

Jacob and Esau Between Nation and Empire:

A Jewish European History

For the last decade, I have been working on a book on the Central European Jewish intelligentsia that probes the limits of Jewish European history. The horizons of Jewish and European history have been converging in the last generation. National narratives, Jewish and European alike, have opened up to border crossing – cultural, ethnic and political. Studies of the European Jewish intelligentsia exemplify the end limit of Jewish European history. Precisely because the protagonists often no longer regard themselves as Jewish, profess cosmopolitanism, and their networks interact across national borders, contemporary European culture has made them an icon. But the Jewishness of the new European history is constrained. The protagonists' struggle with their identity and, of course, the antisemites make sure that their Jewishness remains salient but such Jewish European history is free of traditional Jewish culture and its sources, of Talmud, *Midrash* and *responsa*, of Hebrew literature and, for the most part, even of Yiddish. In short, the new Jewish European history provides a one-sided view of Jewish history, excluding traditional Jewish life from European history.

What is to be done? My study confronts two narrative histories of the European intelligentsia – one focusing on the cosmopolitan protagonists, the other on intellectuals and discourses engaging the typology of Jacob & Esau, the biblical brothers traditionally viewed as exemplifying the hostile relations of Jews and Christians. Both narratives are told from a Jewish European perspective but whereas the first gives rise to cosmopolitan conceptions of Europe, the latter, using traditional Jewish materials, suggests inassimilable Jewishness that must also be recognized as European. Where, you might ask, is the real Jewish European? In

the tension between the two historical narratives, is my answer. Jewish European history is possible only as divergent narratives, interrelated but non-convergent.

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Early Modern Europe: The Waning of Edom?

Shattering Christendom, the Reformation commenced a quiet marginalization of Jacob & Esau in Jewish life. The typology survived in Jewish and Christian discourses all the way through the Enlightenment, but it ceased to provide orientation for ever-

growing spheres of life. Jewish responses to early modern catastrophes did not echo with Edom. The 1648-49 pogroms in Poland, known as the Chmielnicki *Gezerot* (persecution), provide the prime example.¹ Edom was so firmly identified with the Roman Church that the Cossacks attacking the Poles and Jews, members of the Greek Orthodox Church descended from Byzantium, were identified as Greek. Jews viewed the rebellion as a war between Edom and Greece, Catholic Poles and Greek Orthodox Ukrainians.² Curiously, the Jews found themselves on Edom's side.³ The Roman

¹ After Bohdan Khmelnytsky (c. 1595-1657), leader of the Ukrainian Cossacks rebelling against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth,

² The pogroms chronicle, *Yeven Mezulah*, repeatedly refers to the Ukrainian Cossacks as Greek, and uses “kings of Edom” as an appellation for Catholic kings (pp. 34, 41) and “Alufe Edom” for the Polish generals (p. 50). The titles of both chronicles narrating the pogroms identify the catastrophe as brought on by Greece, and the martyrology of the Jews refusing Greek Orthodox conversion is modeled on stories of ancient Jewish refusal of idol worshipping, ordered by Greek rulers. Natan Neta Hanover, *Sefer Yeven Mezulah* (1653; book of deep mire) (Tel-Aviv: Ha-Qibutz Ha-Meuhad, 1945); Shemuel Fayvush ben Natan Faydl, “Sefer Tit ha-Yaven” (1649; book of the pit of destruction), in: *Le-Qorot ha-Gezerot al Yisrael*, ed. by Hayim Yonah Gurland (Odessa, 1892), pp. 17-28. *Yeven* and *Yaven* evoke the Hebrew for Greece – *Yavan*. (Originally in Psalms 40:2: “He brought me up out of the pit of destruction [*Yeven Mezulah*].”)

³ But not completely: Polish protection of the Jews in 1648-49 proved inadequate, and occasionally treacherous. The pogroms did give rise to a Sabbatean concept of Poland as Edom. With the eighteenth-century deterioration in Catholic-Jewish relations, Poland

Church and the Inquisition remained fearsome, especially to crypto-Jews in the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America, and Catholic persecution of Jews increased in eighteenth-century Poland, but multiple churches now represented Christendom, undermining typological Edom. Medieval Christian Rome withered away as the major target of Jewish hatred.

With the departure of Emperor Karl V in 1556, the fragmented Holy Roman Empire no longer projected imperial might. The 1512 Cologne Diet changed its name to the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.” The Roman feature became attenuated. Voltaire’s witticism, “neither Roman, nor holy, nor an empire,” applied throughout the early modern era.⁴ At the same time, Jewish endorsement of royal and imperial power became consistent and clear. Post-expulsion Spanish-Jewish historiography, exemplified in Solomon ibn Verga (1460-1554), reflected the conversion of *Josippon*’s benevolent view of Rome into a political strategy: a vertical alliance between ruler and Jews.⁵ The 1648 chronicle, *Yeven Mezulah*, spoke of German

became for a brief period “Edom,” at least for some Jews. See the discussion later in this chapter.

⁴ *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations, Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, 35 vols.

(Paris: Hachette, 1859), VII: 416: “Ce corps qui s’appelait et qui s’appelle encore le saint empire romain n’était en aucune manière ni saint, ni romain, ni empire.”

⁵ Shemuel ibn Virgah, *Sefer Shevet Yehudah* (Judah’s scepter), ed. by Azriel Shoḥet and Yizḥak Baer (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1946); Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1976).

emperors and Polish kings as righteous. Rulers past and present, from Emperor Titus (who destroyed the Temple), to Portuguese King Emmanuel I (who forcibly converted the Jews), to Polish Prince Jeremi Wiśniowiecki (who tried but failed to protect the Jews in 1649), became friends of the Jews.⁶ Prague historian and cosmographer, David Gans (1541-1613), wondered how to reconcile the demonic Titus emerging from the Talmud with the Josipponian picture but loyalty and closeness to the ruler became the touchstone of Jewish politics.⁷ Even more than Christian Edom, imperial Edom withered away in early modern Europe.

In the aftermath of the Spanish exile, the failure of the Edom-Rome eschatology seemed obvious. Pious Jacob continued to accompany Jews in their exile travails, and popular Yiddish and Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) biblical compendia vouchsafed his traditional role, but the Edom eschatology declined. Overall improvement in Jewish-Christian relations in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Western and Central Europe contributed to the waning of Edom. The terms of Jewish-Christian coexistence made tolerance contingent on the Jews not giving offence to Christianity. This entailed

⁶ For Titus, see my discussion of *Josippon* in chap. 2 and of Abraham ibn Daud in chap. 3; for Emmanuel I, Shemuel ibn Virgah, *Sefer Shevet Yehudah*, p. 126: “The King of Portugal was a benevolent king מלך חסיד היה”; for Prince Wiśniowiecki, Natan Neta Hanover, *Sefer Yeven Mezulah*, p. 30: “Prince Wiśniowiecki, his memory may be a blessing, was a great lover of Israel and a war hero without equal.”

⁷ David ben Shelomo Ganz, *Sefer Zemaḥ David*, ed. by Mordechai Breuer (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982), p. 85 (paragraph 829).

editorship, both politically imposed and self-administered.⁸ It impinged even on Jewish liturgy: The malediction against the apostates (*Birkat ha-Minim*) was modified. The version recited today is an early modern product.⁹ As print culture widened Christian access to Jewish writings, coexistence and censorship silenced Edom discourse.

Internal Jewish intellectual developments reinforced Edom's marginalization. As the Kabbalah triumphed throughout the early modern Jewish world, historical redemption became subsidiary to cosmic restoration, and the Edom eschatology played a diminished role. When Edom reappeared in the aftermath of the Sabbatean debacle – the apostasy of the would-be messiah Shabbetai Zevi (1626-1676) to Islam in 1666 – it reflected syncretic Sabbatean theologies that broke radically with Jewish and Christian traditions alike. A mute *midrashic* Jacob, cosmogonic kabbalistic Edom and a Sabbatean Jacob donning Esau's clothes competed among eighteenth-century European Jewry. Jewish emancipation would challenge all three, and Sabbatean syncretism would vanish. Jacob

⁸ Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text*: The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century, trans. by Jackie Feldman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2007).

⁹ As recited today by Orthodox and Conservative Jews, the malediction substitutes the “informers” (*malshinim*) and “insolent” (*zedim*) for the medieval “apostates” (*meshumadim*) and Christians (*minim*): Ruth Langer, *Cursing the Christians? A History of Birkat HaMinim* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Compare versions on p. 212 and p. 226.

& Esau outline a distinct early modern period in Jewish European history, the waning of Edom from the Spanish expulsion to the French Revolution.¹⁰

In the Western European mercantile states, early modern polemics over Jewish inclusion shifted from theology to economics, and highlighted the Jewish role in commercial development.¹¹ To be sure, economics and theology coexisted. The architects of the Jewish re-admittance into England in 1654, Menasseh ben Israel and Cromwell, and their opponents, thought in both economic and eschatological terms, but Edom played no role in their schemes. Indeed, when Menasseh ben Israel mentioned Edom at all, it was to suggest that Jews were better off under Christian than Muslim governments: “It is better to inhabit under Edom than Yishmael, for they are a people more civil, and rational, and of a better policy.”¹² Secularization of Christian-Jewish exchange appeared less as a theological upheaval and more as a progressive emergence of social and cultural spheres that did not abide by theology. Rather than confront theology, they often complemented it.

¹⁰ David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010) forcefully argues the case for a distinct early modern period in Jewish history.

¹¹ Jonathan Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce: Economic Thought and Emancipation in Europe, 1638—1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Derek J. Penslar, *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

¹² *Vindiciae Judæorum* (London: Roger Daniel, 1656), p. 7.

Theological reassessment did broach, however, on Jacob & Esau. Christian Hebraists acquired a measure of scholarly distance toward the Edom polemic, and, revisiting the assumptions governing Jewish-Christian relations, criticized persecution of the Jews. Pictorial representations of Jacob & Esau, especially of the reconciliation scene, projected freedom from the Christian typology. Artists and missionaries alike articulated a vision of shared humanity that, in the late Enlightenment, led to proposals for normalizing the Jews' political status. "The Jew is even more human than Jewish," said Prussian official Christian Wilhelm von Dohm (1751–1820), pleading for removing restrictions on Jewish life.¹³ Traditional Jews needed "improvement" but their humanity made them, like Christians, potential citizens. Such reform proposals could not have emerged in a world governed by the Edom eschatology. Jacob & Esau had had to retreat into the background before their shared humanity was highlighted.

Yet, the traditional typology went dormant rather than passed away. Certain German-Jewish communities took Edom-Rome seriously enough to prohibit, into the eighteenth-century, marriage between Jewish women and first generation converts from Italy (assuming they could be of Idumaeen origin). The sites of radical rethinking of Christian-Jewish relations were far removed from the typology, and no vision of Jacob & Esau's reconciliation emerged in mainstream Judaism or Christianity. Jacob Frank (1726-1791), who led his Sabbatean-inspired Jewish group to Christianity, envisioned himself an embodiment of Jacob & Esau. The late Enlightenment opened space for his

¹³ *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (on the civic improvement of the Jews, 1781-83), reprint 2 vols. in one (Hildesheim: Olms, 1973), I: 28: "Der Jude ist noch mehr Mensch als Jude."

heretical group but such a synthesis was possible only on the margins. The response of Jewish Orthodoxy's founder, Ḥatam Sofer, to the Napoleonic Wars showed how quickly the traditional typology could be recalled. Beaming with messianic excitement, Sofer disclosed a *gimatria* (numerology) in a biblical oracle on Esau's descendants, implying that 1800 was the year of redemption: "In such a time, a wise person remains silent, and we shall see what will come of it."¹⁴

Protestant Jacob & Esau

Sofer's Europe was three centuries removed from the Reformation, but he would have found Luther's vision of Jacob strangely familiar. The Reformers' endeavor to recover the primitive Church and rescue biblical meaning from medieval Christian exegesis returned them to the Old Testament and the *Hebraica Veritas*. Their rejection of the cult of the saints resurrected the Patriarchs as Protestant role models. Luther's *Commentary on Genesis*, composed over a decade between 1535 and 1545, shaped the Protestant image of Jacob & Esau for centuries.¹⁵ Searching for the literal sense, his commentary engaged critically Lyra's *Postilla*, and, through Lyra, he became familiar

¹⁴ “ראשית גוים עמלק ואחריתו עדי אבד” [Amalek [Esau's descendant] was the first of nations, but in the end he shall come to destruction (Numbers 24:20).] Behold the ending of the words [the acronym amounting to 1800 = תק"ס]. In such a time, a wise person remains silent, and we shall see what will come of it”: *Ḥatam Sofer al ha-Torah*, ed. by Naftali Hertz Shtern, 5 vols. (Jerusalem: Ḥatam Sofer Institute, 1987), IV: 125-26. See also Sofer's homily on Numbers 24:18 at the end of this chapter.

¹⁵ *Luther's Commentary on Genesis*, trans. by J. Theodore Mueller, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1958).

with rabbinic exegesis.¹⁶ Luther's portrayal of Jacob on the eve of his final meeting with Esau, preparing for war, praying for salvation and offering gifts, bore remarkable similarities to the rabbinic picture, even if the tribulations Jacob faced were those of Christian calling rather than Jewish exile.

Luther's Jacob is perfect, chaste and pious, but, unlike saints, he is not celibate, and he suffers fulfilling his vocation in life. His household provides a model of Christian marriage: He marries late, not out of sexual desire but the wish to build up the Church. Luther interprets away evidence of discord in Isaac's household and rejects suggestions of sexual impropriety so consistently, that he exempts even Esau from rabbinic allegations of incest (Genesis 36:18). Jacob and Rebecca knew of divine will, hence buying the birthright and tricking Isaac – who mistakenly preferred natural to divine law (birthright to spirit) – were just. The “two nations” prophecy was fulfilled first in David, then, spiritually, in Christ. Jacob became the father of the Church.¹⁷

Luther's portrayal of Esau became just as predominant among Protestants. He drew it with the Catholic Church rather than the Jews in mind. “Esau is a type, a figure of the false church, which boasts the name and Word of God yet despises its birthright, namely the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and seeks only the glory, power and enjoyment of this earthly life. The false church makes the belly its God.” Still, Luther surmised that Esau

¹⁶ Thomas Kalita, *The Influence of Nicholas of Lyra on Martin Luther's Commentary on Genesis* (Th.D. Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1985).

¹⁷ Marilyn McGuire, *The Mature Luther's Revision of Marriage Theology: Preference for Patriarchs over Saints in his Commentary on Genesis* (Ph.D. dissertation, St. Louis University, 1999).

was saved and many of his descendants became Church members. The trope of Esau's belly lived on among the seventeenth-century Puritans but not Luther's promise of his salvation. "Esau did sell his Birth-right indeed, and so do many besides; and by so doing, exclude themselves from the chief blessing," said John Bunyan in *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678).¹⁸ "Esau will part with the heavenly birthright for ... god belly," echoed Roger Williams, "and Jacob will part with porridge for an eternal inheritance."¹⁹

Hans Sachs (1494 – 1576 CE), a prolific Protestant *Meistersinger* (popular poet) who lived in the German national imagination as a folk hero, dutifully carried on the Lutheran picture in his "Comedy: Jacob and his brother Esau" (1550).²⁰ He kept close to the biblical story, but invented a happy end, a family scene, Jacob uniting with his parents. Sachs uses the happy end to didactically tell the story's moral, tying it to Christ. More interesting was his carnival play "The Devil Tries Marriage," where Esau appears as a Jewish usurer duped by the devil.²¹ If Shakespeare, a few decades later, would have

¹⁸ *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come* (Chapel Hill, NC: Yesterday's Classics, 2007), p. 145.

¹⁹ "A Letter from Roger Williams to Major Mason, 22 June 1670", *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society for the Year 1792* (Boston, 1792), I: 188.

²⁰ "Comedia. Jacob mit seinem Bruder Esaw," in: *Hans Sachs*, ed. by Adelbert von Keller (Stuttgart: Literarischer Verein, 1870), I: 88-110.

²¹ "Der Teuffel nam ein Weib" (1557), in: *Hans Sachs: Eine Auswahl für Freunde der älteren vaterländischen Dichtungskunst*, ed. by Johann Adam Göz (Nuernburg: Bauer und Raspe, 1829), I: 197-219.

Shylock associate himself with Jacob, Sachs associated the Jewish usurer with Esau.²² He vindicated Luther's image of Esau as a "craving belly," yet ignored his theology: His Esau was Jewish and not one who denied Christ but a petty criminal. Sachs affirmed Christian communal boundaries with no reference to theology.²³ Luther had no need for a Jewish Esau in his violent attack on the Jews, but, in Sachs, old and new Christian typology dovetailed with popular antisemitism.

Lutheran schoolmaster Johann Hübner (1668 – 1731 CE) in Hamburg redrew Luther's Jacob & Esau in the most influential Bible instruction book in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Germany. *Selected Biblical Stories, fifty-two each from the Old and New Testament, redacted for the youth* (1714) came out in thirty editions, sold two hundred thousand copies in the first hundred years and was translated into fifteen languages, having also Catholic and Calvinist versions.²⁴ Using shortened biblical verses, Hübner recited Old and New Testament stories, one of each to be read per-week. The stories were followed by simple questions, moral instruction, and uplifting Christian appeal. Jacob is a Christian model, Esau godless: Hübner unusually adds the words pious

²² The Merchant of Venice, Act I Scene III, lines 70-96.

²³ John D. Martin, "The Depiction of Jews in the Carnival Plays and Comedies of Hans Folz and Hans Sachs in Early Modern Nuremberg," *Baylor Journal of Theatre and Performance* 3:2 (2006): 43-65.

²⁴ *Zweymal zwey und funffzig Auserlesene Biblische Historien, der Jugend zum Besten abgefasset*, first U.S. edition (Harrisburg, PA: Wm. Wheit und Wm. Boyer, 1826). For a history of the book and its impact: Christine Reents, *Die Bibel als Schul- und Hausbuch für Kinder* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984).

(*fromm*) and *gottlos* to the biblical text. He tells of the unedifying birthright sale only indirectly, as he explains that Esau suffered no injustice by Jacob taking over the blessing. Rebecca acted on God's oracle. The stories lose much of their typological significance, only Jacob's struggle with the angel, interpreted, following Luther, as an encounter with God the Son, resonates with eschatology. The moral instruction is: Parents' blessings counts for much; the pious are rewarded; whatever God has decided – the older shall serve the younger – must take place; the power of faith is great (Jacob winning against the angel). The Christian appeal is for confidence in God and his judgment. The Jews no longer appear as part of the story. Neither in struggle nor in reconciliation do Jacob & Esau tell a story about Christians and Jews.

Early Modern Jewish Bibles

Similar relaxation of eschatology occurred on the Jewish side. Edom polemics was rare in early modern Judaism.²⁵ Jews knew Jacob & Esau primarily through three popular works: *Sefer ha-Yashar*, an early sixteenth-century Italian biblical history, and two biblical compilations, the Yiddish “women's bible,” *Zenah u-Renah* (*Tsenerene*, go forth and gaze, c. 1616), and the expansive Ladino anthology *Me-Am Loez* (from a foreign people, 1730-1777). These works give a firmer sense of the Jacob & Esau stories circulating among the populace than we have for medieval Jewry. Remarkably, they pay little attention to Christian Edom or Rome.

²⁵ A notable exception: Issac Lopez (Lupis), *Kur mezaref ha-Emunot u-mareh ha-Emet* (crucible of the faiths and mirror of truth, 1695) (Metz: J. Mayer Samuel, 1847), pp. 36a-b. The polemics came from of Aleppo, echoed Abrabanel, and Edom was not a central concern.

The anonymous *Sefer ha-Yashar* was published in 1625 and soon rivaled in fame medieval Jewry's foremost history book, *The Josippon*.²⁶ It told the biblical story from the creation to Joshua's conquest of Israel, but it could not provide access to rabbinic commentary. This remained the biblical compendia's task. Early modern rabbis complained profusely about a decline in biblical study. Schools de-emphasized the Bible, considering it inferior to the Talmud and irrelevant to observance. Most Jews did not have sufficient Hebrew (and Aramaic) to approach biblical or rabbinic literature. Both *Zenah u-Renah* and *Me-Am Loez* were written in simple language to assure the widest access. The authors expressly intended the compendia for an audience with limited literacy: Only knowledge of the Hebrew alpha-bet and basic reading was assumed, and the titles designated women as the major audience.²⁷ The compendia took advantage of the opportunities opened by print culture to address the educational needs of a mass market.

Zenah u-Renah was the most popular work in the Ashkenazi Diaspora: a homiletic-exegetical rendering of the Pentateuch, *Megilot* (the five scrolls read on Jewish holidays) and *Haftarot* (portions from the Prophets read on Shabbat in the synagogue

²⁶ *Sefer ha-Yashar*, ed. and intro. by Joseph Dan (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1986).

²⁷ *Zenah u-Renah* (go forth) rehearses Song of Solomon 3:11: "Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and gaze on King Solomon with the crown." The Torah is the crown. *Me-Am Loez* (from a people of foreign tongue) follows Psalms 114:1: "When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue." "The house of Jacob" is traditionally interpreted as the women; *loez* connotes *la'az*, a foreign language, the Ladino spoken in exile.

after the Torah reading).²⁸ An itinerant preacher, Jacob ben Isaac Ashkenazi of Janów (Poland, 1550-1625) composed it, using select *midrashim* and Ashkenazi and Sephardi commentators, most frequently, Rashi and Bahya. *Zenah u-Renah* came out in more than 150 editions, some illustrated (with pictures often taken from Christian bibles).²⁹ It shaped the informal education of women and preschool kids for centuries.³⁰

Jacob Culi (Yaakov Khuli, c. 1689-1732), a leading rabbi in Jerusalem and Constantinople, used a much broader array of *Midrash* and biblical commentary to begin *Me-Am Lo'ez*: a synthetic compendium of *Midrash*, *Targum*, and biblical commentaries on the Pentateuch, *mishnah* Avot and the Passover *Hagadah*, accompanied by moral instruction and concise *halakhic* rulings.³¹ His successors completed the commentary on the Pentateuch in 1777, with nineteenth-century additions on the Prophets and the

²⁸ Jacob ben Isaac Ashkenazi, *Tz'edah Ur'edah*, trans. from the Yiddish by Miriam Stark Zakon, 3 vols. (New York: Masorah Publications, 1983). The 1798 Yiddish edition, published in Sulzbach (Germany), is available at <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/42459>, accessed 2 May 2011.

²⁹ Chone Shmeruk, *The Illustrations in Yiddish Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Akademon Press, 1986).

³⁰ The *maskilim* (Jewish enlightenment intellectuals), aware of *Zenah u-Renah*'s influence, tried an enlightenment version: Chava Turniansky, "A *Haskalah* version of *Zenah u-Renah*" (Hebrew), *Ha-Sifrut* 2 (1971): 835–841.

³¹ Jacob Culi, *The Torah Anthology: MeAm Lo'ez*, trans. by Aryeh Kaplan, 19 vols. (New York: Moznayim, 1977). The 1864 Ladino edition of Genesis, published in Izmir (Turkey) is available at <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/22704>, accessed 2 May 2011.

Writings bringing the collection up to twenty-three folio volumes. *Me-Am Loez* came out in eleven editions and was the most popular work in the Sephardi Diaspora, especially in Mediterranean communities, where families often read it around the Shabbat table.³²

Zenah u-Renah and *Me-Am Loez* became the foremost examples of Yiddish and Ladino cultures.

Both works seem to tell traditional rabbinic stories of Jacob & Esau. In *Zenah u-Renah*, wicked Esau loses the birthright because he cannot possibly assume the priesthood role. Rebecca, having received the oracle “the elder shall serve the younger,” forces Jacob into tricking Isaac to get the blessing of the first-born, and Isaac, when finding out that he mistakenly blessed Jacob, confirms the blessing. Jacob goes into exile to live with the wicked Laban but faithfully keeps the Torah in exile. The struggle with the angel confirms his merits, and he returns to the land of Israel perfect (*shalem*) in his body, wealth and morals. *Me-Am Loez* expounds in greater detail on Esau’s vices, yet emphasizes also his honoring of Isaac. It intersperses the biblical narrative with stories showing the power of prayer (Isaac & Rebecca’s prayer for children and Jacob’s prayer to be saved from Esau), instructions on mourning rituals (Jacob cooks lentils on Abraham’s death), blessings over fragrances (Isaac commends the scent of Jacob’s clothes), and *kashrut* (the sciatic nerve is prohibited in cattle to commemorate the injury Jacob incurred from the angel), and advice on business practices (minding, like Jacob, small things). It puts Esau’s design to kill Jacob in the worst light (combined fratricide

³² Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th-20th Centuries* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2000), pp. 60-64.

and parricide), and casts doubt on his reconciliation with Jacob. In both *Zenah u-Renah* and *Me-Am Loez*, Jacob refuses any collaboration with Esau, and concedes to him domination of this world.

The narratives' traditionalism is misleading. Posed against medieval accounts, the absence of the Edom-Rome eschatology is striking. *Zenah u-Renah* makes no mention of Rome and Edom. *Me-Am Loez* recognizes the Romans as Esau's descendants on several occasions, and even suggests that Israel's rule will succeed Rome, but the narrative lacks any urgency. It is free of hostility towards Rome, as if Esau's wickedness is dissociated from his descendants: Esau is an idol worshipper more than a Christian. Both *Zenah u-Renah* and *Me-Am Loez* recount the friendship between Rabbi Yehudah the Prince and the Emperor Antoninus, and *Me-Am Loez* suggests that Italy was created especially for Esau. Neither works identifies any contemporary empire or church with Esau or Edom. *Sefer ha-Yashar* provides an expanded *Josippon Zepho* story, detailing how Esau's descendants came to inhabit Rome. In its author's discursive universe – that of Abrabanel – the story had polemical significance. For early modern readers it became just a good story. The Edom-Rome typology lost its specificity and urgency. Early modern narratives were centuries away from medieval anti-Christian polemics.

To be sure, neither *Zenah u-Renah* nor *Me-Am Loez* envisions genuine reconciliation between Jacob & Esau. *Zenah u-Renah* is deafeningly silent about the brothers' kiss, and *Me-Am Loez* is skeptical. Both interpret the final encounter as a division of the world: Jacob refuses collaboration with Esau and concedes this world, in the hope of winning the next. "I will bear the yoke of exile. I will speak gently to my persecutors ... so they will not harm me. I will hide from them ... Thus, I will

survive.”³³ The tribulations of exile continue, and the traditional eschatology remains intact, if marginalized. Jacob Katz’s view, no longer popular today, that early modern Europe experienced simultaneously increased closure of the Jewish community and improved Jewish-Christian relations could derive support from early modern biblical narratives.³⁴

Zenah u-Renah and *Me-Am Loez* show limited exposure to the Kabbalah: *Zenah u-Renah* barely touches on it, via Bahya, and *Me-Am Loez* uses the *Zohar* but does not meddle in its theogony. Neither treats Esau as a cosmic force. Both reflected what rabbinic elites thought common Jews should know, and, especially in the aftermath of Shabbetai Zevi, this did not include the Kabbalah. Neither the Sabbatean outbreak nor Frankism is explicable in the discursive universe of “I will bear the yoke of exile.” One wonders whether the biblical compendia’s mellow traditionalism was not contingent on redemptive hopes shifting to the Kabbalah, less exposed to the public eye.

From Eschatology to Cosmogony: Edom in the Lurianic Kabbalah

The Kabbalah’s spread throughout the early modern Jewish Diaspora owed much to the *Zohar*’s publication, but the Safed Kabbalah mediated the *Zohar*’s reception, and reshaped Jewish liturgy and devotional practices. Safed, a town in the mountainous

³³ *Me-Am Loez* on Genesis 33:14, III: 150.

³⁴ *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York: New York University Press, 1993); *Between Jews and Gentiles* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1960), esp. 131-156. Jacob & Esau reflect an ideology of closure but multifarious Jewish-Christian interaction and religious syncretism are just as much part of the early modern story.

Upper Galilee arose mercurially in the sixteenth-century into a Jewish intellectual center. A textile-manufacturing hub under the newly established Ottoman rule, the city drew Jewish traders, among them Spanish exiles and *conversos*, and grew to about 1800 Jewish households in 1568-69. Many exiles wandered through Mediterranean Kabbalah centers on their way out of Spain. The proximity of Tannaic rabbis' alleged burial places – above all, the burial place of the *Zohar*'s putative author, Shimeon bar Yoḥai – served as a draw to Safed. Safed rabbinic scholars and kabbalists were permeated with messianic anticipation, with the sense that they were living the gathering of the exiled and taking part in an oncoming redemption. They generated authoritative *halakhah* books, masterpieces of liturgical poetry, and kabbalistic teachings that reshaped, over the next two centuries, the intellectual and emotional life of early modern European Jewry.³⁵

Emulating the *Zohar*'s ancient rabbis, Safed kabbalistic circles organized around eminent teachers. Moses Cordovero (1522-1570), a prodigious writer who systematized the *Zohar* into theosophy, was such a master. Shortly before his death in June 1570, Isaac Luria (Yizḥak ben Shelomo Ashkenazi, 1534-1572), known as the ARI (literally, the lion, an acronym for the Ashkenazi, or the divine [אֱלֹהִי], rabbi Isaac), joined his group. The charismatic Luria had only recently arrived from Egypt (possibly via Jerusalem), but he quickly emerged as the group's indisputable leader. He established a reputation for moral perfection and for healing damaged souls through penitential rites.

³⁵ Moshe Idel, "On Mobility, Individuals, and Groups: Prolegomenon for a Sociological Approach to Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah," *Kabbalah* 3 (1998): 145-173; Laurence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 41-77.

Luria expounded on the kabbalistic vision of the Torah's commandments (*mizvot*) as measures for spiritual perfection and cosmic healing, and instituted mystical rituals, known as the *yihudim* (unifications), to commune with the souls of the pious, living and dead alike. Claiming spiritual descent from a line of prophets and martyrs going back to Moses, Luria appeared to his disciples a saintly mystical messiah, a potential cosmic redeemer. He died eighteen months after Cordovero, passing on a rich body of oral teaching but few writings, leaving his disciples to record his legacy, struggle over its authoritative interpretation, and ponder the vanished mystical giant.³⁶

In contrast with Cordovero, who synthesized diverse kabbalistic traditions emerging from the *Zohar* into a rational systematic theology, Luria parted with tradition and offered new cosmogony and theurgy, tying together cosmic and spiritual regeneration. He reshaped the *Zohar*'s universe of ten spheres into one of *parzufim* (countenances), divine configurations with distinct identities.³⁷ Reading the *Zohar*, he focused on the *Idrot*, the esoteric convocations contemplating the creation and mystical

³⁶ Laurence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*; Menachem Kallus, "Pneumatic Mystical Possession and the Eschatology of the Soul in Lurianic Kabbalah," in: *Spirit Possession in Judaism: Cases and Contexts from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. by Matt Goldfish (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), pp. 159-185; Jonathan Garb, "The Cult of the Saints in Lurianic Kabbalah," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 98:2 (2008): 203-229.

³⁷ The *parzufim* are at the center of the *Zohar*'s *Idrot* (without the term being used) but they remain undeveloped and marginal to the rest of the *Zohar*. Luria shifted the Kabbalah's focus from the spheres to the *parzufim*.

ascent, and made biblical homiletics subservient to theogony. The *Zohar* still endeavored to make rabbinic Edom part of cosmic restoration. Luria marginalized the Edom eschatology and focused on messianic redemption through cosmic healing alone.

Luria depicted an unstable cosmic order that called for human engagement to perfect the world.³⁸ For the creation to occur, Divinity (the *Ein Sof*, one without end) had

³⁸ Scholars have traced the contours of Luria's account of the creation but it remains convoluted, in part, due to divergent posthumous recitations. My outline reflects Luria's views toward the end of his short life, in Safed and, of necessity, simplifies. Yosef Avivi provides taxonomy of the Lurianic corpus of manuscripts in *Binyan Ariel* (Jerusalem: Misgav Yerushalayim, 1987) and *Kabbalat ha-Ari (Kabbala Luriana)*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2008) and, in the last volume, traces Luria's argument on emanation from writings ascribed directly to him, especially the commentary on *Sifra de-Zeniuta* (book of concealment, *Zohar* 2: 176b–179a). Ronit Meroz tracks biographically the intellectual formation of Lurianic Kabbalah in: *Geula be-Torat ha-ARI* (redemption in the Lurianic teaching), (Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1988). (For a dissent from Meroz, inspired by Yehudah Liebes: Yosi Yarhi, Maamar "Aseret Haruge Malkhut u-Mot ha-Melakhim" she-mi-Ketivat Yad ha-ARI: Hebetim shel Torat ha-Gilgul ba-Meot ha-13-16 [a discourse on "the Ten Martyrs and the kings' death" in Luria's handwriting: aspects of the incarnation doctrine in the 13th-16th centuries], MA Thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1995.) Luria's student, Hayim Vital, transcribed and edited his teaching several times, and his manuscripts were further redacted by seventeenth-century kabbalists. I used the Ashlag-Brandwein edition, *Kol Kitve ha-ARI* (collected works) (Jerusalem, 1988), including *Shemonah Shearim* (eight

to contract to make empty space available. Once contraction (*zimzum*) had occurred, Primal Man (*Adam ha-Qadmon*) emerged, a divine *anthropos*, the *logos*, projecting light from his eyes, emanating ten spheres, divine vessels. But, standing alone and isolated, the vessels were too fragile to contain the light, the three upper spheres got damaged, and the lower ones shattered and fell below, to the world of creation.³⁹ This “shattering of vessels” (*shevirat ha-kelim*) created the “shells,” or “peels” (*qelippot*), forces of evil, prevailing in the universe’s lower reaches, or on its left side. Sparks (*nitzot*) of light remained entrapped among the peels. Humanity’s task was to release and gather them to accomplish cosmic healing (*tiqun*). The *shevirah* was a cosmic disaster, but it made human free will possible. Humanity could now choose between good and evil and improve the creation.

The first *tiqun* was not, however, human. *Adam ha-Qadmon* repaired the broken vessels by shaping the isolated spheres into five *parzufim*. The three upper spheres required only minor alteration and became *Arieh Anpin* (the Patient One) and *Abba* and *Imma* (father and mother), but the seven lower spheres were radically reconfigured as *Zeir Anpin* (the Irascible) and his *Nuqvah* (female), known also as the Blessed Holy One

gates), the version edited by Shemuel Vital (vols. 5-11); *Ez Hayim* (tree of life, vols. 1-2), the version edited by Meir Poppers; *Sefer ha-Liqutim* (collected homilies, vol. 15), edited by Poppers; and *Sefer Mevo Shearim* (the gates’ entry, vol. 4), edited by Yaakov Zeman and Natan Shapira.

³⁹ Kabbalah had four divine worlds: emanation (*Azilut*), creation (*Beriah*), formation (*Yezira*) and action (*Asiyah*). Luria added another, preceding them: the world of points (*Nequdim*), the isolated spheres that shattered.

and His *Shekhinah*. To accomplish the *tiqun*, *Abba* and *Imma*, the parent gods, gave birth to *Zeir* and *Nuqvah*, the children. Like the future Eve, *Nuqvah* was initially part of *Zeir*, and then sawn apart from his back, so she could turn and face him. The masculine and feminine divinities, *Abba & Imma* and *Zeir & Nuqvah* could now join together in face-to-face embrace, assuring the flow of divine bounty.⁴⁰

Cosmic harmony was temporary. Adam's sins and, later, Israel's transgressions repeatedly disrupted the divine order. The *Shekhinah* was the *parzuf* most vulnerable to human transgression, and Luria tracked Her rise and fall through Israel's history. Obedience to the Torah and performance of the *mizvot* (commandments) enhanced the *Shekhinah*, and transgressions, such as worshipping the idols (the Golden Calf), diminished Her. With the Second Temple's destruction, the *Shekhinah* fell as low as the *qelippot*, went into exile, and no longer coupled with the Blessed Holy One. Raising the fallen *Shekhinah*, and encouraging Her union with the Blessed Holy One, was the task of the *tiqunim* that the Lurianic Kabbalah devised, such as midnight prayer and study (*tiqun ḥazot*), or the Friday evening welcoming of the *shabat* (*kabalat shabat*). The *tiqunim* made it possible for the *Shekhinah* to collect sparks entrapped among the shells, and the

⁴⁰ Luria's account of the *tiqun* includes several turns. Especially important is the moon's diminution (*miut ha-yareah*): Departing from the *midrash* (*Bavli*, *Hulin* 60b) that the moon was diminished in comparison with the sun when it contended that "two kings could not wear one crown," Luria speaks of the waning and waxing of the *Shekhinah* (the moon) during the creation, and after. *Ez Hayim*, *Kol Kitve ha-ARI*, 2: 184-194, 6:36:1-4. *Ez Hayim* is sub-divided into sections according to palace, gate and chapter, and *Mevo Shearim* according to gate, part and chapter. My references list the section after the page.

sparks, in turn, facilitated divine unions. Israel's mission in exile was to facilitate the *Shekhinah*'s task: They "became subject to the seventy nations to release the sparks from amongst them."⁴¹ When enough sparks had been gathered, the *Shekhinah* will be restored, united with the Holy Blessed One, and redemption will come forth.

The *Zohar*'s obscure Kings of Edom became Luria's major parable in telling the creation story. In most Lurianic accounts, the kings appear as the seven spheres that shattered because they could not contain the bounty of divine light, or as sparks that came to inhabit the spheres, causing them to shatter, then dropped and died.⁴² The feminine sphere *Binah* (understanding), the future *Imma*, nurtured the kings in her womb, and they are sometimes described as pure thought, product of female *moḥin* (brains).⁴³ As in the *Zohar*, the kings embody the primordial universe's instability, and Luria attributed the instability to the spheres' inability to form *parzufim*.⁴⁴ The kings' deficiencies vary in

⁴¹ *Sefer ha-Liqutim* (on Psalms 80), *Kol Kitve ha-ARI*, 15: 440. See also: Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 284.

⁴² *Sefer Shaar Maamarei Rashbi*, *Kol Kitve ha-ARI*, 6: 188-190, 203-214 (henceforth: *Rashbi*); *Ez Hayim*, 1: 113-117, 2:8:4-6, 144-165, 2:11:1-10. The eighth king (*Genesis* 36:39), Hadar, who had a wife, Mehetabel, did not die. He represented the *tiqun*: *Ez Hayim* 1: 140, 2:10:3.

⁴³ *Rashbi* 163-66; *Ez Hayim* 1: 115, 2:8:6, 2: 221-230, 6:40:1-3. Kabbalists believed that the human seed originated in the brain.

⁴⁴ In *Ez Hayim* 1: 135-36, 2:9:8, the kings represented only the feminine *Malkhut* sphere, hence they were called *melakhim* (kings). The *tiqun* will add the other nine spheres to each *parzuf*.

different Lurianic narratives: They represent harsh judgment and sexual impotence (*Rashbi* 105-107, 203-214, 305-310), and, especially in earlier accounts, impure peels and the foreign nations (*Sefer ha-Liqutim* 89-108 on Genesis 36).⁴⁵ But most accounts present them as essential to reconstructing the creation: Their purge, separating their sparks from their peels – scholars speak of catharsis – contributed, in one fashion or another, to shaping the *parzufim* and facilitating their unions.⁴⁶ In late Lurianic narratives, the kings become virtually martyrs for healing the world (*Rashbi* 167-68; *Ez Hayim* 2: 221-230, 6:40:1-3; *Mevo Shearim* 19, 2:1:5). Israel’s chief oppressor and the *Zohar*’s moribund Edom became for Luria martyr and healer of the universe.

The *Zohar* (2: 254a-b) associated the four rabbis who pursued mystical ascent (“entered Pardes”: *Bavli Hagigah* 14b) with the Ten Martyrs (*Aseret Haruge Malkhut*) who fell victim to the Romans.⁴⁷ Rabbi Aqiva belonged in both groups. He was the single one to come out unharmed from the mystical ascent, hence was granted

⁴⁵ See Ronit Meroz, *Geula be-Torat ha-ARI*, 141-42 for the early development of the Lurianic vision of the Kings of Edom.

⁴⁶ The spheres that dropped to the lower worlds served as *malbushim* (garments) for their spheres so they could better contain the divine light and avoid shattering (*Rashbi* 203-214); the kings’ remains served to build all four worlds (*Ez Hayim* 1: 36, 1:1:4); their holy sparks repaired the spheres and enhanced divine unions (*Rashbi* 163-6, 305-310; *Ez Hayim* 1: 118-137, 9:1-8, 2: 221-230, 6:40:1-3).

⁴⁷ *Midrash Ele Eskerá*, ed. by Adolph Jellinek (Leipzig: A. M. Colditz, 1853); *Ekhah Rabbah* 2:4; *Ekhah Rabbah* 2:8, ed. S. Buber; *Midrash Tehilim* 9:13, ed. Buber. The legend of the Ten Martyrs is recited in prayers on Yom Kippur and the Ninth of Av.

martyrology. The martyrs' bodies, the *Zohar* explained, were sacrificed to appease the *sitra aħra*, the Romans, so as to release their souls for ascent, as sparks, to perfect the upper spheres. The *Zohar* circle debated whether the souls of Israel's tribes, Jacob's twelve sons, could have reincarnated (*gilgul*) in the Ten Martyrs to receive punishment for Joseph's sale to slavery, but they did not associate the Ten Martyrs with the Kings of Edom or ascribe to the kings a redemptive role.⁴⁸

The Safed halakhists and kabbalists from Joseph Karo to Cordovero to Luria dwelled on martyrology. Cordovero and Luria deliberated on the relationship between tribes and martyrs, and Cordovero used the *Zohar*'s expression for Aqiva's mystical ascent – עלה במחשבה – in connection with the Edomite kings' partaking in cosmic improvement.⁴⁹ Luria made the daring move of identifying the Kings of Edom with the

⁴⁸ Ashlag's reading of *Zohar* 254b, associating kings and martyrs, is Lurianic and anachronistic: *Sefer ha-Zohar im perush ha-Sulam*, translation and commentary by Yehudah Ashlag, vol. 5. For the reincarnation debates: Yosi Yarhi, Maamar "Aseret Haruge Malkhut," 12-30.

⁴⁹ *Sefer Shiur Qomah* (Warsaw: Yizhak Goldmann, 1882), p. 65d; *Or Yaqar, Sefer ha-Zohar im Perush Or Yaqar*, 23 vols. (Jerusalem: "Or Yakor" Organization, 1989), 11: 292, 22: 89. On tribes and martyrs: *Or Yaqar* (on *Zohar Hadash* to *Ekhah*), 17: 195; *Rashbi* 167-68, 305-310. Esther Liebes expounds on Cordovero's martyrology, based on unpublished chapters of his *Sefer Elimah*, and finds in Cordovero identification of the kings and martyrs: "Cordovero and Luria: A Reexamination of the Myth of the Kings of Edom's Death," in: *Maayan Ein Yaacov*, ed. by Bracha Sack (Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion

Ten Martyrs.⁵⁰ He assigned them the role of generating human souls by raising *mei nuqvin*, the “feminine water” that facilitated the union of masculine and feminine divinities.⁵¹ The Kings of Edom’s purge released their sparks (*Ez Hayim* 1: 118-137, 9:1-8, 2: 221-230, 6:40:1-3). They engraved Adam’s *parzuf* on the *qelippot*, and from

University in the Negev, 2009), pp. 32-60. *Pace* Liebes, Cordovero stopped short of such identification.

⁵⁰ The idea was revolutionary, and Luria moved tentatively as he had difficulty reconciling the kings as martyrs and harsh judgments. In an early commentary (*Rashbi* 301-310), written by Luria himself (Gershom Scholem, “Ketavav ha-amityim shel ha-ARI,” *Qiryat Sefer* 19:2 [1942]: 195), the martyrs and kings appear in consecutive homilies (on *Zohar Hadash* to *Ruth* and *Zohar* 254b), their association implied but never stated. In *Rashbi* (167-68) and *Ez Hayim* (2: 221-230, 6:40:1-3), the kings appear as the martyrs’ predecessors, but they are not their equal in holiness: Their bodies are purged of peels to rescue sparks whereas the martyrs’ bodies are said to become the equivalent of spirit. The martyrs intervene at a historical juncture when the kings ceased to be effective. *Mevo Shearim* (19, 2:1:5) is the single place where “Luria” declares the kings and martyrs one group and removes any ambiguity. Could the explicit association be the redactors’ work rather than Luria’s own?

⁵¹ The *Zohar* implied that the righteous’ souls promoted divine unions, and fifteenth-century kabbalists, notably the Spanish Shem-Tov ben Shem-Tov, intimated the kings’ role in generating new souls. (Yosi Yarhi, Maamar “Aseret Haruge Malkhut,” 85-88.) But Luria first imagined the martyrs and kings raising *mei nuqvin* to sustain a permanent cosmological *tiqun*.

Adam's image sparks emerged to create human souls (*Rashbi* 163-66). The Edomite kings began the creation's healing.

The kings' *tiquin* was insufficient. The purged *qelippot* stuck to *Zeir* and *Nuqvah*'s backs (*Ez Hayim* 1: 113-117, 2:8:4-6, 2: 221-230, 6:40:1-3). Until Adam (*Adam ha-Rishon*), through his prayers and *mizvot*, removed them, the Holy Blessed One and His *Shekhinah* could not couple face-to-face.⁵² Adam's *tiquin* made their union possible: "Man in the lower world enabled through his deeds union in the upper one" (*Ez Hayim* 1: 115, 2:8:6). Had he not sinned, the world would have lingered in messianic bliss, as the Blessed Holy One and His *Shekhinah* remain in constant embrace. Adam's transgression meant that they could only face each other when coupling, separated thereafter, and stood back-to-back (*Rashbi* 163-66; *Ez Hayim* 2: 221-230, 6:40:1-3). History – the Flood, the Patriarchs, and Israel – represented cosmic ups and down, the Patriarchs' virtuous deeds enhancing heavenly union, Israel's transgressions retarding it. The universe hung in the balance, Israel's adherence or betrayal of the *Torah* determining its course and prospect.

The Second Temple's destruction threatened a cosmic catastrophe. All divine unions, even that of *Abba* and *Imma*, ceased. The kings' sparks could no longer raise *mei nuqvin* (*Rashbi* 167-68). Only the souls of the Ten Martyrs, whose bodies turned into spirits, restored a measure of cosmic normalcy, raising feminine water that made occasional union of the exiled *Shekhina* and the Holy Blessed One possible (*Ez Hayim* 2:

⁵² To conceive Adam, *Zeir* and *Nuqvah* had to escape the peels by climbing to *Abba* and *Imma*'s palace and coupling there, their single encounter face-to-face before Adam's *tiquin* (*Rashbi* 163-66; *Ez Hayim* 1: 113-117, 2:8:4-6).

221-230, 6:40:1-3). Thus, the kings and martyrs were the righteous whose souls made cosmic procreation possible (*Mevo Shearim* 19, 2:1:5). Lurianic Kabbalah instructed that prayers on the righteous' graves had special power to restore divine unions (*zivugim*) and generate new souls. Those who prostrated themselves on the graves joined their souls with the righteous to advance messianic healing.⁵³ Kabbalists, it would appear, communed with the Kings of Edom as part of *tiquin*.

Luria's Edom martyrology is the intellectual development the historian least expects. Edom was irrevocably Christian, and Edom eschatology prevailed in Luria's biblical homilies (*Sefer ha-Liqutim* 76-78, 89-108). The homilies offer an alternative myth of the Kings of Edom, merging eschatology and cosmogony, Edom of *Midrash* and Kabbalah. According to the alternative, the kings' purge represented cosmic separation of sparks properly belonging to Israel from Edom's peels, and the purged peels constituted the "field of Edom," the *sitra aħra*.⁵⁴ The sparks that raised feminine water

⁵³ On the Lurianic practice of mystical *yihudim*, unifying the kabbalist's soul with the soul of a pious living teacher or that of a righteous dead, and on the generation of new souls in saintly impregnation (*ibur*) or as reincarnation (*gilgul*), see: Menachem Kallus, "Pneumatic Mystical Possession and the Eschatology of the Soul in Lurianic Kabbalah," pp. 159-185; Jonathan Garb, "The Cult of the Saints in Lurianic Kabbalah," 203-229.

⁵⁴ See also: *Mevo Shearim* 150-52, 3:2:14. Isaiah Tishbi, *Torat ha-Ra ve-ha-Qelippah be-Kabbalat ha-ARI* (the doctrine of evil and the peel in the Lurianic Kabbalah) (Jerusalem: Aqademon, 1965), pp. 41-2 highlights this vision. Luria may betray here a debt to pre-Zoharic kabbalistic tradition: *Kabbalot Rabbi Yaakov ve-Rabbi Yizħak benei*

were not of the kings but of Jewish martyrs, and the martyrs appear on the Day of Judgment with garments soiled with blood to exact vengeance upon Edom. Lurianic Kabbalah provides alternative visions of the Kings of Edom, but the main current opts for cosmic healing – the Kings as martyrs – over messianic vengeance.

Shaul Magid discerns in “Luria and his disciples ... interest [in] the contours of being human, its limitations and possibilities. ... The repopulation of the Land of Israel and the return of many conversos to the Jewish fold [meant that] communal borders were being redrawn and many identities were in flux.”⁵⁵ The conversos could call Luria’s attention to the relationship among martyrology, shifting religious identity, and shared humanity. If the Kings of Edom bear traces of such concerns, they are hard to track. Luria never articulated them. He made no effort to reconcile his two visions of the Kings of Edom. Marginalizing eschatology, he liberated Edom from its Christian bondage and transformed the foremost Jewish typology. But, as he left the Edom eschatology intact, messianic vengeance was incomprehensibly visited upon an Edom whose kings were martyrs advancing cosmic redemption.

Independently of the Edomite kings, Jacob went through a major transformation in the Lurianic Kabbalah. The historical Patriarch vanished together with the biblical narrative recounting his travails, and reemerged as a divinity identified with *Zeir Anpin*. Jacob, Leah and Rachel were personal countenances of the primary *Parzufim*, *Zeir* and

Rabbi Yaakov Hacoheh, ed. by Gershom Scholem, 82-102; Ronit Meroz, *Geula be-Torat ha-ARI*, 141-42; Yosi Yarhi, Maamar “Aseret Haruge Malkhut,” 87-90, 98-101.

⁵⁵ From *Metaphysics to Midrash: Myth, History, and the Interpretation of Scripture in Lurianic Kabbala* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008). P. 35.

Nuqvah. *Zeir* appeared as Israel from the chest up, and as Jacob or Yeshuron from the chest down.⁵⁶ Leah & Rachel were, respectively, Israel and Jacob's *nuqvah*; *Zeir* coupled with Leah in the upper spheres and with Rachel in the lower ones (*Ez Hayim* 2: 126, 5:32:5; 203-204, 6:38:2). Luria occasionally called the diverse countenances *malbushim*, garments that endowed a divinity with an altered appearance, usually a more protective one, conducive to its cosmic mission. Just as biblical Jacob artfully traded garments to change his appearance, so he did in heavens, beginning as a Jacob *parzuf*, separate from *Zeir*, and becoming *Zeir*'s Israel *parzuf*. Jacob remained for Luria the choice of the Patriarchs: Abraham and Isaac represented only aspects of *Zeir*, Jacob-Israel constituted *Zeir*'s identity, his entire *Parzuf* (*Ez Hayim* 2: 206, 6:38:2; *Shaar ha-Pesuqim* 82-83, section 33).

Cosmogonic Jacob was central to Luria but remote from biblical and midrashic narratives. Jacob, Leah and Rachel emerged as divinities in the aftermath of the Edomite kings' downfall, part of the first *tiqun*. Luria recounted in minute detail their creation, changing countenances and cosmic location, and manifold coupling (*Ez Hayim* 2: 109-118, 5:31:1-5; 184-221, 6:38:1-9). Jacob & Leah were formed, respectively, from the backs of *Abba & Imma* that were damaged by the *shevirah*, but Jacob received also illumination from *Zeir*, making him at home in the lower and upper spheres alike. *Zeir* and *Nuqvah* (Rachel), in contrast, were born to *Abba & Imma*, with Rachel attached to *Zeir*'s back. Just as the future Eve would be taken from Adam, Rachel was separated,

⁵⁶ Luria offers here an unusual homily. Unlike hairy Esau, Jacob was “a smooth (*halaq* חלק) man” (Genesis 27:11). Luria suggests that *halaq* means *mehulaq*, split (*Ez Hayim* 2: 221; *Sefer Shaar ha-Pesuqim*, *Kol Kitve ha-ARI*, 7: 66, section 27).

sawn apart (*nesirah*), from *Zeir*, so that she could turn around and couple with *Zeir* face to face. Leah & Rachel presaged Adam's two wives: The first, Lilith, was made of peels purged from Leah, the second, graceful Eve, taken of Adam. Both pairs presaged Rabbi Aqiva's two wives, the first, a Roman convert, wife of a wicked governor (*Bavli*, *Avodah Zara* 20a, *Nedarim* 50a-b), descended from Lilith but had Leah's soul, the second, called Rachel, was daughter of a rich Palestinian Jew (*Shaar ha-Pesugim* 72-73, section 30; *Ez Hayim* 2: 204, 6:38:2). Jacob-Adam-Aqiva: Luria's cosmogonic and historical typology marginalized the Jacob & Esau struggle.

Rachel represented the *Shekhinah*, the divinity closest to the people of Israel, merciful carrier of their hopes, but vulnerable to the peels, and dependent on *Zeir*. Leah, in contrast, represented strict noble judgment and, residing in the higher spheres, was less vulnerable to the peels. Fearful that she was destined for Esau, who was born like her out of judgment, she cried, her eyes filled with tears, her judgment was mitigated by grace, and she was given to Jacob.⁵⁷ Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah because, like him, Rachel dwelled in the lower spheres and drew illumination from *Zeir*. But Jacob's upper sphere origin and meritorious deeds had him grow into Israel, take over *Zeir*'s upper countenance, and couple with Leah. Weekday prayers encouraged the multiple unions among Jacob-Israel, Leah and Rachel: The morning prayer enhanced Jacob & Rachel's union, the afternoon prayer, that of Israel and Leah, and the evening prayer, that Jacob &

⁵⁷ Luria reworks the homily on "Leah had weak eyes" (Genesis 29:17) in *Bavli*, *Baba Batra* 123a; *Tanhumah* 4; *Tanhumah* 12, ed. Buber; *Zohar* 2: 29b; *Ez Hayim* 2: 204; *Shaar ha-Pesugim* 73 (section 30).

Leah.⁵⁸ Luria transformed the meaning of Jewish ritual and biblical and midrashic stories.

Esau made only a fleeting appearance in Luria. Like Jacob, he was formed of *Abba* in the first *tiquin*, but, descending through Isaac (representing judgment) on the universe's opposite side, he stood as a twin on Jacob's left, the *Zeir* of the peels (*Ez Hayim* 2: 123-124, 5:32:2, 377, 7:48:3). Esau, too, originated in holiness, and his hair was the legacy of upper divinities.⁵⁹ His proximity to Isaac on the universe's left side explained his father's love for him, but he never became part of Jewish genealogy (2: 122-23, 5:32:2). He competed with Jacob for divine illumination, the blessings, and, standing by Jacob, left no room for *Zeir*'s coupling. He was lured away from his position to wander in the peel field, Jacob moved over and took his place, thereby making room for Rachel to come from behind *Zeir*, couple with *Zeir* face to face, generating divine bounty that descended on Jacob. Coming back, Esau recognized, to his chagrin, what had just happened, to no avail (2: 123-124). Luria's incestuous play with interchanging divine identities aside, he reduced Jacob & Esau's historical struggle to a single cosmological event of limited significance.⁶⁰ The *Zohar* had already severed the Edomite

⁵⁸ Sefer Shaar ha-Qavanot, Kol Kitve ha-ARI, 8: 125-28 (qeriat shema), 9: 9-14 (shinui ha-Tefilot).

⁵⁹ *Abba* and *Imma* had white hair. There was mercifully no *tiquin* in the peels' upper spheres (or evil would have overwhelmed good), hence Esau (*Zeir* of *sitra aħra*) retained their hair, which turned red, whereas Jacob was smooth: *Ez Hayim* 2: 377, 7:48:3; *Shaar ha-Pesuqim* 66, section 27.

⁶⁰ For a different Lurianic account of the blessings: *Shaar ha-Pesuqim* 67-68, section 27.

kings from the Jacob & Esau narrative. In *Ez Hayim*, Jacob & Esau's struggle rarely surfaces, Jewish culture's central motif, as if vanished.

Luria made biblical history from Adam to the Flood to the Patriarchs to the Egyptian exile to the desert saga tell theogonic stories, but theogony could not retain the coherence of the biblical narrative (*Ez Hayim* 2: 121-136, 5:32:2-9). The Jacob story, the travails of the nation's wandering father, presaging Israel's exile, was lost. Luria may have enchanted the world, making Jewish daily life into a work of redemption, a permanent *tiquin*. Rachel as the *Shekhinah* amplified her traditional role as the mother crying for her lost children in exile. But it is difficult to imagine *Zeir's* heavenly coupling as eliciting equivalent empathy to traditional Jacob of *Midrash*. Whether in times of oppression or emancipation, cosmogonic Jacob was irrelevant to Christian-Jewish relations. Gershom Scholem berated nineteenth-century liberal Jews for turning Jacob into a German civil servant. He overlooked the earlier and more profound subversion by his protagonist, Isaac Luria.

Yet, for all his influence, Luria did not end up subverting the traditional Jacob. Luria had written little, and his disciples, above all Hayim Vital (1543-1620), recorded his teaching. Much of Vital's work was not published until the *Haskalah*, in the 1780s, when it had already left its major mark. In an age of expanding print culture, Lurianic Kabbalah uniquely made its impact through manuscripts, copied by the thousands but guarded by kabbalists. Lurianic Kabbalah enjoyed reputation as the most advanced but it shaped Jewish culture in conjunction with the *Zohar* and alternative kabbalistic works, as Isaiah Halevi Horowitz's (c. 1558-1630) *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit* (two tables of the

covenant $\pi^{\text{על}}$).⁶¹ Like the *Zohar*, *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit* retained the Edom eschatology. The Jacob of *Midrash*, however kabbalistically inspired, continued to dominate biblical commentary. Indeed, Vital's own commentary, *Ez ha-Daat Tov* (tree of knowledge of the good) reflected eschatology at variance with Lurianic cosmogony.⁶²

Ez ha-Daat Tov merged a kabbalistic Jacob healing Adam's infractions with the Edom eschatology. Vital viewed Jacob's sojourn with Laban as presaging Jewish exile and subjection to Edom and interpreted Jacob's dream, following *Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 29b)*, as divine reassurance of redemption from Edom after much travail (*Ez ha-Daat 1: 15a-17b*). Much like Nahmanides, he saw Jacob's negotiations with Esau on his return to Israel as predictive of Jewish-Roman relations and hinting at the final redemption (1: 23a-b). Jacob splitting his household into two camps (Genesis 32:7) presaged Israel's strategy for diasporic survival between Edom and Yishmael. Vital delighted in Jewish survival. Yishmael, albeit a robber, was a refuge from Edom.

The new element in Vital was his reintroduction of Yishmael and his comparison of Jewish fate under Christian and Muslim rule. Edom, said Vital, persecutes to convert,

⁶¹ *Sefer Shenei Luhot ha-Berit ha-Shalem*, 4 vols. (Haifa, Israel: Mekhon Yad Ramah, 1992).

⁶² *Sefer Ez ha-Daat Tov*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Ahavat Shalom, 2000), 1: 6a-23b. Vol. 2 includes commentaries on *Psalms* and the *Megillot* not included in the 1906 edition. Vital reports that the commentary originated in his youth but he recorded it in old age. It is primarily pre-Lurianic but reveals Lurianic traces. The genre, biblical commentary as opposed to Kabbalah, seems to me more crucial in explaining Vital's retention of the Edom eschatology than his biography.

Yishmael robs; Edom claims the souls, Yishmael extorts and threatens the bodies. Spanish and Portuguese conversos (*anusim*) are returning to Judaism by the tens of thousands only to face Yishmael's persecution (2: 82a).⁶³ In the aftermath of a century of Ottoman rule in Palestine, Vital was disillusioned with the prospect of a Jewish-Muslim front against Christianity. He may have left Jerusalem in 1585 to avoid persecution. Safed, going through rapid decline, became towards the end of Vital's life a shadow of the city of his youth, and he lived in Damascus. In his Psalms commentary, Vital amended the Four Empires vision, predicting a fifth last exile under Yishmael, subsequent to Edom, the harshest of all (2: 80-81a).⁶⁴

Shenei Luhot ha-Berit, a synthetic kabbalistic work of ethics, homiletics and *halakhah*, did much to spread the Kabbalah in Central and Eastern Europe, and provided an alternative kabbalistic vision of Jacob & Esau.⁶⁵ Jacob & Esau were polar opposites,

⁶³ Shaul Magid, "The Politics of (Un)Conversion: The "Mixed Multitude" ('*Erev Rav*') as Conversos in Rabbi Hayim Vital's '*Ets Ha-Da'at Tov*,' *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 95:4 (2005) 625-666.

⁶⁴ This innovation (Psalm 124) has no parallel elsewhere in Vital. The *Psalms* commentary is extant in only one manuscript, and Vital's statement seems odd. But the deprecation of Yishmael, together with Edom, appears elsewhere, and abides by the traditional eschatology. It has parallels among other contemporary kabbalists, e.g., Natan Shapira who resurrects the splitting of the Fourth Empire between Edom and Yishmael: *Sefer Torat Natan* (Lemberg: Salat, 1884), p. 13a.

⁶⁵ Horowitz wrote the book as an ethical will to his family after his arrival in Jerusalem in 1620. His son, Shabbetai Sheftel Horowitz, published it in 1648 in Amsterdam.

morally, physiologically and cosmologically. Jacob embodied the world to come – which, for Horowitz and other kabbalists, was identical with the messianic age – and Esau this world. Worldly Esau resembled the Protestant hunter and a glutton, but he was also an arch-demon, dweller of the *sitra ahra*. Jacob, in contrast, was an ascetic mystic and divine.

In the kabbalistic worldview, the universe was linguistically constituted. The Hebrew alphabet embodied cosmic properties, its letters, especially the tetragrammaton, God's holy name, foundational to the creation.⁶⁶ For Luria, the *parzufim* reflected different configurations of the divine name. Horowitz innovated on Jacob & Esau's names. The letter *yud* (י) signaled the number ten – the Torah's ten commandments. When *yud* (י), the Torah, was added to *akev* (אָקֵב, heel, but also to follow, i.e., the world that follows) to create the name Jacob (יַעֲקֹב), Jacob prevailed over Esau, and the world to come triumphed over the material world.⁶⁷ When Jacob's descendants neglected the Torah, Esau overcame (1: 390-91).

However, the homilies on the supernal letters in Jacob & Esau's names originated in the 1590s in a commentary on his father, Abraham Horowitz's *Emek ha-Berakhah* (blessed valley).

⁶⁶ The late antique Palestinian *Sefer Yezirah* had first expounded the idea, the twelfth-century Provençal *Sefer ha-Bahir* took it over, and *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz*, and then the *Zohar*, elaborated it. See the *Zohar* section for the full references.

⁶⁷ This is a homily tying together Genesis 3:15 and 25:26. God tells the Serpent (Esau): “[Eve's descendant (Jacob)] will crush your head, and you will strike his heel (*akev*

Jacob & Esau were part of Horowitz's ascetic discourse on consumption, particularly eating (1: 390-98).⁶⁸ Conceiving of the human body as a microcosm, a pair of pipe-like organs, the esophageal (ושט) and trachea (קנה), embodied the two characters, the first passing food, the second conveying speech, "Jacob's voice." When the esophageal expanded, Satan and the material world triumphed, and Horowitz advised a set of ascetic practices, designed to assure the trachea's predominance. Jacob bought the birthright, the world to come, and the trachea by obliging Esau's esophageal (with lentil soup). He restored the birthright that had been lost by Adam, regaining the *yud* (י) attached to עקב and symbolizing the trachea. The trachea's physiognomy resembled the divine throne and holy palace, and Jacob purged the upper spheres of Esau's idol worshipping. Jacob was carrying out the Patriarchs' unified project. Esau embodied the threat – *halakhic*, moral, and physical, internal and external – to Jacob-Israel.

Horowitz depicted the Patriarchs as martyrs, and found the meaning of Israel's exile in suffering that prepared the people, and the world, for redemption (3: 84-104). The Patriarchs healed the creation by offering their lives to sanctify God's name (3: 87, 101).⁶⁹ Their lives were spared so they could give birth to the nation of Israel. Whether in practice or thought, the Patriarchs all experienced *Galut* (Exile, 3: 91). Jacob's travails

עקב).” “After this, his brother [Jacob] came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob.” Horowitz elaborates here on *Zohar* 2: 111a.

⁶⁸ Horowitz's homiletic point of departure is Jacob's vow (Genesis 28:20) to accept God, if God provided him with bread to eat and clothes to wear.

⁶⁹ Abraham was thrown into a fire oven for testifying to the Lord (*Bereshit Rabbah* 38:13); Isaac consented to be sacrificed to God (Genesis 32).

at Esau and Laban's hands purged the impurity passed on from the Serpent and assured that he becomes Israel and that his descendants release themselves from the impure peels. Jacob was Israel in heavens and Jacob on earth, and Esau was Samael (Satan) in heavens and Esau on earth (3: 88, 111). The struggle between them went on in both realms, and focused on the sphere *Binah*, the world to come. Isaac knew that Esau could not inherit the world to come, but, recognizing his holy roots, wished to sanctify his worldly dominion. Jacob had to cunningly present himself in Esau's garments, marking this world, to win the blessing and complete the creation's healing (3: 94-97). The triumph was complete when King David issued from Jacob, red like Esau, marking the conquest of bad inclination (3: 89-90).

Jacob & Esau's final meeting represented a crescendo (3: 109-118). The person with whom Jacob struggled on the eve of his meeting with Esau was Samael, heavenly Esau, the fallen archangel who libels Israel before God. Samael complained that, against the Torah's injunction, Jacob married two sisters (3: 110).⁷⁰ He injured Jacob's thigh to mark the transgression. Jacob still triumphed, becoming El (a god) and Israel, one who struggled with gods and men and overcame them (3: 117). Horowitz took pains, however, to depict Jacob's struggle as spiritual and not physical, so he could convert Jacob's conduct into a contemporary guide for action, a "pillar of the Diaspora." The prayers Jacob offered to be saved from Esau instructed his descendants that prayer would substitute for sacrifices, once the Temple was destroyed. The gifts he sent Esau were

⁷⁰ The *Mishnah* (Kidushin 4:14) maintained that the Patriarchs observed the Torah.

Naḥmanides (on Genesis 26:5) explained that they did so without obligation but only in the land of Israel. Jacob could marry sisters abroad.

equivalent to the goat (*seir*) offered in the Temple to pacify Samael (3: 114-15). In the future, Israel would likewise have to widely use bribe to relieve oppressive foreign decrees.

Just as Jacob prepared with gifts, prayer and arms, so do we with Esau's descendants, but our power is only to pray to God in time of trouble, and fighting against the nations is not our mission. "War" means [today] that the *shetadlanim* (interceders, pleading for Jews) dare their face in front of kings and ministers, and, when rejected, return, all the same. ... [Jacob guides] our worship: [His] "gifts" are charity, his "prayer" is still prayer, and his "war" is repentance, the conquest of the evil inclination. ... All three bring forth redemption. ... This is the foundation sustaining the Diaspora for all generations to come until our righteous Messiah arrives (3: 118).

Shenei Luhot ha-Berit retained the Edom eschatology but its vision of the Jacob & Esau struggle and the future redemption was non-violent. Interpreting Balaam's oracle, Horowitz maintained that "there is something like redemption everyday: [Israel is] like a lamb among seventy wolves, and the Blessed Holy One saves us. [We], recipients of the miracle, just do not recognize it" (3: 359). Complete redemption will come in due time – the date is set – but it could come earlier, if Israel repented. Exile (*Galut*) purified and softened, its curse was also a blessing. The Diaspora assured Israel's survival: "If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape" (*Genesis* 32:9) (3: 118, following *Genesis Rabbah* 76:3 and Nahmanides). Horowitz's messianic craving was strong but he channeled it away from history and towards mystical *tiqun*:

Exile allowed for a viable Jewish life, for permanent *tiqun*. He emphasized self-sacrifice and moral regeneration and left historical intervention to God. He found redemption in the everyday, retained eschatology yet softened it, assuring it did not provoke the *Goyim* (non-Jews). Acknowledging the viability of a Jewish community under foreign rule, Horowitz exemplified early modern messianism.

Lurianic Kabbalah, with its emphasis on martyrology and *tiqun*, shared important aspects of Horowitz's messianism, but, theurgic rather than just mystical, it manifested deeper tension between patient restoration and messianic expectation. The Safed kabbalists anticipated imminent redemption and designed a permanent framework for redemptive work. A look at the *sidur* of German rabbi Jacob Emden (1697- 1776), a compendium of prayer, ritual and *halakhah* composed by a scholar not uncritical of kabbalistic traditions, would corroborate the Safed Kabbalah's profound influence on daily Jewish life.⁷¹ Luria entrusted the messianic task, collecting sparks through devotional practice, to collective Israel, but a kabbalistic elite was to lead the effort, and a personal messiah was by no means ruled out.⁷² Marginalizing the Edom eschatology and centering on *tiqun*, Luria redrew the portrait of the Messiah as a kabbalist, remote from the traditional Messiah, leading the military charge against Edom. Without Edom's diminution in the early modern Kabbalah, a pathetic messiah like Shabbetai Zevi would be inconceivable. The waning of Edom was a precondition to both the *modus Vivendi* Christians and Jews increasingly imagined and the greatest messianic explosion in early modern Judaism.

⁷¹ Sidur ha-Yaavaz: Amudei Shamayim, Beit Yaaqov, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Eshkol, 1993).

⁷² Ronit Meroz, Geula be-Torat ha-ARI, 328-359.

Christian Hebraism and Edom

The sacralization of kabbalistic works, as the *Zohar*, presented a stark contrast to Christian Hebraist scholarship, which began historicizing rabbinic texts. Paradoxically, interest in Kabbalah gave rise to Renaissance Hebraism in Pico della Mirandola and his student, Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522). Reuchlin was a humanist jurist versed in Hebrew and rabbinic commentary. He successfully defended the Talmud against a coalition of Jewish converts, the Inquisition, the Dominicans, and the universities, trying to launch a Spanish-style conversion bid in Germany.⁷³ Reuchlin asserted that Jewish books' offenses were minor, they contained Christian wisdom, and they were necessary for Jewish practice. These views became common tenets of Protestant Hebraism.

The Protestant search for the *Hebraica veritas* reflected, among others, hopes of settling biblical scores with both the Catholics and the Jews. Expanding Hebrew presses facilitated access to Hebrew writings. Beginning in the second half of the sixteenth-century, universities as Altdorf, Basel, Heidelberg, Leiden and Leipzig established chairs of oriental languages. In Basel, Johannes Buxtorf the Elder (1564-1629) composed a bibliography and dictionaries of rabbinic literature and the first ethnographic study of the synagogue. Buxtorf was involved, as business agent, editor and censor, with the Jewish press.⁷⁴ Over the next century, Hebraists wrote several theologico-ethnographic studies of Jewish life, and published translations of Hebrew biblical commentaries, *Midrash*,

⁷³ Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500-1750* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 47-53.

⁷⁴ Stephen Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564-1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth-Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

Targum, the *Zohar* and medieval Jewish and Christian polemics. They established massive Hebrew libraries in universities, royal courts and the Vatican.⁷⁵ Christian knowledge of Jewish culture increased exponentially.

The Hebraists' encounter with the European Other, and especially with the wrath Jews had poured on Christians for a millennium through Esau and Edom, evoked ambivalent responses. In their works, the Hebraists can be seen struggling with their feelings, revealing intermittently respect and contempt, anger and pity. They created both the largest compendium of Jewish anti-Christian polemics, Eisenmenger's *Entdecktes Judenthums* (Judaism exposed), a mine for future antisemites, and the first society, founded in 1730 in Halle, for cross-cultural understanding between Christians, Jews and Muslims as precondition for missionary work.⁷⁶ Nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft des Judentums* used the Christian Hebraists, and some regard them as founders of Jewish Studies.

Unlike medieval Hebraists, the Protestant professors were usually not active missionaries, but converting the Jews remained a goal, and they engaged in polemics, or advised on how best to advance it. Most came out against the host desecration and blood libels, and a good number protested the attack on the Talmud, insisting that the Jews had

⁷⁵ Frank Manuel, *The Broken Staff: Judaism through Christian Eyes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁷⁶ Johann Andreas Eisenmenger's *Entdecktes Judenthums* (Königsberg, 1711); Christoph Rymatzki, *Hallischer Pietismus und Judenmission: Johann Heinrich Callenberg's Institutum Judaicum und dessen Freudenkreis (1728–1736)* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2004).

the right to worship as long as they did not insult Christianity. They highlighted Jewish mistrust and hatred of non-Jews, and condemned it as inhuman, but they sometimes explained it as a result of Christian mistreatment, and they tried to ascertain, philologically and historically, charges they levied against the Jews. They could not envision a Christian commonwealth accepting the Jews as members: Theirs was not Unitarian or Deist politics, which sought to expand the religious parameters of citizenship.⁷⁷ Rather, they viewed the Jews as an ethno-religious culture, existence of which amidst Christian society should be tolerated and regulated. Theology and ethnography mixed in their understanding of Jewish life.

Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin suggests that the paradigm of censorship set the parameters of *modus vivendi* between Jews and Christians in early modern Europe, and the Hebraists exemplified it.⁷⁸ Jews were recognized as a minority culture on condition that they suspended anti-Christian polemics. Christians were free to continue non-coercive missionizing but when the Jews claimed – as they did with Eisenmenger – that a book put their community at risk, political authorities could intervene to suppress publication. Protestants, Catholics and Jews alike shared the censorship paradigm. The apologetics of Solomon ibn Verga, Leon (Yehudah Aryeh) Modena (1571-1648) and Menasseh ben Israel skirted theology, and highlighted Jewish ethnic virtues. Early modern Jewish silence on Christian Edom abided by the *modus vivendi*.

⁷⁷ Shmuel Ettinger, “The Beginnings of the Change in the Attitude of European Society towards the Jews,” in: *Studies in History*, ed. by Alexander Fuks and Israel Halpern (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), pp. 193-219.

⁷⁸ The Censor, the Editor, and the Text□, esp. the Conclusion.

Johann Christoph Wagenseil's (1633-1705) confrontation with Edom embodied the Christian Hebraist's ambivalence. Professor of oriental languages and theology at Altdorf, his *Tela ignea Satanae* (the fiery darts of Satan), a major collection of medieval Jewish polemics, showed him trying, and failing, to contain his rage and arbitrate Jewish claims.⁷⁹ Publishing anti-Christian polemics was controversial, and Wagenseil constructed a Christian Hebraist tradition to legitimize his project. He opened with a prayer to Christ to convert the "wretched Jewish race," and promised that his tireless exposition of anti-Christian polemics would assist missionary efforts. His rhetoric about secret Judaism was malevolent but it aimed most to establish his scholarly authority. He provided a preliminary account of the *Mishnah* and *Talmud*'s formation, and came out forcefully against prohibiting them. For all their nonsense, "there are many useful things in [them], and they advance learning" (63-64). Beginning with "the wretched Jews," he ended up with a plea for the preservation of Jewish culture. Were his emotional turmoil not evident, one would suspect esoteric writing.

⁷⁹ *Tela ignea Satanae: hoc est arcani, & horribiles Judaeorum adversus Christum Deum, & Christianam religionem libri Aneklotoi* (fiery darts of Satan, that is, the secret and horrible books of the Jews against Christ, God, and the Christian religion) (Altdorf, 1681).

http://books.google.com/books?id=0xMtAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Tela+ignea+Satanae&hl=en&ei=7B64TdC9KMLTgAfpw-Rz&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&sqi=2&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false, accessed 23 April 2011.

Wagenseil proposed instructing the Jews. Those who pray for vengeance against Christian Edom should be shown “in word and deed ... that we are not their enemies and the name ‘Edomite’ is not appropriate for us.”⁸⁰ “For a long time now the [Holy] Roman Empire has been different from [the one] deservedly labeled in the Talmud ‘wicked empire’ (*Regni impii*, p. 216).” But, then, Wagenseil turned the table and used Edom to argue that Jewish-Christian brotherhood, as articulated by Abrabanel, should have prohibited Jews from taking interest from Christians (or Muslims) (599-608). He cited the Talmudic story (Rosh-Hashanah 19a) of the Jews protesting to the Romans: “Are we not your brothers, children of one father and one mother? Why do you discriminate against us among the nations with your harsh decrees?” Jacob & Esau betrayed a common humanity prohibiting usury.

Wagenseil was scathing of *halakhic* opinions that suggested that the Prophets had abolished Edom’s brotherhood, Christians were not brothers, and taking interest from them was permissible. The authorities, or the Jews themselves, Wagenseil fumed, should have censored these opinions (604). He called upon magistrates to take firm action to restore illegitimate Jewish profits to Christians, so they were not reduced to poverty.

⁸⁰ Presenting Christianity anew to the Jews to gain their confidence was also the guiding theme of Jesuit Hebraist, theologian and censor, Franz Haselbauer. His *Gründlicher Bericht von dem Christenthum* (German and Judendeutsch), 2 vols. (Prague: Colleg. S.I., 1719-1722): 1: 1-8 conducts more traditional polemics against Edom but opens with: “The Jews have been living among Christians for sixteen centuries, and they still do not know the truth about basic Christian beliefs.” To counter the Idumaeon origins of Christianity, Haselbauer underlines Jesus’ Jewishness.

Scholarly arbitration of Jewish claims ended up with a call for Christian control of Jewish life, the effort to draw brotherhood from Jewish sources with calls for repression. This was a warning sign for the Enlightenment. Dormant typologies and withering eschatologies created an early modern *modus Vivendi*, which universal humanity, the move to reconcile Jacob & Esau, could endanger.

The Reconciliation in Thirty Years War Painting

Universal humanity emerged most transparently in paintings of Jacob & Esau's reconciliation. Until the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), a succession of civil and religious conflicts that devastated Central Europe, the reconciliation did not figure prominently in discourse or art. In popular medieval and early modern comedies, the reconciliation served as a happy end (often followed by a typological explanation of Jacob's election) but the scene seldom appeared in churches or illustrated bibles, and biblical commentaries marginalized it.⁸¹ Seventeenth-century painting, especially Flemish and Dutch, revealed increased interest in Jacob & Esau. Portrayals of the birthright sale and of Issac's blessing remained prominent, but there was unprecedented

⁸¹ "Jacob," in: *The Towneley Mysteries* (London: J. B. Nichols; William Pickering, 1836), pp. 45-48; "The Historie of Jacob and Esau" [1568], *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature* in 18 Volumes, ed. by A.W. Ward, A.R. Waller, W.P. Trent, J. Erskine, S.P. Sherman, and C. Van Doren (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907-21), V: 125-26. The oldest English Bible, the illustrated Anglo-Saxon Hexateuch (Pentateuch & Joshua) of the second quarter of the eleventh-century, shows Jacob & Esau embracing, with Esau's retinue of armed men in the background. (Library of the British Museum, Cotton Claudius B. IV, 10570.tif, f. 51.)

attention to the reconciliation. The search for European peace between Catholics and Protestants recalled the peace the biblical brothers made to end their life-long conflict.

Peter Paul Rubens' (1577-1640) oil sketch model (c. 1624) of the reconciliation may have set the pattern for Netherlandish painting.⁸² **Photo?** Rubens foregrounded Jacob dressed in blue, heading a family camp of women, children, servants, camels and cattle. His left hand on his heart, as if asking forgiveness, Jacob prostrates himself, stretching his right arm to a robust Esau, who is dressed in red, heading an armored camp, a horse and soldiers behind him. Full of emotion, Esau opens his arms to embrace Jacob, while Jacob's right arm holds on tentatively to Esau's arm, his eyes querying, begging, and his expression ambiguous. Rubens' understanding of Genesis is literal: The typology of Jew and Christian is gone. The protagonists retain their biblical characters, but they channel the helpless civilian population's hope for an end to military violence, the reconciliation posing a stark contrast to contemporary Europe.⁸³

⁸² National Gallery of Scotland:

http://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/online_search/4:324/result/0/5656, accessed 2 May 2011.

⁸³ Several painters, notably Flemish Abraham Willemsens (1627-1672), drew the reconciliation after Rubens. Dutch painter Jan Victor (1619 – 1677 CE), who had Portuguese Jews for patrons, provided an altogether different framing. He depicted a black bearded Jacob prostrating himself, asking for forgiveness, his family on his side, his left hand on his heart, a staff in his right hand, Esau and his camp nowhere to be seen – reconciliation as a prayer for mercy. (Jacob Seeking Forgiveness of Esau, Indianapolis Museum of Art.)

Rembrandt's reconciliation pen-drawing (c. 1655) had motifs similar to Rubens but he portrayed Jacob & Esau in a firm embrace, an armed Esau bending over a partially hidden, prostrating Jacob, almost overwhelming him with the embrace, and a dame, possibly Rachel, seated on a camel, watching.⁸⁴ The reconfiguration of biblical characters in light of Amsterdam's multicultural tapestry was most evident, however, in Rembrandt's painting of Jacob on his deathbed, blessing Joseph's children (c. 1656): An elderly bearded Jacob reclines on a pillowed bed, and, by his bedside stands Joseph (possibly Rembrandt's Dutch patron), wearing an oriental hat, his Egyptian wife by him, and crouching on the bed are the two European-looking grandchildren.⁸⁵ **Photo?** Jacob and Joseph's dispute on who of the two grandchildren should get the elder's blessing vanishes, and the characters project generational and ethno-religious harmony.⁸⁶ The

⁸⁴ Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn, *The Reconciliation of Jacob and Esau*,

Kupferstichkabinett – Museum of Prints and Drawings, Berlin:

<http://www.artbible.info/art/large/87.html>, accessed 2 May 2011. Rembrandt's Jacob & Esau paintings included also a pen-drawing of the birthright sale and a painting of Jacob wrestling with the angel (c. 1660, *Gemäldegalerie*, Berlin): A red clad, reddish haired Jacob, looking almost like Esau, struggles – or does he embrace? – an effeminate angel, as if foreshadowing tomorrow's reconciliation, characters reversed.

⁸⁵ *Jacob Blessing the Children of Joseph*. *Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister*, Kassel (Germany): <http://www.artbible.info/art/large/421.html>, accessed 2 May 2011.

⁸⁶ But the new types do not lose their grounding in biblical narrative, or in recent biblical commentary. The sale of the birthright to Jacob commonly highlights the Protestant hunter-glutton Esau.

Netherlands escaped the Thirty Years War's ravages, but memories of the civil and religious conflicts that had torn Spanish Flanders apart from the predominantly Protestant North two generations before were alive, and the fragility of the new arrangements was evident. Netherlandish painting parted with Christian typology to present Jacob & Esau as protagonists of European reconciliation.

The break with theology in favor of universal humanity was most pronounced in two reconciliation paintings of German baroque painter Johann Heinrich Schönfeld (1609-1684). Schönfeld's life and work represented a struggle to overcome the Thirty Years Wars' rifts.⁸⁷ He was born to a Protestant family of goldsmiths in Biberach on the Riß, a Swabian town with a mixed Protestant and Catholic population. Blind in one eye and his right-hand disabled, he trained in painting in southwestern German towns, as Memmingen and Stuttgart. The area was devastated in the early 1630s by the fights between imperial and Swedish troops, and Schönfeld left. In 1633, he arrived in Rome, joining a German colony of Netherlandish and Dutch painters. Training in Italy was customary, even for Protestant painters, and Schönfeld found a powerful patron in the Orsini family. In 1637-38, he moved to Naples and stayed there until 1650. His first reconciliation painting dates to his time in Rome (1634-35), and the second to Naples (1640-42). He returned to Germany in 1651, married in Ulm, and, in 1652, became a burger and master in Augsburg. Augsburg, celebrating the 1648 restoration of joint

⁸⁷ Christoph Bellot, "Schönfeld, Johann Heinrich," *Neue deutsche Biographie* (Berlin: Schinzel-Schwarz, 2007), XXIII: 408-409. Hermann Voss, *Johann Heinrich Schönfeld: Ein Schwäbischer Maler des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Biberach an der Riß: Biberacher Verlagsdruckerei, 1964) has a biography and 79 paintings.

Protestant-Catholic rule (*paritätische Reichsstadt*), became his home. He had both Catholic and Protestant patrons, among them the Archbishop of Salzburg (where his paintings stand in the Cathedral and the Archbishop's Residence). A 2011 Salzburg exhibition celebrated him as the international German baroque painter par excellence.

Schönfeld's Jacob & Esau do not display strong individual characters, their red and blue clothing the only sure way of marking them apart. In the first reconciliation painting, they march toward the horizon, away from the viewer, with their backs turned.⁸⁸

Photo? The landscape is rocky, a camp of nomads, camel riders, herders and sheep on one side, a single sitting classical figure on the other. The second painting adds Roman ruins to the landscape, a sitting Roman soldier replaces the lonely classical figure, and a group of soldiers stand behind the seated Roman. **Photo?** Jacob & Esau embrace, their profile turned to the viewer. The troops behind Esau contrast with the pastoral nomads behind Jacob, but Jacob and Esau's figures are similar. Schönfeld dissociated the reconciliation from the biblical narrative. Jacob & Esau become universal types, and the reconciliation gains significance when posed against paintings such as "Battle Image" (*Schlachtenbild* 1640; called also "Pyrrhic Battle"), depicting a bloody battlefield. The classical setting cannot mislead: Protestants and Catholics in the Thirty Years War are

⁸⁸ Conservator Verena Graf of the *Kunsthistorisches Museum*, Vienna, introduced me in June 2001 to Schönfeld's reconciliation paintings, at the time in restoration. Lee Sorensen of Lilly Library at Duke University called my attention to Protestant German painters getting their training in Rome. Herbert Pée, *Johann Heinrich Schönfeld: Die Gemälde* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1971).

signified. Conscious de-historicization and de-typologization of the biblical story suggest that shared humanity must overcome historical and religious conflict. Jacob & Esau reconcile a confessionally fractured Europe.

***Haskalah* Traditionalism: Jacob & Esau in Mendelssohn's Bible**

If Schönfeld de-historicized Jacob & Esau so he could see them as contemporaries, Enlightenment biblical scholarship acquired critical distance toward Christian typology precisely by historicizing the Bible as a document of an ancient culture. Historians traditionally track the modern crisis of biblical authority to seventeenth-century French rationalism, or to English Deism or to eighteenth-century German historical theology and biblical scholarship.⁸⁹ They regard the gradual transformation of the Bible from sacred text to cultural document as reflecting secularization's inevitable march in the wake of Enlightenment. Recent scholarship has attenuated this view by insisting that Enlightenment expressed itself as much in exploration of new forms of religiosity as in attacks on established churches and orthodoxy. Secularization consisted as much in proliferation of religious movements and in reconfiguration of biblical attachments as in desacralization of polity, community and

⁸⁹ Klaus Scolder, *The Birth of Modern Critical Theology* [1966], trans. by John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1990); Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*, trans. by John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); Henning Graf Reventlow, Walter Sparn and John Woodbridge, eds., *Historische Kritik und biblischer Kanon in der deutschen Aufklärung* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988).

religious text.⁹⁰ The Jewish enlightenment, the *Haskalah*, sustains this view, as does Jacob & Esau's fate in the age of Enlightenment. The *Haskalah's* Bible, the *Biur* (commentary, 1780-83) – a German translation of the Pentateuch, printed in Hebrew letters, and accompanied by Rashi, the Aramaic *Targum*, and a Hebrew commentary by Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) and his colleagues – retains the traditional Jacob & Esau typology.⁹¹

The Jewish *maskilim*, advocates of educational reform and acculturation, began coalescing in mid-century into a Jewish Republic of Letters in urban centers, from Königsberg to Breslau to Berlin to Hamurg-Altona to Amsterdam and London. They constituted an alternative intellectual elite to the rabbis, and, like the rabbinic network, they tied Europe across borders. Their number was small – writers numbered in the tens, the reading audience in the hundreds – but they set intellectual trends that, in the aftermath of the French Revolution and Jewish emancipation, appear to historians as the

⁹⁰ Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); David Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah and German Religious Thought* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000); Dale Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Eric Wilhelm Carlsson, *Johann Salomo Semler, the German Enlightenment, and Protestant Theology's Historical Turn* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2006).

⁹¹ Moses Mendelssohn, *Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom*, 9 vols. (Vienna: Anton Schmid, 1818; reprint: Jerusalem, 1974). This edition includes an additional commentary, “ha-Korem” (the winegrower), by Mendelssohn's student, Herz Homberg.

first Jewish encounter with modernity. By the late 1770s, they established in Berlin a school, and launched the *Biur*; by the mid-1780s, they had a press and a Hebrew journal, *Ha-Measef* (the gatherer; המאסף). In the Berlin salons, Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals regularly met. Christian Wilhelm von Dohm's 1781 proposal for extension of economic and civil rights to the Jews – a first such German proposal ever – was a major topic of debate. Dohm set the context for *Haskalah* reform in the 1780s, just as French emancipation would set it for the 1790s.

Naphtali Herz Wessely's "Words of Peace and Wisdom," the *maskilim*'s 1782 manifesto, argued for the compatibility of education in the arts and sciences with rabbinic visions.⁹² But the *maskilim*'s relationship with the rabbinic elite became, in the 1780s, confrontational – a "culture war," says Shmuel Feiner.⁹³ Campaign rhetoric concealed the codependence of *Haskalah* and rabbinic culture. The early reform urge came from within rabbinic ranks, and traditional eighteenth-century rabbis, as Jacob Emden of Altona-Hamburg, manifested growing acculturation. Parallel Catholic, Protestant and Jewish theological enlightenments served as a context for educational reform, and David

⁹² *Divre Shalom ve-Emet* (Berlin: Hīnukh Naarim/Jüdische Freyschule, 1782); Naphtali Herz Wessely and David Friedländer, *Worte der Wahrheit und des Friedens an die gesamte jüdische Nation* (Vienna, 1782), www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10570911-0, accessed 18 June 2011.

⁹³ *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 87-183.

Sorkin emphasizes their traditionalism.⁹⁴ There was no unified rabbinic opposition to the *Haskalah*: The *Biur*, Moshe Samet shows, became part of traditional rabbinic libraries.⁹⁵ Andreas Gotzmann further insists that the rabbinic establishment was never as anxious about the *Haskalah* as its rhetoric may suggest: Communal structure never came under stress.⁹⁶ Only emancipation would bring modernity's pressures to bear on the *Kehilah*.

A 1793 work, *Besamim Rosh* (fragrance of rabbi Asher), by the *maskil* rabbi Saul Berlin (1740 – 1794) showed hyperbolically how vested the Jewish enlightenment was in rabbinic culture. Feigning to be a medieval halakhic *responsa* collection, to which the editor, Berlin, only added a commentary, Berlin pushed *halakhic* logic to its unreasonable limits. In a carnivalesque fashion, he parodied the perversity of the contemporary

⁹⁴ The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁹⁵ “Moses Mendelssohn, Naphtali Herz Wessely and Their Generation's Rabbis” (Hebrew), in his: *Ha-ḥadash Asur min ha-Torah: Chapters in the History of Orthodoxy* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Dinur, 2005), pp. 67-92.

⁹⁶ *Jüdisches Recht im kulturellen Prozeß* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), pp. 70-106; idem., “On the Confrontation of Maskilim and Rabbis at the End of the Eighteenth-Century” (Hebrew), in: “*The German-Jewish History We Have Inherited*”: *Young Germans Write Jewish History*, ed. by Henry Wassermann (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 2004), pp. 11-35.

halakhic regime and, at the same time, offered possibilities for reforming it from within. Berlin articulated the *Haskalah* in rabbinic idiom.⁹⁷

The *Haskalah*'s course was shaped, however, as much by political developments as by internal Jewish debates. In October 1781, Emperor Joseph II issued the first *Toleranzpatent* (Edict of Toleration) for Jews, a series of Austrian decrees, beginning in Bohemia and extending later to the other Austrian provinces, removing economic and educational restrictions on the Jews. The edicts reinforced the urgency of Dohm's proposals. Dohm argued that education and economic opportunities, and the prospect of citizenship, would transform the Jews. Joseph II's *Toleranzpatent* was halfway measure, he thought; he, Dohm, would do better, by envisioning citizenship.⁹⁸ He conceded that contemporary Jews showed a range of liabilities, but insisted that political oppression had shaped them the way they were, and they had no peculiar national vices; others would respond to oppression the same way. Christians should be educated to accept the Jews.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Saul ben Zevi Hirsch Berlin, *Sefer Shelot u-Teshuvot Besamim Rosh* (Berlin, 1793); Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, pp. 335-341; Talya Fishman, "Forging Jewish Memory: Besamim Rosh and the Invention of Pre-Emancipation Jewish Culture," *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi*, ed. by Elisheva Carlebach, John Efron and David Myers (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998), pp. 70-88; Moshe Samet, "Besamim Rosh by Rabbi Saul Berlin" (Hebrew), in his: *Ha-ḥadash Asur min ha-Torah*, pp. 45-66.

⁹⁸ Robert Liberles, "Dohm's Treatise on the Jews: A Defense of the Enlightenment," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XXXIII* (1988): 29-42.

⁹⁹ Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden, esp. I: 26-39, 142-44.

Dohm gave eloquent expression to enlightenment universalism – to empathy with the downtrodden, rethinking of religious prejudice, and belief in the malleability and improvement of human character.

Mendelssohn first drew Dohm’s attention to the “Jewish Question” by asking him to help defend the Alsatian Jews against a wave of popular anti-Semitism.¹⁰⁰ His engagement in the debate on Dohm’s proposals shaped his mature philosophy. Scholars as Alexander Altmann and Jacob Katz regarded Mendelssohn as the first modern Jew, maker of the “image of the future,” but Mendelssohn’s hopes for historical progress in Christian-Jewish relations remained modest to the end.¹⁰¹ He intervened in the Dohm debate by publishing a German translation of Menasseh ben Israel’s 1654 *Vindicae Judaicae*, with an introduction, supporting Dohm but criticizing the view that Jews were especially in need of “improvement.”¹⁰² He confronted Dohm’s enlightenment civic

¹⁰⁰ The term “Jewish Question” entered political discourse in the 1750s with the British debate on the naturalization of Jews, and it became widespread with the German debates on emancipation in the 1840s. (Jacob Toury, “The Jewish Question – A Semantic Approach,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* XI [1966]: 85-106.) Dohm’s memo on the Alsatian Jews was printed as an appendix to *Verbesserung der Juden*, I: 151-200.

¹⁰¹ Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973); Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), esp. pp. 47-79.

¹⁰² *Menasseh ben Israel Rettung der Juden*, with an introduction by Moses Mendelssohn, “as an appendix to military counselor Dohm’s essay *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung*

virtue with pre-enlightenment defense of Jewish virtue. Dohm's proposals and Joseph II's *Toleranzpatent* exceeded his expectations and pushed him to imagine Jews as citizens. He did so in his magnificent *Jerusalem* (1783).¹⁰³ He redrew the boundaries between natural religion and Judaism, state and religion so that neither Christianity nor citizenship could encroach on the *Torah*. Natural religion and politics were made sufficiently capacious to allow for the Jewish citizenship but sufficiently narrow to leave room for Jewish law. Judaism emerged as the rational religion *par excellence*, the one most compatible with the civic order.

The *Biur* shows Mendelssohn an enlightened traditionalist, a culmination of early modern Christian-Jewish coexistence, rather than an emancipation philosopher. His translation and commentary alike put a premium on philological precision. To combat kabbalistic homiletics, he recalled medieval commentators, above all the literalists Ibn Ezra and Rashbam, but also Rashi and Ramban. Mendelssohn, and his colleague Solomon Dubno who wrote most of the *Genesis* commentary, omitted well-known homilies about Jacob & Esau. At crucial moments, however, the typology resurged: “[S]ometimes the elder serves the younger,” said Dubno, “as will be after our restoration,

der Juden” (Berlin: Friedrich Nicolai, 1782). Mendelssohn also responded to the orientalist Johann David Michaelis, Dohm's critic, who disqualified Jews from citizenship on account of their unsuitability for military service (as well as their racial difference and Mosaic political constitution): *Verbesserung der Juden*, II: 72-77.

¹⁰³ *Jerusalem, or: On Religious Power and Judaism*, trans. by Allan Arkush, intro. and commentary by Alexander Altmann (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1983).

and sometimes the younger serves the elder, in our time, in our sins (Genesis 25:23).”

There were occasional echoes of critical scholarship – Esau & Jacob served also as hunter and shepherd types – but theology still reigned supreme: Rebecca loved Jacob because “she recognized his perfection (תומתו) and knew also God’s will (Genesis 25:28).” In interpreting Esau’s blessing (Genesis 27:40), *Midrash* was allowed in: Esau triumphed when Israel sinned and transgressed the Torah. Nahmanides was cited to the effect that God urged Israel not to provoke the Edomites, a hint to Jewish-Christian relations. The *Biur* abided by the rules of the early modern *modus vivendi*: The typology withdrew into the background to avoid giving offense to Christians, but it remained intact.

Mendelssohn’s limited expectations for Jewish-Christian relations may explain the *Biur*’s silence on Jacob & Esau’s reconciliation. The dots above “and he [Esau] kissed him [Jacob]” cried out for clarification, but it never came, and Rashi, relating the controversy over the genuineness of Esau’s reconciliation, stood above the commentary, unchallenged (Genesis 33:4). In his supplementary commentary to the 1818 edition, Herz Homberg (1749-1841), Mendelssohn’s student and colleague, and the leading Austrian-Jewish reformer, intervened: Esau, a hunter, he said, could not possibly have behaved like disingenuous courtiers (נימההצר הזייפנים) – he cried with all his heart.

Homberg already witnessed emancipation in Western Europe, Mendelssohn still thought within early modern limits. Cautiously, in the name of our “our rabbis,” the *Biur* suggested (Genesis 32:8) that Esau’s anger was great but Jacob’s prostration turned his heart for the good. Esau imagined that Jacob was surrendering the birthright, and, hence, his feelings of mercy welled. Early modern *modus vivendi* was founded on concealment of Jewish expectations for the end of days.

What did Mendelssohn envision for messianic times? Commentary on the oracle on the nations in Numbers 24, the *locus classicus* for messianic Edom prophecies, gave a measure of his thoughts in the early 1780s. Like ibn Ezra and the medieval literalists, Mendelssohn (and Aaron Friedenthal, who wrote the Numbers commentary) insisted that most of the prophecies – including “a star shall come out of Jacob” – referred to biblical and not to messianic times: Why would we imagine fighting all the nations, asked the *Biur*? But, in settling controversies on the Four Empires, the *Biur* left no doubt: Rome was the last one. Toward the oracle’s end (v. 24) – “ships shall come from Kittim and shall afflict Asshur and Ever, but they too shall come to ruin” – the *Biur*, hastily and shyly, concluded: “Rome will torture the Hebrew exiles in Assyria, but their day will come, too.” A year later, in *Jerusalem*, Mendelssohn would propound a Jewish vision of universal redemption. In the *Biur*, he envisaged a peaceful messianic age but Edom-Rome had to meet its end. Well into the 1780s, the *Haskalah* tweaked early modern parameters but could not imagine emancipation.

Mendelssohn professed disinterest in history, yet the *Biur* spent great efforts trying to reconcile biblical Edom (Genesis 36) with Idumaeon engagement in the prehistory of Rome. Sixteenth-century rabbis, as Leon Modena, had questioned *Sefer ha-Yashar*’s authenticity, but the *Biur* showed no hint of critical historical consciousness and treated the book as authoritative. Its reconciliation of the Bible and *Sefer ha-Yashar* was sensitive to narrative, but lacked rudimentary source criticism. Concluding the discussion, the *Biur* noted that Rashi’s view that “Chief Magdiel” (v. 43) referred to “Rome” was problematic but proposed that names could still provide hints for the future,

after Nahmanides, “that which happened to our ancestors will happen to us.” Edom-Rome highlights the limits of Mendelssohn’s enlightenment.

Rapidly moving political events and a radicalizing Berlin *Haskalah* quickly overtook Mendelssohn’s enlightenment. French emancipation (1790-91) made Dohm and Joseph II’s idea of gradual integration look timid and presented a stark contrast to Prussian resistance to repeated Jewish appeals for equal rights between 1787-1793. Mendelssohn’s vision of a traditional Judaism compatible with the modern civic order reached a crisis. Younger Berlin reformers, as Saul Ascher and David Friedländer, concluded that only radical reform of Judaism would make Jews acceptable to German society.¹⁰⁴ In 1799, David Friedländer proposed, in an open letter to Wilhelm Teller, head of the Berlin Consistory, that leading Berlin Jewish families would convert to Lutheranism, provided they were exempted from affirming Jesus’ divinity and participating in ceremonies attesting to it.¹⁰⁵ They, in return, would renounce most Jewish ceremonial laws. Friedländer expressed the sentiments of only a fraction of the Berlin patriarchate, but his desperate attempt to create a Judeo-Christian religion suggested, like the closing of *Ha-Measef* in 1797, that the Berlin *Haskalah* had reached a dead-end. Separation of religion and state seemed implausible, and a Hebrew Jewish

¹⁰⁴ Steven Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish community: Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770-1830* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 75-103; Jonathan Hess, *Germans, Jews and the Claims of Modernity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 137-203.

¹⁰⁵ Sendschreiben an Seine hochwürden, herrn Oberconsistorialrath und Probst Teller zu Berlin von einigen hausvätern jüdischer Religion (Berlin, 1799).

culture seemed incompatible with German acculturation. One could not hope to be integrated as a Jew in absolutist Prussia.

Late-eighteenth-century patrician Jewish Berlin transgressed early modern parameters of Christian-Jewish relations but the forms of modern Jewish culture negotiating emancipation, such as Reform and Orthodox Judaism, had not yet emerged to sustain German-Jewish life. The Berlin *Haskalah* would later inspire educational reform elsewhere: in Galicia, where it would be soundly defeated by popular pietism, in Westphalia, where Israel Jacobson (1768-1828) would establish, in Seesen, the first Reform school and temple (in 1801 and 1810, respectively), and in Prague, where moderate curricular and liturgical reforms would set the pattern for the Austrian Empire.¹⁰⁶ For nineteenth-century German Jews, and even for Eastern Europeans, Mendelssohn and the Berlin *Haskalah* became, for good or bad, the fountainhead of Jewish modernity. Jewish historians from Isaak Markus Jost to Heinrich Graetz formed this vision, and many hold on to it today. For Shmuel Feiner, the *Haskalah* was an enlightenment revolution, a Jewish equivalent to the French Revolution.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Dirk Sadowski, "Maskilisches Bildungsideal und josephinische Erziehungspolitik – Herz Homberg und die jüdisch-deutschen Schulen in Galizien 1787-1806," *Leipziger Beiträge fuer Jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur* I (2003): 145-168; Louise Hecht, *Ein jüdischer Aufklärer in Böhmen: Peter Beer* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2008); Hillel Kieval, *Languages of Community: The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), chap. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, pp. 366-374.

Yet, a chasm separated between *Haskalah* and emancipation, the corporate absolutist order and the democratic nation state.¹⁰⁸ “The early discussions of the civic improvement of the Jews,” which sought to make them “useful to the state,” notes Jonathan Hess, “rarely made reference to conceptions of a ‘German nation.’”¹⁰⁹ Dohm’s model for Jewish integration was the Roman Empire, which exemplified, he thought, religious and national pluralism. Precisely because his model was imperial, and not national, he was content to let the Jewish *Kehilah* retain its legal autonomy. Mendelssohn responded by counter-posing Jerusalem to Rome, and suggesting that Jerusalem (and the *Kehilah*) did not require the political sanction Dohm offered them. But, no more than Dohm, could he foresee Jewish citizenship in the nation state, the *quid pro quo* of complete equality for complete integration. Dohm aimed to modernize the well-ordered absolutist state. He lived to witness emancipation in Westphalia (1807) and Prussia (1812) and felt ill at ease. In the *Aufklärung* (German enlightenment) and *Haskalah* debates, enlightenment universalism, author of Jewish emancipation, had not yet settled on the nation as the political site *par excellence*.

All the same, there was a crucial continuity between the enlightened absolutist and national projects: Resolution of “The Jewish Question” became an ultimate test of

¹⁰⁸ For the term “emancipation,” see references in Chapter 5. Dohm spoke of “improving” the Jews and “making them equal” (*gleichstellen*) and not of a right to citizenship.

¹⁰⁹ *Germans, Jews and the Claims of Modernity*, p. 5. Indeed, it was the Jews who were frequently defined as a nation (of foreign origin), whose social integration presented a challenge.

their political viability. Joseph II's Jewish *Toleranzpatent* followed the 1781 edict removing Protestant disabilities, and British discussions of Jewish naturalization dovetailed with removal of the Dissenters' disabilities and Catholic emancipation. But Jewish integration seemed the most difficult – the limit case, a test for Enlightenment theories, statecraft and nation building. This re-centering on the Jews – first since late medieval expulsions – regenerated the Jacob & Esau typology. The rabbinic fantasy of imperial Edom confronting Israel that became a painful reality in medieval Christian Europe was waning with early modern *modus vivendi*. “The Jewish Question” restored it to the center.

Sabbatean Enlightenment? Edom in Eibeschütz and Frank

The best evidence for the Edom typology's vitality in the Enlightenment came not from the *Haskalah* but from hybrid Jewish-Christian Sabbatean movements. In figures as rabbi Jonathan Eibeschütz (1690-1764), a prominent *halakhist*, head of the Prague *yeshiva* then rabbi in Metz and Altona-Hamburg-Wandbsbek, Sabbateanism revealed a divergent enlightenment universalism, one that sought to bring Jews and Christians together through kabbalistic theosophy rather than through natural religion and politics. In Jacob Frank (1726-1791) and his followers, Sabbateanism displayed a mass movement of Jewish converts to Catholicism, with a syncretic theology, claiming to synthesize Jacob & Esau. Among the Moravian Sabbateans, there were founders of a Christian-Jewish Masonic lodge, the Asiatic Brothers of St. John the Evangelist, with a syncretic rite.¹¹⁰ Sabbateanism exemplifies the pluralist Enlightenment emerging from recent

¹¹⁰ Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe 1723-1939*, trans. by Leonard Oschry (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), Chaps. 3-4.

scholarship. It confronts the common narrative of *Haskalah* to emancipation with an equally compelling closing scene for early modern Europe.

The apostate messiah Shabbetai Zevi haunted eighteenth-century Jewry. The shock at his conversion to Islam tore apart Jewish communities. Among the minority continuing to uphold Zevi as a messiah, there were groups, disparagingly called *Dönme* (apostates), who converted to Islam, establishing in Turkey and Greece Islamic-Jewish communities. Openly Sabbatean Jewish communities grew in eighteenth-century Podolia (contemporary southwest Ukraine), and a network of crypto-Sabbatean circles existed throughout Europe.¹¹¹ Kabbalistic Sabbatean works fed into major eighteenth-century Jewish currents, such as the *Hasidut*. Sabbatean hybridity soon extended from Islam to Christianity. With Eibeschutz, it reached into the heart of traditional Judaism, transgressing Christian-Jewish borders more radically than the *Haskalah*.

Sabbateanism forced the Jewish community to move, however reluctantly, toward drawing boundaries of orthodoxy. Several bans of excommunication (*haramot*) were declared against the Sabbateans, with Jacob Emden, Eibeschutz's nemesis, taking the lead. To Emden, monotheistic religions each had a role in God's design, and hybridity confounded it: He urged the Church to burn the Frankists as Christian heretics. Trying to preserve an early modern *status quo*, Emden reverted to a medieval practice, still current in the Iberian Peninsula. The Enlightenment made it possible for Sabbateanism to turn into syncretic universalism but the old corporate order set limits to transgression: Sabbateans had to keep their heads low, and the Frankists were induced to convert to

¹¹¹ Pawel Maciejko, *Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755-1816* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

Catholicism, to the mutual joy of Jews and Catholics. Sabbatean hybridity will dissipate with emancipation precisely because the boundaries of Jewish self-definition will expand well beyond Emden's allowance.¹¹²

The early 1750s controversy over Sabbatean formulae that Emden discovered in Eibeschutz's amulets divided the European Jewish world and spilled over to the non-Jewish press. It overshadowed an earlier episode of interest here. In 1725, a Sabbatean emissary (Frank's uncle) was caught in Mannheim, on a European trip, distributing literature to the underground Sabbatean network. Among his books was a manuscript originating in the young Eibeschutz's Prague *yeshiva*, "Va-avo ha-Yom el ha-Ayin" (I came this day to the spring [of wisdom]).¹¹³ "Va-avo ha-Yom" appeared radically

¹¹² Gershom Scholem, critical of emancipation, saw the Sabbatean and *maskilic* challenges to tradition as congruent: Sabbateanism prepared the grounds for the Haskalah. I view them as incongruent: Emancipation rendered Sabbateanism irrelevant by opening new possibilities for acculturation. Scholem, "Redemption through Sin," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), p. 141. Jacob Katz scrutinized Scholem's view: "The Suggested Relationship between Sabbatianism, Haskalah, and Reform," in *Divine Law in Human Hands* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998), p. 510. References provided by Michael Laurence Miller, "Neophytes, Apostates and Social Memory," paper at the conference on Religion & Identity, Bar-Ilan University, 14 June 2012.

¹¹³ Five mss. are extant. David Halperin made two, Oxford 955, Bodleian Library ms. Mich. 157 and National and University Library, Jerusalem, Heb. 8^o 2491, available to

antinomian, “a *summa* of Sabbatean Kabbalah,” says David Halperin.¹¹⁴ Its portrayals of sexual rites – including homoerotic relationships among the gods – were explicit. It became a foundational work for eighteenth-century Sabbateanism.¹¹⁵ A scandal erupted, leading, a year later, to the Prague anti-Sabbatean ban, which Eibeschutz, typically for crypto-Sabbateans, signed.

In *Va-avo ha-Yom*, as in other Sabbatean works, the God of Israel and his *Shekhinah* are inferior to *Atiqā Qadisha* (Holy Ancient One), an older divinity, identified with *Ariḳh Anpin*, in whose realm the Torah is not binding.¹¹⁶ All three divinities emerge

me, as well as his 2009 AJS paper: “The Hole in the Sheet, and Other Topics in Sabbatian Kabbalah.” Pagination here follows Oxford 955.

¹¹⁴ “Sabbatianism and Kabbalistic Heresy,” unpublished ms. written for: *The Cambridge Companion to the Kabbalah*, edited by Elliot Wolfson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹¹⁵ Yehudah Liebes, “New Writings in Sabbatean Kabbalah Originating in Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschutz’s Circle” (Hebrew), *Mehqerei Yerushalayim be-Maḥshevet Yisrael* 5 (1986): 191-348. Liebes thinks that young Eibeschutz and a leading Sabbatean teacher, Judah Leib (Leibele; Löbele) Prossnitz, jointly wrote “Va-Avo ha-Yom,” but most scholars recognize Eibeschutz as the sole author.

¹¹⁶ These divinities were all as old as the *Zohar*, and Lurianic Kabbalah associated *Zeir Anpin* with the Blessed Holy One and the Israelites’ God. But tradition insisted all were aspects of One Divinity. The Sabbateans, notably Abraham Miguel Cardozo (1626-1706), coined the term “the God of Israel” and restricted him, and the Torah, to the lower spheres.

from the Root (*shoresh*) in *Ein Sof* (one without end), Divinity before the creation. *Atiqa* is the cosmic Head (*rosh*), and the God of Israel & his *Shekhina*, as well as the primal Adam & Eve, had all been part of the Head in their latent state, before they expanded away from *Atiqa* (*hitpashtut*) (7a-8a). Eibeschütz surprisingly identifies the Root with Esau and Seir, and *Atiqa* and the primal Adam and God of Israel with Edom. Esau's name (עשו), he conjectures, meant to do, hinting at the creative role of the *Ein Sof*. Esau was “father of Edom” (Genesis 36:9), as the *Ein Sof* generated *Atiqa*. Edom and Adam both implied silence (דומ *dom* in Hebrew), as one had no right to speak of esoteric *Atiqa* and primal Adam (11b).¹¹⁷ *Genesis* states that kingship in Edom began earlier than in Israel, implying, says Eibeschütz, that the God of Israel was initially under *Atiqa*-Edom's rule and only later became King of Israel, ruler in His own sphere (13b). For the Kabbalah's view of primordial Edom as shattered spheres of unremitting judgment, purged of their impure peels, Eibeschütz substitutes an eternal benevolent Edom hosting the God of Israel.

Atiqa is an abode of tranquility, mercy and holiness in the universe of *Azilot* (emanation). *Atiqa* “loves the nations (*hovev amim*, Deuteronomy 33:3),” and makes no distinction between righteous and sinful, Jew and Gentile (35a-b). But the creation

¹¹⁷ *Zohar* III: 22a (interpreting Isaiah 21:11, “oracle on Dumah”) speaks of Edom's exile as “the burden of silence” (as its end-time is not known), and Moses Cordovero speaks of Edom as “the land of silence” (ארץ הדממה), where divine thought alone performs deeds: *Sefer Shiur Qomah*, p. 65d; *Maayan Ein Yaacov*, p. 21. (In *Ein Yaacov*, however, דממה signals both silence and bleeding.) Neither the *Zohar* nor Cordovero identified Edom with a beneficent god.

requires distinction and balance between grace (*hesed*) and judgment (*din*), and *Atiqa*'s overflowing mercy (*rahamim*) proved catastrophic, triggering the shattering of vessels (11b).¹¹⁸ Esau embodied the creation's problem: Like Luria's Kings of Edom, he was an unstable mix of grace and judgment (7b). His head (*rosh*) was holy, but his hairy body signified judgment. Isaac, who sensed the holiness in Esau, wished to bless him so that mercy may overcome judgment but, as Isaac himself represented judgment (the sphere of *Gevurah*), he could not empower grace (7b). Hence Jacob, smooth and holy in his body, had to resort to trickery to receive the blessings. Jacob is identical with the God of Israel who resides in the sphere of Glory (*Tiferet*) and mediates grace and judgment. While Israel was on its land, the Torah provided a blueprint for the cosmic order.

Israel's exile signaled a cosmic crisis. The God of Israel left the sphere of Glory. He no longer coupled with the *Shekhina*, and the Torah could not retain a cosmic balance (35a). Shabbetai Zevi rectified the situation. Eibeschütz never mentions him by name, but he assumed the role of Jacob and the God of Israel as a cosmic mediator (34b). Sabbateans understood Zevi's apostasy as a descent into the abyss to gather sparks, and perform the great cosmic *Tiqun* (29a). They focused on the sinfulness that Zevi had taken upon himself to initiate redemption. Eibeschütz focuses instead on the ascent. Having collected sparks of mercy, Zevi ascended all the way to *Atiqa*, coupled with it (as

¹¹⁸ An additional distinction, originating in Zevi's prophet, Nathan of Gaza, between "mindless light," the aspect of the *Ein Sof* that is indifferent to the creation, hence destructive, and "mindful light," is central to "Va-avo ha-Yom." *Atiqa*'s overflowing mercy is destructive "mindless light" and rechanneling it so it becomes mindful, i.e., benevolent to the creation, is the messianic *tiqun*.

the *Shekhinah* does with the God of Israel), and thereby established a reliable alternative channel for mercy to flow between the universe's upper and lower echelons (34b-35a).

The true messiah's (משיח האמת), in *gimatria*, Shabbetai Zevi) relationship with Edom-Christianity overcame – or, at least, provided a model for overcoming – the cosmic crisis.

Zevi is the new Jacob (associated with *Zeir* and the God of Israel), but Eibeschütz intimates that he is also Esau. Esau had long been identified with the Serpent, and Zevi's followers called him a “holy serpent.” Eibeschütz notes that Esau is, in *gimatria*, “serpent lives” (נחש חי) – a thinly veiled reference to Zevi (11b). The *Zohar* had stressed that Jacob's cunning had to surpass that of the Serpent Esau, and Sabbateans had Zevi take over Samael and the *sitra aħra*'s demonic qualities to overcome them. But Eibeschütz went beyond such a Jacob & Esau convergence: He intimated Jewish-Christian reconciliation.

For Eibeschütz, Jacob & Esau were, in essence, holy brothers. Esau's holy head was buried with Jacob.¹¹⁹ The Torah commands, “You shall not detest an Edomite for he is your brother (אחיך הוא) (Deuteronomy 23:8).” “He” (הוא), says Eibeschütz, is a different name for *Atiqā* (*rosh*, head), where holy brotherhood between Edom and Israel prevails (7b). Esau's confusion of kindness and judgment made him a source of cosmic instability (and may explain his troubled relationship with Jacob, i.e., the Jewish people), but possessing his body made it possible for Zevi to reach the lower universe, where Jacob and the Torah's hold had always been shaky. Esau was vital to the cosmic order.

¹¹⁹ Eibeschütz quotes Luria, following *Midrash: Sefer ha-Liqutim* (on Genesis 25:28), p. 78; *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* 39, ed. by C. M. Horowitz (Jerusalem: Maqor, 1972); *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Genesis 50:13.

He was the Root, part of the Head, *Atiqā*, and the messiah. Zevi-Jacob-Esau's coupled with Edom-*Atiqā* restored the primal unity of the *Azilit* universe, and the intimacy between Edom and the God of Israel.

Coupling with *Atiqā*, the messiah followed a venerable model for courting a foreign religion. King David worshipped *Atiqā* (35a): “David arrived at the head (*harosh*, the mountain's summit), where he (sic) worshipped God (II Samuel 15:32).”¹²⁰ It was inappropriate for David to do so while Israel was on its land, but “Va-avo ha-Yom” implies that, in exile, and certainly with the onset of the redemption, the Torah is no longer binding on Israel. One should not pray *to* the God of Israel but rather *for* the God of Israel and the *Shekhinah* to join again and bring forth Israel's redemption. This is best done, following Zevi's example, through “enclothement” (*hitlabshut*), donning the host religion's garments – Christianity or Islam (34b-35a). But the meaning of “enclothement” remains unclear. Eibeschutz specifically rejects praying to *Atiqā* – which may be tantamount to Christian conversion – because, without the Jewish messiah's mediation, *Atiqā*'s flow of pure mercy remained destructive, “wasted seed” (זרע לבטלה) that created no cosmic union (34b-35b). Zevi's mediation seems crucial to any Jewish relationship with *Atiqā*-Christianity. The ritual implications remain mysterious – the mystery of crypto-Sabbateanism.

¹²⁰ This follows a Talmudic homily (Sanhedrin 107a), suggesting that David contemplated worshipping an idol, so that the blame for Absalom's rebellion will fall upon his, the King's head rather than profane God's name.

Eibeschutz had close relations with Christian theologians, and rumors circulated that he was a crypto-Christian.¹²¹ His biography would suggest that he was content to live as a traditional Jew, and remain a member of a Sabbatean elite of – dare I say – *maskilim*, aware of the alternative. His *halakhic* works function in the Torah’s realm and not in the Sabbatean world, and he is hypernomian – a strict *halakhist* and moralist.¹²² In his homiletic *Yaarot ha-Devash* (honeycombs), Edom appears as a historical rather than a cosmic agent: as Jerusalem’s destroyer, Israel’s powerful ruler in exile, and the enemy to defeat before Israel is restored.¹²³ Using similar homilies to “Va-avo ha-Yom,” Eibeschutz mentions that Esau’s head contained sparks of holiness, but the context is not Jacob & Esau’s shared holiness, rather, Jacob-Israel collects in exile sparks from other nations (45a).¹²⁴ “Va-avo ha-Yom” and *Yaarot ha-Devash* represent alternative

¹²¹ Pawel Maciejko, “Controverse sur la crypto-chrétienté de Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschutz,” *Les cahiers du judaïsme* 29 (2010): 130-134. Like Scholem, Moshe Arie Perlmutter thinks of Eibeschutz’s Sabbateanism as distinctly Jewish: *Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschutz and His Attitude Towards Sabbatianism* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1947), pp. 146-170, 270-71, 337-38.

¹²² Perlmutter, *Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschutz*, finds Sabbatean hints throughout Eibeschutz’s *halakhic* corpus and treats the works as esoteric writing.

¹²³ 2 vols. (Yozifov, 1866), I: 10a-b, 20a, 24b, 33b, 61a. The title alludes to Samuel I 14:27: Jonathan tastes the honeycomb (literally, forest honey), and his eyes brighten.

¹²⁴ There is, however, no call for vengeance against Edom: The vengeful God’s bloodied clothes in Isaiah’s prophecy (63:1-6) become the royal red of Edom’s governors, a mark of their affluence (10a-b). Edom’s exile appears tolerable. Edom will be punished not

engagements in the world, and Eibeschtütz never reconciled them. They are testimony to a double life.¹²⁵

Sabbatean theosophy was, however, superior to the Torah, wider in scope and time: It encompassed the world of *Azilut*, both prior to the creation and after the messianic restoration. If the Torah remained valuable, it was because the messianic advent had not progressed enough for the Sabbatean *torah de-Azilut* to take over, and it remained inaccessible to most Jews. There were radical antinomian dimensions to Eibeschtütz. His theogony highlighted incestuous relationships – the *Shekinah* was, at one and the same time, the God of Israel’s daughter, wife and mother – and he said explicitly that cosmic survival demanded incest and only the Torah prohibited it.¹²⁶ Yet, Eibeschtütz never drew a picture of the future religion, never clarified the current stage of messianic advent, and never hinted what it meant to live as both a Sabbatean and a great *halakhic* authority. This explains the ongoing scholarly debate on his message.¹²⁷

for inflicting violence on Israel but for Israel’s own transgressions in exile: Their meager share in Edom’s wealth evokes their evil inclination. Ironically, Eibeschtütz offers this commentary as a homily on *Birkat ha-Minim*, the blessing (invective) against the apostates. ...

¹²⁵ Eibeschtütz’s son, Wolf, an aspiring Sabbatean leader, no longer observed Jewish law and fraternized with the Christian nobility. He declined, however, to convert, even for ennoblement. See: Pawel Maciejko, *Mixed Multitude*, Ch. 8.

¹²⁶ *Tiferet Yehonatan* (Jonathan’s glory) (Yozifov, 1873), p. 170.

¹²⁷ David Halperin, who notes Eibeschtütz’s promise of future erotic pleasure (in contrast with his *halakhic* asceticism), sees “*Va-avo ha-Yom*” as “a charter for the world religion

Eibeschütz's student, Carl Anton, a convert to Christianity, defended Eibeschütz in the amulets controversy as a Jew who loved Christians. The association of Edom with *Atiqa* suggests that Christian universalism appealed to Eibeschütz, and Esau's association with the Root suggests that he considered Christianity's cosmic role as crucial. But the God of Israel and the Torah, not Esau and Christianity, held the cosmos together – at least for a while – and redemption still meant restoration of the union of the God of Israel with his *Shekhinah*: “The Lord shall be One and His name One (Zechariah 14:9).” Eibeschütz may have been, at one and the same time, *hovev Torah* and *hovev amim*, lover of the Torah and of “the nations”: Both exist as moments, however incompatible, in his life.

This much is clear: *Zevi* provided a model for how *atiqa*-Christianity's mercy may flow to all and rectify the cosmic catastrophe that caused history's misfortunes, chief among them, the struggle of Christians and Jews. Eibeschütz transcended Jacob & Esau's traditional hostility. Edom turned from a malevolent destructive force to a benevolent dispenser of mercy. Jacob & Esau both had a role in cosmic regeneration. The *Zohar* had established Esau as the cosmic destroyer, and Jacob as the healer. For Eibeschütz, Christians and Jews were holy brothers, victims of the cosmic catastrophe, partners in healing. “The third generation [of Edomites] shall enter into the congregation of the Lord (Deuteronomy 23:9)” (“Va-Avo ha-Yom” 7b).

“Va-avo ha-Yom” circulated widely in the Sabbatean network. The Asian Brothers of St. John incorporated part of it into their Masonic rite.¹²⁸ But it remained a

of the future, rooted in Kabbalistic Judaism but universal in its scope and distinct from any religious system previously known.”

¹²⁸ Pawel Maciejko, *Mixed Multitude*, p. 312, n. 170.

short work addressed to a cultivated crypto-Sabbatean elite. Jacob Frank's "Collection of the Words of the Lord" likewise contained an original vision of Jacob & Esau's reconciliation but it expressed the ideas of a mass-movement leader. The book – if it deserves the name – is a vast disorderly compilation of Frank's dicta on his life and mission. His disciples took minute notes of his every speech from the mid-1770s on. The challenge "Va-avo ha-Yom" presents is esoteric writing and elusive Sabbatean discourse. "Words of the Lord," in contrast, is an incoherent, barely edited text, generated by an eclectic charismatic leader, who claimed divinity.¹²⁹

Frank was born as Yaakov Leib to a Sabbatean family in 1726 in Podolia but grew up in Ottoman urban centers, becoming known as Frank, a nickname for "European." Marrying into a family of the Salonika Dönme, he was initiated, in 1752, into their most radical sect, the *Koniosos*, whose former leader, Berukhiah Russo (Osman Baba, 1677–1720), claimed to incarnate Zevi and the God of Israel. Frank first stuck a claim to the Dönme's leadership as Berukhiah's reincarnation, then, in 1755, returned to Podolia, presenting himself as a Dönme emissary. Frank was organizing the Podolian Sabbateans when he and his disciples were caught, in January 1756, in an antinomian

¹²⁹ *Zbiór Słów Pańskich* is extant in three divergent Polish mss. I used the English translation: "The Words of the Lord [Jacob Frank]," ed., trans., ann. by Harris Lenowitz, www.languages.utah.edu/kabbalah/protected/dicta_franc_lenowitz.pdf, accessed 1 June 2011. For the mss.' composition and dating, see: Pawel Maciejko, "the Literary Character and Doctrine of Jacob Frank's *The Words of the Lord*," *Kabbalah* 9 (2003): 175–210.

ritual (sexual orgy) and arrested. Released as a Turkish subject, he returned to Turkey and converted to Islam.¹³⁰

A Brody rabbinic assembly proclaimed a ban against the Sabbateans, and appealed to the Church to prosecute the offenders. This was a gross miscalculation. Eighteenth-century Poland witnessed a wave of blood and host desecration libels, accompanied by intensified Catholic missionary activities among the Jews. Christian prelates were familiar with both medieval Jewish polemics (via Wagenseil) and kabbalistic literature, especially the *Zohar*. Catholic scholars opined that the Kabbalah elucidated a version of the Trinity and reflected old and authentic Jewish traditions distorted by the Talmud and rabbinic Judaism. Some Church leaders regarded the Sabbateans as representatives of anti-rabbinic kabbalistic traditions, and others were hoping to use them to advance anti-Jewish politics. In response, rabbinic authorities levied prohibitions on Kabbalah study, reinforcing the polarity of rabbinic Judaism and kabbalistic Sabbateanism. The Frankists' answer to the threat of Church persecution was predictable: They claimed to represent anti-Talmudic kabbalistic Judaism, close to Catholicism. They reformulated with artistry kabbalistic-Sabbatean doctrines on the

¹³⁰ Pawel Maciejko, *Mixed Multitudes*, provides a contextual biography of Frank up to his conversion, and beyond. My account is indebted to his groundbreaking work. Scholarly study of Frankism began with Alexander Kraushar whose 2 vols. *Frank i frankisci polscy, 1726-1816* (1895) is now available in English: *Jacob Frank: The End to the Sabbataian Heresy*, trans. from Polish by Herbert Levy (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001). Majer Balaban and A. Y. Brawer's works cited below both provide additional documents.

trine Godhead and the messiah, so they appeared Christian.¹³¹ The local bishop, Mikołaj Dembowski, declared them victorious in the 1757 Kamieniec Podolski disputation with rabbis, extended to them protection as a Jewish group, and ordered a burning of the *Talmud*.¹³²

Dembowski died shortly thereafter, rabbinic persecution of the Frankists recommenced, and the Church was urging them to convert. They began escaping across the border to join Frank. Bishop Kajetan Sołtyk, known for having orchestrated a ritual murder trial, now stepped in, arranging a safe passage for the Frankists to a summer 1759 disputation in Lwów. Frank urged Sabbateans from across the Turkish border to flock to Poland in anticipation of revelation. The Frankists' Lwów theses were pronouncedly Christian, and, in a petition for baptism, they appealed to Christian expectation for Jewish

¹³¹ The Catholic clergy may have helped them formulate their theses. Judith Kalik, "Christian Kabbalah and Polish Jews: Attitudes of the Church to Jewish Conversion and the Idea of 'Jacob's Return' in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 18th Century," *Jewish History Quarterly* (2004): 492-501; Pawel Maciejko, *Mixed Multitudes*, pp. 75-85.

¹³² Majer Bałaban, *Le-Toldot ha-Tenuah ha-Frankit*, 2 vols. in 1 (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1934-35) surveys the documentary sources for the Frankists to 1760 and quotes extensively from the disputations and exchanges between the rabbis and bishops. A. Y. Brawer, *Studies in Galician Jewry* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1956), p. 210-275 covers similar territory, quoting extensively from the major Hebrew source, Ber Birkenthal of Bolechów, "Sefer Divre Binah" (Ms. Hebrew 8□ 7507, Jewish National Library).

conversion by using the rubric of “Jacob’s Return”: “We fulfill the prophecy that the remnants of the house of Jacob will return at the end of days.”¹³³

Biblical prophecy envisioned Jacob’s return as collective redemption: “A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God” (Isaiah 10:21). The return was associated with the Jewish people’s national restoration (Ezekiel 39:25; Micha 5:6-7; Nahum 2:2). Christians, too, conceived of Jacob’s return as collective: the Jews’ conversion. Jacob Frank had a different idea: *He* was the returning Jacob, and *his* house, the “House of Jacob,” was to accept Christianity, Edom’s religion.

The Lwów disputation focused on the blood libel, and it was debated in the non-Jewish press, with German biblical scholars, as Johann Salomo Semler, chiming in as experts. The Frankists alleged, among others, that rabbinic statements on red wine should be understood as hints to Christian blood, since the Hebrew for “red,” *adom*, is

¹³³ As quoted in: Judith Kalik, “‘Jacob’s Return’,” 500. Sources leave it unclear whether Christ was mentioned by name in the theses (compare: Majer Bałaban, *Le-Toldot ha-Tenuah ha-Frankit*, 2: 209 and A. Y. Brawer, *Studies in Galician Jewry*, p. 227) but the petition left no doubt: “Jesus Christ ... was the true messiah.” The Jews’ conversion prior to the Second Coming was central to the Jansenites and German Pietists, and scholars have tracked their influence in Poland. Kalik includes references. See especially: David Bankier, “The ‘Return of the Jews’ in French Jansenism,” in: *Israel and the Nations* (Jerusalem: Historical Society of Israel and Zalman Shazar Center, 1987), pp. 71-86.

evocative of Edom, hence Christianity.¹³⁴ The blood libel remained unresolved but it severed the Frankists' relations to Judaism. During and after the disputation, some three thousand people, in Lwów, Lublin, and Warsaw, converted to Catholicism with great fanfare. Frank negotiated for his mostly poor and uneducated followers collective resettlement on church and nobility estates. His plan for an armed Sabbatean colony never materialized, but the joint pressure of Jews and Catholics created a mass Jewish-Christian movement.

The disputations, *Talmud* burning and ritual murder trials created surreal medieval scenery, but European Jewry's joy at the conversion news, the relief that Jewish identity and communal boundaries were no longer under threat, intimated modern anxieties. Crypto-Sabbateanism evoked no such anxieties. Just a few years earlier, in 1752, Polish Jewry's self-ruling organization, the Council of the Four Lands, had reigned in the public debate on Eibeschutz's Sabbateanism by ordering a stop to pamphleteering. Jacob Emden's witches may be real enough, they reasoned, but his hunt, criticized also in the Christian press, was undermining the Jewish community. Future Prague rabbi, Ezekiel Landau (1713-1793), who arbitrated the Emden-Eibeschutz controversy, applied the lesson in Prague. The city's crypto-Sabbatean community was a matter of public knowledge but Landau declined to move against it. Podolia, where the Council was at

¹³⁴ “When they write: ‘One should try to get red wine,’ they mean, ‘Edom wine.’” The Frankists refer to *Shulhan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayim* 472:11, http://he.wikisource.org/wiki/תעב_חיים_אורה_ערוך_שולחן, accessed 29 July 2012. Majer Bałaban, *Le-Toldot ha-Tenuah ha-Frankit*, 2: 247-48; A. Y. Brawer, *Studies in Galician Jewry*, p. 240.

risk of losing control, was a different matter. Triumphant Sabbateanism, claiming to be true Jacob, could seem more dangerous than even a persecutory Catholic Church. Frankism exposed a curious convergence of past and future – medieval disputation and enlightenment public sphere, persecution of heresy and open display of hybridity, communal boundaries and their transgression – in eighteenth-century Polish-Jewish relations.

Frank had a second extravagant baptism ceremony in Warsaw, and received the name Jacob Joseph, but, shortly after, an ecclesiastical court put him under house arrest to limit his influence on the new converts. For twelve years, he lived comfortably with his entourage at the fortress monastery of Jasna Góra in Częstochowa, Poland's foremost pilgrimage site, shrine to the Black Madonna, patron of the Polish Kingdom. Attending Catholic services, the Frankists also continued their own rituals, observed, but undisturbed, by monks and pilgrims. The local Marian cult inspired Frank to transform pre-conversion Sabbateanism into a syncretic Christian-Jewish cult. No longer did he reincarnate Berukhiah, Zevi and the God of Israel, but his own advent announced the messianic epoch that will culminate with the revelation of the Maiden, his daughter Eve-Rachel-Esther.

Russian troops, putting down the Polish nobility's uprising and enforcing the First Partition of Poland, freed Frank in May 1772. He moved with his entourage to Moravia, where relatives lived. He made a smooth transition from his low class Polish followers to the cultivated upper class crypto-Sabbateans in Brünn (Brno). He now styled himself first a rich merchant then Count Frank (he had been ennobled after his conversion, applying an old Polish law, but failed to get an Austrian title), befriended aristocrats

curious about Sabbateanism, and had audiences with Emperor Joseph II and Empress Maria Theresa, suggesting, at one point, drafting troops to support a war against Turkey. The “Words of the Lord” were mostly noted down in Brünn. His mounting debts and a breach with the Emperor forced him to move, in 1786, to Offenbach am Main near Frankfurt, where he lived in a castle with a formal court, including a Russian prince, keeping Frankist rituals secret and cultivating rumors of royal ancestry. When he died in 1791, most of his Polish followers left, but support from the Prague Sabbateans sustained the community under Eve’s leadership until her death in 1816.

Frank saw himself as the new Jacob, who leads the people to Edom, fulfilling the promise Jacob made to Esau, at their reconciliation, to come to his place. Rabbinic and kabbalistic exegesis had already envisioned Jacob’s return to Edom as messianic. Reading the prophecies on the restoration of Israel’s remnant, the house of Jacob, back into Genesis was unexceptional. Frank, however, read into Genesis the Christian view of the remnant, and Jacob’s return to Edom entailed embracing Christianity, conversion to Edom’s religion, *Das* (הַדָּ) Edom, Roman Catholicism.

Edom connoted Christianity but, geopolitically, it no longer meant the Holy Roman Empire but, rather, contemporary Poland, the *field* of Edom (Genesis 32:3, *sede Edom, Polska*). A popular tradition associated with the Lithuanian Sabbatean, Heschel Zoref (1633-1700), spoke of Poland as the metropolis of Edom, and of the 1648 pogroms as the redemption’s birth pangs.¹³⁵ Frank carried the tradition of Polish Edom on. He

¹³⁵ Zevi Hirsh Koidanover, *Kav ha-Yashar* (1709) (Jerusalem: Haktav Institute, 1982), pp. 333-35, quoting Zoref. Zoref was aware of his Edom’s novelty, and used multiple *gimatria* to explain it. Zefo (Zepho; צֶפּוֹ), Esau’s descendant (founder of the Roman

understood Jacob the Patriarch's donning of Esau's attire to receive Isaac's blessings as a Sabbatean enclothing, putting on Esau's religion to heal the world.¹³⁶ In bringing the Jews to Edom, he was following in Jacob the Patriarch's footsteps, completing his mission. He reshaped the traditional Edom eschatology to deliver a message of imminent redemption in contemporary Poland.

Christianity was but a stage in the redemptive process but it went beyond the Torah. The cross, Frank decided, exemplified the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet, *Alef* (א). Contemporary *Hasidic* rabbis spoke of God's revelation on Mount Sinai as a voice silently uttering the *Alef* for *Anokhi* (I am [the Lord your God]), and a kabbalistic tradition had it that *Genesis* begins with the second letter, *Bet* (ב), because the creation

dynasty), had a *gimatria* equivalent to Poland (פולין). He was the demonic parallel of *Zuf* (nectar) who founded Poland. Redemption and destruction struggled against each other in Poland. Jeremiah 1:14 suggests that "out of the north (*Zafon*, צפון) disaster will break forth" (the 1648 pogroms). *Zafon's* *gimatria* is equivalent to Poland-Lithuania. But redemption, too, will start from Poland: "Awake, O north wind" (Song of Solomon 4:16).

¹³⁶ "Words of the Lord," sections 93, 123, 183, 373, 404, 516, 869. Esau's robe, said to have belonged initially to an ancestor, Nimrod, has elaborate mystical meanings in *Midrash* and Kabbalah. On Frank's fascination with Jacob donning masks: Rachel Elijor, "Sefer Divre ha-Adon' le-Yaakov Frank," in *Mehqerei Yerushalayim be-Mahshevet Yisrael* 16-17 (2001): 471-548.

comes after the world of *Azilit* (emanation), of which one cannot speak.¹³⁷ Whether marking revelation or *Azilit*, Frank opined that the chiefs of Edom (*Alufe Edom*, לופיאדום, נ, Genesis 36:43), the Polish nobility, took possession of the *Alef*, and he, Frank, shall repossess it. Ber Birkenthal of Bolechów reports a dramatic speech, in which Frank enjoined his followers not to fear going through baptism because salvation will come through both the cross and the *Alef*.¹³⁸ In the Red Letters he sent from Jasna Góra in 1767-68, Frank urged Jews to take on “Edom’s holy religion,” and save themselves from the approaching apocalypse.¹³⁹ He led his group outside Judaism by joining historical

¹³⁷ Naftali Zevi Horowitz (Ropshitzer), *Zera Qodesh*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Y. T. Horowitz, 1970): 2: 40a relates the *Alef* teaching of Menahem Mendel of Rymanov (1745-1815). See: Benjamin Sommer, “Revelation at Sinai in the Hebrew Bible and in Jewish Theology,” *The Journal of Religion* 79:3 (1999): 439-440. Thanks to Shaul Magid for this reference. On the *Alef* as *Azilit* and as a motif in Frank, my thanks to Pawel Maciejko for his unpublished: “The Dangers (and Pleasures) of Religious Syncretism.”

¹³⁸ “Words of the Lord,” sections 85, 531, 598, 658, 2158, 2163; Ber Birkenthal of Bolechów, “Sefer Divre Binah,” quoted in: A. Y. Brawer, *Studies in Galician Jewry*, p. 224. Brawer provides a brief biography and context for “Sefer Divre Binah” (pp. 197-209).

¹³⁹ The letters were included in the Frankists’ missives to European Jewry after Frank’s death. (A. Y. Brawer, *Galician Jewry*, pp. 270-272 provides the text; Pawel Maciejko, *Mixed Multitudes*, pp. 184-185, p. 302, ns. 22-23 discusses the extant mss.) The letters were written in red ink, Frank wore red clothes, chose red furnishings, all to allude to

and cosmic, Christian and kabbalistic redemption, articulating them in the familiar Edom vocabulary, promising fulfillment of familiar Edom prophecies, and using a familiar Sabbatean stratagem.

There was, however, a radically new element in Frank's messianism – the redemptive Maiden, a female messiah.¹⁴⁰ The *Zohar* had Jacob take over Adam's role by overwhelming, with Rebecca's aid, the Serpent Esau's cunning, and making it possible for the Holy Blessed One and His *Shekhinah* to join. Lurianic Kabbalah had supernal Jacob-Zeir coupling with Rachel and Leah, and Sabbatean traditions had Zevi reenact Jacob by coupling with supernal entities.¹⁴¹ Frank thought this was all insufficient. From Jacob to Jesus to Zevi, messiahs failed to see that, just as the redemptive union of masculine and feminine divinities required a new Adam-Jacob, it required also a new Eve-Rachel. Zevi (and Berukhiah) made a mistake by remaining wedded to Islam, which lacked a female divinity. The Maiden, the Virgin Mary, exemplified in the Black

Edom-Christianity but also to Shabbetai Zevi, who had chosen red as the *sitra aħra*'s color.

¹⁴⁰ I am indebted here to Ada Rapoport-Albert, *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi: 1666-1816* (Oxford, UK: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011), pp. 175-236 and Pawel Maciejko's unpublished: "Sabbatian Jesus: Nathan of Gaza and Jacob Frank."

¹⁴¹ Zevi's gender remained ambiguous in Sabbatean traditions. (See: Ada Rapoport-Albert, *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi*, pp. 189-190 and references there.) Eibeschtz, for example, had him couple with masculine *Atiqa*. But Frank wanted a female, and not a transsexual messiah.

Madonna, became Frank's messianic figurehead. He, Frank, was the new Adam-Jacob, and his daughter Ewa was the Maiden, the new Eve-Rachel.

The death of Frank's wife in 1770 launched Ewa as the messianic Maiden. Frank joined the Virgin Mary to the Sabbatean Queen Esther (who "apostatized" to save the Jews) to configure a female messiah, incarnated in his daughter (and partner?) Rachel-Eve, whose advent he, Jacob, was announcing. The relationship of the messianic father-daughter couple remained ambiguous: Rachel-Eve was a Maiden but her revelation would announce a sexual union, and, with the exception of Mary, the prototypes – Eve, Rachel, Esther – were not chaste. Frank presented himself as the Maiden's agent but their revelation would be joint. Jacob & Rachel, human but also divine, will reveal themselves, exemplifying the heavenly reunion of Adam & Eve, the masculine and feminine god. Their advent will overcome the fall, and bring forth eternal life, spiritual as well as physical.

Frank recast the biblical Jacob & Esau narrative in a highly original way so it could support his theological innovation. He was no scholar but he masterfully manipulated *Midrash* and Kabbalah to create a story of missed opportunities that pointed toward the future and paved the way for him. Jacob was the choice Patriarch, but he was timid and deceptive, and not up to the messianic task. He provided the road's signposts but committed a series of blunders. His journey abroad to Laban was a religious pilgrimage equivalent to Frank going to Edom, and he should have completed it instead of returning home after twenty years. Had he stayed for another three, the true Rachel would have revealed herself. Staying with Laban was tantamount to a Sabbatean apostasy. *Genesis* 31 recounts how, on the family's escape from Laban, Rachel stole and

hid her father's idols. Laban chased the family, and claimed his gods back. Jacob, unwitting of Rachel's misdeed, pronounced death on whomever possessed the idols. *Midrash* says that Rachel died in childbirth on the road back home on account of Jacob's curse.¹⁴² For Frank, Rachel-Eve was an emergent divinity in Laban's household and cult. Jacob got scared about the new religious exploration, and departed, and Rachel died, delaying redemption.¹⁴³

Jacob had another opportunity to bring forth redemption when he reconciled with Esau. Once again, he missed it. On the eve of meeting Esau, as he was struggling with the angel, he was told of the future revelation in Poland, and what it entailed (acceptance of Christianity). He was shocked and became disabled. He would no longer be Jacob – another Jacob will come to fulfill his mission – and he received the name Israel instead. He could no longer remain a cosmic mediator and became the vulnerable God of Israel. (Frank reverses the common understanding of the name Israel.) The next day, when the family was meeting Esau, Joseph stood in front of Rachel to protect her, preventing an encounter between Rachel and Esau that could have led to revelation. Jacob promised Esau to follow him to Edom but reneged, leaving the mission to the second Jacob, Frank.¹⁴⁴

The failure of reconciliation opened a tragic Jewish history. Joseph was punished when his brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt, the people of Israel followed him into

¹⁴² Bereshit Rabbah 74:4, 9.

¹⁴³ “Words of the Lord,” sections 63, 67, 84, 92, 93, 107, 123.

¹⁴⁴ “Words of the Lord,” sections 63, 84, 149, 185. Joseph protecting Rachel from Esau follows *Bereshit Rabbah* 78:10 or *Zohar* III: 202b.

exile, and, on Mount Sinai, they accepted a hideous legal code, detrimental to life. Several messiahs tried to overthrow the Torah's yoke and explore a "way to life." Early in his career, Frank saw Zevi and Berukhiah as predecessors, who lacked understanding of Christianity (Zevi), or, like Jacob, lacked courage to take it on (Berukhiah). Later, he saw himself as superseding Jesus, advocating transgression of taboos to transform the creation's laws and gain physical immortality. He returned to Edom, put on Esau's robe, and, had it not been for his disciples' little faith – they failed him, for example, by not joining him quickly enough in Częstochowa – he would have repossessed the *Alef* and revealed himself, possibly with Rachel.¹⁴⁵ Now he was nurturing Rachel in the Laban-Edom cult, preparing for their joint revelation in Edom-Poland.

Frank may have been a psychopathic charlatan but his tragic sensibility of the reconciliation as a missed opportunity remains unmatched, even during the age of emancipation when we would expect it most. Jacob & Esau's convergence in Jewish-Christian syncretism was an eighteenth-century moment. Sabbateanism and Enlightenment loosened religious identity and Jewish communal boundaries just enough to make Jewish interest in Christian universalism and non-Jewish interest in Sabbateanism possible but not enough to make either of them mainstream. In 1790, Romantic poet William Blake announced in London the coming "dominion of Edom," and his friend, Richard Cosway, styled himself Esau, revealing Frankist and Asian Brethren influences.¹⁴⁶ The French Revolution would quickly dissipate this Edom

¹⁴⁵ "Words of the Lord," sections 67, 72, 85, 263, 373, 397, 404, 516, 531, 877.

¹⁴⁶ "On the Marriage of Heaven and Hell," *Complete Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 149; Marsha Keith Schuchard, "From Poland to London:

discourse. The nation state would undermine Jewish communal authority, emancipation expand Jewish exploration, churches reform confessional identities, and historicization and natural science put distance between intellectuals and Kabbalah. A vibrant debate on the Jewish participation in national culture will supersede Jewish-Christian hybridity. The terms of Christian-Jewish endearment will change and never be such as to invite wishful thinking about Jacob & Esau's reconciliation.

The End of Imperial Edom

Poland did not survive as Edom (or as an independent state) into the nineteenth-century, and its early modern Idumaeian identity remained tentative. In the 1790s, Ber of Bolechów, recounting the Frankist saga, spoke of the events leading the First Partition as fulfilling Ezekiel's prophecy on Edom (25:14): "And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom,' that is, upon the Polish nation (Gentiles being called Edom), 'by the hand of my people Israel': As they dealt with Israel, so were they dealt with."¹⁴⁷ The century-old identification of Poland with Edom was known enough to be used but not without a clarifying gloss. This was the first time since the biblical period that a non-imperial government was designated Edom, and it reflected Empire's demise as an Edom topos. For Frank, the Holy Roman Empire no longer registered as Edom. Having moved from Poland to Moravia, he told his disciples simply that he needed to see the Emperor (Joseph

Sabbatean Influences on the Mystical Underworld of Zinzendorf, Swedenborg, and Blake," in: *Holy Dissent: Jewish and Christian Mystics in Eastern Europe*, ed. by Glenn Dynner (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 2011), pp. 270-272.

¹⁴⁷ *The Memoirs of Ber of Bolechow* (1723-1805), trans. by M. Vishnitzer (Humphrey Milford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1922), pp. 149-150.

II). Empire was normalized in Jewish discourse.

Poland had world Jewry's largest population, it was devoutly Catholic, and Polish-Jewish tensions were mounting after 1648. Jewish hostility toward the Holy Roman Empire, meanwhile, was on the decline. Poland-Edom signaled an end to imperial Edom, but also reaffirmed Edom's association with Western Christianity, particularly Roman Catholicism. The modern evil empire *par excellence*, Russia, which inherited most of Polish Jewry, did not qualify on account of its Greek Orthodoxy. When Poland-Edom vanished, together with Polish independence, no modern state proved formidable and hateful enough to Jews to carry the label – until Nazi Germany. Rather than be associated with a specific geopolitical entity, modern Edom would become a marker for ethno-religious and national hatred of Jews.

On the eve of its dissolution, the Holy Roman Empire was a subject of Jewish approbation the way it had never been in its history. Marc Saperstein discerns Jewish imperial sympathies, even a burgeoning feeling of belongingness, in Ezekiel Landau's 1782 eulogy for Maria Theresa.¹⁴⁸ Under her successor, Joseph II, Landau endorsed Jewish military service.¹⁴⁹ The Jewish-Imperial partnership should not be exaggerated:

¹⁴⁸ Ezekiel Landau, "Derush Hespel al Mitat ha-Qesarit Maria Theresa," in: Marc Saperstein, *Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn. Themes and Texts in Traditional Jewish Preaching* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1996), pp. 147–161, 445–468.

¹⁴⁹ Landau's sermon to the departing Jewish conscripts (*Ha-Measef 5* [1789]: 252-55, reprinted in: Abraham Stein, *Die Geschichte der Juden in Böhmen* [Brünn: Jüdischer Buch- und Kunstverlag, 1904], pp. 121-22) recognized, as Marc Saperstein suggests, that "conscription was an obstacle to observance but also an opportunity to demonstrate

Maria Theresa was notoriously contemptuous of Jews and reinforced residential restrictions on them. Joseph II's reforms, welcomed in Bohemia, were received as *Gzeyres* (evil decrees) in Galicia. But the waning of imperial Edom and the disbanding of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 under Napoleonic pressure opened space for a new modern relationship between Jews and Empire. The Jews' love for Franz Joseph and Austrian Jewish imperial patriotism, the subject of later chapters of this book, would have been inconceivable in the intellectual universe of imperial Edom.

The waning of Edom in early modern Europe suggests that improvement in Jewish-Christian relations in Central and Western Europe was real. Local studies of rural life in the eighteenth-century French-German borderland, for example, corroborate the trend.¹⁵⁰ The *Haskalah*, religious hybridity and the new imperial relationship could help explain recent nostalgia for pre-national pluralism. But the limits of imperial pluralism must be emphasized, too. Germany's largest Jewish community was still locked in the

loyalty": *Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn*, p. 157. Traditional Jews viewed conscription with alarm, and Landau's son petitioned against it, so not all historians view Landau's sermon, delivered in front of officers, as an endorsement. For conscription's significance and the Jewish debate: Michael Silber, "From Tolerated Aliens to Citizen-Soldiers: Jewish Military Service in the Era of Joseph II," in: *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe*, ed. by Pieter Judson and Marsha Rozenblit (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), pp. 19–36.

¹⁵⁰ Claudia Ulbrich, Shulamit and Margarete: Power, Gender and Religion in a Rural Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe, trans. by Thomas Dunlap (Leiden, NL: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004).

squalid Frankfurt ghetto, privileged Jews only could reside in Vienna, Jews paid a poll tax commonly levied on cattle in many communities, and enlightenment reformers expected them to change for the better for conditions to improve. In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, things were turning for the worse with an avalanche of blood and host desecration libels. In Spain, crypto-Jews still burnt at the stake. Open Sabbateanism was persecuted. Imperial pluralism was grounded in inegalitarian corporatism and institutionalized cultural barriers. Nationalization will do away with most of the corporate barriers and, even as it enforced conformity with a national political culture, expand the range of cultural and religious exploration.

The Jewish elites' excited response to Dohm and his French counterpart, the Abbé Gregoire, presaged the Jewish response to emancipation everywhere for the next one hundred and twenty years: Enthusiastic makeover of Jewish identity and culture to suit the national culture, so Jews can enjoy full membership in the nation. Until Napoleon's troops imported French emancipation to Germany, however, central European Jews did not fully grasp its revolutionary implications. Throughout the 1790s, they assumed that imperial corporatism rather than the nation state would continue to stipulate the terms of Jewish membership in the commonwealth. In the Red Letters the Frankists circulated from their Offenbach headquarters between 1798 and 1800, they assured European Jewry that "Jacob our father did not die," and adjoined the "House of Israel" to join Edom and bring forth redemption.¹⁵¹ On the Enlightenment's opposite side, Friedlander's 1799

¹⁵¹ A. Y. Brawer, *Galician Jewry*, pp. 270-274. ("Jacob did not die": *Zohar* I:235b, II:48b, II:141b.) Austrian, Russian, and Prussian agents tracking the letters described the "sect of Edom" as a "state within a state" – a phrase that will become central to modern

open letter to Teller proposed a rationalist convergence of Judaism and Christianity. Neither the Frankists nor the *maskilim* imagined that emancipation would render religious convergence both unnecessary and insufficient for Jewish acceptance.

Jacob & Esau's powerful resurgence in Eibeschutz and Frank demonstrated that any major renegotiation of Jewish-Christian relations would recall the typology from its dormancy. Sabbatean syncretism will disappear with emancipation but the urgency of Jewish-Christian negotiations will only increase and keep Edom alive. Viewing the Napoleonic Wars through the lens of traditional Edom eschatology, Ḥatam Sofer, gave inkling of what was to come. He recalled the biblical oracle "Edom shall be dispossessed, Seir shall also be dispossessed by his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly (Numbers 24:18)." "The sign for the rising star of Jacob is that Edom shall be disinherited," he said, "but by whom? Not by another nation but by Seir, his enemies who are themselves [part of] Edom, exemplifying [the verse] 'I will stir up [brother against brother ... kingdom against kingdom, Isaiah 19:2].' One part of Edom will take over another, then Israel, too, will mobilize for war, and afterwards, 'a ruler will come out of Jacob (Numbers 20:19).' But the wise (*maskil*) must keep silent in witness of the Lord (יְדוּם דּוּם לֵה) ... and we shall see what will come of it."¹⁵²

antisemitism – and put it under investigation: Pawel Maciejko, *Mixed Multitudes*, pp. 240-42.

¹⁵² *Ḥatam Sofer al ha-Torah*, ed. by Naftali Hertz Shtern, 5 vols. (Jerusalem: Ḥatam Sofer Institute, 1987), IV: 125-26.