1. Introduction

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

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

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1 A Hebrew version of the present study appeared in Zot vol. LIX (1934) pp. 31-44.

2 For biographical details of R. Nathan Adler's life and his family, see J.B. Amschul, WIzjar Rabbi
Nathan, Hanuka 5708 (Hemachal: Amschul, Introduction) A.V. (Hebren-Schwarz, Dorech
la-ha-neker ve-sofer emes), Sura-Meot 1929 (Hereferl: Dorech ha-neker), p. 4; Mevderel b.
Nathan Adler, Minhat ha-nakshat'ar ve-emunot Adler, London 1954 (Hereferl: Adler, Mevderel), P.
Ansbach, Die Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden seit der Französischen Revolution, Darmstadt

3 A. Waldstein, Shem ha-musarim ha-lishmah, Warsaw 1884, foil. 61a-b, M. Horovitz, Rabban-
Frankfurter, Jerusalem 1972 (Hereferl: Horovitz, (transl. by Y. Amit)), Sinai Frankfurter Rabbim,
1909, pp. 54 ff. The Frankfurt community memoirs, now in the Jewish National and Universi-
ty Library, Jerusalem, contain the following entry about Adler: "May God remember the soul of
the great eagle (Adler in German = eagle), one of the giant, sharp-witted and learned, modest
and sincere, of great renown... that man whom we have known. A mentor for all who sailed
the sea of Talmud and could decide among authorities on the Law, early and late and es-
tonomy, nothing of cobweb he left, no leaf untorn, small as large, his fame spread equally
in science and learning... His behavior was marked with pity and asceticism, lending an ex-
ocatic and pure life, who drives into the eternal tradition to reach consciousness in accordance
with the Law. All his actions were holy, holy nuns and unblemished breasts. [From maturity,
never passed midnight in sleep and his conduct was never extravagance, for he occupied himself
to the Torah, studied and observed it. It was said of him that he was humble and self-effacing.
His house was ever open to whosoever wished to enter the study house, and he raised
2. R. Nathan Adler and his Circle – Hostile and Sympathetic Evidence

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

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4 See Shlomo Adar, pp. 4-5; Hummels, pp. 131, 234-236, CE, Adar, Milenjot, pp. 8-9; Ami-

5 For Adler's activity of kabbalah see Geller, pp. 16-17, 20; Hamburger, p. 153; Dallachshohn, p. 8. It should be noted that, at the very time of R. Nathan's activities, Protestant Frankfurt experi-
enced a vigorous awakening of religious sentiments. The pietistic movement then active in the Lutheran Church was founded in Frankfurt toward the end of the 17th century and in the early years of the 18th century, by a theologically minded Jakob Philipp Werner (1633-1705). Spener, influenced by the pietistic mystic Jakob Becker (1675-1689) and the mystical poet Augustin Sinram (1654-1677), appealed for repentance, devotion, spiritual renewal and religious asceticism. Pa-

treatment of mental health, and the underground movement in the 18th century and the early years of the 18th century.
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Nathan adopted various customs of piety and abstinence; he was moreover known as a stern and visionary, an exile at practical kabalah. At the beginning of the 1770s he established a study group in his home, gathering around him a small circle of associates impressed by his utopian personality, hisikudic tastes, profundity in

same place as Adler, perhaps the climate of religious piety had more, albeit indirect influence on similar currents in the Hasidic community.

See Horovitz, p. 154; Dersch ha-nahar, p. 15; and cf. Elhanan Soffer's description of his master's familiarity with the so-called "holy names." Presently I shall ask you that the holy names are not asking, as I have seen with my own eyes from the mystical saint, my master, the righteous priest, of mystical memory," Beam Syr. Respon., Oeq, horayim, no. 9/7. R. Nathan cursed himself and practical kabalah under R. Avraham Deren Frankfurtter (1700-1784), son of Zvi Hirsch of Magenheim, Lithuania, author of the work Arukh Avari, whom he had previously filled ribaldic prophecies in various communities of Lithuania, Galicia and the Lithuan distrikt, and who was known as a local prophet, "master of Initiation, dealer in charlots and amulets and meditations." Visits officiated in Frankfurt from 1739 to 1759; see Horovitz, pp. 122-123, 225. For his relation with Nathan Adler see Dersch ha-nahar, p. 6. His biographer, A.E. Michaelson, chief of the Hasidic, Eleazar Karasov, tells a story that when Avraham was at Lublin, his reputation grew open and thousands of Jews used to come to him to hear his secrets and their bodies. There he wrote his book, Pi ha-yefet ush, ascet amulets and amulets; see ibid., fol. 1V, and of Osher Avraham, pp. 74-75, Horovitz, Rohde, Frankfurt, p. 397-398, queries the entry dedicated to R. Avraham in the Frankfurt Merkabah, which reads, inter alia, "The great, pure and humble sage, Rabbi Meir of the Diaspora, on let her and Principal of the heresy of our community,..." The Torah was in his mouth, a mouth that continued from the secure and the mutable, and he was proficient also in Torah and amulets, having never moved, with God's help, many stones, five of charge. The Lord called him a holy man, upright of deed, wise there ever since a man! Taking sanction to afusah, he sanctified himself [by outwardly evoking] events permitted to him, distancing himself [from the] in an extent that made his pure... He was proficient in all six divisions of the Mishnah, his mouth never sealed from study, he learned and devoured into nobly knowledge. No reader is like him, that can tell good laws and upright judgments." Cf. ibid., Appendix B, "Abstractions from the Old Cemetery," p. 263, where, too, we read that he "he would. With God's help, many sorts of charge with his miracles in a place un- known by any human eye." It is further stated in Osher Avraham that he was invested in being in command of the holy spirit and when in Poland was known to have experienced a revelation of the Prophet Elijah. He was 8 years of God famous in his generation, and we know him all over the world as a sage and sort and holy kabalah in things esoteric and ecstatic, no exceedingly plaque, ...", ibid., p. 8. Many of the tales told in the book indicate that he was known to possess exceptional spiritual power, supernatural knowledge and Chasidism. He was known to have experienced different revelations and he would be able to work miracles so on. For more about him see Horovitz, pp. 123-129, 213. Many of the traditions about R. Avraham Avinu are similar to tales told of his contemporary Y. Yitzhak, known as Yitzhak ha-Nesi. Nathan Adler's biographers completely ignored the influence of Avraham Avinu on the shaping of the young man's outlook, disregarding certain things of the mystical and intellectual tastes of Adler's behavior and that of Avraham, who was active, before arriving in Frankfurt, in the very region where Hasidism was customarily, emerging, to which the novelist in the midst of the 19th century, R. Zvi Hirsch of Magenheim, Lithuania, Rzeszów, Kazimierz and Lublin. See Osher Avraham, p. 31. On his book Pi ha-yefet ush see ibid., pp. 50-54. His biographer R. Joseph Löwenstein of Senzig, 1610, the author of Osher Avraham the manuscript of Pi ha-yefet ush, which he has been in possession for further information see M. Wiesenz, Haskill ha-Meikukah, Kessendorf 1910 2nd ed. (hereafter Wiesenz), I, pp. 153-159.
matters both ecstatic and esoteric, religious originality and his deviation from ac-
cepted practices.

R. Nathans followers regarded him as a man of God and miracle-worker. Under his
influence, they studied kabalah, demanded extreme standards of abstention and
self-purification, and ascribed pristine importance to dreams and visions. They con-
ducted separate prayer services according to a special rite, based on the prayer-book
of R. Vilna Gaon (the Ari), in general, they maintained criteria of religious observ-
ance substantially stricter than those that had been accepted in the Frankfort com-
munity for many generations.

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

7 See Derorzitv, pp. 154-156, and cf. Auerbach, Introduction: "As a mystic, who saw him have
attained and declared that he is a holy man of God, the Spirit of the Lord spoke through him and
his word was on his tongue." R. Nathans disciples included the following:

1. R. Moshe Sofer, later renowned as HaAram Sofer, who called Adler "My master, the most le-
nted and pious among the practitioners," and frequently refers to him in his works. For the unique
relationship between Adler and his master see Jacob Katz, "Adler's Kabbalistic circle" (Outline of a
Biography of Reb Abram Sofer").


The paucity of sources available is itself one of the primary reasons for this unique symposium, which
appeared in Jerusalem in 1970. The selection of sources included in this symposium was
the result of a careful study of the literature on the subject.

8 See Derorzitv, pp. 153-154, 210; Dobrow, p. 453.
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ments that have a direct or indirect bearing on the events, provide us, I believe, with some clues to the significance of this Pietist phenomenon and enable us to trace its definitive link to the personal history of R. Nathan Adler.

Sons of the hostile sources were collected in a work entitled Ma'asse ha'aro'im, published anonymously in 1796. The title page is outspoken, to say the least:

_Ma'asse ha'aro'im_ ["An Act of Deception"], to warn against a conspiracy of hypocrites, wicked men, deceivers, who presume to make themselves holy and pure with strange deeds and inveigle their neighbors to seduce them with fine words, as it is written in the book.

The items collected in _Ma'asse ha'aro'im_ represent the current mood of the Frankfurt community vis-à-vis the dispute and R. Nathan Adler’s person — as seen and judged by his adversaries. Included, _inaera alia_, are the proclamations and decrees of excommunication issued against him by the community. The work paints a negative picture of the intent and actions of Adler's group, referring specifically and contentious to the circle’s divergence from customary practice and the circumstances that prompted the community to take such extraordinary measures.7 The primary in-
pertance of Ma'ase ta'n'im and the reliability of its evidence as to the attitude of Adler's opponents in Frankfurt lie in the date of its publication — not long after the events themselves, when those involved could still read the book, protest and re-
spose. Further prognostic evidence, including an indirect testimony from the
1770s, prior to the imposition of the first excommunication decree, and a second, 
direct, item dating to the 1780s, may be found in two letters, written in 1773 and
1784, to be discussed below.

The favorable reports, sympathetic to Adler and his followers, were written at a
slightly later date; they may be found in the works of his disciples, first and fore-
most his most distinguished pupil, R. Moshe Sofer of Frankfurt (1762-1840), later
known as Nathan Sofer, rabbi of Pressburg. In a eulogy of his master delivered in
1801, shortly after Adler's death, he describes the latter's personality as seen by his
followers and associates; elsewhere in his written works, he not infrequently cites R.
Nathan's teachings and customs. 12 Other contemporary accounts may be found in the
Frankfurt community Memorabah and in the community panyak (record book).
An enthusiastic evaluation, written from the point of view of a later generation, may be

Library, MS 8 1465, p. 169, we find the following entry under his name: "May God remember the
and of the famous piano man, holy and pure... Our Master R. Levi ben Gimpel Emmetrich... For
since his youth he trudged all over... to study under great scholars... All his deeds were for the sa-
ke of heaven and most of his days were occupied with Torah and good deeds... He afflicted him-
self and fasted 35 and one half years from one Sabbath to the next... pure and holy, ever wander-
ing from place to place... to be a model... etc." After Adler's death in 1800, most members of his
circle left Frankfurt, but Emmetrich continued to observe his master's prayer ritual in a house re-
ferred to as sau Im. In the Frankfurter Judenkaer, cf. Hamburg, cited at the end of this note.
Many of Adler's disciples filled rabbinical positions in southern Germany and Bavaria, still look-
ing to him for their inspiration as is evident from their letters and reports of their disciples. Cf.
now R. Harwitz, introduction to her edition of a pamphlet by R. Moshe Pinaq Eltahan (Hills
Wochblatt, Dvar-ashrai in-Yevel) (Queveiav, maqor ve-nagardot 741), Jerusalem 1991. Ad-
ler's followers in Frankfurt were based in the Niederdeutschen Synagogue. That this is the case
can be seen from a catalogue reference to a pamphlet and an article indirectly referring to the same
pamphlet, though not explicitly mentioning it: Is is indexed to Dr. D. Asael for drawing my at-
ention to this source. In a Catalogue entitled Anawic in Jerusalem, relating to an exhibition and
public auction of ancient Hebrew books, Jerusalem 1993, item 294 is pp. 324-326. And one below
for the text as recorded in the community panyak. In the Frankfurt community, where the os he
din and the members of the bo din as a whole were not entitled to pronounce a ban without the
permission of the gaon, little use was made of bans and excommunication; the preferred punitive
measure was expulsion from the community, see Horavia, p. 159.

12 Sofer's eulogy of Adler, cited in: Sofer haYatan Sofer, Daromim no-Rehama Moshe Sofer, Jerusa-
lems 1974, II, pp. 371-372, is a typical of Adler's followers' attitude to him: "Rabbi reasoning for the
demise of our master, the high priest, most learned... Nathan Adler... Crown of my head, my most
distinguished rabbi, learned, pious, renowned, the great Eagle, why did I say more in praise of
him, after all, he is famous throughout the land... It behooves me to weep and mourn. I saw him
sitting and preaching, like Moses, from God's own mouth. I followed him for one hundred miles
and left my mother's house, my parents' room, as everyone knows." The eulogy also hardly crit-
icizes the Frankfurters for their treatment of Adler, cf. ibid. The editor, Joseph Nathali Stern, ap-
plied to the eulogy a detailed list of references to R. Nathan Adler in Nathan Sofer's sermons.
Adler's novellae were published only quite recently: Moshe Sofer, Bilbatdei haYatan Sofer al Mo-
rebah ganim, Bilbatdei no-Rehama no-Rehama haYatan Adler, Morde Kirz, NY, 1961."
3. Hasidim in the East and Pietists in Frankfurt

S. Dubnow, a prominent historian of Hasidism, doubted the existence of a direct link between the formation of Adler's circle and the emergence of Hasidism, and most other scholars who have considered the question agree.12 Some reconsideration of this position is now required, as the scholarly world has recently revised its view of the spiritual nature of early Hasidism and embarked on a new assessment of its religious and social features. The new approach, rejecting the earlier, economically and socially oriented theories, with their emphasis on historical crisis situations, studies the beginnings of Hasidism in the context of the religious awakening then taking place in the world of the kabbalistically oriented pietistic groups active in eighteenth-century Europe. We are therefore justified in attempting a reassessment of the link between the different manifestations of Hasidic pietism appearing at one and the same time in Eastern and Central Europe.13

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

13 See Dubnow, p. 441; Zehel, p. 632; and cf. Wilensky, I, pp. 25, 324; Katz, Outline, p. 139.

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

It follows from both hostile and sympathetic evidence that R. Nathan Adler’s divergencies from accepted norms, which he attributed to kabbalistic tradition and promoted by virtue of his charisma, were largely similar in spiritual motive and social significance to the devotions of the disciples of the Baal Shem and the Maggid of Mezhirech from the traditional norms and frameworks of their communities. Moreover, in both cases the establishment leadership was motivated by an apprehension of the unlimited spiritual authority claimed by those new bearers of the holy spirit, by opposition to changes in accepted practice justified by that authority, and by the dangers perceived in the spiritual slothness and ritual innovation of the pietists, which violated the uniform religious practice and social cohesiveness of the community. The various manifestations of piety, largely inspired by kabbalistic ethos and mystical tradition, such as adoption of the rite of R. Yisrael Lipa and kabbalistic customs, aroused fear and opposition. It was felt, on the one hand, that the authority of the community and the accepted order were threatened, on the other, the lessons of the Shabbatean apocalyptic had not been forgotten, and the pietist groups were associated—at first, as we shall see, in the eyes of the opposition—with the Shabbatean-Franklin movement.

4. The Polemical Arguments

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

1. They introduced substantial changes in both the text and the conduct of prayers, accordingly holding prayer services apart from the rest of the community.
Most frequently, they were accused of using the Sephardic prayer rite, known as Siddur Ha-tevi (R. Yitzhak Lorca’s prayer-book), using the Sephardic pronunciation in prayer, praying in a loud voice in an excessively ecstatic manner, and reciting the long version of the benediction for peace (Sim Shalom) in the afternoon and evening services.2

2. Departures from conventional behavior: self-abnegation and fasting to excess, abstinence and various stringent practices, combined with excessively rigorous observance of the laws of purity and ritual slaughter; as a result, they refrained from eating or drinking with outsiders for fear of pešulja (forbidden foods). This was tantamount to illegitimation of the community at large, who maintained the conventional observances and were therefore shunned for fear of impurity.3

3. Variations of standard religious practice and introduction of innovative rituals, for example: a new version of the circumcision ceremony; wearing two pairs of phylacteries simultaneously; donning a larger prayer-shawl than usual; tying of ritual fringes in women’s clothing; recitation of the priestly blessing daily. These variations, which produced special patterns of religious observance, also encouraged separation.4

Prayer in Adler’s circle are described as follows in Me’ase a’aitim: “They have no heart, for they mock their brethren the House of Israel for reciting Shalom re [the short version of the last benediction in the "Eighteen Benedictions"] in their evening prayers, while they [Adler’s followers] do otherwise, for they recite Sim Shalom in evening and afternoon prayers as well, and raise their voices, narrating as if the spirit of the Lord had alighted upon them” (Ibid., p. 7). See Ho-rettina, p. 154; and of Katz, Outline, p. 338. See also Hamburger, p. 241; Avraham Sina’i: Women Molkhecheim, Shahar ha-cem, Pirenne 1965, p. 92, p. 97; Cheb, Bet ha-meshulash, p. 2. See below, sect. 5.6.8, for the significance of this change.

For they form separate sects. They are painted with the branch of pomegranates, and indeed that is the name by which they are known (Safed), in order to disgrace the evil of their ways. They are fools and spurn the discipline of their fathers, despising clear things, unless, for they have devised for themselves different laws concerning the uncleanliness of women after birth and the uncleanliness of priests, intending to seduce against the rabbits” (Me’ase a’aitim, pp. 4-6). “For they have slandered their brethren Israel and declare our bread and our wines until for consumption” (Ibid., pp. 9-10). Cf. Hamburger, p. 241; Greenwald, Introduction, p. 8; see Derenho ha-recher, p. 25. And cf. n. 16 below.

“For they sought a false accusation, libelling the commandment of circumcision as we practice it... And they invented for themselves a new circumcision, causing infants grief with terrible pain” (Me’ase a’aitim, p. 10). “For they lay on their heads two attached phylacteries and pretend to be righteous men, claiming ten petitions in the Torah, boasting about the city, for they are their actions, to be recognized by all those who see them, for they call themselves Safedim” (Ibid., p. 6). “...They are simpletons, for the heart has been deceived in the matter of their wives, who make fringe on the corners of their garments” (Ibid., p. 9). For the innovative circumcision ceremony of Adler’s circle cf. Hamburger, p. 239 n. 5. The daily recitation of the Priestly blessing was of particular significance; see Derenho ha-recher, p. 34 and comments in Marie kobon, loc. cit.; 6, p. 154. And cf. Tose ha-meshulash, p. 20. “The go’en R. Nispa’im Adler was a priest of proven image, and he would ascend the altar [i.e., deliver the priestly blessing] every day in his study house. He used to say of himself that if the Temple were to be built, speedily in our days, his soul greatly desired to perform the divine service in the Holy of Holies — no familiar was he in the laws of the divine service.” For the kabalistic interpretation of the priestly blessing see Sefer ha-shoah, ed. R. Margoliot, Jerusalem 1951, §§ 92, 124; S. Eshel, III, Esh. 143-147. For the special
4. Modifications of the religious calendar: R. Nathan's circle insisted on their own system for determination of the times at which festivals began and demanded freedom of decision in other calendrical matters – all measures that were seen as violating communal unity.  

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

The main points of these accusations might be summarized as follows: introduction of new priorities; accent on ecstatic and ecstatic norms beyond accepted standards; exclusive recognition of charismatic leadership, religion: awakening and spiritual freedom. Very similar wording, as both the offending elevations and the polemical description of idiosyncratic positions, may be found in the polemical works and writings of excommunication aimed at the Hasidim in Eastern Europe. We shall

significance of the yearly meeting in eighteenth-century mystical thought and the frequency of its recitation of, the recital of the Kabbalat Shabbat, which represents the Vilna gaon's view in their morning daily, in the Aristophanic site which permitted it only as a festival, as a token of remembrance of the Temple service. 'I call upon heaven and earth as witnesses, that I set times times heard the repentant righteous person... Israel [i.e. Shalom], author of the book For his children... who heard the voice of our Master and Father, Elijah of Vilna (may his memory be blessed), to say still if he could, he would do two things, reflecting on teaching and thinking and traveling from town to town, one of these to teach to the house of R. Gershon parted dignity... and the other to bring the redemption nearer, and the second being that the prayers should raise their hands and recite the priestly blessing every day' (Habadim Litvak, Na-gaon be-Arush ha-Shana, Lemberg 1978, p. 107 n. 63). On the history of the site and the reasons for its reticulation to certain Hasidim are Y. E. Zimmerman, 'The Times of the Priestly Blessing', Jood 100 (1977), pp. 453-470 (Hebr.), and cf. ibid., pp. 62-62, F. Fuchs, the positions of the Vilna gaon and R. Nathan Adler (due thanks to Mr. David Lowisch, who brought Zimmerman's paper to my attention). For criticism of this practice of R. Nathan Adler in his services, see n. 18 above.

8 "This is the way of those that are foolish, who think they have found a stronger to know the very minute of the beginning of day and night, and they make darkness even light and light into darkness and gloom, and despite our determination of the inauguration of Sabbath and festivals and fast day, to the extent that they are gone and dark has fallen, they consider the day still long" (see also wish list, p. 17-21). Hermanowicz, p. 153.


10 The busy excommunication attack the Hasidim for holding secret prayer services and using the Synagogue (see R. Yigalat Bnei ha-Shivah's prayerbook) for evil-doing services, praying with fervency and dissolving the proper times for prayer. The Hasidim were also accused of dressing in white, adorning themselves with gold and silver, and sightings and ritual slaughter with highly polished (polished) knives, and studying only kabbalah. For the Hasidim point of view, explaining the significance of the changes, see the letter of R. Samuel Szeinhein Hakohen Jerszowicz (1742-1773), rabbi of Nikolov, to the author of Beit ha-Sidur in 1762, cited in Mil- cholphenen, Shemone ha-Shivah (above, p. 53), pp. 86-87; and a letter to this author by Wiletsky, I., in: Re- m, R. Samuel Szeinhein's letters, written in response to the busy excommunication during the early 1770s, just before R. Nathan was gathering his group around him, makes it clear that the Hasidim considered themselves bound by R. Yigalat Bnei ha-Shivah's view, acting in accordance with the strict customs of the kabbalah. He claimed that the gaon writes: 'God-revealing and upright, following the customs of the Art of Tobias memory, which are founded and decreed by tradition from
return to this similarity later. For the moment, suffice it to say that at the root of these similar reactions lies a negative evaluation of certain manifestations of a common tradition—the kabbalistic-hasidic-pietistic tradition, which derived from mystical inspiration and charismatic leadership, a tradition that was shared by esoteric circles of hasidim and pietists all over Europe.

5. The Pietistic Group and the Community

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

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


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

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

22 For a characterization of kabbalistic piety see H. Z. Diner, Be-mittel ha-dore, Jerusalem 1972 (hereafter: Diner), pp. 181-170. And see below, n. 29. The author's introduction to the work Hagadd u-mazikwe, Amsterdam 1712, edited by Jacob Zevuluni from the works of Jekhen Vital and arranged according to the Jewish liturgy, in kabbalistic states, as follows: "You will find in this book all the commandments and customs and piyutim (regulations) and "restorations" (dupasim) whose secret meanings are explicated in the books of the Rabbi our Master R. Elijah Kohenhaun [Lurin], of blessed memory, whether in the inner sense of that commandment or for its restoration. We have found in this book several things that he commanded and said that they are permitted by Law as you will find here, and they are the way of piety (dvarot ha-gadulot) and necessary for those engaged in studying the wisdom of truth (kabbalah)."

23 The introduction to Hagadd u-mazikwe is followed by a heading, "Shulhan arukh according to the wisdom of truth," wherein the sentence here cited appears. The term "customs of piety," mazikwe, in the Arukh, is frequently used in relation to the Lurianic circle by R. Shlomo Shmuel Dovnitz, who wished to disseminate and popularize the kabbalists' practices throughout Eastern and Central Europe; see M. Ben-Arieh, Tobiso ha-zehi, Jerusalem 1997, pp. 48, 59, 170.
by the weight of charismatic personality and the force of mystical inspiration alone. The major factors were a thorough familiarity with kabbalistic myth, the irresistible allure of esoteric lore and the spiritual freedom it offered; once formulated, the new rites received their sanction from that same kabbalistic ethos and from the tradition of mystical literature, justified by a new freedom of ritual creativity.

The common denominator of all pietistic innovations in religious observance was rooted in the dualistic ethos of kabbalah. This ethos in turn was inspired by the myth of the Zohar and of Lurianic kabbalah, which picture the world as an arena of conflict between the g'vur at-haVa ("the other side," the powers of evil) and the g'vur at-geudat ("sancity"), between Shemad and the Shekhina, between the "internal" powers of the "left," which tend to lengthen the exile, and the "inner" powers of the "right," which bring redemption closer. This conflict, which rages simultaneously in the upper and lower worlds and is based on the complex interrelationships between these worlds, is also linked to the relations of separateness and unity in the world of the gevur and to the alternation of exile and redemption in historical reality. The outcome will largely be decided by each person's deeds and intentions, which bridge the gap between heaven and earth, tip the balance and influence the entire universe.

The kabbalists and the pietists, who venerated this dualistic kabbalistic myth and the ethos it implied, put a new interpretation on religious commitment, seeing it as participation in the cosmic struggle reflected in the historical experience of the Jewish people, a struggle taking place in the constant shadow of the clash between the qetqayot ("husks", evil powers) and sanctity, between the misery of exile and the exaltations of messianic hope.

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

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

The pietists were inspired by the Lurianic doctrine of kabbalistic ethics and by R. Yehudah ha-Levi's custom, acting largely under the influence of mystical lore that saw history in a metaphysical-dualistic light. Thus they believed in the kabbalistic doctrine of

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24 See Elazar, pp. 159-181. The publication of Levi's Golot ha-kabbalah (Venice, 1620) also Hansen, 1624 (see Horowitz, pp. 42, 205), had a crucial effect on the dissemination of the kabbalistic ethical beyond the immediate circle of its creators. A similar influence may be attributed to the spread of the Lurianic handbook (mystical and moral conduct), in dozen manuscripts, throughout the seventeenth century, in parallel to the dissemination of the first part of the legal code Shulhan arukh. The ultimate printing of Shulhan arukh hakham in the 1660s, and later in Frankfurt (1691), reinforced these tendencies. Such books as Elazar Ashkenazi's Golot ha-kabbalah (Venice 1601), Eliyahu de Vikar's Ruch ha-kabbalah (Venice 1693), Joseph Karo's Ma'aseh bereshit (Linzlin 1646), Part Two (Venice 1645), and R. David Endaleh's Shaarei shnei lokech (Constantinople 1734) - all of which went through numerous editions - were also highly influential in spreading the kabbalistic outlook and shaping the details of kabbalistic ritual. A major contribution was also made by R. Moshe Cordovero's Pardes rimonim (Cracow 1592) and its abbreviated version Pardes ha-

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

However, the innovations thus devised were invariably intended for the select few and were not considered binding on the pious in general, as we clearly learn from such terms as hegger (seclusion), kisra, bene-adiya ("select persons"), yeheide zoqqua ("select few"), hayyidim w-prahkim. On the contrary, the traditional exotericism characteristic of such groups of recluses, self-possessed saints and pietists, and the spiritual and ethical merits of their members, created a permanent pattern of distance self-sacrification and aloofness, which was accented and respected by the community. This was the situation as long as the modifications of religious ritual and prayer, aimed at the achievement of mystical elation, remained within the esoteric bounds of the limmat groups.

A new departure occurred, however, in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the prestige and power of the traditional institutions declined and there emerged certain circles seeking a more distinctive form of religious expression. The turning point was signaled by the publication of large quantities of kabbalistic literature, the popularization of the kabbalistic ethos and the influence of the various groups of kabbalistic pietists, Shabbateans and Frankists, all of whom made their own contribution to the undermining of prevailing standards of behavior and induced changes in the accepted social/religious stratification. The dissemination
of kabbalistic literature in manuscripts and printed books, the prevalence of mysti-
cal, ecstatic and ascetic ideas among increasingly larger groups, brought the idio-
syncratic customs of the Safed kabbalists to various groups of pietists in Eastern and
Central Europe. The newly adopted literary-kabbalistic traditions, which threatened
to transform conventions and violate the religious uniformity of the community,
clashed with the local traditions of European Jewry. The changes brought about
social ferment, creating alternative foci of authority and undermining the standing of
the established leadership; for the individuals who adopted these spiritual and mys-
tical doctrines wielded disproportionate influence in communal life and their influ-
ence went far beyond their actual numbers.

8. Separatist Tendencies

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

for stricter observance of the commandments under kabbalistic influence see Katz, Halakhah ve-
qalotah (supra, n. 7), pp. 197-198. For a literary account based on historical reality see S. Y.
Agnon, "Early Hasidism," in: Le-ki-lotah, benajjah & Tel-Aviv 1973, pp. 528-527. From the
time of Bezalel Haimdim till the end of the eighteenth century, the boundaries between
mystical pietists, inspired by kabbalistic ethos, and the new Hasidic movement were not clearly
defined, and the various attempts made by scholars to distinguish between the two trends suffer
from unsupported generalizations, arguments projecting back from later, nineteenth-century ex-
pressions of Hasidism to its beginnings in the eighteenth century.
could view them in a positive light; but once such idiosyncratic behavior had transcended the limits of the small secular-religious distribution and removed itself from the agreement and sanction of the community, it threatened to topple the pillars on which the accepted order rested. The community had no choice but to contest the challenge. 30

9. Esotericism and Extroversion

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


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

10. Joseph Steinhardt's Letter

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

32 On Joseph Steinhardt (1720-1797), whose introduction to his book of responsa, Zikaron Yosef, Frankfurt 1773, was included in Schwer polski and cited in anti-Hanukkah arguments, see E. Loe- weizenstein, Zur Geschichte der Juden in Frankreich (Leipzig 1908), pp. 190-199; Enc. Judaica, Jeru- selen 1971, 15: 368; DH 187, pp. 130-131; Wilner, II, pp. 141-143; Steinhardt studied in his youth in Frankfurt, as the source of R. Jacob b. Benjamin Hanoch Poppers, author of the re- sponsa Shv Tishov, a major opponent of Shabbatanim as the first half of the nineteenth century. Later he officiated as rabbi in Allsace and was from 1763 on rabbi of Frankfurt. Steinhardt, who was closely involved with Frankfurt community affairs, was one of the rabbis connected with the well-known Cleves divorce, an episode which shocked the Jewish world in the 1760s - he publicly criticized the Franklin divorce, which had revolutionized the bill of divorce written by R. Israel Lip- schezet, see Horwitz, pp. 124-129.

33 R. Ezekiel Šepla Kunst, Noda b-Yehuda, Prague 1775, no. 93: "Concerning your fourth questi- on, relating to the text of sinam oydel (a mystical formula to be recited before performance of a religious commandment), which has lately become popular and is printed in prayer-books. Here is my answer. As to your question concerning the text, one should sooner ask whether we say that it is at all worthy of being recited. In my opinion it is a precarious evil in one generation, if there is any general good will among the faithful, the righteous can work on them, while sinners stem them on them" (cited from ed. Warshaw, 1891). And see A. Wnorose, Halachot ve-hakolot ha-ganot, Jerusalem 1899 (hereafter: Wnorose), pp. 71-72; Wiener, II, pp. 88, 135, 330. And cf. D. Spitzer, Minhag Zeruf Min- gavo ve-sokolot, II, Jerusalem 1991, pp. 118-119. R. Ezekiel Landau was closely acquainted with the pietistic-kabbalistic experience as sanctioned by the communities, for he was born in 1735 in Opole, where his family maintained a kahal, and had studied at Dorcas and in the Yeshiva at Breslov, where he had also studied in kabbalah. He served as rav in Zamosc, Ponysz, Bialie- nia and being appointed in 1745 rabbi of Prague, where he stayed till his death in 1795. Landau, who had witnessed outbreaks of Shabbatanim in Podolia and was involved in the Eshchutza- Emden controversy in the 1760s, also excommunicating the qabbalist Shabbetai Zvi, was also known for his opposition to the Hanukkah who, in his best, has "recently appeared to change the customs of our sacred ancestors in these parts." He suggested them of sin with Shabbatanim and objected in principle to tampering with the text of the liturgy. For more on R. Ezekiel Landau see Y. A. Kaniezyc, Mylch ha-yay, VILNIAU 1885; Kahana, Toldot, II, pp. 44-46; Enc. Judaica, s.v.
January 1773. The letter, which deals with the Frankfurt piety, was written in answer to a letter from Landau, who had also sent Steinschard a copy of a responsum on that subject addressed to R. Nathan Maas, av bet din (= Chief Justice of the Rabbinnical Court) of Frankfurt. Yet another motive for the writing of the letter was Steinschard’s receipt of a copy of the anti-Judaic tract Zemer aruzim (lit.: “cutting of the terrible ones”, cf. Isaiah 25:5), published in 1772, which he had received from a disciple resident in Frankfurt. This unnamed disciple had given his rabbi the latest news from Frankfurt, referring to clashes with the pietist groups who were innovating with accepted practices.

At that time, moreover, Steinschard was writing the remarkable polemical introduction to his book Zikhron Yosef, published in 1773, in which he inveighed against “the congregation of jasidim and prachim (= pietists and recluses), who remove themselves by their actions and customs from the holy community,” and the text of the letter in several places is very similar to that of the introduction. Steinschard in his letter encourages R. Ezekiel for having put his pure mind to be zealous with the zeal of the Lord of Hosts, to expose and reveal the hidden motives... of a good many hypocrites, who show themselves as pious seen, but put on airs and act presumptuously, failing to observe the customs of the Children of Israel, the Torah, dictated to us from days of old by our Ancients, of blessed memory. They only mix with those who are different, to change there as dictated by their hearts and their proud spirits, to parade their abstinence and unsecular piety before the masses, the blind Hebrews [wordplay in the original Hebrew], who have eyes but do not see that [the pietists] are insincere, and do not understand that their words are false.

Steinschard, who was an ardent defender of the Ashkenazi rite and vigorously opposed any attempts to return to it, saw in R. Ezekiel’s letter, whose letter was an attack on the pietists’ attempts to deviate from the accepted rite, a kindred soul and fellow fighter. He told Landau of his fears and actions in that respect:

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

34 The letter is in MS 257 of the Stadelsches Kunstinstitut, reproduction in the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem, Institute for the Photography of Hebrew Manuscripts, Film 49262. I am indebted to Dr. Michael Silver, who brought it to my attention and provided me with a photograph, and to Dr. Moshezi Naderi, who very kindly helped me to decipher it.
35 Zemer aruzim was published in Above in 1772, see Wilensky, I, pp. 15-26.
36 The author, in his preface, points out that the fourth rite was established by rabbi of the Neuenburg community, which was obliterated in 1499 and its Jews escaped to Fuerth. Hence the Fuerth rite was based on the ancient rite of Neuenburg and therefore preserved the early Ashkenazic liturgy.
is in my heart. I only thought constantly, weal that I could act uprightly and re-buff the, as your Excellency's eyes may see from the copy of the letter I sent to the holy community of Frankfurt am Main to one of my disciples there, who sent me a few weeks ago the book *Zemir ariqim*, copied by hand in full from the printed book, which is in the possession of the head of the bet din (rabbinical court) there, the great rabbi, R. Nathan (may God protect and redeem him) Maas,37 who permitted him to copy it and send it to me.

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

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

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

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

37 In 1759-1760 R. Abraham Lysen (ibid. 6 above) officiated as Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt. Upon his death the position of the chief rabbi remained unfulfilled: R. Nathan b. Solomon Maas (the spelling of the same variant, principal of the yeshiva and the study house, served as acting rabbi until the appointment of R. Pinhag Hezil Horowitz at the end of 1772. On R. Nathan Maas, a prominent figure in the Frankfurt community and one of R. Nachum Adler's chief promoters, see Horowitz, pp. 120, 125-126, 208. The Institute for the Photography of Hebrew Manuscripts in Jerusalem possesses several talhawks works written by Maas.

38 See supra, n. 37.
R. Nathan Adler and the Frankfurt Pietists

study house of that place [- Frankfurt] to be undertaken by a handshake, with the honored managers of the study house to observe the twelve projects listed below:

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

An agreement sealed by a handshake was considered as binding as one concluded with an oath, says A. D. Eisenman, Omer Yossef, Jerusalem 1944, vol. V, p. 296, e. v. “tegur hap’.

Compare Addis’s custom as described in Mekie ha-Oseh, p. 15: “Two attached phylacteries,” and see above, text n. 17. The background for this practice may be its definition as permissive for particularly worthy persons only. R. Joseph Kann in: Shulhan arukh, Orh ha-Yahad, 246, writes:

The custom of laying two pairs of phylacteries should not be practiced save by a person who is known and famed for his piety.” And of Omer Yossef, Y. e. v. Tel Aviv, p. 202: “These men and men of good deeds, who wish to avoid any doubt as to the observance of the priestly phylacteries of Rashi and of Rabbenu Tam at the same time. But only one who is known and famed for his piety should do so, and moreover he should not do so publicly.” For the source and significance of the practice in the Sefer ha-Kabbalah, see H. R. Gershom, Omer Yossef, p. 157. According to him, phylacteries according to both Rashi and Rabbenu Tam, and citing R. Yigael Luria’s personal practice: “My master... laid the morning phylacteries of Rashi and of Rabbenu Tam at the same time.” Jacob Zemah, Nigunim u-Megurot, Presser 1905, p. 35-f. For evidence of some hesitation as to the priestly significance of the practice in the first half of the eighteenth century, see R. Pinhaj Kazanasz-Berg, Teshuvot manorot ( reprint, n. 20), pp. 311-312. On two pairs of phylacteries as practiced by the Sefer ha-Kabbalah in general and the Sefer ha-Kabbalah in particular cf. M. Rokhlin, Toledot ammim shel haEleh, Konigsberg 1879, p. 19, Melchior, Shemon Asev ha-Osev ( c. 1597), p. 75. On the significance of the practice in the Talmud and its growing popularity see Werthein, p. 78.

On the laying of phylacteries in the afternoon service see Nigunim u-Megurot, London 1861, p. 33, which promoted the custom by attributing it to R. Yigael Luria “My master... would lay phylacteries of Rabbenu Tam as the afternoon service, and then he made phylacteries of Rashi, two finger-breath- lengths by two finger-breath- lengths... and would lay them at the afternoon service.” Moreover, R. Hayyein Vital, wrote in phylacteries of Rabbenu Tam at the afternoon services.” Cfr. Shulhan arukh ha-Or, Hilkenos toffin, para. 11-12, and cf. Gershom, supra. 42 Phylacteries are laid only on the afternoon service of the fast of the tenth of Av. An anthology of Frankfurt custom compiled and edited by L. L. Leitner from various books and manuscripts, Minheh Frankfurter Orh. Minheh q.v. Frankfurter ha-Dor, Jerusalem 1902 (First volume), explicitly states concerning the ninth of Av (p. 146): “In the morning one does not lay the phylacteries, neither does one lay phylacteries.” Cfr. Speyer, b. p. 227.

On Luria’s special phylacteries knot see Nigunim u-Megurot, p. 33, and see Shulhan arukh ha-Or, Hilkenos toffin, para. 2. 3. For the Frankfurt style of winding phylacteries on one’s arm see Yosef Yuda ha-Shuni, Mishne ha-Asev ha-Oseh ( reprint, Tel-Aviv 1900), p. 29, para. 6. When Meir Kahane published this book, the customary knot by his grandfather, R. Yosef Yuda ha-Shuni, Teshuvot amor, on Frankfurt custom, had not yet been printed, but he presented the manuscript, from which he copied cogently. See further Enc. Hebratiska, 32, p. 1024, e. v. “Teshuvot,” for the difference between the Ashkenazim and Haskelim styles of laying phylacteries.
that the priests would not raise their hands [in the priestly blessing] each day,¹⁴
6. not to remain in his home when there is a death in his neighborhood;¹⁷ 7. not to walk in the gate known as "Wallhabor" when an impure thing is about to leave there,¹⁸ 8. that no man of team would go to any synagogue in which the priestly blessing is recited each day,¹⁹ 9. not to pronounce the letter he as a he,²⁰ 10. not to say sim shalom in the afternoon or evening services, save in the afternoon service of a fast day,²¹ 11. to reite the mi shu-sherah for a person called up to

44 For the daily recitation of the priestly blessing in morning services of Adler's circle, see Macar
aw, and cf. n. 37 above. But compare the Frankfort custom. "It is the custom of the
Reform leaders to follow the Sephardic rite of the Hebrew Congregation of Amsterdam that the priests raise four bands [in the priestly blessing] only on festivals that are days of visiting." (Neheb ha-Yam Tosef, p. 89). For the special custom of Amsterdam cf. Zimmer (supra, n. 17), pp. 460-461. Daily recitation of the priestly benediction was practiced only in Palestine. The reason for the innova-
tion in Adler's congregation may be a statement made in H. V. Yiphaq's (who's name is a description of the latter's custom) given by R. Shimoni Dresner: "Every day the priests recite the daily [i.e.,
deliver the priestly blessing] in Sim Shalom [the last of the "Eighteen Benedictions"], and on fast days in the afternoon service as well." (B. A. A. I., "Laws on Shabbat," (Gottes at ed., 3 (13) (1940), p. 126 (Heb.). See also Naggi's magnum opus, 210: "One should practice great devotion in the priestly benediction. The priest should sing his words exactly as he hears them, and one should take great care in this matter." Proper-hand following the rabbic tradition places great emphasis on the priestly blessing, pronouncing it as a daily practice. For the Zehari source of the custom and the great importance ascribed to it cf. Zohar, III, pp. 143-147.


46 The phrase may be a transposition of the German Kabbale, referring to a small church near the cemetery just by the Jewish Quarter (communication by Mr. Henry Zimet, formerly of Frank-
fort); more probable, it might mean "Wool Gate" (wool = Wolle); one of the gates of the Judea-
gate, as follows from Joseph Horel: Tosefot, quoted by Horowitz. p. 37 as the Judengasse was
built on the Wolfgang. Yet another possibility is Old German Wollhabor, meaning simply a gate besides the Wool Gate; the same, cf. J. Grämer & W. Grämer, Deutschcan Winterthau, Leipzig 1922, vol. 13, p. 218; 219, 219 noted by Mr. Bata Beer and Dr. De Shulowsky, who helped me to
to investigate the meaning of this word.

47 The gate at the southern end of the Judengasse.

48 As stated, R. Naftali ben Abraham we accustomed to recite the priestly blessing in daily services;
see n. 17 and 44 above.

49 In Neheb ha-Yam Tosef, pp. 66-67, there is a lengthy discussion of this question. The author cites his grandfather's manuscript: "In the book Tosafot page 53:2 it is stated: "As the pronunciations of the letter, that we Ashkenazic pronouns like a, it is evidently stated." He cites detai-
lized notes for this practice, which was common in Frankfurt but - as implied by the context of the explanation - controversial; this special pronunciation, too, was one of the bones of contention in the 1770s and a cause of attempts to form separate groups. See Yeradiot, Briefer und der he.

50 Compare the accusation leveled against Adler and his associates as: Mit ein arum. "They recite the prayer Sim Shalom in the evening and afternoon services as well." Cf. above, n. 15. Concerning this practice in Adler's prayer group. The answer to Frankfort, however, stipulates: At a time of day when the Torah Scroll can be brought out, one says Sim Shalom, which refers to the living Torah; but when that is not the case, he brought out the Torah, one says Shalom, except in Additional Prayers and the Closing Prayer of the Day of Atonement." (Neheb ha-Yam Tosef, p. 63, p. 154. On the controversy over this point in Frankfurt see S. Z. Gréger, Dreyer aschkenas Mosheh ashkenas y'shifuder y'shifuder y'shifuder der fluter y'shifuder, p. 200, 200, documenting the customary practice in the early nineteenth century. Compare Westheim, p. 129, who notes the rule given in the prayer-book of the Rabbin of Shabbat (Shabbat 1200), that Sim Shalom
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should also be recited in the afternoon prayer and even the evening prayer, contrary to the Ashkenazi rite, in which "Sim shalom" is replaced in the afternoon prayer by "Shalom ravi. And (61), pp. 121, 130, concerning the Hasidic practice of reciting "Sim shalom" even at evening services. For the practices involved in the altered rite of Hasidic piyut cf. Widmayer, Index, p. 402, s.v.


52 The Frankfurt citzenry solemnly maintained its Hasidic customs and was exclusively cautious toward any hint of change, as may be deduced from the community's books of minhagim. Yoffe, Mohel ha-Zevi, Afad, Berlin Lithographisches Frankfurt. Umgang der P Frankfurter Juden. (1907) (supra, n. 51).
11. The Meaning of Separatism – Hostile and Sympathetic Views

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

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

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

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

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

53 Mo'asse ta'as'ma, pp. 3-4.
54 Loc. cit.
55 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
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The innovative laws and customs, inspired by the kabbalistic ethos, combined with exaggerated emphasis on the laws of purity and impurity and excessive piety, all of which encouraged a tendency to remove oneself from society at large, were thus seen by the establishment as arrogant separatists, a disparaging criticism of accepted usage, tantamount to violation of halakhic norms. The adoption of a special liturgy, with separate services held at different times, insistence on separate food and distinctive dress— all originally intended as a means of self-sanctification and mystical devotion, aspiring to apprehension in heavenly spheres—were interpreted as a threat to the accepted scale of values, a challenge to halakha and tradition as represented by the community.

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

We learn from this that Israel kept themselves apart from the mixed multitude in two ways: when eating, they would not eat together with them; and also they refused to mingle with them, keeping themselves apart in the clouds of Israel and not the mixed multitude. From this issued that call, for they argued: let us be together with you, that is to say, why are you isolating yourselves from us to pray and study by yourselves, neither do you eat our food? And as mine own eyes have seen, not a stranger’s eyes, this war is also waged against a person wishing to sanctify himself and to be separate, to pray in a separate minyan, since one cannot pray in a congregation whose members are observing the commandments merely by rote. And there are several related reasons. As to food, I cannot approve a generation in which anyon is permitted to slaughter, even one not proficient in the laws of ritual slaughter, who is not God-fearing and opposes our holy rabbis, for our early and late halakhic authorities admonished us: that the slaughterer should be especially God-fearing, and in particular in connection with his sense of touch, to feel and sense the blade of the knife, in accordance with his fear of God... Surely, whoever abstains from ordinary food should be called a saint, for many are not proficient in the laws of washing and rinsing [of meat during preparation prior to cooking]. Surely, whoever wishes to sanctify himself will not eat in their company, as the author of Shem be’t ha-herit wrote, in matters of food above all... And the hint to future generations is by his making a separate prayer group with other worthy men and moreover not eating in their company at all... And the hint to future generations is that they make a study
house for the select of Israel, who shall be separate from the masses, for they cannot be together with them in one company. 56

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

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

12. Excommunication and Accusation of Sectarianism

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

56 Toledot Yara'eh Yosef, Kuretz 1780, part II, Naos (ed. Jerusalem 1973), vol. II, pp. 460-461; and see further that.
57 At the end of the cited passage R. Jacob Joseph writes: "And I, the author, have myself experienced all the above-mentioned things from beginning to end, and I am stating at how I myself commanded to make a study house at Shargorod." Cf. Diana, p. 154; Pickartz, p. 391; J. Hissol, The Early History of Hasidim and Hasidagadot in Light of the Drash Literature, Dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1984, pp. 147-162 (Hebr.).
58 The reports of dissatisfaction with the usual norms of ritual slaughter and incriminations against the community slaughterers, which appear repeatedly in the literature of the pietist's opponents and in homilies in contemporary kabbalistic and pietistic literature, point to the importance of this matter for the pietists. We may also infer from such reports as to the considerable tension aroused by these questions. See H. Shmeruk, "The Social Significance of Hasidic Dikdukei," Zev 20 (1958): 47-72 (Hebr.); and cf. Voskhod, pp. 200-208; Wilensky, I, pp. 44-49.
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 preserved in the piaqat of the Frankfurt community is the text of the ban pronounced on R. Nathan Adler and his associates in the synagogue on Sunday, 3 Bal, 5539 (= 15 August, 1779). The piaqat also records the background for the proclamation, emphasizing the separate tendencies of the separate prayer groups and their disregard for the authority of the qahal (= the leaders of the community):

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

Hear ye, gentlemen, that I have been instructed to proclaim in the name of the holy company, may God preserve and redeem them, in conjunction with the leaders and qahal, may God preserve and redeem them, that it is forbidden for the learned and respected Rabbi Nathan, son of our master Rabbi Simeon Adler Katz, and the learned and respected Rabbi Leizer Walf (= Walsae) to assemble a qurum of ten men and to pray in their house. Any member of our community who should go to their house to pray in their house in a minyan, whether a property owner or an ordinary person of our community, is hereby excommunicated and banished; and whoever is not a member of our community, if he is a student under the above-mentioned R. Nathan or R. Leizer, it is absolutely forbidden to give him lodging for the night and he should be expelled from our community without any discrimination.

On [or even see Eng. Talmud, vol. 17, Jerusalem 1903, pp. 325-371 (Hebrew); for an account in English see Encycl. Judaica (Hebrew 1971), vol. 8, col. 533 ff On the significance of the piaqat in the Jewish community in Europe see Katz, Tradition and Custom, pp. 196-197; idem, Hakla-

The continuity of the qahal is now in the Jewish national and religious library, Jerusalem, MS 4462. For a detailed description, including a printed index, see M. Adler, "The Piaqot of the Community of Frankfurt am Main", Osiris 1 (1977), 305-16 (Hebrew).

The qahal, written in the "ancient" language of the piaqot, a mixture of Old Yiddish and Hebrew, is preserved in the Frankfurt piaqot, fol. 250a, 4vo, no. 481. See also Horowitz, p. 155. M. Levine has recorded the text preserved in the synagogue at Augsburg 1779, which is also cited in Witenberg, 1, p. 327-28, for the significance of the social and religious isolation of the subject of the decree see the sources cited above, n. 59.
However, the community was not strong enough to enforce its prohibition on the formation of pietist prayer groups, nor even to impose its authority on individuals, as we see from the next document in the piske.

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

The purpose of the ban was to emphasize that loyalty to accepted custom and emotional commitment to convention — both sentiments that were practically taken for granted in the community — were irreconcilable with disregard of those values by the excommunicated person and his associates. Any individual, even one as learned as R. Nathan Adler, was expected to bow to the community's time-honored custom and to respect its spiritual conventions. Longstanding modes of kabbalistic and custom were to be upheld and enforced in face of the changes proposed by the would-be reformers in the name of kabbalistic tradition and charismatic leadership. The community piske demonstrates that the community was at the time much agitated by controversy, due to the proliferation of synagogues and private prayer groups — a situation reflecting the economic and social tension aroused by religious and spiritual elitism. The documents reflect a considerable degree of tension and anxiety; the inner relationships between the qahal, the one hand, and the various circles that aspired to guide their lives more independently by a variety of social and spiritual tendencies and therefore chose to assemble in separate prayer groups, on

62 Piske, fol. 250a, doc. no. 482, and immediately thereafter a slightly different version of the same writ, in doc. no. 483. In the second version the title "learned" (kabbalistic) is omitted. The second writ was signed — probably unwillingly — by Adler's friend R. Pinhas Horowitz, author of Ḳom se'fer, then Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt; he was also the brother of R. Samuel Shmelge, cited previously as a defender of Hasidic practices (³ 59) And see Aharoni, III, p. 221.
the other, were marked by unease and controversy. In 1783 we read in the *pintas* of nine private *miqvaot* and there is an obvious decline in the status and authority of the *gahal*. In 1790 the author of *Ma‘aréh ta‘bhá‘im* describes some of these prayer groups in acrimonious terms, referring to Adler’s circle as a sect “that has already done much in the way of sinning and misleading others.” The ritual innovations instituted by the kabbalists and piets out of spiritual and mystical motives induced them, as we have seen, to isolate themselves from society so as to ensure stricter compliance with ritual minutiae rooted in kabbalistic ethos; the subsequent social consequences, though unintentional, were quite far-reaching. The pietist groups in both Eastern and Central Europe were seen as a sectarian phenomenon, since they viewed themselves as a namely company, living a life that demanded social isolation and rejection of the lifestyle favored by the majority of society. The description of R. Nathan Adler’s group in *Ma‘aréh ta‘bhá‘im* was written in that vein. The traditionalists, when they accused the piets of having spurned accepted, normal standards, were essentially saying that R. Nathan and his followers considered their mode of worship exclusively valid while challenging the legitimacy of the traditional lifestyle; the Pietists themselves, however, viewed themselves as bearers of the mystical tradition, not obligated to the community’s authority in matters of spirit, fully committed to erecting a barrier between them and their fellow Jews in order properly to maintain the kabbalistic ethos.

13. R. Nathan Adler in Boskovice

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

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63 On the economic significance of *pintas* isolation and its social implications see Nadar, p. 513; and cf. Lorr, pp. 94-109, for the considerable social tensions in mid-eighteenth-century Frankfurt and the various disputes in the community. More on Frankfurt in the 1780s and the struggle against the *miqveh* there see I. N. Hauchel, “The View of the Gere Rabijn of the Time in his *Struggle against the munkal Nafah Haqiqut*”, in: Bei Aharon ve-Tanach, VIII/4 (1993), pp. 147-156 (Hebr.).
65 *Ma‘aréh ta‘bhá‘im*, p. 25.
known letter, first published in the German translation of The ha-mishalakh, a certain R. Zvi Hirsh Possilberg, originally of Prague, who had been appointed by the Bokovice community to contact the Frankfurt bet din (= rabbinical court), complained to R. Nathan Maas of Frankfurt about the unconventional behavior of his townsmen Nathan Adler, who was trying to impose rigorous religious standards on the Jews of Bokovice, refusing to compromise or to recognize accepted authorities. The community had fallen into the trap of electing a rabbi who had been excommunicated, because the Frankfurt bet-din had not given the case sufficient publicity.

And he wrote, among other things:

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

66 The letter was published in 1809 MS Zurich, Zentralbibliothek, Holz 192, pp. 74-76, in the German translation of Gifter’s book: Der dreifache Faden, Basel 1912, pp. 159-159. I am indebted to Prof. M. Katz, who brought this to my attention. Prof. Katz himself learned of its existence from the late Prof. G. Scholem, after the latter had read Katz’s paper “Outline etc.” (supra, n. 7).
Thus, besides complaining that R. Nathan was enforcing secret observance of ritual laws in general, particularly with regard to examination of the slaughterer’s knife and of slaughtered animals — such complaints recur repeatedly in the polemical anti-pietistic literature — the writer finds fault with the new rabbi’s sermons, which were incomprehensible and overlong; perhaps this was due to Adler’s Frankfurt accent, which may have been strange to his Moravian audience’s ears, or to his habit of praying according to the Lurianic rite, using the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew and affecting kabbalistic customs. 67

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

How surely has the ashen grown in our camp, in our midst, from the baying of asses and barking of dogs that have gathered about him, wicked men, abounding in slen custom, men of low character, murderous, deceitful men, their love for him is strong and rooted in their hearts and burning as fire; all their silver and gold are anathema in their eyes, like dung on the face of the earth, compared with his love, and they accept his discipline, preferring to die rather than to disobey....

Through him a sect of liars, insolent men, speakers of calumny, has grown and multiplied, and neglect of the Torah is rife.

The hostile description of the group, rather reminiscent of accounts of the early Haskidic groups in Eastern Europe, tells us, on the one hand, something of the anger and suspicion that the separate creature around with its disregard for traditional

67 Cf. Eliezer Feffer, Responsa,多种语言, para. 15: “Therefore, my ruined, the wise, pure and especially, Nathan Adler, of blessed memory, he himself would lead the services and pray in Sephardic pronunciation from R. Vital’s Lurianic prayerbook.” Cfr. Abraham Lowenstein van Enk, Responsa,多种语言, Amsterdam 1830, etc., “Aurora Hermetica.” ”As to what has been notified of the unique voice of master and lord R. Nathan Adler in Frankfurt, that he is said to pray in the Sephardic pronunciation, I saw in this... And heard him pray in the Sephardic pronunciation, and as a result, I... R. Nathan, of blessed memory, at that time spoke aloud in his usual, manner to all the print authorities of that time in Frankfurt a.M., and no one reproached him, the aforementioned R. Nathan, that he prayed in the Yiddish accent is we do.”

According to Adler’s Biographical, he had learned the Sephardic accent in his youth from a Jewish Antwerp vendor to his home. Zundel,多种语言, p. 22. And see Horavitz, p. 196, to the effect that R. Nathan’s style was considered by a spiritual-writer, cf. Eliahu Feffer,多种语言, para. 101, for the spiritual-characterization of these figures of, in G. Schalit, “Maynu be ha-ben be-oros,” in, Melqatenu-Me’enu, pp. 9-10.
values; on the other, it indicates the fervor and immediacy of the relationship between R. Nathan's followers and their leader.

R. Shlomo ben Hasid goes on to query Maas why the Frankfurt rabbis and hatzei, having excommunicated Adler for his separatist tendencies, had not made the ban a matter of public knowledge; by failing to do so they had misted the Boskovernotables, who would otherwise not have appointed him:

Afterwards I heard from wise and faithful people that His Excellency the great Rabbi, may the Lord protect him, had branded the injurious rabbi, that same R. Nathan Adler, with four signs, with the rabbinical curse and with the thorn that draws no blood (16thexcommunication), because of his evil deeds and his laws that are different from those of all the people, against the laws of our holy Torah...
But I am surprised and exceedingly amazed at such a wise man as himself, incomparable in his generation... why did he not publish the matter in the streets and cities of Israel, lest people be misled by him, to learn from his actions, to withdraw from the ways of the community as he has done, Heaven forfend. [Such actions as] it is impossible to list in detail, for the time would end and the list would not. Had we heard but one suspicious thing or blemish, surely he would not have become a stumbling-block for our community... So my request is set forth, may it please [him]... to instruct one of his servants to inform us of everything, so that we may see whether these things are true, that in [His Excellency's] community as well, a great city in Israel, the holy community of Frankfurt am Mein, he built a high-place for himself and separated from the people and committed sins of the ways of... against our Torah and the great bet din today in his city. And if it indeed be true that he is under a curse and an excommunication pronounced by His Excellency the great rabbi, may the Lord protect him.

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

Adler did not stay long in Boskove. The biographies claim that he left in 1784, after the lessor of the city meat tax, convinced that Adler's stringent approach to ritual slaughter was causing him financial loss, demoted him to the authorities.68

68 The allusion may be to the "ways of the Amorites," a standard idiom meaning faith, infallible beliefs, in both manuscript and printed versions the phrase is completed by a dash, perhaps the writer halted at using such a harsh expression.

69 Adler's biographies generally state, wrongly, that he left Boskove in 1786. He in fact left the city toward the end of 1784; this may be inferred from a statement by R. Joseph Hayyim Pollak, rabbi of Trier (Germany). For details see A. Benedikt, "The Jewish Squire with his Rabbi at Boskove", Moesh 17 (1900), 226-230 (Hebrew).

70 For Adler's rabbinic in Boskove and its institutional termination, see Horovitz, pp. 155-156; Dubnow, p. 437; "Derech ha-nevi'im", pp. 38-42; Zehul, pp. 451-456; Katz, Outline, p. 360, and of now Benedikt (supra, n. 10) for the dispute over ritual slaughter in Frankfurt as well, see Dubnow.69
However, as the above letter indicates, his hasty departure was not due exclusively to financial disputes with powerful townspeople or to slander put about by persons whose income he had affected. His standing in the community was severely damaged by the tension and hostility due to his deviation from accepted norms and his religious eccentricity, true to speak of the bitter scrimmages aroused by his followers. All these created conditions in which he could no longer function properly. The discovery that he had been excommunicated did nothing to calm the controversy, and the community leaders, considering themselves responsible for preserving religious unity in the city, attacked Adler and the changes he was advocating. Toward the end of 1784, probably shortly after the community officials had received an answer to their appeal to Frankfurt, which had been sent in December 1783, he was forced to flee. He traveled to Nikolajburg in Míklov, Moravia, and thence to Vien-

tina, returning in 1786-1787 to Frankfurt, where he reassimilated his followers and reopened his yeshiva and study house. Soon, however, he again incensed the leaders of the community and was excommunicated for a second time in 1789.

14. Spiritaulism and Ancestorism in the Various Pietistic Groups

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

71 See G. Scholem, "The Shabbatian Movement in Polish," in Mžigorym u-mon ogodnu Le-toldot ha-
misleading cover for nefarious intentions. That was why the opponents of Hassidism in Eastern Europe tested to accuse the Hasidic groups of affiliation with the Shabbatean movement in its various guises, to brand it as a heretical sect and to bound it mercilessly. R. Nathan Adler's experiences, too, were largely an outcome of what was perceived as the Shabbatean-Frankist danger: in view of the increasingly vague borderlines between kabbalistic pietists or ascetics, on the one hand, and the Shabbatean and Frankist pietists, on the other, any manifestation of separatism, be it only so much as a separate prayer group of an unconventional kabbalistic-pietist practice, was automatically suspect, arousing attacks and excommunication — unless it had been explicitly sanctioned by the community authorities and leadership.

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

72 Cf. Zikhron Yiqqel (Igarta, 1, 32), Introduction.
73 Note worthy in this context is a statement by the secretary of the Brody community, who copied the 1772 writ of excommunication: "When the aforementioned letter reached us [at Brody], we were frightened to see, anguished to hear, that even now the fire that has been burning for so many years has not been extinguished; those companions of wickedness are still dancing among us," see Witenisky, p. 44; and cf. Gelber, Toldos Toledos Brody, p. 111. Witenisky understood the statement as referring to the community in Vilna, news of which had reached Brody, supposing that "nothing was actually done until the Vilna letter was received" (ibid., n. 59). I believe, however, that Witenisky was wrong: the secretary is speaking of the Shabbatean and Frankist pietist circles, which were banned in Brody several times in 1752, 1753, 1756 and 1760. This is also the conclusion to be drawn from the wording of the proclamation: "Some sects and factions have reappeared among our people," the implication being that the anti-Hassidic base were aimed at the resurgence of Shabbateanism, not against something that the author of the base considered an essentially new phenomenon. The members of the Brody police were in the forefront of the anti-Shabbatean efforts; we know that it was they who issued the term against R. Jonathan Eybeschuetz, Leib Pressman and Jacob Frank in the first half of the eighteenth century. Witenisky seems to have underestimated the weight of the accusation of Shabbateanism as a motive for the anti-Hassidic base, see ibid., p. 18. Even after the conversions of 1757 and 1759, most of the Shabbateans remained in the Jewish community, and their actions, covert and overt, aroused considerable unrest and tension. See Schlein, Melakhim ve-Mahanim, p. 126.
the Frankist conversion at Prossnitz in Moravia in 1773 — all these could not but confirm the establishment's worst fears about the continued subversive activities of the Shabbatean movement. Such developments reinforced the positions of the opponents of kabbalistic piety, Hasidism and various pneumatic practices, accentuating suspicions that ascribed secret meanings to any changes in the standard ritual. Various piestistic groups were suspected of entertaining heretical beliefs and practicing strange rites, as we hear from a variety of evidence throughout the eighteenth century. Apparently, however, it was not until the 1770s, when the first waves of excommunication were issued against the Hasidim in Eastern Europe, as well as the first ban on R. Nathan Adler and his associates, that the traditional religious and social establishment began to identify the various piestistic manifestations with Shabbatean-Frankist circles.

15. Jacob Frank and the Excommunication of the Pietists

Scholars seem to have overlooked the fact that the proclamations were being issued, in both Eastern and Central Europe, at approximately the same time as a series of events of crucial importance that was casting an ominous shadow on the Jewish world. I am referring to the intensive activity of Jacob Frank (1726-1791) and his propaganda efforts toward the end of the 1760s, as well as his journeys throughout Eastern and Central Europe after he had been released from captivity in Czestochowa in 1772, when he launched a systematic campaign to disseminate his doctrines through emissaries, letters and books. Thus we read, in a letter from Yerucham b. Hananya Litman of Czernowitz and Solomon b. Eliezer Shor, a kabbalist from Rohatyn, and his brother Nathan Nepa, concerning the history and teachings of Jacob Frank (the letter was first published by Brewer),

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

75 See n. 16 above; cf. Podkar, pp. 310, 329, 331, 334-338
76 Czestochowa was captured by the Russians in August 1772, and Frank, who complained to the Russian commander that he had been wrongly imprisoned, was released. For his actions in the 1770s see A. Krauscher, Frank and his Congregation 1736-1784, 1 (Hebrew translation by N. Sokolow), pp. 277-278; ibid., pp. 514-516 (vol. II of Sokolow's translation was published only partly, before together with vol. I; that volume, too, appears to be not a first copy; A. J. Brewer, Galicia and Its Jews 1750-1850, p. 267-275, Schoell, Magyar Irodalmi, pp. 137-138; H. Levy, Hasidim in Transilvania 1780-1830, Budapest 1984, pp. 76-86. For Frank's vigorous propaganda at the end of the 1760s, with the outbreak of the Russia-Poland war, see Krauscher, ibid., 1, p. 277: "During the year 1772 he disseminated numerous emissaries." And cf. ibid., pp. 272-273, for the emissaries in the early 1770s.
him, to proclaim to all God-fearing people that they should know that a time will come when all the Jews will be forcibly converted. For the decree is from the Lord alone, however it may be fulfilled, and whosoever shelters in the shadow of true faith, in the house of the God of Jacob [= Frank], the God of Jacob shall come to his aid, that the believer shall not lose worlds, for in His shadow shall we live among the nations.

It is commonly believed that Jacob Frank was released in the summer of 1772, when Czestochowa fell to the Russians in August of that year. According to the Frankist chronicle, Frank was freed on January 21, 1772[3], subsequently proceeding to several places in Poland, Moravia and Volachia. His journey aroused a spiritual resurgence and waves of conversion,[6] reawakening and reinforcing suspicion of all the pietist groups and separate prayer groups, perhaps even prompting the various decrees of excommunication; for the composite denominator among the kabbalistic pietists, the Besh donts haBashan and the Shabbatean-Frankist groups was far more prominent – in the minds of the opponents – than the fundamental differences among them.

It was in that spirit that the author of Et ha-meachalash, Hatan Soffer's grandson, described the background to Adler's excommunication:

At that time the land was heaving and surging and the war waved great against the haBashan in the lands of Poland and Russia, the go'alm... Eliahu of Vilna, of blessed memory, and together with him some other great sages of Israel, sent letters to all the large communities of Israel, to persecute the haBashan and dispute with them, as they have changed their ways and altered the prayers and other standard customs... And the sages of Israel were particularly fearful of change and innovation at that time, for then the sect of Shabbatey Zvi, may his name be blotted out, were prevailing, doing evil and vile things in Poland and Germany, and the members of that sect were also occupying themselves with books of kabbalah, with hints and gematriot, wrapping themselves in cloaks of piety... One could not see whether they were of the Zvians [= Shabbatean], a stock springing poison weed and wormwood, or of the buma fita haBashan, whose faith was pure. So they feared the Zvians, who resemble haBashan, and since they saw in the behavior and processions of the men of R. Nathan Adler, of blessed memory, certain things that resembled the behavior of the haBashan, and did not wish the things to spread through the city and the country, they therefore tried to prevent people from doing so. In Prague at that time the bet din ga'equ had studied of the kabbalah, for that reason.}[9]

78 For the main conversions see Y. Goldberg, Ha-munavim ba-monashkei Polin-Litva, Jerusalem 1986, pp. 10, 12.
All the piest groups, whether the ascetic kabbalists, Badshjan tuygudin or the like then operating in the vicinity, or the Shabbateans and Frankists, shaped their ideologies in the light of kabbalistic tradition and subscribed to panemons of thought and behavior that were strongly influenced by the ethical literature of the kabbalists and its mystical-visionary currents. It was only natural that the believers in the various creeds assigned new meanings to kabbalistic practices; in time, each group laid emphasis on different spiritual dimensions and created its own distinctive social and religious patterns. All, however, had a common denominator: a profound affinity with kabbalistic tradition, coupled with the conviction that the bearers of that tradition were authorized to modify the more conventional tradition. It was because of this element that the changes introduced in common practices by the various pietistic groups and the characteristic peculiarities of their methods of worship, together with their attraction to charismatic inspiration and recognition of the authority that it conferred, looked very similar to outside observers—so much so that the latter could not properly distinguish groups still loyal to traditional values from those deviating from them and striving to undermine them. The establishment of the community, faced with a resurgence of the Shabbatean heresy and its Frankist offshoots, did not give serious consideration to the real distinctions between the different groups, but took a generally negative stand toward all and any separatist, piestet, and any groups attempting to modify existing practices without the agreement or sanction of the traditional leadership.

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

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

In 1746, the Council of the Four Lands also prohibited the study of the kabbalah by anyone aged less than thirty and even "who had not filled his belly with Talmud and prayer" or kabbalistic literature. For more information about the incident, reviewed now that the Frankists, too, were exploiting mystical lore, see Schleser, Melkazin u-megurot, pp. 123-124, cf. Gefter, Vehade Brody, pp. 107-108.

80 See Melkazin u-megurot, pp. 113-115.
81 See Levin, loc. cit. (supra n. 78).
82 See Bawer, p. 272, and cf. accounts of the emergence of the Frankists in Warsaw from 1770 onward, Schleser, Melkazin u-megurot, pp. 137.
rectly or indirectly responsible for the willingness of the Brody community leaders to cooperate with the anti-Hasidic excommunication of the summer of 1772. At any rate, it was in that year that the gaon of Vilna excommunicated the Hasidim, out of the conviction that the "sect of Jewishism...was shot through with heresy of the sect of Shabbetay Zvi," as cited in his name in Shever poshe'em. The Hasidic leaders, on the other hand, who considered themselves the bearers of kabbalistic tradition, its faithful interpreters and disseminators, furiously protested their classification under the heading of Shabbatean heresy, but to no avail. In other words, the Frankist propaganda of the late 1760s, the journeys throughout Europe of Jacob Frank and his emissaries in the early 1770s and the subsequent ferment may well have contributed to the banning of Hasidism in 1772, which the authorities saw as aimed against the Shabbatean heresy and its Hasidic manifestations. These measures, in turn, indirectly prompted the first excommunication of R. Nathan Adler and his associates; it will be remembered that the various texts of the anti-Hasidic ban, as cited in Zemah am mizrah, were in the hands of the Frankfurt av bet din when the latter book was published. As to the second excommunication of the group, it is perhaps no accident that it occurred shortly after Jacob Frank settled in nearby Offenbach in 1787. All through the 1780s, the Frankist community fought R. Nathan and his circle, while at the same time the Shabbatean-Frankist threat intensified. By the close of the decade there were some one thousand Frankists in Frank's fortress in Offenbach, on the outskirts of Frankfurt across the Main, and his supporters numbered several thousand. It was only natural that this situation could only aggravate the attack; and, indeed, a further ban, more extreme than the previous one, was pronounced in 1789.

16. The Second Excommunication

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

83 See Wilensky, I, pp. 44-49, and cf. supra, n. 73.
84 Shever poshe'em, p. 77b.
86 See Levi, p. 100; cf. Y. Gronowski's introduction to the second edition of Mid'ane ne'hame, p. 8.
87 Schlessel, Megyarei be-meguroth, p. 138; cf. ibid., n. 290.
For they began to terrify the people with their dreams and frighten them with the falsehood of their visions. But that is all their wisdom and intelligence, to awaken their imagination as they lie prostrate abed, for in their company whatever dreams more dreams is considered superior.95

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

Those bans that were recorded in the community minhag and publicly proclaimed in the synagogue in the year 5539 [c. 1779], as has already been stated and repeated, are barely upheld in their original force and strength, redoubled and expanded, so that these false prophets and their ilk should desist from terrifying and frightening the people.96

The proclamation continues, sternly forbidding...

Adler’s followers could rely on a rich kabbalistic literature on the major significance of dreams, ranging from the Zohar, which sees dreams as revelations sent by the soul in the angelic world and interprets righteous men’s dreams as being close to prophecy, to sixteenth-century kabbalistic works, much of which was actually written under the influence of supposedly heavenly inspired dreams and visions. In view of the kabbalistic-visionary tradition that real qabbalot, in the sense of “received tradition,” was based on a revelation in a heavenly vision or on the soul’s ascension to higher worlds, dreams were considered a source of spiritual authority independent of teachers or books. Kabbalistic tracts disseminated in manuscript or in print, such as Qalyot rasa, Ḥayyur ha-gematri, Maggid mezharam, and Yoter ha-renovot, populari...
and the view that dreams and visions were omens of heavenly import, messages from the higher worlds.** It was only natural, then, that the various pietistic groups in Eastern and Central Europe, moved by their ecstatic and ecstatically-inspired ethos, considered dreams to be a means of transcending the bounds of time and space, an instrument of direct contact with the supernal worlds that would enable man to achieve communion with the Holy Spirit. Dreams were not only a mere figment of man's mind, but a manifestation of the action of external forces on his soul, through which the denizens of heaven could reveal their will and transmit information to the lower worlds. Such notions as divining oneself or corporeality, eliminating one's consciousness, presenting a question in a dream (Heb.: she'el etzalon), ascent of the soul, shevirat (= communion with God), anxiety and indifference, revelation of Elijah and even claims and use of "holy names" — notions shared by all pietistic persuasions — created a world-view that recognized visionary powers nurtured by contact with the supernal, encouraged the emergence of charismatic inspiration and esteemed those who possessed such inspiration. For the believers, the various figures that appeared all through the eighteenth century, such as the Beith, R. Moses Eitayim Luzzatto, the Maggid of Mezhirich, Jacob Frank or R. Nathan Adler, were charismatic leaders who transcended the usual limits of perception; driven by divine inspiration, they maintained direct contact with higher worlds beyond the sensual. The Beith defined himself as "like one who comports himself as on a supernatural level," and a contemporary said of him: "What the Beith knew was by asking in a dream every night." He disciple the Maggid of Mezhirich stated of him: "Why do you wonder, that he had a revelation of Elijah and other, very high levels." And Hasidic Sefor, R. Nathan Adler's disciple, who was constantly lauding his master's extraordinary virtues and talents, saw him as "one who has reached the utmost limits of piety and self-abnegation... no secret is hidden from him." He cites Adler as having said of himself, "For when I have an 'ascent of the soul' in paradise, I always see..." He is described in Hasidic tradition as a person of whom R. Elimelech said, "For many years now there has not come to this world such a holy soul as R. Nathan Adler, except for our esteemed master R. Yisrael El Ulam Shem of blessed memory."**

94 G. Scholem, "The Historical Figure of the Beith", Derorot ba-egun, Tel-Aviv 1975, p. 302, and cf. p. 294 (Note.)
96 Demek ha-Reveleh, p. 22. And see Horovitz, p. 116, to the effect that R. Nathan's followers considered him a miracle-worker. Cf. Hasidic Sefor, Ohr ha-Shamayim, p. 197. For the spiritual characterization of theic figure cf. also G. Scholem, "Miznav ha-be-erets", in: Mezheverim u- me戛siros, pp. 16-20.
97 See Ohr ha-Shamayim, pars. 127, pp. 45-46.
It is axiomatic that the interpretation of paranormal phenomena depends primarily on the position of the person involved, the religious meaning derived from them, and the cultural mentality of their time and locality. Thus, phenomena seen in circles that promote a mystical atmosphere as revelations of the Divine Spirit, hence as worthy of seri~us consideration and awe, will be considered manifestations of confusion or delusions in another environment, which fears their influence and treats them with contempt and condemnation. A fortiori, the evaluation of such phenomena is dependent on whether they are viewed as challenges to established authority, whether they pose a danger to the accepted order, or arouse objections on the part of the ruling leadership. A considerable proportion of the bans pronounced against the pietistic circles was motivated, I believe, by fear of the unbridled authority claimed by charismatic leaders believed by their followers to be divinely inspired; by dismay at the new ritual molds of spiritual and mystical tendencies and at the changes implied thereby, which violated the customary order of things.

Once contact with the supernal worlds ceased to be the exclusive prerogative of one exceptional person or persons, operating with the approval of the community, and became a socially significant group phenomenon, it aroused suspicion, hostility, and criticism. Those same dreams that were, for R. Nathan and his circle, an expression of prophetic revelation and divine inspiration, received an utterly different, even opposite, interpretation in the minds of the communal leaders. Adler and his associates were denounced as frauds and cheats; the establishment generically identified prophesying, revelations and nightmares as the Shabbatean movement and condemned the Frankists as charlatans pure and simple—these views most probably produced the exaggeratedly negative evaluation of the dreams reported by Adler’s followers. 98

After all, Jacob Frank, who was living, as we have seen, near Frankfurt, at Offenbach, toward the end of the 1780s, was notorious for his dreams, prophetic visions, and manifestations of the Divine Spirit, 99 not to speak of the acts of sexual abandon and promiscuity practiced by his circle—under such circumstances one could hardly expect a clear-headed, tolerant or moderate assessment of the visionary phenomena and prophetic dreams common at the same time and in the same place among R. Nathan Adler’s followers.

98 On the role of prophesying, visions and frightening dreams in the Shabbatean movement, see: Kastenhof, op. cit., and Schotten, “The Shabbatean Movement”, Jr. Medgurim u-megurot, pp. 78, 98 (Heb.).
99 Frank’s dreams are referred to in the book Diva ha-Ashkenaz, parts 2145, 2201, 2203; see also Levin, p. 48 para. 37, p. 72 para. 77, p. 82 para. 93, and elsewhere. Cf. the memoirs of Dov Baruch of Benechow, cited by Bravaw, p. 216; also Schotten, Medgurim u-megurot, p. 119.
17. Conclusion

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

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

R. Nathan Adler suffered a fate similar to that of his contemporaries, the Hasidim of Eastern Europe. They, too, were active at that time in small groups, under the leadership of a few charismatic individuals; they saw themselves as bearers of the sanctified kabbalistic tradition, as innovators who aspired to reach new depths — but exclusively within the limits of that tradition. The fate of the pietists in both Eastern and Central Europe was largely sealed by the clash between standard conventions and the new, kabbalistic practices, which were considered not in their own right, but
in the light of the antinomistic intentions and azeptic messages that the Shabba-
teans and Frankists, then active in the same geographical areas in the name of the
same kabbalistic-pietistic tradition, derived from the Kabbalah.