaking of the vessels—has been interpreted in Hasidism in a totally new manner. That is, it is only in Hasidism that this kind of redemption and reparation of the human soul associated with the supposedly new task of *devekut*. Scholem further argues that it is more the personal sparks rather than the cosmic ones that should be uplifted by Hasidic masters. This represents a shift from the cosmic and general reparation to the personal one. Elsewhere, Scholem describes this point at length. He imagines a deep transformation of Lurianic ideas related to the uplifting of the sparks, a shift that took place in East European Hasidism.<sup>10</sup> According to his more general approach to Hasidism, it is this process of separating the divine sparks from their immersion within the corporeal world, and thus the destruction of the material component, that is characteristic of Hasidism; this means that it is the evacuation of the divine elements from this world, and not so much the value of “worship in the corporeal world,” that hallows the world, as has been emphasized by Martin Buber.<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that Joseph Weiss accepted Scholem’s emphasis on the centrality and innovation of the elevation of the soul-sparks in early Hasidism.<sup>12</sup> The single study dedicated exclusively to

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10. *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 216–23. See also his *Sabbatai Sevi, the Mystical Messiah*, trans. R. J. Z. Werblowsky (Princeton, N.J., 1973), 38–44, where again the Lurianic discussions about the existence of the personal sparks in Lurianic Kabbalah, which should be redeemed by the person, are avoided. See also the strong formulation in Hebrew in Scholem, *ha-Shalav ha-aharon*, 230, when discussing the theme of the soul-sparks. Scholem even enumerates the historical reasons for this change. Let me emphasize: he, and following him scholars who will be mentioned below, did not speak about a new emphasis offered by Hasidic masters but about a profound change, or a “new form,” a *novum*, that allegedly reflects the originality of Hasidic thought.

11. Scholem, *Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 227–50. Buber himself, when dealing with the elevation of sparks, does not address the issue that the sparks belong specifically to the person who elevates them. See Buber, *Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, 79. For the problems related to Buber’s understanding of the elevation of sparks, see now Judah Gellman, “Buber’s Blunder: Buber’s Replies to Scholem and Schatz-Uffenheimer,” *Modern Judaism* 20 (2000): 20–40.

12. On this issue, see Weiss, *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism*, 17–22, 26, and in a somewhat less emphatic manner in his “The Beginning of the Growth of the Hasidic Path” (Hebrew), *Zion* 16 (1951): 65, 68. His assumption follows Scholem, but he also offers a sociological explanation why the Hasidic masters “changed” the Lurianic view on the soul-sparks: they reflect the social status of itinerant preachers, who had to elevate the personal sparks from the different places they visit. See also Ada Rapoport-Albert, “The Hasidic Movement after 1772: Structural Continuity and Change,” in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert (London, 1996), 126–30; Rachel Elior, “Between Yesh and Ayin: The Doctrine of the Zaddik in the Works of Jacob Isaac, the Seer of Lub-

this topic, an article by Louis Jacobs, also adopts this approach unequivocally,<sup>15</sup> assessing in a quite solemn tone that “as Gershom Scholem has shown, in Hasidism, each individual, or at least each tsadik, has his own sparks to reclaim. There is *nothing* of this in Luria.”<sup>14</sup> In this vein writes also E. R. Wolfson who, though critical of Scholem’s nonmessianic understanding of Hasidism, nevertheless formulates our topic as follows: “The Hasidic teaching added a personal and unique dimension to this idea by stressing that there are sparks in the cosmos that belong exclusively to an individual.”<sup>15</sup>

The consensual statements as to the novelty of soul-sparks are samples of the reigning consensus in scholarship on Hasidism, and they exemplify how some of Scholem’s major assessments have been accepted and have inspired entire lines of research. Thus, it is evident that personal redemption by the experience of *devekut*, and redemption by elevating sparks from the shells, are, to Scholem, novel elements in East European Hasidism. They share a focus on the individual and his spiritual salvation as a key, though not exclusive, part of the mystical drama.<sup>16</sup>

However, a perusal of the vast kabbalistic literature shows that the situation is more complex. More recent studies on the relation between Kabbalah and Hasidism have shown that some elements that scholars believed were Hasidic innovations, such as the concepts of *katenuit* (smallness) and *gadelut* (greatness), are found already in Lurianic texts.<sup>17</sup> This

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lin,” in *Jewish History, Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky* (London, 1988), 404; Arthur Green, “The *Zaddiq* as *Axis Mundi* in Later Judaism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45.3 (1977): 339; Elliot R. Wolfson, “Walking as a Sacred Duty: Theological Transformation of Social Reality in Early Hasidism,” in Rapoport-Albert, ed., *Hasidism Reappraised*, 186–201.

15. Louis Jacobs, “The Uplifting of Sparks in Later Jewish Mysticism,” in *Jewish Spirituality II*, ed. A. Green (New York, 1987), 99–126. For an excellent analysis of the concept of holy sparks in the Beshtian teachings and their elevation, see now Tsippi Kauffman, *In All Your Ways Know Him: The Concept of God and the Avodah be-Gashmiyut in the Early Stages of Hasidism* (Hebrew; Ramat Gan, 2009), 121–26.

14. Jacobs, “Uplifting of Sparks,” 117 (emphasis added). See also Rapoport-Albert, “The Hasidic Movement,” 127–28.

15. Wolfson, “Walking as a Sacred Duty,” 186, n. 18, after quoting approvingly both Scholem and Jacobs on the topic.

16. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, 344.

17. See Mordechai Pachter, “Smallness and Greatness,” in his *Roots of Faith and Devekut: Studies in the History of Kabbalistic Ideas* (Los Angeles, 2004), 185–233, and Yehuda Liebes “‘Two Young Roes of a Doe’: The Secret Sermon of Isaac Luria before his Death,” in *Lurianic Kabbalah*, ed. R. Elior and Y. Liebes (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1994), 113–26. For Scholem’s differing position, see his *Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 218–22.

is also the case with the claim that *devekut* possesses a redemptive value, which is not actually new in Jewish mysticism.<sup>18</sup> In our specific case, Scholem himself acknowledged in a footnote that the Hasidic masters did not invent the concept of the elevation of particular sparks out of the blue. “Such a possibility,” he noted, “is mentioned by one of Luria’s disciples: cf. Menahem Azariah of Fano, *Tikkunei Teshuvah*, ch. 10.”<sup>19</sup> However, as we will see immediately, it is obvious that there is more than just one single, and relatively late, Lurianic text, where such a “possibility” is mentioned. Scholem himself adduced elsewhere another Lurianic text that—when interpreted properly—points in another direction than he assumes, as we will see below. In other words, while the more general statements of Scholem declare the novelty of Hasidism on this topic, a few statements by Scholem complicate the picture.

Some years ago, I presumed that the view that someone has to elevate the sparks that belong to his own soul predates Hasidism, since it occurs already in the circle of Luria’s students. Especially important for my argument then was a story quoted by R. Eliezer Tsevi of Komarno, writing in the second part of the nineteenth century, in the name of his more famous father, R. Isaac Aizic Yehudah Safrin of Komarno, to the effect that Luria told his disciple R. Moshe Galante to eat more in order to redeem those sparks of his he did not redeem in his former transmigration, when he abstained from eating because of his ascetic propensity.<sup>20</sup> However, though I assume that the story is reliable, I have not been able to locate this legend in earlier sources.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, I have identified a series of other texts, largely Lurianic ones but also some pre-Lurianic

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18. See my “Modes of Cleaving to ‘Letters’ and Their Effects in Israel Baal Shem Tov,” forthcoming in *Jewish History*.

19. *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 281, n. 121. Also the fact that one of the Hasidic masters refers to the theory of personal sparks as found in “writings,” namely, kabbalistic writings Scholem himself adduced (*ibid.*, 220), did not convince him to attenuate or modify his stark distinction. See also now his *ba-Sbalav ba-aḥaron*, 234, where he claims that “precisely what is new and specific in this teaching, is not found in these Lurianic ‘writings,’ “at all.”

20. See his *Zekan beti* (Jerusalem, 1973), 175, and Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, 206, 375, n. 130.

21. See, nevertheless, the later kabbalistic stories about the ritual eating of an animal into which the soul of a relative had transmigrated in order to rescue that soul. See Moshe Idel, “Rabbi Yehudah Halewah and His *Zafnat pa’aneah*” (Hebrew), *Shalem* 4 (1984): 126–27, and compare to David B. Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, and Science: The Cultural Universe of a Sixteenth-Century Jewish Physician* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), 125–26. Compare also to the story in *Shiveḥe ha-Besht*, ed. A. Rubinstein (Jerusalem, 1991), 312–13.

ones, that paved the way for the emergence of the Hasidic practice of elevating soul-sparks.

Moreover, a proper understanding of Safedian Kabbalah (pre-Lurianic and Lurianic) and of Hasidism depends on an understanding of the development of not only Kabbalah but also nonkabbalistic literatures, like the theory of the two types of wars, which had a substantial impact on Judaism long before Safedian Kabbalah and Hasidism. Without understanding these developments, it will be difficult to offer a proper account of both Kabbalah and Hasidism, neither of which were closed systems belonging solely to Jewish mysticism but were more dynamic and open than we sometimes think.

#### SOME KABBALISTIC TREATMENTS OF ELEVATING SOUL-SPARKS

In order to understand better the background to some of the Hasidic discussions concerning the elevation of one's own sparks, let me examine a major conceptual development that reached its apex in Safedian Kabbalah and reverberated later in Hasidism. Already in early Kabbalah, the supernal Righteous, the *Tsadik* qua ninth *sefirah*, has been described as the source of the souls which descend from that divine power. This is clear in the book of Bahir,<sup>22</sup> one of the first kabbalistic documents, and in many iterations of its position. From the nature of the images through which this process is described, it is evident that the sexual nature of this *sefirah* contributed to the description of the dispersion of the soul; it emanated from that power that is portrayed by images related to ejaculation of seed. Already in late thirteenth-century Kabbalah, seminal emission, which was considered a very great sin, was understood on the human level as drops that constitute divine sparks, which are thereby mixed with demonic powers.<sup>23</sup> This understanding has been sometimes connected to a more general vision of reality as a mixture of good and evil, which betrays an influence of some Manichaean elements.<sup>24</sup> Theories

22. See, e.g., Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 93–98; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, trans. A. Arkush, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton, N.J., 1987), 71–80; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Along the Path: Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism, and Hermeneutics* (Albany, N.Y., 1995), 80–82; M. Idel, *Ben, Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* (London, 2008), 385–99; and Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism, Pillars, Ladders, Lines* (Budapest, 2005), 79–83.

23. Shiloh Pachter, “Shemirat ha-Berit: To the History of the Interdiction of Seminal Emission” (Hebrew; Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 2006), 117–91.

24. Moshe Idel, *Ascensions on High*, 141, n. 122, and Idel, “The Interpretations on the Secret of Incest Interdictions in Early Kabbalah” (Hebrew), *Kabbalah* 12 (2004): 153–58.

of evil, marginal in the general economy of the kabbalistic literatures before the mid-thirteenth century, emerged or surfaced immediately afterward and took on a variety of forms. Accordingly, there developed the assumption that a Kabbalist should study the realm of evil, visit it, and eventually confront it, as it is. This is evident in the later kabbalistic writings of R. Moshe de Leon and in some parts of the zoharic literature.

On the other hand, in Nahmanides' kabbalistic school, there was a secret conceived to be more important than other kabbalistic secrets, which is described as the secret of impregnation, *sod ha-ibur*. This secret was interpreted from the end of the thirteenth century as meaning, among other things, that a certain soul, or a spark of a soul, can inhabit the soul and body of another person, who already possesses a soul of his/her own.<sup>25</sup> This secret differs from the more widespread and better-known concept of *gilgul* (metempsychosis or reincarnation)—which is described in several sources as distinct from the secret of impregnation—which means that the soul of a certain person as a whole entity passes from one body to another, which does not possess a soul of its own. Thus, the secret of impregnation assumes the possibility of what can be called poly-psychism, referring to the synchronic presence of more than one soul in the same body, while metempsychosis assumes that one soul visits, diachronically, more than one body, a phenomenon that can be described as polysomatism. The phenomena referred to by the two concepts were widespread in Safedian Kabbalah, and the interface between them triggered many interesting developments in Jewish mysticism since then.<sup>26</sup>

In the sixteenth century, we can detect a conceptual turn, according to which the dissemination of the souls is related not only to the divine righteous, the ninth *sefirah* of *Yesod* or the supernal *Tsadik*, but also to the human realm. The view of an anonymous kabbalist is reported, sometime in the mid-sixteenth century, by R. David ibn Avi Zimra, as disclosing a great kabbalistic secret:

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25. See Idel, "The Secret of Impregnation as Metempsychosis in Kabbalah," *Verwandlungen, Archaeologie der literarischen Communication*, IX, ed. A. and J. Assmann, (Munich, 2006), 349–68, and Idel, "Interpretations of the Secret of Impregnation and its Significance for the Beginning of Kabbalah and its Development" (Hebrew; *Daat* 72 [2012]: 5–49; 73 [2012]: 5–44.), and compare to Haviva Pedaya, *Nahmanides, Cyclical Time and Holy Text* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 2003), 366, 376. See also the interesting discussion in Cordovero, *Or yakar*, vol. 13 (Jerusalem, 1985), 5. See also the interesting thesis of Assaf Tamari, "Human Sparks, Readings in the Lurianic Theory of Transmigration and its Concepts of the Human Subject" (Hebrew; M.A thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2009).

26. For more on these two terms, see Idel, "Secret of Impregnation."

Just as a woman becomes pregnant and gives birth without lacking anything [of her own being] so too the souls of the righteous and pious become pregnant and give birth and emanate sparks into this world, to protect the generation,<sup>27</sup> or for some other reasons, in the manner of one who lights one candle from another, while the first candle is not diminished.<sup>28</sup>

This theory had been reported orally to ibn Avi Zimra as an explanation of the difference between the secret of impregnation and that of metempsychosis. Therefore, the soul of the righteous—and in many instances it is the soul of Moses that is discussed in such contexts—is conceived of as emanating sparks, which belong to him personally but, most probably,

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27. See also *Metsudat David* (Zolkiew, 1862), fol. 28c, where again the task of defending the generation is attributed to some sort of souls, conceived to be “new”—that is, they did not undergo transmigration. See also the passage of R. Shlomo Molkho, a contemporary of ibn Avi Zimra, adduced in Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 150, where the soul of the Messiah comes in order to protect the generation.

28. *Metsudat David*, fol. 27d, adduced and briefly discussed by Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, 223, without, however, suggesting anything related to its impact on Luria or Hasidism. On this kabbalist's views of transmigration in general, see Melilah Hellner-Eshed, “The Doctrine of Metempsychosis in the Writings of R. David ibn Avi Zimra” (Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 43 (1990): 15–63, esp. 44, n. 98. It should be pointed out that a similar approach that conceives the secret of impregnation as a specially esoteric topic is found in the text of ibn Avi Zimra's contemporary kabbalist R. Shlomo ha-Levi Al-Qabetz, *Shoresb yishay* (Sziget, 1891), fol. 78ab. See also the next footnote. Is Al-Qabetz the anonymous kabbalist who transmitted to ibn Zimra the secret of impregnation orally? It should be pointed out that for ibn Avi Zimra, the secret of impregnation was not only a matter of relationship between a dead righteous man and a living person but also a matter of the inspiration of the student by his living teacher. See Menachem Kallus, “Pneumatic Mystical Possession and the Eschatology of the Soul in Lurianic Kabbalah,” in *Spirit Possession in Judaism: Cases and Contexts from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. M. Goldish (Detroit, 2003), 177–78, n. 31; and Jonathan Garb, “The Cult of the Saints in Lurianic Kabbalah,” *JQR* 98 (2008): 209–10. See also the interesting statement of Cordovero's that the teacher is the root and his disciples are his branches: הרב בעצמו שהוא אל התלמידים כשורש אל הענפים כולם והוא עצם הקדושה ומקורה Cf. *Or yakar*, vol. 15 (Jerusalem, 1987), 194, commenting on *Ra'aya' Mehemna's* statement (Zohar III, fol. 29b), to the effect that the disciples are like the limbs of the body, which is their teacher. In that context Cordovero describes this relationship in terms of the emanational system of the *sefirot*. In another discussion found immediately afterward (195), a more intimate relation is described, in which the souls of the disciples and the multitude dependent on the master are described as elevated by the master, bringing the view of this Safedian kabbalist even closer to Hasidism.

enter the body and soul of other persons. If the possibility of synchronic inhabitation of different bodies is accepted, then we already have the assumption that the soul of a righteous being inhabits more than one body at the same time, by means of its different sparks. Though this interpretation is, philologically speaking, not certain, it is nevertheless quite possible. In fact it is corroborated by a discussion found in another book of ibn Avi Zimra's, *Sefer migdal David*. After adducing a text that is parallel to that discussed above, where the anonymous kabbalist or ibn Avi Zimra adds that while giving birth to the sparks, the soul of the righteous remains on high and serves God as one of the angels, he writes that the soul of Adam is divided into three souls, those of the three forefathers "who were (present) at the same time."<sup>29</sup> Thus, in the generation preceding Luria, the idea that there were sparks of the same soul inhabiting different bodies synchronically was found in a rather clear manner, and this concept has been explicitly connected to the secret of impregnation. It should be pointed out that the image of giving birth is related here to the woman and not to the male human or divine righteous.

To a great extent, according to one of the major images recurring in the kabbalistic view of emanation, the integrity of the ultimate source is not diminished by the process of its generating other powers, which has been transferred here to the divine counterpart within the human, the soul. This assumption is found also in the context of the two discussions of ibn Avi Zimra referred to above. The human souls of select persons are imagined to generate sparks without losing their integrity. We see here a clear process of externalization of sin, which causes neither disintegration of the soul not even a fragmentation of the original source, namely, in the soul of the righteous. This is the reason why the drama that ensues from this process of generation takes place between a strongly personalized soul and the offshoots belonging to it. This fragmentation of the soul parallels the fragmentation of the divinity, which is reflected in the theory of the divine sparks and their presence within the shells that

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29. See *Migdal David*, (Lemberg 1883), fol. 82c–82d. : ויש גלגול בצדיקים 'פעמים' שלש עם גבר'... ויש עיבור בנשמות החסידים להגן על הדור שהם מתעברות ויולדות ניצוצות כמדליק נר מנר לצורך העולם והנשמה במקומה עומדת לשרת לפני מלכו של עולם בין המלאכים העומדים... כי נשמתו של אדם הראשון נחלקת לל' ניצוצות שהרי אברהם יצחק ויעקב בזמן אחד היו.

This seems to be the implication also in another discussion found (*ibid.*, fol. 52b) in the connection of the drops of the seeds of Joseph that are described as sparks, and as transmigrating into the ten "martyrs," namely, the mythic ten rabbinic figures killed by Roman forces after the destruction of the Second Temple. See also in R. Shlomo ha-Levi al-Qabetz, *Berit ha-Levi*, (Lemberg, 1863), fol. 42b.

arose in Safedian Kabbalah, in both Cordovero's and Luria's writings.<sup>50</sup> Given the fact that the soul was conceived of as divine, the concomitance of the two processes of fragmentation is quite understandable.

Though the identity of the anonymous kabbalist quoted by ibn Avi Zimra cannot be detected in a certain manner, the content of the passage as I understand it very plausibly follows a tradition found already in Nahmanides and his kabbalistic school, considered to be one of the most esoteric teachings. It is in this school that the combination of the image of the sparks of the soul and the secret of impregnation is found for the first time in a rather explicit manner. Indeed, according to R. Hayyim Vital, Nahmanides was considered to be the last authentic kabbalist, and Luria's Kabbalah was regarded as deriving from it.<sup>51</sup> I assume that at least in the case of the distinction between impregnation and metempsychosis, Luria or Vital was correct.<sup>52</sup> A more insightful understanding of the developments in this field should take into consideration the tradition that started with the early Kabbalah and reached its peak in the founder of Hasidism, as we will see below.

To put it in more general terms: the concept of sparks of the soul has generated two different though complementary processes: first, the polysomatism of the soul, which is deemed to be capable of inhabiting more than one body, both synchronically and diachronically; second, a process of polypsychism, which means that in the same body sparks belonging to different souls cohabit. In Safedian Kabbalah from the mid-sixteenth century, both concepts of polysomatism and polypsychism were further developed; they were elaborated in writings related to the theories and self-perceptions of R. Hayyim Vital.<sup>53</sup> The most important example of polypsychism is related to the figure of the biblical Moses that was also strongly connected to the secret of impregnation since the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>54</sup>

30. See, e. g. Cordovero's *Sefer Or yakar*, vol. 4 (Jerusalem, 1967), 200; vol. 5 (Jerusalem, 1970), 231; vol. 6, (Jerusalem, 1974), 16, 61; and R. Abraham Azulai, *Hesed le-Avraham*, fols. 20ab, 28cd, and 35b. For impregnation in Cordovero, see *Or yakar*, vol. 17 (Jerusalem, 1989), 23, 148.

31. "Secret of Impregnation," 354–56, and Scholem, *Major Trends*, 255. See also my "On the Concept of Zimzum in Kabbalah and Its Research," in *Lurianic Kabbalah*, ed. Elijah and Liebes, 59–112.

32. See Scholem, *Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 204–14.

33. See Idel, "Secret of Impregnation," and "On the Concept of Zimzum" and also "Maimonides and Kabbalah," *Studies in Maimonides*, ed. I. Twersky (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 51–53.

34. See Liebes "Two Young Roes of a Doe," and Idel, "Mystical Redemption and Messianism in R. Israel Baal Shem Tov's Teachings," *Kabbalah* 24 (2011): 64, n. 142.

In Lurianic Kabbalah, the view of the personal sparks was combined with a theme that would later have a great impact: the war of choice and the beautiful alien woman, as a projection of one's sin. The question why the Hebrew Bible allowed intercourse with an alien woman has been addressed by several kabbalists, who attempted to explain the verses in Deut 21.10–13 about intercourse with a captive gentile woman in a non-obligatory war. "Given" her basic "impurity," intercourse with her will amount, according to many theosophical-theurgical kabbalists, to mixing purity with impurity.<sup>35</sup> Many of the medieval kabbalists, who drew a stark demarcation line between Jews and gentiles in more pronounced fashion than was drawn in earlier Judaism, found it difficult to accept the rabbinic explanation for the biblical permissiveness. The ruling in bKid 21b is based on the assumption that this form of relationship was allowed in an emergency situation, that is, wartime, in order to counteract the evil inclination.<sup>36</sup> The biblical issue of the conversion of the captive woman to Judaism was much less acceptable in kabbalistic circles, such as Nahmanides', which distinguished sharply between the holy souls of the Jews and the impure one of the gentiles.<sup>37</sup> Though belonging to this school, R. Bahya ben Asher offered instead an astral understanding of the beautiful woman.<sup>38</sup> According to one of the kabbalistic solutions proposed in this circle by R. Isaac ben Shmuel of Acre, conversion to Judaism represents not a real transformation of an originally gentile soul into a Jewish one but return of an originally Jewish soul, which has been punished temporally, from its transmigration to its initial source.<sup>39</sup> This means that the superficial apprehension of who is or is not Jewish does not always reflect the "real" status of the soul.

This ambiguity between the superficial appearance and the inner essence is very important for the further developments in the field of the secret of impregnation. R. Isaac of Acre's view seems to be the background of a short statement by R. Shelomo ha-Levi Al-Qabetz, who claimed that the beautiful woman should be understood as part of the

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35. See, e.g., the kabbalistic discussions referenced in Elliot R. Wolfson, *Venturing beyond, Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* (New York, 2006), 74–75, 82, 138, 163, 168, 172.

36. bKid 21b.

37. See Moshe Idel, "Nishmat 'Eloha: On the Divinity of the Soul in Nahmanides and His School," in *Life as a Midrash, Perspectives in Jewish Psychology*, ed. S. Arzy, M. Fachler, B. Kahana (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 2004), 338–80.

38. *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, ed. Ch. D. Chavel (Jerusalem, 1968), 3:378.

39. See R. Isaac of Acre, *Merat einayim*, ed. Ch. A. Erlanger (Jerusalem, 1993), 45.

process of the transmigration of the soul, a process that will come to a halt only in the messianic times. The implication of his succinct and enigmatic statement (which he attributes to some unidentified ancient sources, *sifre ha-kadmonim*) is that by having intercourse with a captive gentile woman, then later on marrying her, the Israelite combatant who goes forth to war is saving an originally Jewish soul, or at least a spark, from its imprisonment in a gentile body.<sup>40</sup> The spark is captive in the gentile as part of a punishment for a sin. What is not clear and perhaps not intended at all in the succinct treatment of this issue by Al-Qabetz is the possibility of an affinity between the alien woman and the Israelite combatant who marries her. It is also possible that Al-Qabetz saw kabbalistic sources to this effect that are no longer extant, similar to that adduced by his contemporary R. David ibn Avi Zimra.

The next major development is related to the kabbalistic thought of Al-Qabetz's brother-in-law, the prolific and more influential R. Moshe Cordovero, and its reverberations in Safed and beyond. For Cordovero, the peculiar type of marriage with the beautiful alien woman constitutes an act of divine cunning, a way to penetrate the realm of evil, namely, the shells, in order to rescue a divine spark imprisoned in that zone.<sup>41</sup> Elsewhere, Cordovero describes the transformation of the drops of semen ejaculated outside the vagina, as creating sparks that are imprisoned within shells.<sup>42</sup> He was well acquainted with the theme of the enemy within the person.<sup>43</sup> In recent studies, the centrality of the theories of Cordovero and his students for understanding many subsequent developments in Jewish mysticism, including Lurianism and Hasidism, becomes more and more apparent.<sup>44</sup> The various treatments of the theme were, in

40. See *Sefer berit ha-Levi*, fol. 23c, and Bracha Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, (Hebrew; Beer Sheva, 1995), 98, n. 93; 241, n. 47.

41. See the texts discussed in Isaiah Tishby, *The Doctrine of Evil and "Qelippah" in Lurianic Kabbalism* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1984), 131; Yehuda Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1995), 58–60; Sack, *Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, 97–99; and for earlier partial examples, the passage discussed in Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 118–20.

42. See *Pardeis rimonim*, Gate 26, chap. 2, II: fol. 57bc, and the interesting discussion in his *Or yakar* (Jerusalem, 1970), 5:254.

43. See the text adduced by Sack, *Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, 94.

44. See Mordechai Pachter, "Traces of the Influence of R. Elijah de Vidas's *Reshit Hokhma* upon the Writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye," in *Studies in Jewish Mysticism, Philosophy and Ethical Literature Presented to Isaiah Tishby*, ed. J. Dan and J. Hacker (Hebrew; Jerusalem 1986), 569–92; and Bracha Sack, "The Influence of *Reshit Hokhmah* on the Teachings of the Maggid of Mezhibirech," in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert (London, 1996), 251–57; Ron Mar-

my opinion, part of a larger and more coherent view, which has been expressed by Cordovero's two most important disciples, R. Hayyim Vital and R. Isaac Luria Ashkenazi. In fact, the emergence of the great Lurianic theosophical system is not only a matter of his creativity but also of traditions and customs that scholars are inclined to ignore in favor of a romantic picture of Luria as a grand innovator.

Let me attempt now to characterize the more central phenomenological contribution of another development that started in sixteenth-century Safed. The theme under scrutiny here, namely, the elevation of one's own soul-sparks, increasingly becomes a paradigm for repairing one's own sins, and the biblical discussion in Deut 21.10–13 was understood as if it is dealing with righteous persons who engage in personal combat. In some of the texts to be discussed below, however, the alien woman is conceived of as having some form of congenital affinity for Jews, especially the righteous ones. This new theory emphasizes the notion that seemingly inimical powers found in objective reality belong to the soul of a certain person, whose sin is imagined to be responsible for their emergence and who is personally required to repair them. Surfacing in the sixteenth and or early seventeenth century, this view is reminiscent of an important theory found in Hasidism, which attributes to each *tsadik* a family of sparks found in his immediate surroundings, for which he is directly responsible. As mentioned above, this seminal theory has a precedent in a discussion found in a passage of R. Moshe Galante, a kabbalist belonging to the circles of Moshe Cordovero and Isaac Luria.<sup>45</sup>

In R. Hayyim Vital's *Commentary on the Commandments*, there is a view dealing with the emanations, or the hypostatic status of the sins of the righteous, which influenced part of the passage of Abraham Azulai adduced above:

The commandment of the beautiful [captive] woman . . . *Sitra' aḥara'* [the demonic side] starts with a linkage and finishes with separation.<sup>46</sup> Behold someone who goes to the war of the evil instinct,<sup>47</sup> He starts from below and [ascends] on high; first he fights with them when they

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golin, *The Human Temple, Religious Interiorization and the Structuring of Inner Life in Early Hasidism* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2005), 202–4.

45. See Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, 206, 375, n. 130.

46. Probably the assumption is that evil powers emerge in the world of unity and proceed to the world of multiplicity or separation. Unlike the downward emanational process, the reparation by means of war operates in an inverse manner.

47. On this phrase see, n. 96 below.

are in a state of separation, then they are linked to each other. In order to understand the rest of this issue you should understand the issue of the sages who said that “the Torah did not speak except about the evil instinct.” [The question is] since the evil instinct is overcoming him, should we allow him to commit such a great transgression? But the secret of the issue is that some of the great souls<sup>48</sup> have been oppressed under the *tikla*,<sup>49</sup> and they are [now] wicked. But all of the [children of] Israel who went forth to war were righteous [persons] . . . and that [alien] woman[’s soul] stems from the root of Israel, and she was taken and imprisoned within the shells . . . and this is the reason why it is appropriate to take [a woman] from them [the shells]. And it is possible that man has two enemies. Either the shells themselves, or those persons who are the secret of *Nig’e bene adam* that are the drops and the souls that have been embodied in the shells themselves, and all are hateful and antagonistic to him . . . And when the first [enemy] will be delivered to your hands, then you shall [also] capture the second enemy, which is the holy soul that is imprisoned within him.<sup>50</sup>

Let me start by elucidating the second part of the passage dealing with the two kinds of enemy. The first one can be described as objective: they are shells (*kelipot*), and entities that emerged in *illud tempus*, as part of a great cosmogonical catastrophe as we will see in some detail below. The second enemy has been described as *nig’e bene adam*, an expression that in kabbalistic literature means the demonic powers generated from the drops of the semen outside the vagina.<sup>51</sup> As such, those entities represent personal enemies, since this type of dissemination is conceived of as a

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48. On the concept of great souls in Kabbalah and especially in the Lurianic one, see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, the Mystical Messiah*, 63–64, 232–37.

49. This is a zoharic term whose precise meaning is not clear. According to Luria’s view in Vital’s *Peri ‘ets hayim*, this term stands for the shell of *Nogah*, a veil of negative powers that covers the *sefirah* of *Malkhut*. See the important remark of Liebes, *On Sabbateism*, 310–11, n. 88, and the Lurianic texts cited and discussed by Shiloh Pachter, “*Shemirat ha-berit: The History of the Interdiction of Seminal Emission*” (Hebrew; Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 2006), 191, 195.

50. *Likutei Torah* (Vilnius, 1879); (*Ta’amei Torah*), fol. 104b. For a parallel to this view, see below the quote from *Sefer ha-likutim*. See also another passage from *Likutei Torah*, fol. 43a, referred to briefly by Scholem in *On the Mystical Shape*, 222, 281, n. 123, where a similar approach is found, namely an attribution of a link between sparks and a certain person, but it is denied again by Scholem.

51. See Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. R. Manheim (New York, 1969), 154–56.

grave sin in both rabbinic and kabbalistic literatures. Many of the kabbalistic writings from the end of the thirteenth century elaborated on this issue much more than was previously the case, and those discussions served as an important backdrop for the emergence of the Safedian treatments of this theme.<sup>52</sup>

According to this passage, those drops take the body of the first enemy, the *kelipot*. This type of affinity between the results of the seminal emission and the cosmic shells is already known from the writings of Luria's master, R. Moshe Cordovero's *Parḏes rimonim*, and it seems that his views had been elaborated by subsequent kabbalists, especially by Luria himself.<sup>53</sup> The defeat of the external body, which emerges from the primordial shells, is, therefore, the condition for the liberation of the inner aspect of the composite of the two enemies. The external beauty of the alien woman presumably serves as the attracting device that engages the righteous, despite its demonic source. In other words, by waging and winning one single war, one achieves two different victories: one over the objective enemy, thus taking part in the broader battle between the divine and the demonic, and then a more personal attainment, the rectification of one's own past sexual sins, which have been reified in the form of a beautiful alien woman. It should be emphasized that the specific relationship between the second enemy and the righteous is implicit and would be understood by any knowledgeable kabbalist. The Lurianic text does not elaborate on it, though this affinity had attracted the attention of Lurianic kabbalists in other discussions to be considered below. The two-enemy theory should be understood against the wider framework of Lurianic Kabbalah. According to some texts from this school, the process of the breaking of the vessels and the dispersion of the divine sparks which took place as part of the primordial may be understood as a dissemination of the divine drops of semen.<sup>54</sup> So, for example, we learn from Vital's interpretation on Isaiah:

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52. For numerous discussions of this issue in Jewish mysticism, see Liebes, *On Sabbateism*, passim, and Pachter, *Shemirat ha-berit*, passim; Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford, Calif., 2003), 178–79.

53. For Cordovero's views about shells and evil inclination in general, see Sack, *Kabbalah of Rabbi Moses Cordovero*, 83–102.

54. See Ronit Meroz, "Redemption in Lurianic Teaching" (Hebrew; Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 1988), 97–99, 102, 104, 107. Meroz dealt in several instances with the issue of the elevation of sparks, but not as being related to a certain person's soul (260–64).

Behold, the person who emitted seed in vain delivers the drops of his semen, which are his sons, to the external shells,<sup>55</sup> as it is well-known. However, when he repents in a perfect manner, those souls return to the treasury of holiness that is called “body.”<sup>56</sup> And as long as they do not return, the Messiah is delayed.<sup>57</sup>

This is a very important observation, salient for our entire discussion below, since it brings together the issue of personal sins and the coming of the Messiah. Also here there is a double entity related to evil: the shells and those souls that are personally related to a certain person, and related to his sin. He is responsible for rescuing them by repenting. Luria capitalizes on the double meaning of the verb *sh-v-b*, which refers to both repentance and returning.<sup>58</sup> The seminal emission is envisioned as a sin, which may be repaired by repentance, which will cause the return of the drops to a supernal body. This return is understood as a contribution to the messianic enterprise. Thus, the extraction of the drops from the shells is part of a grand confrontation among the human, the demonic, and the divine. It seems that, at least in some Lurianic texts, this approach has been related also to some forms of more precise ascetic behavior.

Similar views to that found in the passage quoted above are expressed in a famous Lurianic treatise, Vital's *Sefer ba-likutim*, where the themes of the captive woman and the *tsadik* are brought together in the context of elevating the sparks. This is done in a rather lengthy and explicit treatment of the topic.<sup>59</sup> Let me quote a part of this discussion, which is especially pertinent to our topic:

Behold in this way you should understand the topic of the beautiful woman: it is known that all those who went to a war of choice were absolute righteous men . . . and it is impossible that the evil instinct

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55. *Kelipot hitsoniyot*. It is clear from this passage, as in the above quote, that the shells preexisted the emergence of human sins.

56. *Guf*. This is an elaboration of a talmudic dictum found, e.g., in bYev, fol. 63b, which reverberated in many kabbalistic discussions concerning messianism.

57. *Sha'ar ba-pesukim* (Jerusalem, 1962), 235. The passage has been adduced as part of a “secret scroll” in R. Isaiah Horowitz, *The Two Tablets of the Covenant, Ha-Shelab* (Warsaw, 1930), I, fol. 70b.

58. This pun is implicit also in the late eighteenth-century Hasidic master R. Benjamin of Zalozitch, *Tore zabav* (Brooklyn, 1983), fol. 108d. The source of the pun is earlier, and found in several instances in Kabbalah. See Idel, “Multiple Forms of Redemption,” 46; 48. n. 76; 49; 52, etc.

59. *Sefer ba-likutim* (Jerusalem, 1913), fols. 59d–60b.

will overcome such an absolute righteous man in order to defile himself with an alien [woman], and this is the reason why the Torah had announced to him that would he desire her, this is [because] she is a spark of holiness that is mixed in that nation, which is found in that alien woman [stemming] from him, a spark that is related to the high soul of that man, and this is the reason he desired her. This is the reason why the Torah has allowed that he will come upon her.<sup>60</sup>

Here the essence of the beautiful captive woman as the hypostasis of a sin committed by a righteous man is evident, and this is the reason why he is allowed to have intercourse with her during the war, even before her conversion to Judaism. Of outmost importance is the fact that the concept of the righteous man has been introduced in a biblical context that has nothing to do with it. This linkage between the righteous man and the personal sparks embodied in the external reality contains the gist of Hasidic teachings on this issue.

Moreover, according to a passage which occurs immediately after the above quote, we learn about a view that differs, to a certain extent, from the Lurianic view as described above:

“The enemies of man are the members of his household”<sup>61</sup> which are the drops of semen from which the body of the shells have been created . . . there are two types of enemies: one the emitted seed, which are *nig’e bene adam*; and one the *kelipot*, and this is why it has been said “The enemies of man are the members of his household” in the plural.<sup>62</sup>

Though similar to the quote from *Sba’ar ha-pesukim*, this one emphasizes more the personal but ignores the messianic aspect. This personal dimension is conspicuous because of the resort to the verse that serves as a proof-text of the individual sin and enemies, as seen above in other cases in the Lurianic corpus. Therefore, the warfare is a matter of the confrontation between a righteous man and a spark belonging to his particular

60. *Sefer ha-likutim*, fols. 59d–60a. A part of this passage has been copied verbatim, without mentioning its source, in R. Abraham Azulai’s *Ba’ale berit Avram*, fol. 87b, which has been cited and discussed above. See also Liebes, *On Sabbateanism*, 311–12, n. 89.

61. Micah 7.6.

62. *Sefer ha-likutim*, fol. 60a, which reverberates in R. Abraham Azulai’s *Ba’ale berit Avram*, fol. 87b (to be discussed below). This passage overlaps with some of the issues mentioned in the quotation from R. Hayyim Vital’s *Likutei torah*, quoted above.

soul, which is redeemed from its mixture with the impure nation. It should be emphasized that in some cases the person entering this war is described as righteous, *tsadik*, and thus the war is a matter of the restoration of the lost particles of his soul, a view quite reminiscent of both the earlier kabbalistic sources mentioned above and of the theory of Hasidism. For both Luria and Azulai, it is the body of the evil powers, not only the sparks within them, that is created by the emitted seed.

According to a later Lurianic book, known as *Shulḥan 'arukh ha-'Ari*, in a passage that was also cited in R. Isaiah Horowitz's widespread *Two Tablets of the Law*, the fight against the sin of semen emission took some quite specific form. I quote the second source, which was more widespread:

The secret and the essence of these forty-days fasts are consisting in amending the sin of the emission of seed in vain; this [emission] is called the murderer of the children etc . . . He [who does so] delivered that holiness to the shells, and by that he gives strength and vitality to the shells, and by it [the fast] he elevates [holiness] upward and they [the shells] will remain dead.<sup>63</sup>

Therefore, the war mentioned in the other cases in the Cordoverian and Lurianic passages mentioned above may take some specific ritual form according to this Lurianic passage: structured fasts during a specific period of several weeks. The above passage describes a practice that has been established since the late sixteenth century and is known as the *Ttkun 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.<sup>64</sup> 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

63. *Ha-shelah* (Warsaw, 1930), I, fol. 70b. See also *Shulḥan 'arukh ha-'Ari* (Lemberg, 1861), no pagination. On the many affinities between Horowitz and Lurianic Kabbalah, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "The Influence of Luria on the Shelah" (Hebrew), in *Lurianic Kabbalah*, ed. Elior and Liebes, 423–48; and see also Jacob Elbaum, *Repentance and Self-Flagellation in the Writings of the Sages of Germany and Poland, 1548–1648* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1992), 188–89, n. 32.

64. See G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, 156–57; and Pachter, *Shemirat ha-Berit*, 232–39.

the term *shovav* is interpreted as “he turned his inclination aside.”<sup>65</sup> 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.

Let me point also to a text of Luria found in *Sefer ha-gilgulim*, adduced already by Scholem. Strikingly, he did not see in it a possible source for the Hasidic theory of personal sparks to be redeemed by the righteous:

This is called the secret of impregnation, and all in accordance to his deeds and in accordance to the measure or aspect of the commandments he performs so will the sparks reveal to him . . . and so also the sparks of the spirit, if he amend the spark of his spirit, and so also the sparks of the higher soul if he amended the spark of his higher soul. You ought to know that a tsadik is able, by means of his deeds, to reassemble the sparks of his *nefesh*, his *ruah* and his *neshamah*, and to lift them up from the depth of the shells.<sup>66</sup>

Despite the fact that he was well acquainted with this passage, a part of which he quoted without mentioning the first sentence, Scholem nevertheless claim that “there is an altogether different mood in Lurianism and Hasidism.”<sup>67</sup>

To return now to our main topic in this section: the *kelipot* constitute

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65. See bSot 12a; G. H. Cohen Stuart, *The Struggle in Man between Good and Evil: An Inquiry into the Origin of the Rabbinic Concept of Yeser Hara'* (Kampen, 1984), 46. On the entire question of evil inclination in late antique and early medieval Jewish sources, see now the studies of Ishay Rosen-Tzvi, “Refuting the ‘Yetzer’: The Evil Inclination and the Limits of Rabbinic Discourse,” *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 17 (2009): 117–41; Rosen-Tzvi, “Sexualising the Evil Inclination: Rabbinic ‘Yetzer’ and Modern Scholarship,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 60 (2009): 264–81; and Rosen-Tzvi, “Two Rabbinic Inclinations? Rethinking a Scholarly Dogma,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 39 (2008): 513–39.

66. Chap. 5. A part of it has been brought by Scholem, *Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 190–91, but he assumes that it is different from the gist of the Hasidic treatments of this topic. Scholem also assumes that the issue here is related to the “migration of the soul.” Apparently, he has in mind the concept of *gilgul*, while the text speaks explicitly about impregnation, *ibur*. See also the same passage in *Sha'ar ha-gilgulim* (Jerusalem, 1928), par. 30, fol. 31a. It should be pointed out that R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye (*Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, fol. 18cd) claimed that his view, inherited from the Besht, is reminiscent of a discussion found in *Sefer ha-gilgulim*.

67. See Scholem, *Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 191. This means that according to him, there is a different mood in each of the two literatures.

not only the first enemy of every one but some reification of the divine fault. The war against them is part of the ongoing process of *tikun*, the amendment of the divine and human faults. Repentance, which is understood as part of the war, and the performance of the commandments, which is understood in Lurianic Kabbalah as redemptive, together constitute the main type of war against the two enemies. One of them should be rescued and elevated, the other destroyed. This mythical fight that attempts to separate the evil from the good that is immersed within evil is reminiscent, as Scholem has duly pointed out, of Manichaeism, though he denies a historical connection between the two types of religious systems.<sup>68</sup>

Let me emphasize that despite the potential to interpret these issues as dealing with the individual battle to rescue his individual spark, the main gist of Lurianism was to rescue all the sparks stemming from Jewish souls as part of the collective messianic enterprise.<sup>69</sup> The Lurianic theories of dissemination of sparks by breaking the original structure of a primordial man and the process of reconstitution of his broken limbs are not new; neither are they a reaction to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain (in 1492), as deemed by some scholars.<sup>70</sup> Rather, they are quite reminiscent of a long series of widespread myths and rituals, some of them quite archaic, found in several cultures, dealing with the restitution of the dismembered *Urmenusch*, analyzed in detail in a fascinating monograph by Bruce Lincoln.<sup>71</sup> The messianic implications of the ritual of restituting the sparks to their place, both within man and within the divine structure,

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68. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, 269, 280; and Isaiah Tishby, "Gnostic Doctrines in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Mysticism," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 6 (1955): 146–52. Interestingly enough, Tishby—writing many years after the publication of Scholem's *Major Trends*—does not find it necessary to mention his master's explicit references to the possible impact of this specific theme in Manichaeism on Lurianism. See also Idel, *Ascensions on High*, 141, n. 122. In my opinion, the theory of the mixture of divine sparks, or sparks of the Shekhinah, and shells, is to be found already in the writings of Cordovero. See, e.g., his *Or yakar*, vol. 5 (Jerusalem, 1970), 231; vol. 6 (Jerusalem, 1974), 61; vol. 9 (Jerusalem, 1976), 51; vol. 14 (Jerusalem, 1986), 85, 209; vol. 16, (Jerusalem, 1989), 121, 144; and in R. Abraham Azulai, *Ḥesed le-'Avraham* (Lemberg, 1863), fols. 20ab, 28cd, and 35b. This is just one more example of Luria's debt to his teacher, not sufficiently acknowledged in scholarship. It should be mentioned that in *Or yakar*, 16:144, there is a connection between shell, sparks, and the concept of transmigration.

69. See Tishby, *Doctrine of Evil*, 132–33; 137–38.

70. See, especially, Scholem, *Major Trends*, 244–51.

71. *Myth, Cosmos and Society* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), passim; and Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford, 1995), 291, and n. 6.

conceived in anthropomorphic terms, cannot account, alone, for the emergence of this explanation of the ritual. This eschatological understanding of the reparation of sexual sins may account for the emergence, again in Lurianic Kabbalah, of the so-called general reparation (*ha-tikun ha-kelali*), which has to do with the repair of the sins related to sex.<sup>72</sup>

Additional reverberations of Luria's views are found in a book composed sometime around 1620 in Gaza by a follower of both the Kabbalah of Cordovero and Luria, the famous R. Abraham Azulai, which reflects the existence of a theme relevant to our topic:

Know that it is incumbent on the [people in] exile to purify the holy sparks which were mixed because of the sin of Adam within the shells that mixed good and bad, as it is known. Behold, according to this issue, you should understand the matter of the beautiful woman. It is known that those who go to that war, that is a war of choice, were completely righteous persons, who did not [even] speak between a prayer to another. Thus, it is impossible that the evil inclination will overcome these righteous persons, and defile them with an alien woman. This is the reason why the Torah announced that if he [the righteous] desires her it is [only] because there is a holy spark mixed in that nation, found in that alien woman, a spark that belongs to the soul of that man. This is the reason why he desired her and why the Torah allowed him to have sexual intercourse with her.<sup>73</sup>

The formulations found here rely on earlier sources, pre-Lurianic and Lurianic, and adumbrate in quite a significant manner the theories attributed by scholars to Hasidism. They show that the theme under consideration can travel from one type of Kabbalah to another, without involving

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72. On this phrase, see Liebes, *On Sabbateism*, 253–61; Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth and Jewish Messianism* (Albany, N.Y., 1993), 115–50, who assumes that this term occurs for the first time in Nathan of Gaza's writings, and that this Sabbatean *tikun* had an impact on R. Nahman of Bratslav. See, however, the occurrence of this phrase in several Lurianic texts authored by kabbalists like R. Immanuel Hay Richi, in the context of the reparation of the *Ze'iyir anpin*, and in two manuscripts of the pre-Sabbatean famous kabbalist R. Nathan Shapira of Jerusalem's sermons he delivered in European Jewish communities.

73. *Ba'ale berit Avram* (Jerusalem, 1982), fol. 87b. The sentence from the beginning until "it is known" is found in a seminal text of Vital's *Likutei torah* discussed above. However, Luria's or Vital's passage deals with general redemption, while Azulai takes the discussion in a different direction. On this kabbalist, see Isaiah Tishby, "The Attitude of R. Abraham Azulai to the Kabbalah of R. Moshe Cordovero and ha-Ari," in *Studies in Kabbalah and its Branches* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1982), 1:255–303.

the acceptance of their respective wider theological structures, as we see in the passage of the theme of impregnation/sparks from a text authored by R. David ibn Avi Zimra, one of Luria's teachers in matter of Kabbalah, to be discussed below. This theme, just as that of the two wars discussions, can be absorbed within wider structures and then adopted later from those structures into other structures, without importing the entire earlier structure. In other words, someone can adopt the two-war theme from Islamic or Jewish Neoplatonism into the theosophical structure of Lurianism, and then from Lurianism into Hasidism.

With this in mind, we conclude that Luria or Vital explicated the strong affinity between a righteous person and the beautiful alien woman. She is understood as a combination of primordial shells and the drops of the righteous that are related to souls and sin at the same time. The possibility of taking a beautiful alien woman is therefore part of a religious worldview, which combines the personal form of salvation, related to the redemption of the souls of someone's own children metamorphosed in hostile bodies, with a theurgical operation, since it deals with divine sparks which are rescued from their corporeal demonic prison. To put it differently: someone may worship God not only by performing the rabbinic commandments but also by repairing his sins and acting in a manner that is not specifically a commandment. Since ancient times, the war of choice was no more an actual ritual performance but rather solely a spiritual kind of enterprise. This new mode of acting, namely, the expansion of the spectrum of religious acts from the classical and well-defined commandments, is known as *'avodah be-gashmiyut*, the worship within or by corporeality, which attracted plenty of attention in the early stages of East European Hasidism. It should be noted that Abraham Azulai was well acquainted with this approach, but this is a matter for another study.<sup>74</sup>

In other words, unlike the internalizing propensity of the sources we dealt with above, the material presented in this section points to a more complex situation. The inner struggle is conceived to be important, and repentance remains quintessential for religious life. However, the main strategy for spiritual combat is a process of externalization of the sins in figures with which the righteous has to struggle. This war combines the cosmic confrontation with the ontological evil understood as the objective enemy, and the solution of the problem created by the personal sin, which is mixed in with the external evil entities. This propensity is part and

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74. See his voluminous commentary on the Zohar, *Or ha-ḥamah* (Premislaný, 1887), vol.2, part 2, fol. 30b.

parcel of a wider religious approach, characteristic of the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah, which puts the main emphasis on processes taking place in the external realms of reality: the divine and the demonic. Let me emphasize the specificity of these discussions: beyond the more general religious framework, represented by sparks and theurgical *tikun*, what is interesting in these discussions is the invitation or the instruction to enter in contact with impurity, in order to repair a certain type of sin. This contact is initiated by the kabbalist and is part of the more general theory of *tikun*, and the need to extract the holy sparks from the demonic shells.

#### THE *TSADIK* AND HIS SPARKS IN SOME BESHTIAN TRADITIONS

In his article about metempsychosis, from which I have quoted extensively above, Scholem analyzed a series of Beshtian discussions dealing with the rescue of the sparks of one's own soul.<sup>75</sup> It suffices to say that this teaching plays a greater role in early Hasidism than in Lurianic Kabbalah, and it makes more sense to speak of differences in emphasis than of a conceptual sort of innovation. In a previous section I noted a passage in which the connection between the righteous and his sparks that were embodied in his enemies was discussed. Let me now mention two more quotes out of the numerous expressions representing the Besht's view. He was quoted by his grandson R. Ephrayim of Sudylkov:

I heard from my grandfather, blessed be his memory for the next world, this principle that each and every righteous has holy sparks that belong to the root of his soul, that it is incumbent on him to repair and to elevate them, even his servants and animals and his vessels, in all of them there are holy sparks and it is incumbent on him to repair and elevate them to their root.<sup>76</sup>

What is interesting in this passage is the opening, which argues that this is a principle, namely, a more general statement, without specification. This assessment is not a vacuous declaration. We can detect indeed an elaborate discussion which deals with details of what has been described in general terms in the previous passage, found again in the name of the Besht:

75. See *On the Mystical Shape*, 218–23. It should be pointed out that the Besht and his followers were more lenient than their predecessors regarding the sin of the seminal emission. See Schatz Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism: Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth Century Hasidic Thought* (Jerusalem, 1993), 102–3.

76. *Degel maḥaneh Efrayim* (Beditchev, 1809), fol. 5b. See also Scholem, *ba-Shalav ha-Aharon*, 233, and Kauffman, *In All Your Ways Know Him*, 121, n. 97.

I heard in the name of my master how to pray for one's enemies; the benefit [of the prayer] is that: "seven times the righteous will fall and stand up,"<sup>77</sup> namely in seven *sefirot*<sup>78</sup> his *NR''N*<sup>79</sup> will transmigrate, namely the soul that are his slaves and animals, and his spirit are his wife and his speech, is also the intercourse of the mouth, which is called his wife<sup>80</sup> . . . when he is blemished by [means of] his speech by slanderous language and similar things, out of them the men who are inimical [to him] emerge, speaking [then] against him; and the high soul is from the brain, and they are his sons, and the blemish of the brain is [found then] in thought;<sup>81</sup> it causes the pain to his sons, and the soul too, if he blemished by his deeds and acts, which cause him pain, because of his slaves and animals. And in each of the *sefirot* he is capable of elevating his *NR''N* from there, but not in the case of the seventh *sefirah*, which is *Malkhut*, and from there the shells of Nogah suckle.<sup>82</sup> It is difficult to elevate the *NR''N* from there. Therefore, he should amend his enemies that emerged from the blemish [created out] of the speech,<sup>83</sup> elevate them by means of the speeches of prayer,<sup>84</sup> and if he does not do so, but rejects them, they will become even more

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77. Prov 24.16. The figure "seven" is related to the seven *sefirot*, mentioned immediately below, and in a way is reminiscent perhaps also of the seven capital sins in Christian spirituality. This biblical verse has been interpreted in quite a different manner in the commentary on Ps 107, attributed by the Hasidic tradition and by Schatz Uffenheimer to the Besht. See her *Hasidism as Mysticism*, 361 and below.

78. Namely, the seven lower *sefirot*.

79. This is the acronym for *Nefesh, Ruah, Neshamah*, namely, soul, spirit, and higher soul.

80. See Idel, "Models of Understanding Prayer in Early Hasidism," 40–49; 56–78.

81. The connection between brain and semen has much earlier sources in Indian and Greek physiology and is widespread in medieval discussions, appearing in Kabbalah from its inception. See, e.g., Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 154–55, or Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, trans. J. Chipman (Albany, N.Y., 1987), 190–91. On the nexus between the sin of the brain and its rectification, see the passage of Nathan of Gaza, adduced by Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth and Jewish Messianism*, 144.

82. The shell of *nogah*, which is connected to the divine sphere, constitutes an intermediary entity between the demonic and the divine. See, e.g., *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, fol. 29c.

83. For the centrality of speech in the religious worldview of the Besht, see Idel, "Modes of Cleaving to 'Letters.'"

84. Elevation by means of speeches of prayer is found in the Besht's *Holy Epistle*, though there it is the praying person's soul, while here it is some form of correction of one's sin.

inimical, because of coarseness and materiality.<sup>85</sup> This is the reason why it is written<sup>86</sup> “and the punished [person] by the righteous is not good” since he [the punished] is the very spirit of the righteous, and this is the reason why he should pray for the enemies, and by means of prayer it is sweetened in its root<sup>87</sup> and he draws out from them his spirit, and what remains of them are dissipating by themselves. “Let the sage listen and he will add instruction”<sup>88</sup> and the words of the sage are gracious. And<sup>89</sup> this is the issue of the rank of Moses, blessed be his memory, that he elevated and emended his speech. At the beginning, they were the flock,<sup>90</sup> which he was shepherding. Afterward, they became his disciples, and he gave them the Torah, and studied with them, etc., and the words of the sage are gracious.<sup>91</sup>

I am unable to explicate here all the details of this important teaching. Nevertheless, it is clear that elevation of sparks may constitute, according

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85. Of the shells.

86. Prov 17.26. The term *‘anush*, translated here as “punished,” is not so clear in the biblical context.

87. This concept of mitigating the negative aspect by elevation to the source is found in Lurianic Kabbalah, but its sources are earlier. See, e.g., R. Moshe Cordovero, *Or yakar* (Jerusalem, 1970), 5:57. The Besht himself resorted several times to it. See also my “Modes of Cleaving to the ‘Letters.’”

88. Prov 1.5.

89. It seems that here begins another quotation in the name of the Besht. In *Toledot Ya‘akov Yosef*, the entire text is attributed as one continuum to the Besht. I assume that the version found in *Ben Porat Yosef* was the original one, and the two originally different texts of the Besht have been conflated in *Toledot Ya‘akov Yosef*.

90. In Hebrew *ts‘on*, following the verse “Moses was shepherding the flock in the desert,” cf. Ex 3.1. From the context it is quite clear that the flock is related to speeches and is probably a pun on *midbar* = desert, *medaber* = speak. Such a pun is found in a teaching attributed to him. See R. Zeev Wolf of Zhitomir, *Or ha-Me‘ir* (Parichi, 1815), fol. 57bc. A relationship between *ts‘on* and speech is reminiscent of an interpretation of *ts‘on* in Abulafia, but this is an issue that transcends the framework of this essay.

91. See *Ben Porat Yosef* (Koretz, 1781), fol. 99bc. See also *Tsafnat pa‘aneah* (Koretz, 1782), fol. 5b, and *Toledot Ya‘akov Yosef* (Koretz, 1780), fol. 15a. A comparison of three versions shows that this disciple of the Besht was quite careful in his transmission of his master’s teaching. In *Tsafnat pa‘aneah*, there are some few additions, meant to clarify the text, which do not affect its meaning. See also Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, 218, 245, 311, n. 115. A shorter version is brought by R. Jacob Joseph, *Kutoneth passim*, ed. G. Nigal (Jerusalem, 1985), 264; and R. Aharon Kohen of Apta, *Keter Shem Tov ha-Shalem*, ed. J. E. Shohet (New York, 2004), 14, no. 18. On Moses, see Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, 41, and Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, 306, n. 54.

to this teaching, a self-redemptive activity, which does not embrace the enemy out of sympathy but in fact destroys the demonic part of it by liberating the divine one—the spark that belongs to the soul of the righteous himself. Let me point out that though the assumption that the sparks of someone are found in his sons and wife can be easily explained in classical kabbalistic sources, the view that such sparks are found within servants, slaves, or animals is more complex. It assumes that the normal forms of kinship are not working in the regular way. As Ada Rapoport-Albert has pointed out, this Hasidic presupposition may stem from Lurianic sources, or Cordoverian ones.<sup>92</sup> Ironically enough, the strong connection between fathers and sons became essential for the further development of the institution of the *tsadik* in Hasidism, which became preeminently hereditary from the end of the eighteenth century.

#### SOME KABBALISTIC AND HASIDIC TREATMENTS OF THE TWO-WAR THEME

As seen above, it is possible to understand the Besht's views as a continuation of earlier kabbalistic traditions dealing with the sparks of the soul, which he has put in relief. However, other early Hasidic discussions, including Beshtian ones, perpetuate another theme, which combines the theory about the war and the captive woman with a much earlier theme of two kinds of wars. Some Safedian kabbalists adopted different versions, found in earlier Hebrew texts, one talmudic and dealing with the importance of the inner or the great war (or what is called in Muslim sources the *jihad al-'akbbar*, or to resort to a related Latin term, the *psychomachia*<sup>93</sup>) in comparison to the external, or the small war. Let me exemplify this theme by adducing the most influential source in Judaism, of R. Baḥya ibn Paqudah:

You should know that your worst enemy in this world is your own instinct . . . A holy war against somebody else should not distract you from fighting him; no other battle should interfere with the struggle against him. Combating a far enemy must not keep you from engaging

92. See her "The Hasidic Movement," 127 and n. 192; and for Cordovero see *Or yakar*, vol. 14 (Jerusalem, 1986), 209, where the spark of the soul of the righteous is described as influential on the places where the living righteous once studied.

93. For the talmudic source, see below n. 128. For psychomachia, see, e.g., Macklin Smith, *Prudentius' Psychomachia: A Reexamination* (Princeton, N.J., 1976); and Kenneth R. Haworth, *Deified Virtues, Demonic Vices and Descriptive Allegory in Prudentius' Psychomachia* (Amsterdam, 1980).

this one who is inseparable from you. Defending yourself against somebody who cannot attack you without permission must not stand in the way of defending against this one, who asks no permission to attack you. It is told of a pious man that he met some people returning from the great battle with an enemy. He said to them, "You are returning, praised be God, from a smaller battle carrying your booty. Now prepare yourself for the greater battle." They asked: "What is that great battle?" and he answered, "The battle against the instinct and its armies."<sup>94</sup>

Thus, in a classic of Jewish thought, Bahya's *Duties of the Heart*, which though written in Arabic was translated into Hebrew and studied by many thinkers, the two-war theme was introduced in an explicit manner in Jewish spirituality. This theme can be said to have introduced a split between the spiritual and the material, a vision that draws on the Platonic dichotomy between soul and body and has informed much of Jewish spirituality since the Middle Ages.

A quite similar theme is found in another influential literature in medieval Judaism, that dealing with Alexander the Great and his encounter with Brahmins.<sup>95</sup> A version of the Alexander the Great legend made its way to Safed into the very circle of Luria, as we notice in R. Moshe Al-Sheikh's very influential commentary on the Bible.<sup>96</sup> In the concept of the

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94. Cf. the English translation *The Book of the Direction of the Duties of the Heart*, trans. M. Mansoor (London, 1973), 276–77; and for the Hebrew translation by R. Yehudah ibn Tibbon, to *Hovot ha-levavot* 5.5, whose impact was very significant (Tel Aviv, n.d.), 357. For the possible source of this passage, see Yahuda's introduction, *Hidāja ilā farā i al-qulūb des Bachja ibn Jōwēf ibn Paqūda, aus Andalusien* (Leiden, 1907–12), 95. On Jewish poems dealing with the battle with the inclination, see Aharon Mirsky, *From the Duties of the Heart to Songs of the Heart* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1992), 191–205. See also Paul Fenton, "Judaeo-Arabic Mystical Writings of the XIII<sup>th</sup>-XIV<sup>th</sup> Centuries," in *Judaeo-Arabic Studies* 3, ed. N. Golb (Sydney, 1997), 88–89, n. 6. For another important channel of transmission of this theme, see also *Sefer mo'ozne tsedek*, an influential reworking of a book of al-Ghazzali, ed. J. Goldenthal (Leipzig, 1839), 67, according to the early thirteenth-century Hebrew translation of R. Abraham ben Hasdai, an inhabitant of Barcelona.

95. See Israel J. Kazis, ed., *The Book of the Gestis of Alexander of Macedon, Sefer Toledot Alexandros ha-Makedoni* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 14–15; 74–75; 126; 183–84; 210; and W. Jac. Van Bekkum, ed., *A Hebrew Alexander Romance According to the MS Heb. 671.5 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale* (Groningen, 1994), 108–9; or Joseph Dan, ed., *Alilot Alexander Makedon* (Jerusalem, 1969), 96.

96. See R. Moshe Alsheikh, *Torat Moshe*, on Deut 21.10 (Warsaw, 1914), v, fol. 70c. Alsheikh's commentary was one of the most cited books in Hasidism, and

two wars, there is an interesting case of internalization of the concept of the war and an application of it to inner combat, or at least to prefer the latter to the former. On the other hand, in Safedian Kabbalah, as we have seen above, there was a process of externalization of the inner conflict, and portrayal of the beautiful alien woman as the objective hypostasis of the righteous man's sin and as his spark. This mythical picture represents a special form of appropriation of the inner struggle with the evil inclination, but projected within a new framework created by the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah. Those two trends regarding war, the mythical-external one related to the beautiful woman, and the spiritual-internal one, will be combined in some forms in the last stage of Jewish mysticism, namely, East European Hasidism since the mid-eighteenth century. In the wake of the different approaches emerging out of Safedian Kabbalah, Hasidic literature adopted and elaborated upon the theory of the spiritual war and the distinction between the two wars. By and large, we can see in this body of sources the most concentrated interest in this issue in all of Hebrew literature. In the following, I address a few examples that contributed some fresh understanding to my topic.<sup>97</sup>

It is the founder of Hasidism, the Besht, who is reported to have dealt with this theme. In a teaching reported in his name, it is said that:

I have heard in the name of the Besht that he said: "'Enemies'<sup>98</sup> of a man are the members of his household.' Those [enemies] are the transgressions that he committed,<sup>99</sup> because from them, the shells have

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Alexander's story could therefore have been easily known by Hasidic masters, including the Besht.

97. In the following discussions on the Besht I do not deal with views found in the commentary on Ps 107, printed and attributed to the Besht by Schatz Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, 342–82, as this seems to be a dubious attribution, as Scholem has already pointed out. See Scholem, *The Messianic Idea*, 189–90; and now in *Ha-shalav ba-aharon*, 293; Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Berkeley, Calif., 1996), 122–23; and Wolfson, "Walking as a Sacred Duty," 194. The only scholar in the field who accepts the attribution of the commentary to the Besht seems to be Arthur Y. Green, "Typologies of Leadership and the Hasidic *Zaddiq*," in *Jewish Spirituality II*, ed. A. Green (New York 1989), 154, n. 7. From the specific point of view of this study, it should be pointed out that Schatz Uffenheimer's remark (*Hasidism as Mysticism*, 375, n. 61) that there is a parallel between a passage of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye and the *Commentary on the Psalm*, as to the rescue of the personal sparks in the commentary, is unfounded. Compare Schatz Uffenheimer, 359.

98. *Oyve ish*.

99. *She-pa'al*. This makes clear that it is the person who went to war who is the sinner and thus the creator of the shells.

been generated and they are embodied in some bad persons because [good things] come into being [by means of the righteous],<sup>100</sup> [by] those who are arguing and struggling with him. Behold, men have two types of foes: one, mentioned above, which emerges from a sin he committed. The other kind [of foe] are the wicked persons, who hate those who walk on the upright paths by nature, just as it is the way of the evil to hate the good, as I have heard in the name of the Rabbi, the preacher [of Polonnoye],<sup>101</sup> blessed be his memory, on the verse<sup>102</sup> *When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies be reconciled with him.* He put special attention to the word 'his<sup>103</sup> enemies' and commented in the vein of the above interpretation that there are two aspects of foes. One foe hates him because of the sin that he committed previously, and the shell has clothed itself in that man to struggle against him, in the manner [of the verse]<sup>104</sup> *Thy own wickedness shall rebuke you.* And it is also imperative that there is another foe, which is an absolute evil part, whose way is, by nature, to hate the good. The obliteration of this foe does not depend on the will, etc. And who is greater than Moses our master, about whom it is said that there were people arguing against him? However, the remedy for this is *God will be pleased by his ways; also his enemies will be reconciled with him.* Since when his heart will understand that it is the enemy [manifested] by means of the shells that were created from his sins, and he repented and gave a remedy to it and obliterated the shell, the enemy automatically becomes his lover. And this is the precise meaning of *God will be pleased by his ways* [and then] *also his enemies will be reconciled with him.* It is precisely his enemy that emerges from his own deeds by means of his sins; he himself will reconcile with him." End of quote.<sup>105</sup> The words of the mouth of the sage are gracious.<sup>106</sup>

100. Cf. tYoma 4. The assumption being that bad things are caused by wicked people.

101. It is most plausibly R. Arieh Leib Galliner of Polonnoye, the author of the book *Kol Arieh*, known as the admonisher, *ba-Mokbiyah*, an early disciple of the Besht, who not only preserved many quotes in the name of his master in his book but also transmitted orally teachings that are not otherwise known. See, in the case of R. Gedalya, elsewhere in *Teshu'ot hen* (Brooklyn, 1982), 69.

102. Prov 16.7.

103. It is the possessive plural that is important, which means that they are not only enemies hating him but also his own enemies.

104. Jer 2.19.

105. This following phrase is the formula used by R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye in order to quote mainly the teachings of the Besht.

106. The entire passage has been quoted in the late eighteenth-century R. Gedaliyah of Lunitz, *Teshu'ot hen*, 100. I could not find a parallel to this rather

It is obvious that there are two versions of the same approach adduced here: first that of the Besht and then the articulation of his disciple. These two versions are quite similar to each other not only from the conceptual but also from the terminological point of view. To a certain extent, the later clarifies the first by introducing the exegesis on the verse from the Proverbs. This passage is brought as an interpretation to the verse from Deut 21.10 on “going forth to war against thy enemy” and the beautiful captive woman. Implicitly, the Besht is dealing with a war waged against two types of enemies: the first one is constituted by a combination of the externalization of one’s sin and an already existing bad person, who becomes an enemy by dint of internalizing the shells created by the sinner. The other enemy is the absolute enemy, whose hate does not depend upon the deeds of man. At least implicitly, we have here two types of war: one that is based upon repairing someone’s sins, which comes to approximate repentance, while the other kind of objective enemy should be battled, if at all, by external type of deeds, namely, concrete war. The Besht resorts to the term *kelipot*, widespread already in Safedian Kabbalah, in order to account for the manner in which the transgression has been reified and transferred to another person. Those are the external manifestations of the personal sins, which may be repaired by amending one’s religious behavior, a shift that will destroy the inner power of those shells and dissipate the enmity of that person toward the former transgressor. In a peculiar way, the battle with evil as found already in Luria/Vital and Abraham Azulai discussed above is an internal combat, in which a person encounters and liberates his own sparks, embodied in shells, because of his sins.

Unlike the Lurianic distinction between two sorts of enemies, the Besht conflates the two types into his first category and allows for the second category of enemies, the ordinary type of human foes. However, the main emphasis is less on destroying or obliterating an entire entity but rather on amending one’s own religious behavior. While Lurianic Kabbalah regarded the performance of the commandments as the prime form of extracting the divine sparks from the realm of shells, the Besht is much closer to the version represented by Azulai. According to them, some shells are, in this context, not objective negative powers, which have cos-

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lengthy and quite seminal teaching in the writings of earlier Hasidic authors. It should be mentioned that the Besht himself is never reported to deal directly with the verse from Deut 21.10 as referring to the beautiful captive woman as one’s own spark that was captured within the shells. Rather, he is reported to have considered this woman as a metonym for the *Shekhinah* and the shells. See in R. Efrayim of Sudylkov, *Degel mahaneh Efrayim* (Jerusalem, 1995), 52.

mic sources, but extensions of one's own sins. This is the reason why the war of choice is not just a duty related to the general order or to the community but a personal one. Repentance is, therefore, the main prescription for winning the war and bringing the first type of enemy to reconciliation or peace.

Though there can be no doubt that the Lurianic categorization indeed influenced the Besht, I assume that the latter was acquainted also with the two-war theme, which is represented by an Alexander-related passage in his disciple R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye. In the first printed Hasidic book, R. Jacob Joseph's *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, the author drew upon a passage of R. Isaiah Horowitz, as I have cited it above:

It is known from the dictum of the sage:<sup>107</sup> "You returned from the Small War, prepare for the Grand War, which is the war of the evil inclination etc." And when someone behaves in a modest manner, he escapes from the war of the evil inclination. However, this is not the case if he is eager to attain richness, which is the ornament of the evil inclination in his war, in order to behave like a prostitute after the evil inclination, to listen to its advice and forget the worship of God.<sup>108</sup>

The context of this passage has to do with sexual vices, which are one of the meanings of the evil inclination from rabbinic times. The occurrence of this rather precise reference to the Alexander the Great tradition in R. Jacob Joseph's book may point to the possible acquaintance of his master, the Besht, with this tradition, which had been known through its appropriation in R. Isaiah Horowitz's widespread book. Elsewhere in his book, R. Jacob Joseph treats the issue of the beautiful captive woman and advances in this context the view of the Besht about the principle of distinction that is applied to the beautiful gentile woman, when she leaves her earlier form of behavior and becomes Jewish. As we will see immediately below, in another discussion of the Besht, he associates the act of distinction with his approach to alien thoughts.<sup>109</sup> It is in this context that

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107. The Muslim and the "Alexander the Great's" storiola became here a rabbinic source, perhaps due to its occurrence in ibn Paqudah's influential book!

108. (Koretz, 1780), fol. 188b, referred to in Piekarz, *The Beginning of Hasidism, Ideological Trends in Derush and Musar Literature*, 210–11, and Elbaum, *Repentance and Self-Flagellation*, 189, n. 34. It should be mentioned that the dictum concerning the two wars recurs in R. Jacob Joseph's book.

109. See the references adduced in Idel, "Models of Understanding Prayer in Early Hasidism," 50–51, n. 130. It should be pointed out that the elevation of the alien thoughts may well be an innovation of the Besht. See M. Idel, "Prayer, Ecstasy and Alien Thoughts in the Besht's Religious World," in *Let the Old Make Way for the New: Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Eastern European Jewry*,

R. Jacob Joseph argues that there is not even a single act of transgression, and therefore no divine spark.

In general, it should be remarked that despite the adoption of the Safedian mythical theory about externalized evil, the Besht and his followers also developed another seminal approach to the status of the evil inclination. It has been conceived of as a power that should be used in order to worship God by its own means.<sup>110</sup> As quoted above, the Besht was interested less in the conflictual understanding of the human situation and instead chose to emphasize reconciliation. In several cases, he stressed the possibility of finding a positive element to the encounter with evil, a conciliatory approach that reflects the assumption of a profound harmony underlying reality. He offers a rather surprising explanation to a story reported in the name of R. Isaac of Acre, preserved by R. Elijah da Vidas in his *Reshit hokhmah*, and dealing with an encounter between an idle man and a princess.<sup>111</sup> While R. Isaac and da Vidas referred to the princess as a representation of the divine presence, or the *Shekbinah*, the Besht interpreted it as the evil inclination.<sup>112</sup> His assumption is that despite the scene of temptation that is obvious at the beginning of the story, the happy ending, according to which the idle man becomes a righteous person, demonstrates that even within the words of the evil inclination, someone may find positive messages. This is also the case in an important teaching of the Besht:

It is necessary to elevate alien thoughts through the three lines,<sup>113</sup> and someone should pay attention from which line each alien thought

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*Presented to Immanuel Etkes*, vol. 1, *Hasidism and the Musar Movement*, ed. D. Assaf and A. Rapoport-Albert (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2009), 57–120.

110. On this issue see Piekarz, *Beginning of Hasidism*, 204–68.

111. On this storiola, see Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros* (New Haven, Conn., 2005), 155–68.

112. See R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, *Tsafnat pa'aneah* (Koretz, 1782), fol. 66a, and *ibid.*, fol. 92d. On the contemplation of the beauty of women in Kabbalah and Hasidism as a way to ascend to the supernal beauty, formulated under a distinct Platonic influence, see Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 155–78; Idel, “Female Beauty: A Chapter in the History of Jewish Mysticism,” in *Within Hasidic Circles: Studies in Hasidism in Memory of Mordecai Wilensky*, ed. I. Etkes, D. Assaf, I. Bartal, E. Reiner (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1999), 317–34; and Margolin, *The Human Temple*, 109–10; 351–52.

113. On the three theosophical lines and their role in the uplifting of the sparks, see the numerous quotes in the name of the Besht found in, e.g., *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, fol. 201a, and in R. Aharon Kohen Perlov of Apta, *Keter Shem Tov* (Brooklyn, N.Y., 1987), fols. 19c, 40bc, 55d, 58a. Therefore, also this part of the

[stems] so that he will be able to elevate it to its [specific] source. And these three lines are the three forefathers, as it is known.<sup>114</sup> And behold the shell is called “curse,” that is an alien thought; and it is the exile of the *Shekbinab* within the depths of the shells, as it is written: “Draw near to my soul, redeem it,” namely elevate the parts of the soul<sup>115</sup> which constitute the sparks of the *Shekbinab*, from the shell, toward the holiness that is called redemption. As I heard from my teacher, it is incumbent to pray for the exile of someone’s soul, spirit, and higher soul that are found within the evil instinct,<sup>116</sup> etc., and the words of the sages are gracious.<sup>117</sup>

Like many other discussions in Jewish mystical literature, this passage is based on an analogy between three lines, related to the *sefirot* of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferet*; three forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and three parts of the human soul, which are mentioned immediately afterward. What is interesting in this passage is the conflation between the redemption of the personal spark and the redemption of a spark of the *Shekbinab*, on the one hand, and the elevation of alien thoughts on the other.

In any case, the linkage between the Safedian theory, as described in the previous section, and the two-war theme is found in an explicit manner in some Hasidic writings. Especially interesting is the treatment of the two-war theme in a discussion of the spiritual war theme that occurs

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quoted passage, though not presented as the view of the Besht but as a form of interpretation of the quote in his name, is quite consistent with his views.

114. “As it is known” points to the fact that this is not the original view of R. Jacob Joseph.

115. The three parts mentioned immediately afterward. On the many interpretations of this verse in early Hasidic literature as dealing with redemption, see Idel, “Mystical Redemption and Messianism,” 23, 26, 28, 30, 31, 34, 41, 46.

116. The theory of exile within the evil instinct recurs in the teachings reported in the name of the Besht. For an earlier possible source, see the *Commentary on the Haggadah* by R. Joseph Gikatilla, printed in *Haggadah Shelemah*, ed. M. Kasher, Sh. Ashkenazi (Jerusalem, 1967), 114. The commentary was printed for the first time in 1602 in Venice. For the possible conceptual context of Gikatilla’s view, see Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 351, n. 44.

117. *Toledot Ya’akov Yosef*, fol. 35d. On the assumption that the elevation of the sparks was conceived of as a great secret dealing with messianic enterprise according to another passage of the Besht, see Mendel Piekartz, *Between Ideology and Reality: Humility, Ayin, Self-Negation and Devekut in the Hasidic Thought* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1994), 79. For the vision of the soul as the speech of the *Shekbinab*, see the view expressed in the circle of the Great Maggid as preserved in MS Jerusalem NUL, 8<sup>o</sup> 3282, fol. 106a.

in the early nineteenth-century Hasidic master R. Ḥayyim of Czernowitz.<sup>118</sup> In his commentary on the Pentateuch titled *Be'er mayim ḥayim*, he interprets the war in an original manner, though he seems to rely on one of the passages of R. Isaiah Horowitz mentioned above, as well as on the passage reported in the name of the Besht:

[a] It is known to those who know that the quintessence of the war of man is the war with himself, namely with his passion and his inclination. The latter desires to follow—God forbid—the other gods, which are the passion and the lust of this world that are corporeal and material, and fixed in the heart of man . . . And this is the quintessence of the greatest war in the world: the war one wages with passion, as the sages said<sup>119</sup> “Who is a mighty one? He who subdues his inclination etc.” Because when someone wins this war, all the conquests of all the wars will be his in any case. [b] This is because the “Enemies of a man<sup>120</sup> are the members of his household,”<sup>121</sup> since all the enemies of a man and his foes that are about to kill and destroy him, God forbid, or inflict something evil, are all but the sparks of evil<sup>122</sup> and shells. They were generated from his own deeds, out of his sins and evil desires that he possessed in this transmigration or another one, and he did not repent for them. They are indeed embodying themselves in his enemies and go and come to take revenge and afflict him, God forbid. And in such a manner we should understand the meaning of [the verse] “The enemies of a man are the members of his household”; indeed, they are the plagues of men.<sup>123</sup> This is the reason why the essence of the way someone amends when he is attacked by his enemies to harm him in the house or in the field, when he will fall prey to bandits and robbers during the night, is that he will repent *viv-à-viv* God and atone completely for the past . . . and because of it the evil spark and the shell will be obliterated and they will not harm him . . . [c] And from it you should understand the meaning of the victory someone has in the war

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118. On this author, see the monograph of Ron Wacks, *The Secret of Unity: Unifications in the Kabbalistic and Hasidic Thought of R. Hayyim ben Solomon Tyrer of Czernowitz* (Los Angeles 2006).

119. mAvot 4.1.

120. *Oyve ish*.

121. *Anshe beto*, cf. Micha 7.6. For an early understanding of this phrase as pointing to someone's own structure, see Zohar, III, fol. 275a (*Ra'ya' Mebeinna*), where this phrase is interpreted as pointing to the human body.

122. *Nitsotae ha-ra'*.

123. *Nig'e bene adam*.

with himself, against passion and the inclination that all the other wars will be won [and] he will be able to overcome all his opponents. And this is probably the meaning of the dictum of the sages: "The Torah did not speak except about the evil inclination,"<sup>124</sup> namely the entire issue of going to the war against the enemies in the Torah deals with war against the evil inclination, which struggles with man, and man goes to war against it.<sup>125</sup>

The development that serves as the background for this interpretation is the relationship established already in a discussion of the Babylonian Talmud between the war and the evil inclination. As we have seen above, other commentators have used such a nexus in order to establish the spiritual nature of the war mentioned in Deut 21.<sup>126</sup> However, to the best of my knowledge, none of them elaborated on our topic in such a novel manner. R. Ḥayyim seems to have been acquainted with a version of an Arabic source, most probably in a Hebrew translation, where the phrase *jibād al-naḥs* was translated as *milḥemet 'atmo*, the war of someone with himself. This form of expressing in Hebrew the concept of the war of the instinct, following the two-war themes as found in [a] and [c] from above, betrays an Arabic source. However, in [b] someone's sin becomes reified and thus active in the world, following the earlier kabbalistic discussions on the soul-sparks in Safed. Those somewhat hypostatic manifestations are described in Lurianic terminology: sparks and shells. In order to escape that reification of sins, someone must repent. This repentance has been identified with the inner war, in a manner reminiscent of a discussion of the famous Sufi master al-Junayd.<sup>127</sup> Quite fascinating is R. Ḥay-

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124. bKid 21b. This dictum is related to the verse from Deut 21.10, which already deals with war on the one hand, and the evil inclination, related to a beautiful woman, on the other.

125. *Be'er mayim ḥayim* (ND, NP), II, fol. 118ab. On this text, see also Idel, "Mystical Redemption and Messianism," 27, n. 49.

126. See the passage of R. Isaiah Horowitz adduced above, and the contemporaries of R. Ḥayyim, the Ukrainian Rabbi Reuven Horowitz, a disciple of R. Levi Isaac of Berditchev, *Diḏuim ba-sodeh* (Lemberg, 1859), I, fol. 119a; and in the Polish Hasidic rabbi, Moshe Eliaquim Beri'ah, the son of the Maggid of Kuznitz, in *Sefer Da'at Moshe* (Jerusalem, 1987), fol. 152b, who mentions *Milḥemet ba-yetser* in this context; or the earlier Hasidic author, the student of the Great Maggid, R. Zeev Wolf of Zhitomir, *Sefer Or ha-Me'ir* (Perizek, 1815), fols. 249a–d.

127. See Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Fawa'id*, ed. Muhammad 'Ali Qutb (Alexandria 1412/1992), 50. See R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane* (London, 1961), 165–66, 231; Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (New York, 1972), 135–61.

yim's assumption that by winning the inner war, all the other wars are won too. This seems to reflect the impact of the Brahmins' claim in the *Gests of Alexander of Macedon* and that of R. Baḥya, that by winning the spiritual war, all the other wars are won.

Especially important for the future legacy of the two-war theme is R. Ḥayyim of Czernovitz's observation that wars in general may mean in the Bible inner wars. I understand this statement as a radicalized version of R. Isaiah Horowitz's assumption, analyzed above, that there is a double meaning for the biblical war: a plain and a spiritual one. This spiritualistic interpretation should be understood as a general hermeneutical approach, or even principle. This seems to be the case with a book from the school of R. Nahman of Bratslav, the famous and original great-grandson of the Besht, which drew from R. Baḥya ibn Paqudah's formulation of the two-war theme. There we read:

All the wars in the world hint at the essence of the war of the evil inclination. Even the wars that someone wages against his foes and enemies in corporeality are all wars against the evil inclination, as our sages said:<sup>128</sup> "Just as someone has enemies below, he has enemies above too." This is the reason why the essence of war is the war of the evil inclination. And this is the reason why the priest offered his warning before they entered the war for God [intended] to defeat the evil inclination and the demonic side, which are encompassing [the spark of] holiness, which are the aspect of idolatry.<sup>129</sup>

Here, the Hasidic master conceives the war not only from a hermeneutical perspective, namely, as an effort at reinterpreting the biblical discussions of the topic. According to the author, any war in general is conceived of as pointing to the real war that is levied against the evil inclination, which has been personalized and externalized. Interestingly enough, the theory of the existence of two sorts of enemies, whose history I have surveyed succinctly above, takes here a special turn, distinguishing between lower and higher enemies. While R. Baḥya ibn Paqudah speaks about two enemies, which are found below—the human foes who are

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128. I did not find a precise source for this statement. However, in two sources dealing with the war mentioned in Deut 21.10, the assumption is that the enemies mentioned in the verse are found on both the celestial and mundane planes. See R. Baḥya ben Asher's commentary on this verse, ed. Chavel, 3:377; and in R. Hayyim Vital, *'Ets ha-da'at tov* (Zolkiew, 1871), fol. 222b. In some instances the phrase *tsarim le-ma'lah* occurs in reference to someone who prays.

129. *Sefer meshivat nefesh*, no. 69.

fought militarily, and the instinct that is fought spiritually—R. Nahman assumes the presence of two categories of enemies that exist on two different planes: the celestial one and the mundane. Here we have another instance of a synthesis between the biblical concept of war as interpreted by Safedian kabbalists and the Neoplatonic interpretation of the double war, as represented by some of the sources mentioned above.

In R. Nahman's school, the main weapon in this war is the recitation of Psalms, and even King David has been portrayed as doing so once.<sup>150</sup> Interestingly enough, this Hasidic master assumes that all the Psalms refer to King David himself, and that the later reader should understand the entire book of Psalms as dealing with his own war with the evil inclination. This is a perfect example of what may be called a particular spiritual exegesis, which means that the biblical text is not only a general paradigm, or one that was pertinent for the ancient author who resorted to the Psalms in doing battle: this attitude assumes that someone is capable of reinterpreting the canonical text as dealing with his own spiritual life.

Last but not least: traces of the impact of the distinction between the two enemies as formulated by the Besht are found in the mid-nineteenth-century Hasidic thinker R. Isaac Aizik Yehiel Safrin of Komarno's *Commentary on the Pentateuch*.<sup>151</sup> Thus, we may describe the inner struggle as one of the spiritual concerns in early Hasidism, drawing its inspiration from nonkabbalistic sources, though sometimes mediated by kabbalistic writings. To the sources mentioned above, we may add a variety of other similar books which influenced early Hasidism, like *Ben ha-melekh vebanazir*, for example, which is a Hebrew translation of an originally Hindu collection of stories,<sup>152</sup> or the stories found in R. Jacob Luzzatto's *Kaftor va-ferah*.<sup>153</sup> Different as the divided soul of the two-war theme is from the fragmented soul of the kabbalistic theory of sparks of the soul, they reflect a basic affinity: the main religious event unfolds within the human

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150. See *Likutei moharan*, Taniyana, no. 125: part II, fol. 44b. On the resort to the term "armies," *ḥayalav*, see above note 96. On the issue of *tikun* and the recitation of certain chapters of Psalms, see Zvi Mark, "The Process of Crystalization of the General Tikkun, the Particular Tikkun to Nightly Emission and the Pilgrimage to the Tomb of R. Nahman of Bratzlav and their Affinity to the Messianic Tension" (Hebrew), *Daat* 56 (2005): 101–33; and his *Revelation and Rectification in the Revealed and Hidden Writings of R. Nahman of Bratzlav* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2011), 180–223, where the issue of the inner war is discussed at length.

151. See his *Hekhal ha-berakha* (Lvov, 1869), vol. 5, fol. 128a.

152. This book has been cited in R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye's *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, fol. 37a.

153. See Piekartz, *Between Ideology and Reality*, 33, 50; and Margolin, *The Human Temple*, 248–49.

spiritual scene. This is the reason why East European Hasidism was so fond of the two types of fragmentations: both allow for the emergence of new scenarios, which transferred the earlier kabbalistic dramas within external worlds, divine or material, to inner tensions.

THE AGONIC AND HARMONISTIC MODELS  
OF THE PERSONAL WAR

The theme of the inner war, related as it is to the necessity to repent and thus to resolve the problem of evil conceived of as predominantly a personal state, but which has both an inner and external manifestation, is important basically on the level of the individual. It belongs to what I call the agonic model, an approach that assumes the importance of personal redemption based on an inner conflict, sometimes understood as a first step leading to a more general redemption, a sequence that was articulated in some statements of the Besht. This model, stemming from Neoplatonic and Sufi sources, as well as from medieval histories of Alexander the Great, is less concerned with the redemption of the community, as it focuses primarily on inner struggles and the redemption of the individual soul.<sup>134</sup> General redemption is indeed connected to it in a significant manner, as it is conceived of as the result of cumulative personal redemptions. According to this model, the Besht does not assume any special messianic role for himself. In the texts cited above, this model is expressed by the passage in the name of the Besht from *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* (fol. 35d), which deals also with the exile of the three parts of the soul in the realm of the shells, and its later redemption.

However, I assume that the Besht underwent some form of conceptual development and became more interested in a direct form of messianic activity that assumes that by perfecting the metaphysical structure of the national or the general, redemption will come. This supernal structure may be the *Shekbinab*, whose sparks are saved by being elevated from the shells, the hypostatic Messiah as a supernal construct, or more in the vein of Lurianic Kabbalah, the reparation of *Adam kadmon*. The sparks are, according to this model, not specifically the personal ones but belong to the cosmic entity that informs processes in this world, and thus their redemption constitutes also a general redemption or messianism. I call this model the harmonistic one, since it strives to restore a larger structure that was affected by a catastrophe, the breaking of the vessels, the exile of the *Shekbinab*, or the

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134. See Idel, "Prayer, Ecstasy and Alien Thoughts in the Besht's Religious World," 14–21, 31–37. There I dealt with the possible Sufi background of some topics raised in the early stage of the Besht.

activity of the demonic powers: for example, the shells, *Sitra' aḥara'*, Samael, etc. The assumption as to the importance of such a hypostatic supernal structure is essential for understanding the meaning of religious activity, and it is closely related to the recommendation to elevate sparks from the lower realm to the supernal one, for the sake of the supernal world, the *Shekhnab*. According to this model, one not only redeems the fallen divine entities but at the same time also completes the supernal structure. This second model, inspired basically by theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah as represented mainly by Lurianism, does not prevent the continuation of the interest in the previous one, but it nevertheless consists of a different mode of thought and activity. With respect to these divergent models, I refrain from harmonizing but assume their coexistence, once the later, harmonistic model has been added to the agonic one.

On the basis of the detailed studies I have published on the Besht, my assumption is that the hypothesized transitions from one model to another are related, among other changes, to a heightened consciousness of the decisive role the Besht imagined he was called on to play in history. We may speak, therefore, about an ascent of his messianic consciousness. The rescue of his sparks may be not just a matter that concerns his individual perfection, namely, the possible repair of one of his sparks, but may have much wider ramifications for the welfare of the Jewish community; that is, it may be a contribution to what he would call the general redemption. According to a short passage in the famous hagiography about the Besht, an encounter (it may have been two) between the Besht and Sabbatai Tsevi was reported, and the Besht was required by Tsevi to repair him, that is, his soul. In this context, though referring to another incident, the Besht was also reported to have said that Tsevi had a spark of the messiah.<sup>135</sup> Whether the spark of Sabbatai Tsevi was conceived of as belonging, in one way or another, to the soul-family of the Besht, and the latter imagined himself to be personally responsible for its fate or not, is an important issue. But it is nevertheless a secondary one in comparison to the fact that he was said to have attempted to repair the sin of Tsevi, which is obvious in any case; this may be part of a wider religious enterprise, with messianic overtones. I consider the emergence of the harmo-

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135. See *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, trans. and ed. D. Ben-Amos and J. R. Mintz (New York, 1984), 86–87; the Hebrew version found in an early manuscript printed by Yehoshua Mondshine (Jerusalem, 1982), 172; and my extended analysis in “R. Israel Ba’al Shem Tov’s Two ‘Encounters.’” In this study I discussed the available scholarship on this passage and proposed to see in the Lurianic theory of impregnation a most probable conceptual clue for this section in the hagiography.

nistic model as coming later, roughly speaking between 1735 and 1750. Later on, the Besht added another model, which I call the noetic one, whose details do not concern us here, since it deals mainly with the omnipresence of God. In the framework of this third model, the role of the elevation of the sparks became less important.<sup>136</sup>

For my purposes here, it is important to point out that according to the harmonistic model, the perfection of the supernal structure has implications that are messianic too, though in a manner different from the agonistic one, or the apocalyptic scenarios found in some classical Jewish cultural traditions. In the harmonistic version of messianism, the role of Kabbalah and its theosophical structure is essential, and the theory of the holy sparks is much more related to cosmic than to personal events. According to this model, the concept of the “aspect of Messiah” was imagined to be found in each and every Jew, and I assume that in principle at least the Besht was not denied this feature. The imagined encounter with the persona of Sabbatai Tsevi, according to the hagiography, refers in my opinion to the second stage of the development of the Besht’s thought on messianism, when the ideal of the elevation of the sparks is part of the greater scheme of redemption, which I consider to be more harmonistic. Though perhaps having also a personal aspect, namely, the rescuing of one aspect of the Besht’s soul, the main emphasis is nevertheless on uplifting rather than an agon with Sabbatai Tsevi. That the encounter ended in a struggle is, in my view, due to the pressure of a specific social structure of the majority of the Eastern Europe Jewry that could not allow the redemption of the converted controversial messiah, despite the Besht’s very strong ecumenical Jewish approach. The emergence of Frankism, and the fears of further critiques which could come from the direction of the Lithuanian opponents to Hasidism, the *Mitnagedim*, since the second part of the eighteenth century, would deter a more harmonistic finale to such an imaginary encounter.

In a way, the contents described by the two different models delineated above show that while the Besht was indubitably emphasizing the elevation of the personal sparks more than is found in the Lurianic sources, we can discern also a strong emphasis on the need to uplift sparks in general. In my view, this latter issue may constitute a later development in his thought that brought him to a more messianic level of activity than earlier in his life.

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136. Idel, “Prayer, Ecstasy and Alien Thoughts,” 37–49. The discovery of divine sparks everywhere was connected by Scholem, to the activity of what he calls the “contemplative mind. See his *Messianic Idea*, 238.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The discussion in this essay shows that the distinction between different phases of Jewish mysticism, based on the romantic approach of scholars in search for originality and conceptual innovation, is, at least in some important cases, too simplistic. This approach in fact complicates our understanding of the amount of novelty found in each development, because it ignores the potential contribution of the antecedents. As seen above, lifting the personal sparks from the shells, or the concatenation between *devekut* and *tikun*, conceived of by all the scholars in the field as Hasidic innovations, were in fact found already in Lurianic Kabbalah explicitly, and some of their elements were adumbrated in non-Lurianic texts. In one case, a Lurianic text dealing with theurgical *tikun* of the cosmic Adam had been copied verbatim in a Hasidic text; on the other hand, it is clear that the Besht was reported as redeeming sparks, which are not mentioned as having any sort of relationship to his soul. As such, they function in the vein of what scholars would consider paradigmatic to Lurianic Kabbalah.<sup>137</sup> It seems therefore that the conceptual borderlines between the two vast literary corpora were much less definite than has been assumed. Moreover, the differences between those phases of Jewish mysticism are less a matter of the existence or innovation of specific concepts than of their concatenation in wider spiritual structures. In our case, this wider Hasidic structure includes both the Manichaean theory of mixture as adopted by kabbalists and the stories about the two wars and the emphasis on spiritual war.

This is not to assume that there are no differences between the two literary corpora. But they do not consist in the stark opposition between the preoccupation with the general sparks in Lurianism, on the one hand, and the personal sparks deemed to be found only in Hasidism, on the other. What makes a much bigger difference between the two stages of Jewish mysticism is the process of selection, emphasis, and integration of existing motifs in a variety of broader schemes, which infuse the particular concepts with a significance that is dictated by the structure of the context. In the case at hand, I have proposed to approach the Besht's teachings as reflecting a dynamic religious thinker, whose thought was developing by working with several models. In my opinion, the picture of early Hasidism will benefit much from distinguishing between those models and allowing for their coexistence. This means that while accord-

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137. See, for example, the verbatim quote from Luria on this topic in R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, *Tsafnat pa'aneah*, fol. 87d; and the story about his activity in the towns of Nemirov or Shargorod, in *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, 126–27.

ing to one model, the agonic one, the messianic role of the Besht was less evident, if at all, in the second model, the harmonistic one—which deals also with the reparation of supernal structures—it becomes much more important. I assume that when adopting this model, the Besht was concerned with a form of messianism more intense than earlier, and it seems that it is in this period that the two “encounters” with Sabbatai Tsevi were imagined to have taken place.

The assumption that Hasidism had neutralized or liquidated messianism is a little bit more relevant, and this only to a certain degree, for the agonic and noetic models, though much less for the harmonistic one. In my opinion, in discussions that reflect this model, there is an acceleration of interest in messianism. There are discussions of messianic issues as more acute, as, for example, in teachings transmitted by R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, who encountered the Besht only late in life.<sup>138</sup> More problematic, however, is the dating of what are in my opinion different episodes dealing with attempts to redeem Sabbatai Tzevi, who was imagined to have asked the Besht to repair him.<sup>139</sup>

My assumption is, therefore, that in addition to the quest to reach forms of individual perfection understood as redemption, the Besht was also concerned with other religious topics, which could be defined as different forms of messianism. For a better understanding of the development of Hasidism it is not necessary to assume neutralization, suspense, or dramatic change of mind in one direction or another, since some of the ideas discussed above did not emerge in eighteenth-century Hasidism but were already found in Lurianic and pre-Lurianic Kabbalah. Instead, an emphasis should be put on acts of selection between different ideas found already in the large reservoir of Jewish mysticism. Such a presumption does not assume the neutralization of a certain form of messianism by the ascent or the privileging of another type of spiritual concern, *devekut*, but with the possibility of the accumulation of, and then coexistence between, different approaches. These are models that survived together in the writings of the Besht's followers, uneasy as this coexistence may be from a systematic point of view.

In short, the picture of Jewish mysticism as emerging from the majority of studies dealing with the theory of the elevation of sparks has emphasized much more the divergences rather than the affinities between Safedian Kabbalah and Hasidism. No doubt, the phenomenological effort

138. See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 211–34, and “Mystical Redemption and Messianism,” 49–62.

139. See Idel, “The Two ‘Encounters.’”

to distinguish carefully between the two literatures is a necessary and very important scholarly enterprise, contributing much to a more precise understanding of the different phases of Jewish mysticism. However, as I have noted here, too stark a distinction between the two phases in Jewish mysticism runs the risk of misinterpretation of quite clear Lurianic texts<sup>140</sup> and a marginalization of other pertinent ones. This emphasis on the difference between Luria and Hasidism and, implicitly or explicitly, on the Hasidic novelty in this case is not much better than attributing this theory to Isaac Luria, as if he were its originator. Such a picture of Luria constitutes another simplistic and, to a certain extent, romantic approach to creativity. When seen in a more diachronic fashion, the picture shows that focusing the discussion too much on innovations is problematic. But we must ask: would it not be simpler to check first what was known in classical and thus much less controversial texts, such as those belonging to Safedian Kabbalah and its offshoots, before premature theories are built on assumptions of innovation?

On the basis of what I have discussed in this essay, I am confident that it has been demonstrated that there was much more continuity between Spanish Kabbalah, pre-Safedian Kabbalah, Safedian Kabbalah, and the Hasidic phases of Jewish mysticism than previously assumed.<sup>141</sup> This focus on continuity, though not universally applicable, seems to me to be, at the very least, the initial move that should inspire the study of Jewish mysticism in these phases.

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140. See above nn. 19, 50.

141. See also my study "The Two 'Encounters,'" as well as "On the Concept of Zimzum." On the complex question of continuity between Kabbalah and Hasidism, see Scholem, *Major Trends*, 338; Schatz Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, 33–34; the articles assembled in Bezalel Safran, ed., *Hasidism: Continuity or Innovation?* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988); Idel, *Hasidism*, passim; Rachel Elijor, "The Affinity between Kabbalah and Hasidism: Continuity or Changes," *Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division C* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1986), 107–14; and Garb, "The Cult of the Saints in Lurianic Kabbalah," 203–29. See also Buber's famous formula that Hasidism "deschematized" the mystery of Kabbalah in his *Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, 124.