Hasidism:
The People's Kabbalah

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Synopsis

Here I will discuss a few mythological perspectives of a traditional group: the Hasidim (*Hasid* meaning "Pious" in Hebrew). Beginning in eighteenth-century, in what is today's Eastern Poland and Western Ukraine, Hasidism brought together a constellation of values and practices from older spiritual traditions. Some may think that the word, "People's," in my title denotes liberal values: social equality and human rights from the Enlightenment (1685–1815). In the context of movements within Orthodox Judaism, however, I simply mean "non-elitist" (Schatz 1994:98). An intellectual class had always led movements in Judaism. The Hasidic movement, by contrast, founded by Israel ben Eleazar (c. 1698–1760), was spread by itinerate preachers (usually with no formal education) who addressed ordinary people directly, often outside established religious organizations (Dan 1983:6). What did Hasidism incorporate from earlier kabbalistic movements? How is it different from other Orthodox movements and from Conservative and Reform Judaism? These are just a couple of the questions I will consider here. Hasidism has been remarkably open, through its great optimism, toward democratizing experiential elements of Kabbalah, and this remains itstrademark today.

> **Key Words**
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> Tikkun Olam; Lurianic Kabbalah; the Zohar; the Zaddiq; Raising Sparks; Tzimtzum; the Messiah; The Ba'al Shem Tov; Maimodines; the Sefirot; the Mithnagdim; the Hasidim.

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1. Introduction

Hasidic Jews have the power to unsettle: their traditional clothing (usually black) with long beards (sometimes with long sideburns), and an array of hats that reflect the cities or regions where particular movements originated. They seem from another age—as indeed they are—a three-dimensional alternative to the modern world's trajectory. Their eccentricities have aroused deep interest. Sociologists, psychologists, historians, and even political scientists have studied Hasidism intensely for over one hundred years. Many over the generations have predicted their disintegration, by assaults from within and without (Dan 1987:321). The Hasidim have survived unfathomable social and cultural upheavals and have thrived, producing through its manifold traumas a remarkable literature, perhaps among the finest in the Hebrew language.[1]

Several distinct takes on Hasidism have come down to us, with the first two involving Hasidism's complicated relationship with Messianism. The first, expounded by Ben Zion Dinur (1884–1973), was that Messianism, as in the more excessive expressions of Sabbatianism, a heretical messianic movement, was kept alive as a central ethic (Liebes 1993:94). As we will see, Sabbatian messianic ideas pervade one important feature of Hasidism. In the second, Gershom Scholem (1897–1982) asserted that the *Zaddiq* (also called the Rebbe), a hereditary leader, actually neutralized Messianism, with the "homily" or "sermon" as the main channel for instruction (Scholem 1941:343–344).[2] Since Hasidism was a genuine people's movement, itinerates spread their messages as they wandered from *shtetl* (village) to *shtetl*, creating a vibrant movement in its first fifty years. These homilies, as they were later written down, became the foundation for a "mystical psychology" or a "practical mysticism" rather than a theology (Scholem 1941:340–341).[3] Martin Buber (1878–1965), offering the third view, wrote that the Hasidic "stories" are the central feature (Buber 1947:xvii-xxiv). Buber presented this in *Tales of Hasidim* (1947), a widely popular work, in which he showed Hasidic stories were similar to Zen Buddhism's koan (Dan 1987:318). Buber created the mainstream image of Hasidism that remains most compelling today.[4] Buber also identified something essential about Hasidism in his statement: Hasidism is Kabbalism turned-Ethos.

Hasidism has endured assaults from secularism and from religious orthodoxy, both bent on its destruction. Sabbatianism (seventeenth-century)—and the Frankist movement (eighteenth-century) that grew from it—with its belief in an apostate Messiah, wreaked havoc on traditional life. Thereafter, people who sought a more experiential spirituality were quickly branded heretics. The Hasidism bore this stigma in its formative years. The *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment), founded by Moses Mendelssohn (1726–1789), emboldened Jews to join mainstream secular life as full nation-state citizens; seeing their heritage as ethnic baggage, many jettisoned it for life as normal citizens, thwarting Hasidic attempts to restore traditional Jewish life. The Soviet Union (1917–1991), believing the Hasidim as either unsympathetic to Communist principles or as barriers to social progress (Steinsaltz 2014:29), imprisoned its leaders in Gulag labor camps. The Nazis during the Second World War very nearly obliterated it, destroying over one hundred Hasidic groups.

Yet, the Hasidim spectacularly bounced back after each assault with an even stronger inner cohesion. Today nearly half a million people, members of over forty distinct groups—each with a slightly different emphasis—call themselves "Hasidic." What is their secret for survival? Optimism is Hasidism's chief characteristic: Humanity has the capacity for higher-consciousness and one can achieve a more complete identity through traditional life. Yet, over two hundred and fifty years since its inception, Hasidism's primary mysti-

cal orientations, the values and beliefs that have sustained them, remain subtle and difficult to define. Here I will focus on a few core beliefs Hasidism incorporated from Kabbalah's earlier phases.

2. Kabbalah's four phases

Kabbalah prior to Hasidism evolved in three main stages, over about six hundred years: Zoharic Kabbalah (twelfth and thirteenth-centuries), Lurianic Kabbalah (sixteenth-century) and Sabbatian Kabbalah (seventeenth and eighteen-centuries).[5] Kabbalah has been the place where unbounded creativity and imagination have free-reign, and so much of the literature seems remarkably "modern." Though Kabbalah is seen through the prism of Lurianic Kabbalah today, each phase remains very much alive.

The first phase began with an ancient Hebrew text, the *Sefer Yetzirah* (Book of Creation or Formation), the first known work to mention the Sefirot and the *Ein-Sof* (at least in one version); it could have been written as early as the second-century CE, though most scholars believe it was written between the third and fourth-centuries (Dan 2007:18).[6] Traditions hold that the writer was either the patriarch Abraham or Rabbi Akiva (50–135), a Tanna (composer of parts of the *Mishnah*), martyred by the Romans in the Second Jewish-Roman war (132–136 CE) (Kaplan 1997:xvii), showing the great esteem early mystics placed on it.

It would be another thousand years before the next kabbalistic text appeared: the *Sefer ha-Bahir* (Book of Light), published around 1180 in Provence, France, a center for Jewish learning in the high Middle Ages. The *Bahir* certainly built on the *Sefer Yetzirah*, but wildly expanded it. All kabbalistic texts are ascribed to the sages who wrote the *Mishnah* (the Tannaim), and the *Bahir* is attributed to Nehunya ben ha-Kanah, who lived in second-century Israel.[7]

Since Kabbalah had always been the secret domain of an elite, many wonder why the *Bahir* was published at all. Written in Aramaic and Hebrew, it is the first work extant to present all the central concepts of Kabbalah: the *Merkavah* mystical traditions, the *Tsu* (Magical Presence), the power of the Hebrew alphabet and the names of God, the *Tzimtzum* (Constriction) of God, and *Gilgul* (Reincarnation), the ten "utterances" (*ma'amarot*), which became the ten Sefirot,[8] with the feminine Sefirah, the *Shekhinah*, hovering separately from the other nine Sefirot, the *Ein-Sof*, the unknowable center of divinity, and the appearance of evil as part of the Divine, called in the *Bahir* "the fingers of God's left hand." Some claim the *Bahir* was meant to challenge Moses Maimodines' (1135–1204) *Mishneh Torah* (Repetition of Torah) (Kaplan 197:xix; Green 2004: 19), where he used Aristotelian concepts for a more rational approach to understanding mystical and figurative elements of the Bible (Rubinstein 2003:84–86).[9] Whoever wrote the *Bahir*, or for what purposes, it was a turning point for Kabbalah, for a more public role.

The *Sefer ha-Zohar* (The Book of Splendor), appearing about one hundred years later, the next great work of Kabbalah, remains the glory of Jewish esoteric tradition. Written in Aramaic, and like other kabbalistic writings attributed to a Tanna, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai (c. 100–160),[10] scholars believe that Moses de Leon (1250–1305) wrote the *Zohar* (Scholem 1972:222; 225–28), first published in Spain around 1280 (de Leon lived near Castile). While de Leon took concepts from such works as the *Sefer Yetzirah* and the *Bahir*, his sweeping poetic vision remains one of the great achievements of esoteric writing. A virtual encyclopedia of kabbalistic symbolic poetry, the *Zohar*, one of the great works of art in world literature, solidified key kabbalistic elements in its sweeping vision (Daniel Matt's translation into English, the Pritzker edition of 2011, is in eleven volumes). The *Zohar* is the reason Kabbalah enjoys a renaissance today.

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The second phase of Kabbalah began in 1492, after the expulsion of Jews from Iberian Peninsula, where the *Zohar* and so many other kabbalistic treatises and books had been written. Mystics who guarded their secrets suddenly found themselves in far corners of the world. Some refugees settled in Safed, Israel (Silberman 1997:145–146),[11] where they shaped and honed Kabbalah's next phase. Following Kabbalah's secretive precedents, however, the Safed kabbalistic communities were more like schools of initiates, with a definite hierarchy, roughly organized according to original vision, with the most important one numbering only a few dozen and where each was sworn to secrecy.[12]

Isaac Luria (1534–1572), who became a leader of a small circle, stretched all teachings he inherited until he snapped them, before completely reconfiguring them. The heart of Lurianic Kabbalah is seen in its vision of humanity's preternatural powers, where everything in the universe is dependent on human choice, including the restoration of divinity.[13] Yet, it is difficult to say whether Luria himself understood the colossal consequences his ideas would have, since he seems to have written very little (only a few hymns have been preserved from his own hand), and where everyone seems to have been forbidden to divulge his teachings.

Hayyim Vital (1542–1620) and Joseph Ibn T'bul (b. 1545), his two most prominent followers, recorded his teachings. Vital, the most prolific, was as tight-lipped as his great master and refused to publish the teachings, but he wanted to preserve them for an elite he felt worthy of them. Luria was virtually unknown during his lifetime, and though becoming something of a legend after his death, almost nothing is recorded of his teachings until around 1620, as they spread among Jewish centers, perhaps from manuscripts stolen from Vital (Levine 2003:92).[14] For the first time in nearly a thousand years the Jewish world, which "became permeated to an extraordinary degree by the new spirit and the mystic restatement of older principles" (Scholem 1941:282), united under one set of teachings: those of Isaac Luria.

After the *Alhambra Decree* (1492), Jews everywhere bore the guilt inherent in monotheism: They must have displeased the Divine in some way or they were bearing the failures of previous generations. Luria brushed individual and corporate guilt aside. For him Exile began at the origins of the universe, within the Divine Himself, and so Exile is an underlying reality in all of life:

> . . . the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria may be described as a mystical interpretation of Exile and Redemption, or even as a great myth of Exile. Its substance reflects the deepest religious feelings of the Jews of that age. For them, Exile and Redemption were in the strictest sense great mystical symbols, which point to something in the Divine Being (Scholem 1941:286).

Luria transformed the Zoharic Sefirot he inherited by focusing mostly on the moment of creation. The *Zohar*, in its stunning vision, showed that as the *Ein-Sof* emanated in space and time, it congealed into certain qualities or characteristics (please see Appendix 2): the upper Sefirot, "Crown," "Knowledge," and "Wisdom" (*Keter*, *Da'at/Hokhmah*, and *Binah* respectively), the "mental" or "intentional" qualities, and the lower seven more closely connected to the creation (and therefore "emotional"), especially the tenth Sefirah, *Shekhinah*.[15] Though the *Zohar* had combined two mutually exclusive concepts of divinity, the changeable and the unchangeable, as some formulations of the Christian Trinity had done,[16] the Sefirot were more important for mystics as hinges when meditating upon relational symbols among Divine creative powers:

Sefirah, the singular form, would seem to suggest the Greek "sphere," but its actual source was the He-
brew *sappir* (for "sapphire"), and so the term referred primarily to God's radiance. Scholem gives a very
suggestive list of kabbalistic synonyms for the Sefirot: sayings, names, lights, powers, crowns, quality,
stages, garments, mirrors, shoots, sources, primal days, aspects, inner faces, and limbs of God. . . . But
other kabbalists warily regarded the Sefirot only as God's tools, vessels that are instruments for Him, or
as we might say, language is only God's tool or vessel. Moses Cordovero, the teacher of Luria and the
greatest systematizer of Kabbalah, achieved the precarious balance of seeing the Sefirot as being at once
somehow both God's vessels and His essence . . . (Bloom 1987:7).

The *Zohar* showed that the Sefirot were out of harmony, its life-giving forces of the *Shefa* (Flow) blocked
(Silberman 1998:180). Luria's system—in contrast to the *Zohar* and many other kabbalistic writings that only
implied dualistic tendencies—was straightforwardly dualistic. One *could* say that in Luria the *Ein-Sof* and the
Sitra Ahra (Other Side or Evil Principle) are two rival (and equal) divinities, with the creation as a way for the
Divine (what we think of as all that is positive) to purge Himself of this Otherness (Bloom 1987:16).[17] Luria's
Tzimtzum (the Exile) is indeed an astonishing concept in world religious history, bordering as it does on the
heretical: Creation did not begin with a life-affirming creative act, but as a reactive—even desperate—step by
the Divine to empty a space within Himself and from Himself for Self-healing. The *real* Exile is the Divine
from Himself:[18]

Next, Luria's *Shevirah ha-Kelim* "Breaking or Shattering of the Vessels" came about from the Divine's lack
of foresight. As the Sefirot unfolded, becoming *less* than the *Ein-Sof* in the process, the *Ein-Sof* created "ves-
sels" or "containers" (*kelim*) to channel and give them distinctiveness (for the creation of the universe). Un-
fortunately these vessels (made of coarser light) were not strong enough to hold the overpowering force of
Divine light. The *Sitra Ahra* also aided the "Breaking"(Dan 1987:265).

The Shattering sent sparks (*netzutzot*) in all directions, as from a great explosion. Those flung upward re-
turned to the upper Sefirot (*Keter*, *Hokhmah*, and *Binah*), regenerating them, while the *Sitra Ahra* (with the
reshimu—particles from the *Sitra Ahra* along the edges of the *tehiru* or "void") trapped the sparks that fell
downward in the *qelippoth* (the *Zohar* calls these "bark"), formed in part from the broken "shells" (*kelim*),
which imprisoned them (Scholem 1973:33) to siphon off their sacred powers.[19] Without the kidnapped
sparks, then, the Other Side could not exist.

The third rhythm of Lurianic myth is the *Tikkun* (Restoration), both of the Divine and the universe. The
Divine's original intention appears "knee-jerked" from Luria in a lunge toward wholeness: a cleansing of the
Sitra Ahra. The *Sitra Ahra* had awakened the Divine from His eternal slumber. Evil, then, has an intimate
relationship with the Divine, the counter-force that precipitated the creation of the universe (Scholem
1973:299–300). Would God have awakened without the *Sitra Ahra*? Without Evil, according to Luria, noth-
ing would exist. Alarmed by this duality, even schizophrenia, God roused Himself to purge it and to reinte-
grate it (why the *Sitra Ahra* was present at the beginning is open to speculation). Creation, then, was a Di-
vine *Tikkun* for completeness, where creation and healing are the same. After the process spiraled out of
control, the *Ein-Sof*, channeling light through the Sefirot that had rejuvenated, created Adam through *Binah*
(the Cosmic Mother) that flowed through the left side (female) of the Sefirot (Bloom 1987:9). In the final
Restoration, according to Luria, all will return to *Binah*, consummating in the Messianic age (Scholem

1973:811–812).

3

The third phase is Sabbatian Kabbalah. In 1665, Nathan of Gaza (1643–1680), using Lurianic terminology, announced through letters, tracts, and even personal visits that a wandering mystic, Sabbatai Tzvi (1626–1676), was the incarnation of the sixth Sefirah, *Te'feret*. This "Messiah" had appeared in Israel and will launch his mission to smash the "heel of evil," the fortified *qelippoth* (husks of evil) to release sparks (Dan 2007:88) trapped in the lower seven Sefirah (even *Mitzvot*, the "Good Works" of Jews, could avail nothing there) (Dan 2007:80). The Messiah must descend into it to vaporize it (Scholem 1973:741–743). The Messianic age, Nathan declared, would begin in 1666 and in 1672 the Jerusalem Temple would be rebuilt (Scholem 1973:287). However, Sabbatai, after a Messianic procession from Safed, Israel to Constantinople (Istanbul) that ended in his arrest by the Ottoman authorities, converted to Islam on September 16, 1666.

Nathan of Gaza, in spite of the Messiah's apostasy, continued to insist on Sabbatai's messianic mission, declaring that the Messiah must assume the "cloak of evil" to redeem the sparks trapped there (Scholem 1973:802). Gershom Scholem has written that the Jewish world's attempt to find redemptive meanings in an apostate Messiah is one of the great acts of devotion in religious history (Scholem 1973:799).

Sabbatai had performed "strange acts" (*ma'asim zarim*), ritual violations of the *Torah*, to show that a new age with a new *Torah* had appeared, and later Sabbatians developed their own ritual violations: 1) violations of holy days and dietary laws, 2) violations of theology of the divine, particularly the Ten Commandments that forbade idolatry, and 3) sexual violations (ritually violating selective passages from *Leviticus* 7:25; 18:1–26) (Maciejko 2011:32–33).[20] After Sabbatai's death in 1679, others carried on the "mystery of apostasy." In 1683 about three hundred families in the Ottoman Empire converted to Islam (Scholem 1971:147), becoming known as the "Dönmeh," which amazingly continues today, near Thessaloniki, Greece and in parts of Turkey.[21] The Dönmeh saw themselves as shock troops to deliver the death knell to the *qelippoth*.

Later, Jacob Frank (1726–1791), a Polish Jew who had married into a Dönmeh family, took the message of apostate redemption to Poland, which he felt was the new Promised Land.[22] In 1759 some three thousand Jews (or families) converted with him to Polish Roman Catholic Christianity. Frank's extreme nihilism tore apart the Jewry of Poland, the Ukraine, and Lithuania, wounding its traditional life and bringing harsh divisions (secret Frankism was widespread among the educated and uneducated).[23] Frank, who outraged Jews everywhere, scandalized Judaism with his teachings of sexual libertinism to redeem sparks, the reason his movement was repressed and much of its literature destroyed. Yet Frank's brand of Sabbatianism was fecund, spawning intellectual and spiritual ferment and even openness to new ideas. Indeed, some scholars mark the Sabbatian movement as the beginning of the modern era for the Jewish people (Dan 2007:92), much as the Reformation (1517) had been for the Christian world (Russell 1945:481–483).

The Ba'al Shem Tov ushered in the final phase of Kabbalah and he found fertile ground for his ideas in regions that had been deeply influenced by Frankism (Scholem 1941:330). Yet, as a religious and visionary genius, he took aspects of all three previous stages: the *Bahir* with the *Zohar*, Lurianic Kabbalah, and even the cursed Sabbatianism, for he understood that Sabbatianism's appeal was real—it had focused on God's presence in the here and now and involved all people in all classes in *Tikkun*. Would Hasidism have arisen without Sabbatianism? The stages of Kabbalah, stretching over the centuries, are like a set of dominos, each one

intimately connected to its predecessor.

3.   Hasidism begins

Israel ben Eleazar (c. 1698–1760), called the "Ba'al Shem Tov" (Master of the Good Name), founded Hasidism. Born in Kamieniec, in today's Western Ukraine, and a clay peddler until he was about forty-years old, he began teaching Zoharic and Lurianic Kabbalah to the uneducated, wandering about the countryside (he himself seems to have had no formal education). He grew famous as a healer and magician, seen by the name others gave him, that he used Divine "names" for healing purposes (Schatz 1994:97). An otherworldly and quasi-legendary figure, his life is shrouded in mystery (Wiesel 1972:3–16), with some wondering if he were really an historic person.[24]

The Ba'al Shem Tov showed that Luria's teachings, such as "Raising the Sparks," have redemptive power even in everyday life. Like Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) in some respects, his teachings had a strong pantheistic (or rather panentheistic) orientation.[25] Because God is in everything, all things have something "good" in them. He certainly influenced every facet of Ashkenazi (European) Judaism in the twenty years or so of his public life (Wiesel 1972:8):

> [The Ba'al Shem Tov made] a deep and lasting impression on many by virtue of a unique combination of wonderworking capabilities and charisma, and his ability to make his words penetrate the hearts of the masses (Scholem 1971:324).

Itinerates with little formal education were the Hasidic "missionaries,"giving their sermons and homilies for only meals and lodging as they traveled about (Dan 1983:6). As it grew in popularity, it frightened the educated class, which had traditionally guided Judaism, because the Hasidim resembled the Sabbatians. The Ba'al Shem Tov had begun his ministries in Podolia and Volhynia (Dan 1987:15), precisely where Frankism was strongest and he appears to have taken the side of Frankists, blaming the Jewish authorities[26] for Frankist mass conversion to Christianity (Buxbaum 2005:12).[27] In 1757 and again in 1760, the Polish Roman Catholic Church organized a series of debates between the Frankists and leading rabbis (Dan 1983:15). Embattled Frankist representatives viciously (and falsely) affirmed that the ancient "blood libel," part of Europe's anti-Semitic past, was in fact true.[28] Outrages such as this threw suspicion on all new movements.

Official Judaism (the Mithnagdim or "Opposition") felt a special calling to root out all heresy in its area and ferociously challenged early Hasidism.[29] Also known as the *Litvish*, *Yeshivish*, or *Lithuanians* (today they make up fully one half of Orthodox Judaism), they especially attacked Hasidism's confidence in ordinary folks' innate capacities to understand Divine mysteries:[30]

> . . . for the Hasidim, who maintained a supremely optimistic view of man's spiritual and psycho-religious capacities, this truth must not remain a matter of esoteric theory but must become the object of extensive human contemplation, enriching the religious life of all Jews and ultimately allowing them to achieve mystical union with God in and through the created world. For the Mithnagdim, on the other hand, who harried a deeply pessimistic view of man's spiritual capabilities, the truth of God's immanence must remain in the realm of mystical speculation, reserved for a small, select and well-guarded spiritual

elite. The average Jew, they insisted, must conduct his life in the world as if estranged from a distant, transcendent, and unknowable God (Nadler 1997:27–28).

In 1772, just twelve years after the Ba'al Shem Tov's death, the Mithnagdic Rabbi Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna (1720–1797), among the most esteemed rabbis of his time, excommunicated the fledgling Hasidic movement, throwing it out of the Jewish community and ordering everyone to shun it. This *hērem* (official expulsion) has been renewed many times over the generations and remains in effect today. The Gaon's antagonism, however, shows the great success of the Ba'al Shem Tov's successor, Rabbi Dov Baer (1704–1772), also called the Maggid (Preacher) of Mezheritch, for the growing movement indeed was threatening the foundations of rabbinical Judaism in the region. A gifted organizer with a strong mystical bent, the Maggid spread Hasidism throughout the region as his followers began their own dynasties (please see Appendix 1).[31] (The Mithnagdim and the Hasidim, in fact, have a great deal in common. Both base their elemental world-view on Kabbalah and both dress similarly. Today, unfortunately, with the festering and hardening over many generations, their children rarely—if ever—intermarry, and though they may live in communities that border each other, they will not pray in each other's synagogues).[32]

4. Hasidic kabbalah

In its formative years (the first fifty years or so), Hasidism had accepted most elements of Lurianic Kabbalah, but gave them inner twists: *Tzimtzum* (Contraction), *Shevirat ha-Kelim* (Breaking of the Vessels) *Tikkun Olam* (Restoration of the World), and *Nitzotzot Hadedoshim* (Lifting Holy Sparks) take place within the psyche rather than in the cosmos (Bloom 1996:212). The *qelippoth*, the fortified husks that trapped sacred sparks, really reside within the soul. Raising those sparks by following *halakhah* (practices) is for personal salvation. Hasidism's originality, then, is seen in its selective absorption of Lurianic Kabbalah, reinterpreting it in a more holistic and humane sense (away from Luria's harsh dualism). This is seen in daily practices that address "evil inclinations" in one's personal life and the place of the *Zaddiq* (Righteous Leader) as a redemptive figure for his community.

a. Lurianic twists

First, Hasidism, in reinterpreting Luria's expositions of the *Tzimtzum*, said the Divine was motivated by love in the creation of the universe rather than for Self-healing. The Exile (the Divine's withdrawal to create an empty space), then, was positive, seen in the story from *Genesis* 2:8 where the Divine planted "a garden toward the east, in Eden" for humanity to enjoy. Classic Lurianism had stated that the unfolding of the Sefirot, with the resultant "Breaking of the Vessels," took place from the overwhelming force of Divine light, with the aid of the *Sitra Ahra*, where the Divine appeared to have botched things up. Rather, Hasidism taught that the Divine was not a bungler but knew the light was too powerful and so dimmed it, making it a softer quality in order for humanity to be able to absorb it (Zeitlin 2012:88–89). The *Tzimtzum*, therefore, was really an expression of love and sacrifice for humanity. Lurianic Kabbalah, then, stressed the process of how the Divine redeems Himself through human agency, while Hasidic Kabbalah focuses on the Divine's great love for all the things He created.

Hasidic groups, therefore, do not accept Luria's primal catastrophe, the *Shevirah ha-Kelim* (Shattering),

the opposing forces of the *Sitra Ahra*, with its duality of good and evil forces, where evil is a separate meta-physical force, and more fundamentally divinity's loss of control during creation (Dan 1983:22). But Hasidic thinkers had the challenge in their ethic of "Raising Sparks" through ritual practices: How did the sacred sparks become trapped within the *qelippoth* in the first place, if no primal, cosmic catastrophe took place? Hasidism answered this by returning to the *Zohar* and other pre-Lurianic expositions (the *Zohar* is much more gentle than Lurianic Kabbalah and shows the reason for the *Shevirah* as a lack of love).[33]

Judaism of the eighteenth-century, because of Sabbatianism, had already begun to weaken the more extreme Lurianic expositions (Dan 1983:19). But the question of evil's true nature indeed hunted Hasidism. Is evil completely evil if, according to Luria, it originated within the *Ein-Sof*? If sparks trapped in the *qelippoth* animate evil, should one enter the *qelippoth* to raise these sparks, or even attempt to redeem the *qelippoth*? The Ba'al Shem Tov once said, "To pull another out of the mud, man must step into the mud himself" (quoted by Wiesel 1972:20).

The Ba'al Shem Tov's statement reflects a truism: Hasidism was less interested in *speculating* as it was about *acting*. Luria had said that evil would eventually disappear, slowly, as Jewish *Mitzvot* (Good Words) raised sparks (Luria had said only two hundred eighty-eight sparks needed to be raised) (Zeitlin 2012:90). But, can one hasten redemption by descending into evil? The Ba'al Shem Tov had implied it was possible.[34] Sabbatians, conversely, had believed one must engage evil directly, by transgressing, in order to destroy it from within. Since the new age of *Atziluth* (the Messianic age) had arrived with Sabbatai Tzvi and Jacob Frank, evil was merely an illusion; like air in a balloon it could be deflated and then vanish.[35] Sabbatai had violated the *Torah*'s teachings purposely to destroy evil from within, since the *Torah* of Moses, from the previous age of *Beriah*, was no longer valid (Scholem 1973:390).[36]

Sabbatian ideas indeed hung close to Hasidism during its formative years. In part because of official Judaism's deep terror of Sabbatianism, which may have restrained Hasidic excesses, the Hasidic movement stopped short of Sabbatianism's nihilistic abyss of ritual violation. In place of a missionary zeal to destroy evil that had characterized Sabbatian unholy rituals, Hasidism offered *devekut* (communion/dedication/clinging to) (Scholem 1971:180) to personally redeem the human spirit.[37]

The Ba'al Shem Tov himself, according to followers, had presented two mutually exclusive ways of dealing with evil (Dan 1987:20). The first, of course, was to rid oneself of it by turning away from it. This was also the solution the founder of Messianic Christianity, Paul of Tarsus' (c. 5–67), offered: "We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (*2 Corinthians* 10:5 New International Version). Wrestling and man-handling evil thoughts before they become actions have become part of Christian theologies, both Roman Catholic and Protestant. Nothing is original in this. The second solution is softer with a more long-term view of evil and is purely kabbalistic: to raise evil thoughts and inclinations (*yetzer hara*) in order to redeem them (and to redeem the world). Still, if *Tikkun Olam* comes when all the sparks are raised, is it possible (or permissible) to actively engage evil? Surprisingly, Hasidism agreed that it was, but this function was limited to the *Zaddiq* (which I will discuss this below).[38]

Devekuth, Hasidism's central ethic, is not an original concept, but previous Orthodox movements claimed it was only for an elite. Typically, Hasidism democratized it: *Devekuth* is a birthright of all Jews, as is participation in *Tikkun Olam* (Dan 1983:24). With *devekuth*, Hasidism also exalted *kavvanah* (pure intention), translated also as "complete concentration" in prayer and exalted *devekuth* above *Torah* study (Nadler

1997:154–159) (the Mithnagdim had discouraged prayer because it could lead to ecstatic delusions) (Nadler 1997:75–77). *Devekuth* and *kavvanah* are practiced in daily routines: eating, sleeping, walking, and even when chatting with friends. As Hasidic thinking developed, this concept of God's presence in every aspect of life became known as *avodah be-gashmiut* (physical worship), where every moment is also a redemptive moment (Wiesel 1972:25).[39]

b. The Zaddiq

The *Zaddiq* holds a central place in Hasidic life, and this has obvious Sabbatian roots: "This idea, itself deeply rooted in Sabbatian thinking, generally referred in Hasidism to the work of the *Zaddiq* in redeeming the souls of others" (Green 1992:67). The Orthodox Mithnagdim, as well as all branches of Conservative and Reform Judaism, winch at this concept and see it as against Judaism's spirit of personal autonomy. Yet, it has preserved the pervasive influence of Sabbatian ideas among ordinary folk in the regions where Hasidism first arose.

Sabbatianism developed in part as a reaction to the high demands of Lurianic Kabbalah (Dan 2007:88–89), and so bringing Lurianic Kabbalah down from the cosmos and turning it inward, to the human heart, was also part of the *Zaddiq* teaching. The *Zaddiq* is a "visible" redeemer, a real presence in everyday life (Scholem 1941:344–345), furthering the experiential salvation of his own group of followers.[40] A *Zaddiq* at death passes his spiritual authority to his son. A throw back to aristocratic world-views, it meant, of course, an intense group loyalty, seen in the famous Hasidic statement: "There is no *Zaddiq* but the son of a *Zaddiq*" (quoted by Dan 2007:97). Only the founders' direct descendants lead the Hasidic community (usually the eldest son).[41]

Hasidism was bitterly attacked for its similarity to Sabbatianism in this regard. Extoling communion (*devekuth*) above *Torah* study was not so uncommon, since Jews had over the millennium challenged dogmatic *Torah* study alone, when it superseded "loving mercy" (*Micah* 6:8). The notion of trusting the *Zaddiq*'s redemptive powers, however, has put most other Jewish communities off.

Conversely, Lurianic Kabbalah had absolutely disavowed an individual Messiah (Dan 2007:88). Though Luria accepted messianic figures, (by which he probably meant "righteous people") since this was part of Judaism from antiquity,[42] this was vastly different from what Hasidism developed. For Luria the Jewish people collectively performed *Tikkun Olam* (Levine 2003:97–98), with the Messiah only appearing *after Tikkun Olam* has been completed.[43] Yet, Messianism probably would have developed from Lurianic Kabbalah regardless of the Sabbatian disaster (Dan 1987:24), given the sense of helplessness that ordinary people felt as the prime agents in *Tikkun* (Dan 2007:88–89). No doubt many believed they were unworthy of such an exalted role.

The Maggid of Mezheritch, Hasidism's great architect, was first to shape the concept of the *Zaddiq*, as mentioned above, (but this must have originated from the Ba'al Shem Tov). The Maggid envisioned a league of leaders who through their complete devotion were more highly evolved spiritually and therefore better equipped for special *Tikkun* (Dan 1987:27). Strangely, he combined populism with elitism. The Maggid's disciples, as they founded their own versions of Hasidism (please see Appendix 1), made this dynastic concept a reality. The *Zaddiq*, then, acted as a kind of ancient priest during Temple times (950 BCE-70 CE). Instead of offering sacrifices on behalf of petitioners day and night, reconciling everyone to God, the *Zaddiq*

redeems his community through his complete availability.

What Hasidism did with Sabbatian Messianism, then, was to distribute it among all Hasidic dynasties:[44]

> Hasidism, it might be said, fragmented the superhuman messianic hero of Sabbatianism and distributed the pieces across time and space into every generation and every community. This fragmentation, however, did not alter the basic idea, previously absent from Judaism although it flourished in Christianity, of an intermediary role in the redemptive process (Dan 1987:27).

The word, *Zaddiq*, comes from the ninth Sefirah, also called *Yesod* (Foundation), an intermediary Sefirah between the Divine and the created universe (please see Appendix 2). The *Zaddiq*, as a spiritually supercharged person, has a special capacity to approach God on behalf of others in a way that others do not (as the community supports him with their prayers and devotion). He is in a continual state of *devekuth*, protecting his community from the forces of evil, healing their sicknesses, blessing them with fertility, and lifting up their evil inclinations (and lack of faith) for *Tikkun* (Green 1992:309). The Hasidim believe only the *Zaddiq* is capable of entering evil to destroy it; deeply sensitized as he is to the needs of his community, the *Zaddiq* absorbs his community's evil inclinations, which become his, before lifting them up to be redeemed. Yet the *Zaddiq*'s role differs a bit depending on the community:

> The *zaddiq*, as he appears in the literature of early Hasidism, is a leader with many faces. He is also portrayed . . . as parent, teacher, spiritual guide, intercessor in prayer, healer, and protector from sin. Hasidic masters and communities varied insofar as they chose to emphasize one aspect of *zaddiqut* above another, though this emphasis seldom resulted in the total exclusion of other elements. Thus in HaBaD circles the emphasis was upon the *zaddiq* as guide, while in Lezajsk (and later Galician dynasties) the *zaddiq*'s intercessory function in prayer was more important, and in Przysucha (including later Polish Hasidism) it was the aspect of *zaddiq* as teacher that gained prominence." (Green 1992:182).

What it means to be "a Hasid" is intimately connected to a *Zaddiq* (Dan 1987:30). To become a Hasid, one must petition to enter a Hasidic court, commit oneself to that group and trust the *Zaddiq* in his role as a dynastic redeemer.

c.   Vision of potential

Implicit also in Lurianic Kabbalah (and often unnoticed) is its extraordinary optimism toward human potential (of course Luria was addressing this potential for Jewish people collectively). The high demands that scholars say led to the Sabbatian debacle, of an apostate Messiah, can be seen in a different light: The exalted role of humanity Luria articulated was for releasing humanity's innate, untapped capacities:

> The focus of the Kabbalistic theurgy is God, not man; the latter is given unimaginable powers, to be used in order to repair the divine glory or the divine image; only his initiative can improve Divinity . . . because he concentrates more upon action than upon thought, the Jew is responsible for everything, including God, since his activity is crucial for the welfare of the cosmos in general (Moshe Idel quoted in

Bloom 1992:105).

Granted, the *Zaddiq*'s domineering role constrains an individual Hasid's potential to some degree. Nonetheless, every Hasid participates in *Tikkun Olam*. In view of this incredible optimism toward human potential, some may ask: Is perfection in this life, then, possible? Surprisingly, the answer combines Luria's unbounded optimism with Hasidic pragmatism: "No"and this includes the *Zaddiq* himself, allowing that some individual Hasids may see their *Zaddiq* as perfect (Steinsaltz 2014:217–218).

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812), founder of Chabad (an acronym for the upper three Sefirot: *Keter*, *Binah*, and *Da'at*, but often called Lubavitchers, after the city where they originally formed), wrote the *Tanya* (meaning "Strength" in Hebrew), one of the great pieces of literature to come out of the Hasidic movement, and the center of Hasidic Kabbalah, where he taught just how "Kabbalism would become Ethos." Rabbi Zalman enunciated two forces in the soul: "godliness" and "humanness." But these are not mutually exclusive.[45] No one is expected to annihilate natural impulses (these are always alive and are not in themselves bad). The gravitation toward "humanness" is called y*etzer hara* (evil inclination), but it could also be translated as "the inclination toward this world." When worldly cares drag the soul toward ego-needs alone, one cannot perform *Tikkun Olam* (the *yetzer hara* is indeed connected with conflicts, rivalries, jealousies, selfishness, dark inclinations, and alienation), and so the Hasid's challenge is to keep himself in a state of *devekut*.

Nothing in the *Tanya* states that the "spiritual" should completely dominate the "physical," in contrast to Paul of Tarsus' expositions of the "flesh" and the "spirit." For Paul nothing was "good" about the "flesh," which he described as a "body of death" (*Romans* 7:24). Hasidism, typically, defines it more positively. Since God created humanity in His own image (*zelem*), "nothing is bad in itself" (Steinsaltz 2014:219). Conflict between good and evil is not part of Hasidism: Conflict resides between higher-consciousness and earthy-consciousness. Still, earthy-consciousness is connected with ethics, wisdom, understanding, and other virtues that can be cultivated in this sphere. The *Tanya* democratized spiritual struggle: Everyone is capable of higher-consciousness. While human perfection is not possible, harmony with *devekuth* is.

Refreshingly, one finds honest expositions of human nature, the acceptance of a struggle toward godliness, where everyone remains fully human on this non-linear trajectory. Without conflict, one could not understand the joys of triumph, the fulfillment of one's noblest intentions. Can one be considered righteous despite moral failings? Yes. Rabbi Zalman uses the expression *beinoni* (Hebrew for "intermediate one"), the person who aspires to a godly life but has not yet reached it: One can still be godly despite imperfections. Indeed, just the intention toward godliness in Hasidism makes one godly (Shapiro 2010:xi-x).

5. Conclusion

Martin Buber's formulation that "Hasidism is Kabbalism turned Ethnos" teaches us the essence of Hasidism, where Kabbalah is the people's poetry (Davies 1987:86). By turning away from Messianic expectations, and zeroing in on psychic redemption, the Hasidim have kept Kabbalah alive in the modern world. Further, the Hasidim, as many other traditional peoples, are pioneers of what New Age philosophies have adopted in Gaia or Mother Earth as a living creature. Everything in the universe is intimately connected. All actions reverberate. Not only is the Earth alive with deep memories and consciousness, so is human civilization, where all—as ripples in a pond—have an effect. Those looking on Hasidism from the outside see a colorful, lively,

and traditional way of life, one that harks back to the eighteen-century: Men dressed in long robes, with ven-
erable beards and sidelocks, their days full of music, laughter, singing, praying, dancing, joyfulness, and yes
even pipe tobacco and whisky and vodka, which cloak an absolute commitment to Universal Redemption.
Hasidism teaches that every moment is sacred. By redeeming themselves they also redeem the whole
world.

Notes

1) Ahad Haam, quoted by Gershom Scholem (1941) *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 326: "To our shame we must
    admit that if today we want to find even a shadow of original Hebrew literature, we must turn to the literature of
    Hasidism; there, rather than in the literature of the Haskalah, one occasionally encounters, in addition to much that is
    purely fanciful, true profundity of thought which bears the mark of the original Jewish genius."

2) Gershom Scholem (1941) *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 340–341: "In the Hasidic movement, Kabbalism
    appears no longer in a theosophical guise. . . . What has really become important is the direction, the mysticism of the
    personal life. Hasidism is practical mysticism at its highest."

3) Arthur Green (1992) *Tormented Master*, p. 184: "The place of Messianism in the early years of the Hasidic move-
    ment has been much debated by modern scholars. While some historians (particularly B.Z. Dinur, and to a lesser ex-
    tent I. Tishby) have claimed that Hasidism began with a clearly messianic goal in mind, and only later, perhaps as a re-
    sult of failure, turned to the goal of personal redemption through *devequt*, others (G. Scholem and R. Schatz) have
    seen the 'neutralization' of messianic tension as a basic characteristic of the movement as a whole. In either case,
    however, the discussion revolves primarily around the period of the Ba'al Shem Tov. Even Dinur, the most extreme
    among those who attribute a messianic character to the movement, agrees that by the end of the BeSHT's lifetime
    (1760) there had been a turn away from messianic urgency. In the writings of the Maggid and his school, which
    Schatz has studied, the emphasis on *devequt* as the central value and a turn away from talk of messianic redemption is
    quite pronounced. Of course there is a continued belief in messiah, as well as an echoing of such pious phrases as
    'may he come speedily in our days.' But *activity* directed toward bringing the final redemption, serious predictions of
    his imminent arrival, or even extensive theoretical preoccupation with the nature of messianic redemption, are ab-
    sent—absent, that is, except in Bratslav."

4) Gershom Scholem, among many others today, has pointed out that Buber's perspective is not based on scholarship
    and criticized him in particular for pasting the label of "existentialism," and its modern definition, onto a community
    that had absolutely no inclination for it (Please see Gershom Scholem's essay "Martin Buber's Interpretation of Ha-
    sidim," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 1971). Existentialism is based on individual freedom and choice in a world
    devoid of a deity (certainly not a Hasidic philosophy), as articulated in the twentieth-century by Jean-Paul Sartre
    (1905–1980) and other writers. Yet, in Hasidism, the goal for the mystical upsurge of the soul was the *absorption into
    the divine* (Jacobs 1987:181), certainly not an existential philosophy. Further, the stories of Hasidism cannot be com-
    pared with the Buddhist koan, since sermons and homilies, given by itinerates, were the most important elements
    (Dan 1983:6).

5) Moshe Idel (1988) *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 259 disagrees with Scholem that Sabbatianism was based on Luri-
    anic Kabbalah or that Sabbatianism spread so quickly because the Jewish population had universally accepted Luria's
    teachings (despite fact that Nathan of Gaza used Lurianic terms to proclaim the Messiah). Idel also has challenged
    Scholem in showing that Hasidism was based both on Lurianism and Sabbatianism. I follow Scholem's positions in
    this article because they have withstood intense scholarly scrutiny over the last five decades. Please see Fine (2003:
    363).

6) Scholars, who draw tough-minded conclusions about what constitutes what, do not consider the *Sefer Yetzirah* a

work of Kabbalah, since no Jewish practices are mentioned. Instead, the *Sefer Yetzirah* explores one idea: Divine speech created life through combinations of sounds in the Hebrew alphabet (the language of the Divine is Hebrew). Literally, God used the word "stone" to create "a stone."

7)   Orthodox Jews claim that all sacred works of Judaism were written in the land of Israel. Indeed, sacred literature can *only* be written in Israel, according to the *Mishnah* (Scholem 1973:464). In the Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh*), only Ezekiel (c. 622–570 BCE) had written his work outside of Israel while a Babylonian exile. The *Talmud* states, however, that Ezekiel received his prophecies in Israel *before* he was taken into Exile (Dan 2007:87).

8)   The Sefirot as articulated in the *Bahir* and the *Zohar* and later by Isaac Luria is not necessarily "mystical." Ideas of divinity's emanation had been part of rationalistic, philosophical systems (especially from Neo-Platonism) over the millennium, first formulated by Plotinus (c. 204/5–270). What made Kabbalah's adoption of the Sefirotic system unique was its vision of divinity's changeableness—this had been part of Judaism from ancient times. The Divine in Kabbalah, unlike the static Neo-Platonic models, responds to prayer, to the poor, and to injustice on Earth. Yet, kabbalists, in following Neo-Platonic precedents, combined the changeable (the Sefirot) with the unchangeable (the *Ein-Sof*).

9)   Maimodines was influenced by Avicenna, (the Latin name for Abū Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn Abd Allāh ibn Al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn Sīnā, c. 980–1037), Averroes, (Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rušd, 1126–1198), and Al-Farabi, (Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Farabi, c. 872–950/51). All were philosophers of Islamic philosophy based on Greek thought, especially Neo-Platonic Aristotelian thought. Maimodines, in his *Shemonah Perakim* (Eight Chapters), applied Aristotle's moral philosophy of the four faculties of the soul with the revelation of the *Torah*. In *Guide to the Perplexed*, revelation and philosophy, based on Aristotle, can arrive at the same conclusion. Yet Maimodines could not accept Aristotle's "objectivity," which denies all revelation, miracles, and indeed no personal God who cares about the world. Please see Richard Rubenstein's *Aristotle's Children*, where, on pp. 6–7, Rubenstein wrote that most in the West would probably be surprised that Muslims and Jews kept learning alive during the Dark Ages (500–1000 CE) and that Christians spent centuries catching up.

10)   Orthodox Jews are very sensitive regarding who wrote the *Zohar*, considered sacred today by all branches of Judaism, and define a person as "orthodox" as one who accepts that Rabbi Yohai wrote the *Zohar*.

11)   The Safed census of 1555 (Silberman 1997:145–146) showed that Iberian immigrants made up about sixty-percent of the population. This had increased from under ten-percent since the previous census of 1525. Made up of about one thousand families at its zenith, and lasting for a little less than a century (until the textile industry moved from Safed to Salonika), this small community committed to kabbalistic studies and practices would revolutionize Kabbalah and Judaism everywhere.

12)   Lawrence Fine (2003), *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship*, pp. 80–81: "Vital provides us with the names of thirty-eight individuals who made up Luria's discipleship . . . The fellowship was divided into four hierarchically ordered groups. The first and most important, was composed of eleven men, listed in this order: Hayyim Vital, Jonathan Sagis, Joseph Arzin, Isaac Kohen, Gedaliah ha-Levi, Samuel Uceda, Judah Mishan, Abraham Gavriel, Shabbatai Menashe, Joseph ibn Tabul, and Elijah Falko (or Falkon). It is largely accepted that within a year Hayyim Vital emerged as the leading student, so that when the Arizal (Luria) died in 1572, at the age of 38, Vital succeeded him. Since the Arizal had left almost none of his teachings in writing, Vital began to write down everything he had learned from his master."

13)   Please see R.J. Zwi Werblowsky (1977) *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic*, pp. 78–79, who quotes Hayyim Vital: "And now let us explain the subject of prophecy and the Holy Spirit. . . . It is *impossible* that anything that comes out of man's mouth should be in vain and there is nothing that is completely ineffective . . . for every word that is uttered creates an angel. . . . Consequently, when a man leads a righteous and pious life, studies the Law, and prays with devotion, then angels and holy spirits are created from the sounds which he utters . . . and these angels are the mystery of *maggidim*, and everything [i.e., the quality and dignity of these *maggidim*] depends on the measure of one's good works. . . . If someone studies the Law with pure intent and without ulterior motives, then, corresponding, the angel

created thereby will be exceedingly bold and exalted and true in all his words; similarly if one reads the Law without making mistakes."

Hayyim Vital captures the essence of Lurianic Kabbalah, in the statement "everything depends on the measure of one's good works." This sums up Lurianism: human freewill and actions control ultimate destiny. Also, please see Harold Bloom (1996), *Omens of Millennium*, pp. 86–87.

14) Morris M. Faierstein, in "Traces of Lurianic Kabbalah: Texts and their Histories," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 103, no. 1 (Winter 2013) 101–106: "Hayyim Vital kept all his manuscripts locked in a chest and allowed only a few scholars to read them from time to time. They memorized as much as possible and they rushed home to write as much as could remember down. Unfortunately when Vital fell sick, someone bribed Vital's brother to get the manuscripts; copyists were hired to record the documents."

15) The next level of the Sefirot are the middle three: *Hesed* (Grace or Loving Kindness/Right Arm), *Din* or *Gevurah* (Severity or Harsh Judgment/Left Arm), and *Te'feret* or *Rahamin* (Mercy, Beauty, or Splendor/Heart). Here resides not only the moral and ethical forces of the universe, but also the imbalances—the otherness—even the flaw in the Divine that brought about the catastrophe. Here in this center redemption must begin, with *Te'feret* as the main mending force. *Te'feret* (male) is also the center of divinity. Kabbalists believe this emanation indeed responds and grows or weakens depending on the good or evil deeds of humanity (Green 2004:45). The left side is female, and *Gevurah* (Judgment) (the angry Sefirah), can increase *Sitra Ahra*. Finally, the lower three: *Netzah* (Eternity or Endurance/Right Leg), *Yesod* or *Zaddiq* (Foundation or Righteous One/Phallus) and *Hod* (Splendor or Majesty/Left Leg). The Sefirot at the center (*Te'feret* and *Yesod*) are identified with male sexuality (Scholem 1969:43), which when united with the feminine, *Shekhinah* (Queen or Divine Presence on Earth), universal salvation immediately takes place. The *Shekhinah*, female receptiveness, and the Sefirot closest to the world of creation, is the most volatile of the Divine forces, greatly affected by what happens on Earth—violence on Earth diminishes the female Divine, while righteous and just behavior animates and gives life to it. Below is a list of the Sefirot (please see Appendix 2):

1) *Keter Elyon* or *Keter* (the "supreme crown")

2) *Hokhmah* ("intelligence")—the Chabad Hasidim often use *Da'at* ("knowledge")

3) *Binah* ("wisdom")

4) *Gedullah* ("greatness") or *Hesed* ("love")

5) *Gevurah* ("power") or *Din* ("judgment" or "rigor")

6) *Te'feret* ("beauty") or *Rahamin* ("mercy")

7) *Netzah* ("victory" or "lasting endurance")

8) *Hod* ("majesty")

9) *Yesod* ("foundation")

10) *Malkhut* ("kingdom") or *Shekhinah* ("presence")

16) The philosophers' God (even Plato's) is like the laws of nature, a non-personal deity who cannot respond to human need or injustice on earth. The Sefirot, from a purely rational perspective, is Judaism's answer to Maimodines and the Greek philosophers, for it included the unchangeableness of divinity. Though the *Ein-Sof* has a purpose for creation, it is the impenetrable mysterious aspects, which no one can ever approach or comprehend.

17) Please see Neil Asher Silberman, *Celestial City,* p. 172: "But Luria rejected these ideas of evil, suffering, and misfortune as merely externals to the essence of God. . . . And while earlier Kabbalists had envisioned the act of creation as one of conscious, creative emanation, Luria suddenly recognized creation as a process of purification—primarily aimed at destroying the principle of evil from within."

18) Lurianic Kabbalah begins with Exile: the Exile of God from Himself (Scholem 1941:261). The Divine had to make the *tehiru* (void) in order for creation to take place. Though Divine constriction is an ancient and accepted concept in Judaism—the *Talmud* speaks of the *shkn*, the origins of the word *Shekhinah* (Dan 2007:44, 45), the constriction of the Divine between the Seraphim over the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, in the First Jerusalem Temple (c.

950 to 587 BCE). The *Tzimtzum* is a more radical notion (Dan 2007:75). Rather than "shrinkage," it is "removal." Yet, without the "void" nothing but God would exist.

19)   When discussing mystical systems such as Lurianic Kabbalah scholars are not dealing with "linear" or "empirical" information, but with symbols. A symbol is a kind of "marker" that defies rational explanation (Dan 1987:162). Indeed, symbols are used precisely because they cannot be explained. Kabbalists have written intensely of these symbols, to each other and not to a general audience, which could not understand them. It remains very difficult to understand these systems today, since they were for meditative purposes (though scholars such has Gershom Scholem have done a superb job, yet Scholem himself said he could only "catalogue" these symbols and show their connections). In mystical communion, these symbols further the journey of mystical life, but for those not attuned with these rhythms, they indeed are beyond comprehension. Luria was dealing with the inner life of the Divine just before and after creation, from the viewpoint of the Divine Himself. For the mystic, then, the Ten Sefirot is the same as the One God; it is looking through the prism of the Divine's perspective (Dan 1987:167). Yes, in mysticism ten is one or visa versa. Please see Joseph Dan's excellent essay "Gershom Scholem's Reconstruction of Early Kabbalah" in *Gershom Scholem* (1987), edited by Harold Bloom.

20)   Gershom Scholem as quoted by Harold Bloom (1987) *Gershom Scholem: Modern Critical Reviews*, p. 211: "The annihilation of every religion and positive system of belief this was the 'true way' the 'believers' were expected to follow. . . . The descent into the abyss requires not only the rejection of all religions and conventions, but also the commission of 'strange acts,' and this in turn demands the voluntary abasement of one's own sense of self, so that libertinism and the achievement of that state of utter shamelessness which leads to a *tikkun* of the soul are one and the same thing."

21)   In 1683 up to three hundred Sabbatian families converted to Islam (Scholem 1973:147) to deliver the death knell to the *qelippoth*. They called themselves the *Ma'aminim* (the Faithful or Believers), but the Turkish authorities named the group the "Dönmeh," meaning "to turn" or "to convert," to distinguish them from the "Dhimmi," People of the Book—Jews and Christians. The Turkish government, at first overjoyed with the mass conversion, gave special grants of land, with at least one Sabbatian synagogue/mosque in Thessaloniki remaining today (Mazower 2004:76). Yet, as the Turkish authorities soon learned, these converts kept themselves separate from Muslims and had no intention of mingling in any way: They married only among themselves, kept in close contact with other Jewish communities, and secretly practiced their version of Sabbatian Kabbalah, but some formed alliances with Sufi groups (Mazower 2004:74).

22)   Jacob ben Judah Leib (1726–1791), who later changed his surname to "Frank," a reformer of Sabbatianism, took it to its upmost extreme, ensuring its eventual destruction. Frank, following the Dönmeh's Baruchya Russo branch, declared himself a third reincarnation of Sabbatai Tzvi (after Baruchya) to puncture the "heel of evil." Affirming classic Sabbatianism that "to violate the *Torah* is to honor it," Frank expanded Sabbatian sexual rituals. In debates the Polish Roman Catholic Church organized, the Frankists affirmed the ancient anti-Semitic "blood libel" against Polish Jewry (Maciejko 2011:107–109).

23)   Gershom Scholem proved conclusively that Joseph Eybeschutz's (1690-1764), Chief Rabbi of Prague, was a secret Sabbatian. Israel's Orthodox community, enraged over this, attacked Scholem personally for it (Dan 1987:307–309). For the Orthodox, this violated a deep belief that those who study the *Talmud* and *Torah* are protected from error.

24)   Indeed, when Gershom Scholem, the great scholar of Kabbalah, began researching Hasidism his first task was to determine if he were dealing with legend or fact. After he discovered enraged discourses against Rabbi Israel by the Mithnagdim, Scholem was satisfied that the Ba'al Shem Tov indeed had lived, since only real people are personally attacked (Schatz 1994:97).

25)   "Pantheism" stresses that everything is God while "panentheistic" says that God is in everything.

26)   Pawel Maciejko (2011) *Mixed Multitude*, p. 2: "Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, known as the BeSh "T (1698-1760) . . . was said to have bemoaned the Lwów mass apostasy or even to have died of pain caused by it. According to the story

recorded in the hagiographic collection *Shivhe ha-BeSh" T*, the Ba'al Shem Tov laid the blame for the eruption of the entire affair on the Jewish establishment; he was 'very angry with the rabbis and said that it was because of them, since they invented lies of their own.' The Ba'al Shem Tov saw Frank and his group as part of the mystical body of Israel and presented their baptism as the amputation of a limb from the Shekhinah, the Divine Presence on earth: 'I heard from the rabbi of our community that concerning those who converted [in Lwów], the Besht said: As long as the member is connected, there is some hope that it will recover, but when the member is cut off, there is no repair possible. Each person of Israel is a member of the *Shekhinah*.'"

27) No one knows for sure how many Frankist converted to Christianity, whether it was three thousand people or three thousand families. Whichever, it was a great trauma that so many abandoned their ancestral faith. Pawel Maciejko (*The Mixed Multitude*) in his chapter "How Rabbis and Priests Created the Frankist Movement," shows that the Frankist movement would not have left Judaism had not extremists from both the Christian and Jewish sides been in such sharp conflict over doctrinal boundaries. The Frankists during the conversion process negotiated to retain their Jewish identity (Scholem 1978:296).

28) The "blood libel" was from Europe's history of anti-Semitism; Frankists affirmed, as they felt more and more embattled, that the *Talmud* required Jews to use Christian blood in Passover matzah (unleavened bread) (Maciejko 2011:103–6; 110–16). Bishop Kajetan Ignacy Sołtyk (1715–1788) made a fresh attempt to revive these ancient accusations (thirteen Jews in Poland were sentenced to death because of him). The Roman Catholic Church, however, after the case went to Rome, refuted these charges after it hired translators, who after reading the Aramaic passages in the *Talmud*, said these were misinterpreted. It was a triumph for rational objectivity for this time.

29) I have given the basis for the conflict between the Hasidim and the Mithnagdim as one of elitism verses egalitarianism, put forward by Allan Nadler. Of course, much more is at work, with such a complicated relationship between the two groups. Adin Steinsaltz, the great Talmudic scholar, sees the conflict against the wider backdrop of history, from two systems of analytic methodology from "inter-testament" times, from about 150 BCE to 100 CE, summed up in debates between its two great representatives: Hillel (110 BCE-10 CE) and Shammai (50 BCE-30 CE). These reflect differences in fundamental perceptions even today, most famously articulated by right and left-brain dichotomies or the intuitive (Hillel) versus the rational (Shammai). The Mithnagdim is largely based on Shammai—but the Hasidim, particularly the Chabad—are oriented toward Hillel. Both interpret *halakhah* (practices) similarly but diverge on the "reasons" for practice (Steinsaltz 214:227). Some differences in their reasoning: 1) who could enter the House of Study? The House of Shammai believed only worthy students could enter, the House of Hillel held that the *Torah* could be taught to anyone, since everyone can repent and become worthy; 2) when can one tell a white lie? Shammai believed it was wrong to lie, but Hillel said that all brides are beautiful on their wedding day and should be told so; 3) when can a man divorce his wife? Shammai believed that it was acceptable only in a serious transgression, but Hillel claimed a man could divorce if his wife was a bad cook; 4) how should one light Hanukkah candles? Shammai held that on the first night eight candles should be lighted, with the number decreasing each successive night; Hillel held that one should start with lighting one candle and increase the number on each night, ending with eight (this is how Jews celebrate Hanukkah today).

30) Simeon D. Baumel (2005) *Sacred Speakers: Language and Culture Among The Haredim in Israel*, p. 3: "Mithnagdic garb differs from that of Hasidism in several aspects. Aside from Rabbis, who wear frock coats, Mithnagdic men dress in dark Western suits, often with ties. Tzitzit (strings from prayer shawls) are worn out of trousers, sometimes in pockets or around belt loops to be less visible. Hats are dark and slightly broad-brimmed. While many Hasidic men (depending on the group) grow beards and peot (sidelocks), Mithnagdic peot are short and many men are clean-shaven. Mithnagdic women dress modestly but fashionably; married women cover their hair with wigs."

31) Hasidic groups tended to take the name of the city where they were founded: Lubavitch (Lubavitchers) (or Chabad), Bratslav, Bobowa (Bobov), Satu Mare (Satmar), as just a few examples, each with its own distinctive clothing, practices, and nuances of beliefs.

32) Yet, each, the Mithnagdim and the Hasidim, has arrived at a *Romeo and Juliet* outcome that parallels something of the House of Montague and the House of Capulet: The absence of conflict (relative peace) is without reconciliation. Yet both have resolutely opposed all secular and religious reform movements. Both opposed *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment), with its goal of equal citizenship in a democratic state, and *Zionism*, the return of Jews to Israel to form a secular state. They have stood against Conservative and Reform Judaism, embraced by the majority of American Jews (about 60%).

33) Arthur Green (2004) *Guide to the Zohar*, p. 44: "The Zohar speaks of a discontent that arises on this 'left' side of God. Gevurah (Judgment) becomes impatient with Hesed (Loving Kindness), unwilling to see judgment set aside in the name of love. Rather than permitting love to flow in measured ways, Gevurah seeks some cosmic moment in which to rule alone, to hold back the flow of love. In this 'moment' divine power turns to rage or fury; out of it all the forces of evil are born, darkness emerging from the light of God, a shadow of the divine universe that continues to exist throughout history, sustained by the evil wrought by humans below."

34) Rivka Schatz (1994) "Gershom Scholem's Interpretation of Hasidism," in *Gershom Scholem: The Man and His Work*, p. 99: "A person may repair the world, and himself be infected with evil . . . and this is what the Ba'al Shem Tov revealed . . . that one must go down to Hell for God's sake, as the Talmud implies in the saying, 'great is the transgression in the name of God'" (BT *Nazir* 23b) (R. Pinchas of Koretz quoted by Rivka Schatz).

35) Please see Harris Lenowitz' translation online of Jacob Frank's *Words of the Lord*: https://archive.org/stream/The CollectionOfTheWordsOfTheLordJacobFrank#page/n0/mode/2up

36) Jacob Frank as quoted by Gershom Scholem (1973) *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, p. 801: "But there were more radical possibilities to be explored [than just taking the cloak of evil]: only the complete transformation of good into evil would exhaust the full potential of the latter and thereby explode it, as it were, from within. This dialectical liquidation of evil requires not only the disguise of good in the form of evil but total identification with it."

37) Arthur Green (1992) *Tormented Master*, p. 184: "Following the Sabbatian and Frankist debacles, the circle around the Ba'al Shem Tov and especially the Maggid chose a path of inner illumination, one which would effect the individual transformation of the worshiper without raising the dangerous Messianism implicit in the striving for *tiqqun*. As preached by the Kabbalist, *tiqqun* was a process of restoring wholeness to a world still suffering the effects of primal cataclysm; this restoration would culminate in the advent of messiah, symbolizing the completion of man's theurgic task. *Devequt*, on the other hand, implied no such restoration, but was merely the ascent of the soul, through devout prayer and contemplation, to a state of union or near-union with the divine."

38) Again, for the Hasidim Lurianic symbols addressed personal interiors: the emptiness, the breaking of the vessels, and the necessity of raising sparks were inner psychic realities. Further, Hasidism completely internalized Luria's scheme of the Messianic age: When the *Shekhinah* (female), the tenth Sefirah, rises in union with *Te'feret* (male), the sixth Sefirah, universal *Tikkun* is accomplished. All Kabbalah since the *Zohar* affirmed this (Geller 2001:65).

39) Gershom Scholem (1941) *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 276-277: "The true worshipper, in short, exercises a tremendous power over the inner worlds, just as he bears a correspondingly great responsibility for fulfillment of his Messianic task. The life of every world and every sphere is in continuous movement; every moment is a new stage in its development. At every moment it strives to find the natural form which will lift it out of confusion. And therefore there is in the last resort a new *Kavvanah* for every new moment. No mystical prayer is completely like any other."

40) Gershom Scholem's (1971) study, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, showed that Messianism had been an underlying concept in Jewish thought over the millennium. This is natural, since Judaism's sacred narrative begins with Abraham, then the Prophet Moses, a man who spoke to God face to face (*Exodus* 33:17-33). Yet, though never a central feature, Messianism erupted powerfully at different points in history, and it transformed the spiritual terrain of Judaism, and even world religious consciousness, from its own internal dynamics. Both Paul of Tarsus (fl. 49-64) and Nathan of Gaza (fl. 1666-1675), to offer only two examples, exposited that people needed to transfer moral responsibility (responsibilities to fulfill the *Law of Moses* and the *Tikkun* of Luria) to Messianic figures, Divine

substitutes. All that was required in terms of effort was "faith:" Paul declared the world was dead to sin through Christ, God incarnate who died and resurrected, freeing everyone from the Law (*Romans* 6:8). Indeed, George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) said that Saint Paul and Karl Marx resembled each other in the way they removed moral responsibility (quoted in Bloom 2005:54). Nathan declared that only Sabbatai Tzvi could perform the ultimate *Mitzvot*, shattering the "heel of evil" and raising the *Shekhinah* to *Te'feret* (Scholem 1973:390), since Sabbatai was the incarnation of *Te'feret*. Both claimed their Messiahs had already inaugurated the messianic age.

41) The choice of leadership was hardly ever an issue (when the *Zaddiq* did not have a son, authority passed to his son-in-law), although it caused conflict in Chabad Hasidism (Steinsaltz 2014:49–65), when its last *Zaddiq*, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneersohn (1902–1994), the son-in-law of the previous *Zaddiq*, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1880–1950), who had two sons-in-law, assumed the mantle in 1951.

42) Jewish mysticism after Luria developed two messianic concepts: if from "House of David," then universal redemption was at hand. If of the "House of Joseph," then he must suffer and is only a forerunner for the House of David's Messiah (Scholem 1973:784).

43) Gershom Scholem (1978) *Kabbalah*, p. 245: "This final redemption, however, cannot be achieved by one single messianic act, but will be affected through a long chain of activities that prepare the way . . . which is the essential task of the Jewish people—and the final result, the state of redemption announced by the appearance of the Messiah, who marks the last stage."

44) Today, two Hasidic groups are without a hereditary *Zaddiq*, the Chabad Hasidism, whose dynastic line in 1994 ended with Rabbi Schneersohn (he had no children and it was prophesied the seventh *Zaddiq* would be the last), and the Bratslav Hasidism, whose founder, Nahman Bratslav (1772–1810), great-grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov, disagreeing with the Maggid's *Zaddiq* formulations of many *Zaddiqs*, claimed there could be only one *Zaddiq* for each generation (Green 1992:182), implying that he himself was the real *Zaddiq*. Many Chabad Hasidim believe that Rabbi Schneersohn's presence remains with the group, still performing redemptive functions (Telushkin 2016:421–425). The Bratslav Hasidim also believe in Rabbi Nahman's redeeming presence and that he will return one day (Green 1992:4).

45) Please see Rami Shapiro (2010) *Tanya: The Masterpiece of Hasidic Wisdom*.

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Appendix 1

TIME LINE: A Few Historical Moments

1000–961 BCE	*The United Monarchy of David (*Israel and Judah), which had been a collection of twelve semiautonomous tribes. King David (c. 1010–970 BCE) himself, the person mentioned most in the Hebrew Bible, was Judean. A semi-mythic figure, scholars have wondered if King David actually existed. Recent archeology, however, has proven conclusively that indeed he lived and was in fact a King over Israel, through ancient stone inscriptions. Archeologists are unable to excavate the areas around the Wall of Tears and Mosque area in Jerusalem, which would no doubt yield a great deal of information of King David's time.
961–922 BCE	*King Solomon,* building on his father's (King David) accomplishments, launched building program after building program, according to Bible (*1 Kings* 1–11; *1 Chronicles* 28–29; *2 Chronicles* 1–9). Solomon is also responsible for building the First Temple (950–587) in Jerusalem. The Hebrew Bible considers him among the wisest who ever lived and attributes the Bible books *Song of Solomon*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Proverbs* to him.
950 BCE	*First Temple Dedicated (1 Kings* 8:22–61)
922 BCE	*The Death of Solomon* and the Kingdom divides into Israel (North) and Judah (South) between his two sons: Jeroboam (d. 910 BCE) King of Israel and Rehoboam (973–915 BCE) King of Judah.
922–900 BCE	*Beginning of the Hebrew Bible* (Tanakh), with the writer "J," who always identifies God as "Yahweh." In the eighteenth century, German scholars were the first to begin separating the various writers of the Hebrew Bible. In German "Yahweh" begins with a "J" sound, pronounced something like "Jehovah" in English. J wrote most of *Genesis*, portions of *Exodus* and *Numbers*, and a fragment of *Deuteronomy*, composing the first sacred narrative for the Hebrew people, from the creation of Adam and Eve to the death of Moses. The writer's emphasis was on Judah, the small kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital, after Judah divided from Israel in the north in about 922 BCE.
722–721 BCE	*Fall of the Northern Kingdom* of Israel (Samaria) to Assyria, with the Northern Kingdom ceasing to exist as a political entity and scattering refugees throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, who became known as the Ten Lost Tribes (Reuben, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh).
587–538 BCE	*Fall of Southern Kingdom* of Judah begins the Babylonian Exile, with about fifteen hundred of the Judean elite taken to Babylon (the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Levi, with perhaps a part of Simeon).
538 BCE	*Return from Babylonian Exile* to Jerusalem from a decree by Cyrus, King of Persia (d. 530 BCE), who after conquering Babylon, allowed the Jews to return to their homeland to rebuild Solomon's Temple and a wall around Jerusalem. 42,360 Jews indeed returned from Exile (*Ezra* 2:65).
520–516 BCE	*Rebuilding of Temple in Jerusalem* after the return of the Judean exiles: *Ezra* 6 speaks of the decree by King Darius (550–486 BCE) to rebuild the Temple on its original site.
516 BCE	*Dedication of Second Temple,* which the book of *Erza* (chapter 6) describes taking place on Passover 516 BCE.
c. 200 BCE	*The Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible) is complete with the addition of the book of *Daniel*.
c. 66–70 CE	*The First Roman Jewish War,* with the second Temple destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. Groups, fearing Jewish culture would be lost forever, formed to preserve what they called the "Oral Tradition," and so the *Mishnah* began, completed by 220 CE.
c. 132–136	*Bar Kokhba Revolt* (*Bar Kokhba* in Hebrew is "Son of Star") called by historians the *Second Roman*

Jewish War, began when the Romans started construction of a new city over the ruins of Jerusalem, destroyed by Titus of Rome in 70 CE. The outraged Jewish population, led by Simon Bar Kokhba (d. 135), retook and ruled Jerusalem for three years. The Romans killed over 580,000 Jews, with the Emperor Hadrian (76–138 CE) finally beginning reconstruction of the city and naming it Aelia Capitolina, after his family and the god Jupiter.

c. 2nd Century CE

The Sefer Yetzirah (Book of Formation), one of the most ancient mystical texts (outside the Bible), scholars have called this work "gnostic-leaning" because of its focus on inner enlightenment. The fundamental idea in this short work is that the Words of God, with certain combinations, create life. Parts of it, according to some analyses, are in the same style as the *Mishnah*, and so some date it to the second-century CE, though most scholars seem to date it to the third or fourth centuries. It is also the first known work to mention the Sefirot: "Ten Sefirot of nothingness, then and not nine, ten and not eleven."

c. 220 CE

The Mishnah (*Repetition* in Hebrew) is the most ancient work of Jewish *halakhah* (or practices). Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi (born 135 CE), bringing together oral traditions that were passed down from 536 BCE to 70 CE, shaped the *Mishnah* into its present form, which was completed by 220 CE. It took about one hundred-thirty years to realize, with a rabbinic community in Palestine collecting all the oral teachings, a monumental task. Some categories the *Mishnah* discusses: *Zeraim* (seeds), *Moed* (festival), *Nashim* (women), *Nezikin* (Damages), *Kodashim* (holy things), and *Tehorot* (purities).

c. 500 CE

The Talmud (Instruction/Learning) is an exposition on the *Mishnah*. There are two *Talmuds*, the Jerusalem (c. 350–400 CE) and the Babylonian (c. 500 CE). The Babylonian *Talmud* is used almost exclusively for Jewish law and practice today, with some cross-referencing with the Jerusalem *Talmud*. When the two disagree, the Babylonian *Talmud* has precedence. The first part is made up of the *Mishnah* (c. 220 CE). The second part, the *Gemara* ("To Study" in Aramaic), is a commentary on the *Mishnah*. Written in Hebrew and Aramaic, the Babylonian *Talmud* has 63 tracts and stretches for over 6,200 pages.

(c. 100 BCE-1000 CE)

Merkavah Mysticism consists of meditations and teachings based on the Merkavah, translated as "chariot" (a thing to ride in, a cart) from Ezekiel's vision of God, streaking across the sky above the Chebar canal in Babylon (where Ezekiel lived as an exile, c. 593–571 BCE). Ezekiel (*Ezekiel* 1) uses the word *hayyot*, (living creatures) to describe the four creatures in his vision, each with four wings and four faces (a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle) sixteen faces altogether, with one having the "likeness of man" guiding it. Here may be Kabbalah's origins, according to some dating back to the ninth-century BCE. *Hekhalot* ("palaces") mysticism is also part of *Merkavah* mysticism, with mystics entering other realms, the four worlds, through meditative practices for spiritual ascents.

1138–1204

Maimodines (Moshe ben Maimon) remains one of the great authorities in the Jewish world from his two most famous works: *Mishneh Torah* (1180) subtitled *Sefer Yad ha-Hazaka* ("the Book of the Strong Hand") and the *Guide to the Perplexed* (1204). Maimodines reinterpreted the *Torah* (the Books of Moses) to modernize Judaism, basing this approach on Aristotle's philosophy.

c. 1180

The Sefer ha-Bahir (The Book of Brightness/Illumination) is attributed to Rabbi Nehunya ben ha-Kanah, a first/second century "Tanna" (or contributor to the *Mishnah*). Scholars differ about when it was written: in second-century Palestine, tenth-century Babylon, or twelfth-century Provence? A probable dating is 1180, the first known publication in Provence, France. The *Bahir*, which crystalized Kabbalah's themes and exerted a great influence on the writer of the *Zohar*, may have come from a collection of earlier materials, even oral traditions. Studies show that *Merkavah* mysticism, very ancient, with Rhineland mysticism of the tenth-century, could be sources.
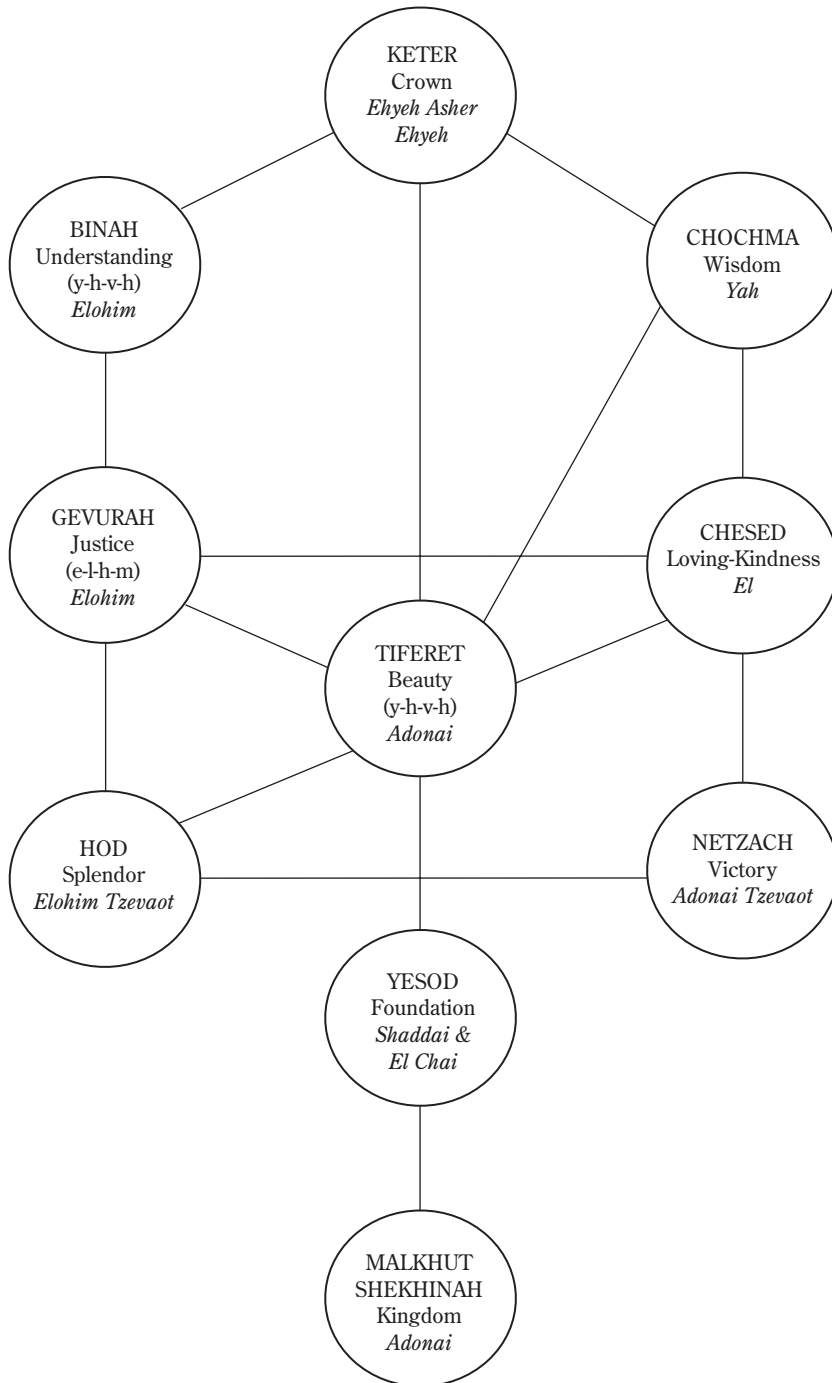
c. 1250–1305	*Moses de Leon* was a member of kabbalistic circles around Castile and is associated with another great kabbalistic writer, Joseph Gikatilla (1248–1305), who was a student of Abraham Abulafia (c. 1240–1291), the virtual founder of meditative Kabbalah. De Leon had written other works in Hebrew: *Sefer ha-Rimon* (1287), *Ha-Nefesh ha-Hakhamah* (1290), and *Shekel ha-Kodesh* (1292). Though these works show de Leon's unmistakable style, ideas, and phraseology, none comes close to the shimmering brilliance of the *Zohar*. Traditional Jews believe Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai (c. 100–160), a Tanna (contributor to the *Mishnah*), wrote the *Zohar* (or that de Leon was a channel or had complied the material).
c. 1280	*The Sefer ha-Zohar* (Book of Splendor or Radiance) is one of the great triumphs of mystical literature. According to Gershom Scholem (1897–1982), Moses de Leon (c. 1250–1305), a member of a kabbalistic community in Castile, Spain, wrote the *Zohar*. A literary and mystical genius, Moses de Leon wrote in a simple Aramaic (a language he was not completely fluent in and in fact re-invented for his purposes). Today the *Zohar* is, with the *Talmud* and *Tanakh*, a sacred writing of modern Judaism.
1492	*Alhambra Decree* on March 31, 1492 the monarchs Isabella I of Castile (1451–1504) and Ferdinand II of Aragon (1452–1516) announced "the Edict of Expulsions" for all of Jewish descent—even many who had converted to Christianity (Mazover 2004:67)—to leave all their territories by July 31st of the same year. Scholars disagree on how many were expelled: from one hundred thirty thousand to seven hundred thousand (Silberman 1997:109–110).
1534–72	*Isaac Luria* (Isaac ben Solomon Luria Ashkenazi), known today as *ha-Ari* or "The Lion," is more of a messianic figure than a sage. Luria completely transformed the *Zohar*'s teachings by expounding on the moment of creation, when God created "vessels" to channel the Divine light through the Sefirot. "Raising the Sparks," another Lurianic originality, is the purpose of *Olam Tikkun*, the restoration of both the universe and the Divine. A leader of a great kabbalistic community in Safed, Israel, Luria died at age 38. While Luria himself wrote very little, students recorded his teachings, mainly Rabbi Hayim Vital (1543–1620).
1626–1676	*Sabbatai Tzvi* was a native of Smyrna (Izmir, Turkey) and a Sephardic rabbi. A wanderer among the synagogues of the Eastern Mediterranean since early adulthood, Sabbatai became an unlikely Messiah. Sabbatai had performed "strange acts," practices that seemed to be ritual violations of Judaism's sacred traditions. These strange acts came to characterize "Sabbatianism," which exists in pockets even today (especially in parts of Greece and Turkey, from the Dönmeh). Their purpose was to peel away the age that had already passed, to allow the messianic age to flow in. Many have speculated that Sabbatai suffered from bi-polar disorder.
1643–1680	*Nathan of Gaza* (Abraham Nathan ben Elisha Hayyim Ashkenazi), also known as "Ghazzati" (an acronym of his name) and "the Holy Lamp" (*Buzina Kaddisha*), named by admirers, created through an overpowering literature using Lurianic formulations the movement known today as Sabbatianism. As a kind of Elijah, he announced the Messiah's appearance (Sabbatai Tzvi) and offered convincing reasons why this was so. Nathan's father, a respected scholar, had moved from Germany or Poland earlier in the seventeenth-century to Jerusalem where Nathan was born. Nathan was an ardent student and studied under one of the world's most respected scholars of the *Talmud*, Jacob Hagiz (1620–1674). Without Nathan of Gaza, Sabbatianism would not have existed.
c. 1698–1760	*Israel ben Eleazar* called the "Baal Shem Tov," (*Master of the Good Name*) or simply "Besht," is an important messianic figure (meaning here the bearer of a new revelation). This movement continues as Hasidic Judaism. Baal Shem Tov gave practical applications to Luria's teaching of "Raising the Sparks," which can be accomplished in everyday life, even in such mundane activities as eat-

ing. All Ashkenazim (Jews of Europe) felt his impact. Rabbi Israel's influence continues to grow as the Hasidic movement continues to flourish.

1726–1791   *Jacob ben Judah Leib* (1726–1791), who later changed his surname to "Frank," led a revival movement within Sabbatianism. Frank is perhaps the most vilified person in Jewish history, with even the fair-minded and great scholar of Kabbalah, Gershom Scholem, calling him "the most hideous and uncanny figure in the whole history of Jewish Messianism . . . [whose] words exercise a considerable though sinister fascination" (Scholem 1941:308). Frank followed the Dönmeh's Baruchya Russo branch and declared himself a third reincarnation of Sabbatai Tzvi (after Baruchya), the incarnation to finish the work that Sabbatai had begun. Frankism spread widely in his home area near Podolia (today's Central and South-Western Ukraine). Frankists influenced some of the great secularizing and reform movements in Europe.

c. 1736   *Israel ben Eleazar* begins preaching in what is today Western Ukraine and became wildly popular.

1704–1772   *Dov Baer,* also known as the Maggid of Mezheritch, takes the reigns of the movement after the passing of the Besht, headquartered in Mezheritch. This is the heroic age in Hasidic history. Rabbi Baer's followers branched out to other cities: Rabbi Shneur Zalman (1747–1812) to Liadi, founding the Chabad Hasidim, Rabbi Menachem Mendel (1730–1788) to Vitebsk, Rabbi Elimelech (1717–1786) to Lizensk, Rabbi Levi-Yitzhak (1740–1809) to Berditchev, Rabbi Nahum (1730–1798) to Chernobyl, Rabbi Brauch (1757–1810) to Medzibozh, to name just a few. The new Hasidic courts took root and the theories of the *Zaddiq* were put into practice.

1772   *Rabbi Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna* (1720–1797), excommunicated (*hērem*) the Hasidim movement, banishing them from the Jewish community. The Gaon remains a famous scholar in Judaism today. Others of the Mithnagdim also begin to fiercely attack the new Hasidic movement.

1780   *The First Hasidic Literature Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, written by Rabbi Ya'akov Yosef of Polonnoye (d. 1782), appeared. It is a collection of the Besht's sayings and homilies.

1780–1815   *Sermons of Itinerates* began to be copied down and distributed. Other Hasidic works also appeared: *Maggid Devarav Le'Ya'akov* by Rabbi Dov Baer, *Noam Elimelech* by Rabbi Elimelech of Lyzhansk, and *Tanya* (Strength) by Rabbi Shneur Zalman.

1815   *Nahman of Bratslav* (1772–1810), great-grandson of the Besht, published *Shivhel Ha-Besht* and *Stories*, classics not only in Hasidic but also in world literature. The Bratslav Hasidic movement is tied today to the New Age movement. Its remarkable openness means that secular Jews, regardless of their background, are accepted. Further, Bratslav Hasidism is welcoming to non-Jewish converts (most Hasidic groups tend to be ambivalent of converts to Judaism). This movement has as its members a surprising number of artists.

1863   *Additional Collections* of Hasidic stories were published, showing the "sermon" now had become the main vehicle for defining Hasidic belief and practice. These collections also educated children of the Hasidim.

Appendix 2

Ein Sof
(Beyond Infinity)

KETER
Crown
Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh

BINAH
Understanding
(y-h-v-h)
Elohim

CHOCHMA
Wisdom
Yah

GEVURAH
Justice
(e-l-h-m)
Elohim

CHESED
Loving-Kindness
El

TIFERET
Beauty
(y-h-v-h)
Adonai

HOD
Splendor
Elohim Tzevaot

NETZACH
Victory
Adonai Tzevaot

YESOD
Foundation
Shaddai & El Chai

MALKHUT
SHEKHINAH
Kingdom
Adonai

The Tree of Life The Sefirot (emanations) From *Estatic Kabbalah, p. 16* by Rabbi David E. Cooper