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Jewish Mysticism: Medieval Roots, Contemporary Dangers and Prospective Challenges

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Abstract: This article traces the beginning of mysticism in mainstream Judaism to the martyrdom of the Rhineland Jews in 1096 during the First Crusade, showing that (1) the tosafist view of this event was not - as generally accepted - one of approval but implicit disapproval, (2) the martyrs' mystical impulse that embraced fervor over reason was to escape Christianity's apparent triumph in the world and seek refuge and life eternal with their Parent in Heaven, (3) the mystical response, elaborated into a new mythology of Creation and the nature of the Godhead, inevitably became the dominant element of Jewish piety and religious thought in Christian Europe by the end of the 16th century as a defense mechanism in the face of continued persecution, and (4) this defensive psychological and cultural response must be reevaluated to determine whether it now provides more of a threat to Judaism and Jewry in the modern world than the benefit that it once provided to a despairing people.

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Jewish mysticism, which I define below from talmudic and other perspectives, arose almost two thousand years ago. It was an attempt to maintain a belief in a transcendent God in the face of the traumas of religious and political catastrophe that periodically confronted the Jewish people. Its principal elements were a desire to escape the reality of the abyss between Jewish chosenness and Jewish suffering, by a spiritual, psychological and intellectual understanding of God, along with a mystical ascent to and union with Him.[1]

Were there problematic aspects to mysticism that, while beneficial during the medieval era, may no longer be so?

Given the focus of this paper-the past and future role of mysticism in Jewish life-we need to consider the view of the talmudic sages (*Hazal*) on mysticism as a baseline for the discussion. In addition, we should consider the views of historians and psychoanalysts regarding the definition of mysticism and its causes and effects. *Hazal* sought to discourage mysticism, and, in the course of doing so, provide us with their views of what it is – at least in its objectionable aspects. There are three primary sources to consider, all in Chapter 2 of *Hagigah*. In the first, four Sages entered *pardes*, which Rashi and Tosafot interpret as a physical or spiritual ascent to heaven, and all but one were permanently and adversely affected. In the second, we find greater detail and amplification of Hazal's views. Except in certain limited cases, persons should not study or discuss matters relating to Creation; to Ezekiel's vision of the "Chariot," i.e., mystical ascent to heaven and what is seen and experienced there; and to sexual immorality. The Talmud also prohibits study of: "What is above; what is below; what came before [i.e., Creation], and what will come afterward [i.e., at the End of Days]." "What is above" seems to relate to the nature of God's being, i.e., theosophy. "What is below" seems to relate to God's governance of the world, including the problem of theodicy-how to account for a world where, despite God's providence, the good often suffer while the evil prosper-and the seeming contradiction between God's omniscience and human free will. In the third text, one is prohibited from "looking upon" (*lehistakel*) a rainbow, a Jewish ruler, and the priests as they bless the Jewish people-considered to be vessels of God's glory.[2] In general, the Talmud covers what historians and psychoanalysts have generally agreed to be the core content of mysticism – the desire

[1]See, e.g., Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1961), pp. 1-39; Mortimer Ostow, "Judaism and Psychoanalysis," in *Judaism and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Mortimer Ostow (New York: Ktav, 1982), pp. 4-41; *idem*., "The Jewish Response to Crisis," in *Judaism and Psychoanalysis,* pp. 233-66; *idem., Ultimate Intimacy*, (London: Karnoc Books, 1995), pp. 3-44, 78, 127; Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. xviii, and 65 ff; Joseph Dan, *Jewish Mysticism* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1998), vol. I, Introduction and Chapters 2-3, vol. III, Introduction and Chapters 1-2, and vol. IV, pp. 152-7. The psychological and ahistorical "messianic" activities of certain mystics were so detached from realistic, historical considerations as to amount to suicidal, eschatological attempts to escape history, not influence it; see Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), *passim; Dan, Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I, Introduction and Chapters 1-3, and vol. III, pp. xxi-xxv. On the importance of psychoanalytic inputs, from a historian's standpoint, for the study of mysticism, see David Halperin, book review, *AJS Rev*. (1996): 153-7.

[2]See *Hagigah* 11b, 14b, 16a; *Yerushalmi Hagigah* 77b; *Tosefta Hagigah* 2:3-4; and *Shir Ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:4. See generally, Ephraim Urbach, *The Sages* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), pp. 184, 193-4, 212-13, 222-3, 417; and authorities collected in the *Artscroll*

to ascend to heaven and achieve communion with God and to see and understand the world of the Godhead.

Of particular significance, the talmudic injunctions bear directly upon *hekhalot* and *merkavah* mysticism, the first major mystical movement in Jewish history, which emerged between the 2nd and 6th centuries. They relate directly to the rebellious aspects of that movement *vis-à-vis* talmudic culture and its worldview, as follows: (1) *Hekhalot* mysticism incorporates the idea of a mystical leader publicizing the "Secret of the World", and, following from that, (2) it posits the ability of any person, with the proper mystical knowledge, to ascend to heaven and see God face to face. (3) It contemplates that this ascent can be at any time or place, at *man's initiative*. (4) *Hekhalot* literature contains a description of the celestial powers, or hypostases, the divine pleroma. (5) God is conceived and described in its literature in bold, anthropomorphic terms (*shi`ur qomah*) consisting of gigantic physical dimensions. (6) This literature is anti-historical, describing pseudo-events as occurring in impossible time periods, in an un-talmudic fashion. (7) It invents and employs a new, unique terminology. (8) It probably contemplates a separate demiurgic power separate from the Supreme God. (9) There is a dramatic descent into the world of the "Prince of Torah" (*Sar Torah*), an angelic being, at man's beckoning, to teach persons so desiring the entire Torah, both written and oral, virtually instantly. This negates, of course, the need for the entire ongoing talmudic structure and halakhic process. Under any interpretation, these elements of *merkavah and hekhalot* mysticism clash directly with the Talmud's prohibitions. Not surprisingly, this fringe group had little influence on contemporary talmudic culture and for centuries thereafter.

Elements of kabbalah, particularly as it arose in a formal way and in various forms in Catalonia in Northern Spain and in Provence - Languedoc in Southern France in the thirteenth century, thereafter in Safed, and later still in Europe generally, concluding with Hasidism in the eighteenth century, clearly depart in many similar ways from the talmudic proscriptions and bear strong imprints of *hekhalot* mysticism after some 700 years of that mysticism lying dormant. Ecstatic and theosophic kabbalah include ascent to heaven; mythological and physical conceptions of God and Creation; unique terminology; secret teachings of the nature of the divinity and how to achieve mystical ascent and union (*unio mystica*); new ways of approaching biblical exegesis; and claims of unique access to religious truth by personal revelation. Historians recognize that Jewish mysticism became dominant in Jewish piety and religious thought from the end of the sixteenth century until the present day.[3]

Not surprisingly, the historians who have dealt with the nature and history of mysticism have reached conclusions about working definitions basically similar to the talmudic view. Gershom Scholem speaks of human, secret knowledge of God, and experiencing the divinity through "seeing," noting that classical Judaism is "more widely removed from mysticism than any other form." He sees the cause of mysticism as the abyss between the perfection of God and the evil that man encounters in the world, which the mystic seeks to bridge by "hidden paths," which becomes his "main preoccupation." These elements describe the essence of theosophic and ecstatic kabbalah, and the mysticism prohibited by the Talmud, particularly as mysticism adds a "new interpretation of old values," which often "differs entirely from the old and transforms their meaning." Thus, the secret revelation at Sinai, which is the source of mystical belief, is the "real and decisive" revelation, the only religious truth. Finally,

edition of the Mishnah, *Seder Moed*, vol. IV (Brooklyn, New York: Mesorah, 1981), at *Hagigah*, Chapter 2.

[3]Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I, Introduction, and Chapters 2-3, and vol. III, Introduction and Chapters 1-2 and pp. 346-48, and vol. IV, pp. 76, 154; Michael D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 10-13, 218-21; David Berger, "Judaism and General Culture in Medieval and Early Modern Times," in *Judaism's Encounter With Other Cultures*, ed. Jacob J. Schacter (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1997), p. 87; Introduction and Chapters 1-2; Ostow, *Ultimate Intimacy*, pp. 37, 121-205. Dan pungently notes that the establishment from which Hasidism separated "was (and still is) led by a leadership that is motivated by kabbalistic theology and symbolism"; *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, p. 42.

the mystic is aloof from history; he seeks ways of "escaping from history rather than…understanding it." Moshe Idel similarly speaks of mysticism as "knowing" and "understanding" God and His "position in the universe," as well as "contact with the divine" through ecstatic and unitive experiences. Joseph Dan generally agrees with these definitions or descriptions but adds an important feature: The mystic, and mystical movements, claim that knowledge of God, and all related religious truth, "cannot be achieved by the usual avenues of knowledge, by sensual perception, and by logical generalization and analysis." Nor can it be communicated by language, but only indirectly by symbols. The real world reflects and describes in a hidden way what is going on within the Godhead. In brief, mystical knowledge of God is secret, unique, superior, and impenetrable to those who do not share the mystical vision of the world.[4]

The psychoanalytic view of Jewish mysticism is in broad agreement with the foregoing express and implied definitions and causes of mysticism. In that view, mysticism is man's aspiration to experience union with the Divine, thereby returning to the loving embrace of the [Divine] Parent in order to escape living in history in the real world of unbearable reality and evil. Mysticism thus stands in stark contrast with classical Judaism: In the latter, "the human - divine boundary is [never] transgressed. We are encouraged to *imitate* God, but never to *identify* with Him."[5]

To conclude this introduction and overview, we may posit that Jewish mysticism arose in Judaism outside of talmudic culture and was contrary – even rebellious – to it. Because many of its antithetical elements became, in various forms, part of Jewish mystical movements during the last thousand years, there is a dissonance between them and talmudic culture that needs to be confronted. Only consistent adherence to rabbinic normative requirements has kept such movements within mainstream Judaism. But it is the prerogative and duty of this generation to consider whether those dissonant elements, which arose as a response to the trauma of pressure, persecution and expulsion coming from a hostile Christian environment, continue to serve the health of Judaism, in its religious and national aspects, in the radically changed environment of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

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The talmudic scholars created a Judaism founded on law, study, and prayer, through which Jewish life was able to

[4]Scholem, *Major Trends*, see note 1; Idel, *Kabbalah*, see note 1; Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, see note 1; Ostow, *Ultimate Intimacy*, p. 28. On the importance of "seeing" God in Jewish mysticism, see Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1994). The most plausible traumatic cause for *hekhalot* mysticism - aside from the destruction of the Temple - was the era of the Roman Hadrianic decrees and persecutions after the Bar Kokhba rebellion (c. 130 C.E.); cf. Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I, p. 107.
For the purpose of clarification of the complex issue of what parts of *hekhalot* and *merkavah* literature are mystical in nature within a proper definition of "Jewish mysticism," Dan notes the following: cosmogony and cosmology, magic and angelology, homiletical exegesis, and hymns and prayers about the heavenly realms, are *not* mysticism. In contrast, ascent through the seven heavens to see God on His throne, God's measurements in physical dimensions, manuals on how to ascend to the Divine realms, personal revelations rather than careful, rabbinic exegesis and *midrash* as the source of truth - these are all mystical in nature; see, e.g., *Jewish Mysticism* , vol. I, p. 39.
[5]Ostow, *Judaism and Psychoanalysis*, p. 35 and *idem., Ultimate Intimacy*, see n. 1. In contrast, "the moral activism of the Bible envisages the world as the scene of the realization of the Divine order, which is an order of moral will and moral life" without any room for magic or myth; see Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*, tr. David Silverman (New York: Schocken, 1973), chapter 1, n. 11. Scholem had to choose between viewing kabbalah as rooted in ancient Judaism and thereafter secretly transmitted to the medieval period, and seeing it as a medieval phenomenon that reflected the tensions of Jewish thought and society in the High Middle Ages. At first, he chose the former, but eventually he realized that the latter view was correct; Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. IV, pp. 235-8. It appears that Idel may be making a similar error; *ibid*.; pp. 238-9.

continue despite the loss of the Temple and its sacrificial ritual. They built on an underlying optimism about Jewish survival and the continuing meaningfulness of Jewish religious practice and the idea of working to improve the material world. Talmudic society was based on reason; it was focused on holiness (*qedushah*) and practical wisdom (*hokhmah*) in dealing with the problems of life. It was organized as a meritocracy based on knowledge and societal support, respect for different ideas on all sides of an issue, and the preservation of those ideas as part of the legacy of each era for the future. *Hazal* taught that there is wisdom in non-Jewish society, but Torah only in Jewish society.[6] Whatever other messages may be implied, there is every indication that Jews should pursue both. The *hekhalot* mystics of the talmudic era were far more interested in the personal, spiritual solace of communion with God.

Jewish mysticism erupted within mainstream Judaism, according to most historians, in the thirteenth century, in the form of the kabbalah, in northern Spain and southern France. At its core was the experience of "feeling at one, united," with the Divine world. It took three forms: ecstatic, as physical or psychological ascent and union – a form of death and rebirth; theosophic, as ideas and images of God and divine behavior; and practical, as attempts to translate the ascent and the ideas of God into practical power or magic, including the concept of theurgy, helping to restore harmony within the Godhead. It has been shown that mysticism is a response to historical trauma and catastrophe and to a pervasive and protracted unbearable reality; it reflects the desire to find relief and comfort thorough return to the parent memory and the parent figure. In the thirteenth century, it centered on a conception of a complex and dynamic structure of various powers or aspects of God, which came to be known as the ten *sefirot*. That structure became part of a mythology of God's transformation from a transcendent, unknowable, spiritual perfection, to a knowable creator maintaining an immanent presence in the visible, material world – a world dominated by the implacable evil faced by the Jewish people in the Ashkenazic world of Christian Europe.[7]

I would argue that the fundamental, governing impulse of this mainstream mysticism became part of Ashkenazic Jewry's spiritual and religious tradition earlier than the thirteenth century - as early as the end of the eleventh century, when Rhineland Jews became the victims of the new, populace – driven, fervent Christian violence of the First Crusade mobs passing through Germany en route to liberating Jerusalem and crushing the Moslem "infidels" who had conquered it centuries earlier. The response of German Jewry to the threat of mass, forced

[6]See Num. 10:31 (Rashi, ad loc.); *Sanhedrin* 17a and 17b; *Menahot* 65a; see also Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Sanhedrin* 2:1 and *Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 5:1 ff.; Judah Halevi, *Sefer ha-Kuzari* 2:64; Gerald J. Blidstein, "Rabbinic Judaism and General Culture: Normative Discussion and Attitudes," in *Judaism's Encounter With Other Cultures*, ed. Jacob J. Schacter (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1997), pp. 1-56. On Talmudic reason and the discouragement of mysticism, see, e.g., *Hagigah* 6a, 11b and 14b, and *Bava Metsi`a* 59b. See generally "Rabbi Chaim Eisen," in *Learning in Jerusalem: Dialogues with Distinguished Teachers of Judaism*, ed. Shalom Freedman (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1999); Shlomo Riskin, "The Wisdom of the Maccabees and the Greeks," *Jewish World*, December 6-12, 1996.

[7]Mortimer Ostow, "Introduction" and "The Jewish Response to Crisis," and Jacob Arlow, "The Emergence of Mystical Leadership," in *Jewish Mystical Leaders and Leadership in the 13th Century*, ed. Moshe Idel and Mortimer Ostow (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1998); *Dan., Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, pp. 9-12, and vol. IV, p. 243; and Idel, *Kabbalah*, esp. chapters 4-6, 8. God's immanence was particularly emphasized in mystical movements emphasizing union (*unio mystica*) with God - see note 39. The roots of kabbalah go back to *hekhalot* mysticism and German pietism, with their ideas of God's immanent glory (*kavod*) and a pleromatic Godhead pre-figuring the ten *sefirot* and a secret tradition, including mystical concepts of prayer; see also Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 80-96, 112-13, 176-81; and *Dan,Mysticism*, vol. III, p. 42.
An important – but not necessarily controlling or defining – element of Jewish mysticism is "seeing" or visualizing God. However, such experiences were discouraged by the Sages, e.g., in the case of looking at a rainbow, a Jewish ruler, or priests in the act of blessing the people, which were all considered to be vessels of the Divine Glory; see, e.g., *Hagigah* 16a and Wolfson, *Speculum, passim*; but cf. Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. II, p. 63.

conversions at the Crusaders' hands was a new, radical form of mass martyrdom, in which husbands and wives killed their children, each other and themselves to sanctify God's name.[8]

For the first time Jewish martyrs sought not just to carry out the talmudic law requiring passive martyrdom, but to avoid such martyrdom in favor of self-destruction and to escape life in the real world.

This response constituted a turning point in the motivation for mainstream Jewish martyrdom. For the first time, Jewish martyrs sought not just to carry out the talmudic law requiring passive martyrdom, i.e., *to be killed* at the hands of their persecutors rather than convert, but to avoid such martyrdom in favor of *self-destruction, and to escape life in the real world - where Christianity seemed to be emerging triumphant in history - and to find their religious reward in ascent to heaven where they and their families would live on in a spiritual world of purity and peace*. This element of ascent to God to escape the evils of life defines the essence of a new medieval "mystical" impulse, as described by the historian Yitzhak Baer, and its breakthrough in mainstream Judaism[9] The martyrs' primary accompanying religious purpose was to demonstrate Judaism's continued authenticity and superiority as a religion, and Jewry's continued worthiness to be God's chosen people, despite His evident intention, as the martyrs understood it, to abandon them to history for a Divine purpose that they could not comprehend. Their goal, in this regard, seemed to be for God to bring about the end of history and the final redemption, all as a result of their bravery.[10]

The problematic nature of their use of family murder and suicide as a new, radical response to religious persecution was evident. The Talmud prescribed martyrdom by the *passive* acceptance of death at the hands of Israel's religious persecutors, not by suicide or murder, which remained among the most serious religious transgressions under all circumstances.[11] The martyrs of 1096 daringly departed from the Talmud's martyrological formula.

At this point in Jewish history - or, more specifically, Ashkenazic history - it was unclear how this daring new martyrdom would be regarded. Would it be rejected as a dangerous violation of talmudic prohibitions against suicide and murder; excused as a transgression committed under extreme duress; or halakhically accepted and elevated, despite the means taken, to an act of *qiddush Ha-Shem*, sanctification of God's name? In fact, the new martyrdom and its accompanying mystical impulse became accepted by popular will and by the silence, for the most part, of halakhists about what *actually occurred*. Let us examine the evidence.

Chronicles of the martyrdoms, written anonymously over some seven decades following the events of 1096,[12] used

[8]Arlow, "Mystical Leadership," p. 200; Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), Chapters III, IV, VII, and the Appendix; *idem., God, Humanity and History* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 2000); Shmuel Shepkaru, "To Die for God; Martyrs and Heaven in Hebrew and Latin Crusade Narratives," *Speculum* (April, 2002): 311-41. See also Shepkaru's work cited below, note 9, p. 36. (See further in Appendix 1.)

[9]Shmuel Shepkaru, "From After Death to Afterlife: Martyrdom and its Recompense," *AJS Review* (1999):1-44; Y. Baer, "*Gezerot Tatnu," Sefer Assaf [festschrift* in honor of Simhah Assaf] (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook 1953), pp. 126-40, which is noted, without disagreement, by Jacob Katz in *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (New York: Behrman House, 1983), p. 89. To my knowledge, Baer is the only historian who has characterized the 1096 martyrdoms as a "mystical" experience, although Shepkaru provides important supporting analysis for this view in his article.

[10]Chazan, *First Crusade*, Appendix (Chronicles of the 1096 martyrdom). The Chronicles reflect, on this issue, the view of the chroniclers *and* the view that they ascribe to the martyrs; see, e.g., *ibid*., p. 282 (the view of the martyrs) and pp. 237, 256, 262, 267, 271-4 (views of the authors of the Chronicles). The martyrs' expectation, as set forth in th Chronicles, that God would reverse what they perceived as the victory of Christianity over Judiasm, implies that they expected this to occur in the near future, whether or not linked specifically to the "messianic era;" see Israel J. Yuval, "The Lord Will Take Vengeance, Vengeance for His People," *Zion* (1994): 351-414; cf. Chazan, *God, Humanity and History,* pp. 151-172.

[11]Haym Soloveitchik, "Religious Law and Change: The Medieval Ashkenazic Example," *AJS Review* (Fall, 1987):208.

an aggadic approach to elevate the martyrdoms to halakhic acts of *qiddush Ha-Shem*. Piecing together Jewish historical precedents, symbols and ideas lauding those who were willing to sacrifice their lives rather than betray their faith – albeit virtually never by suicide and murder as did Rhineland Jewry – the Chronicles elevated the martyrdoms of 1096 to the highest level of religious faith.[13] The tosafists, the leading rabbinic authorities during the following two centuries (1100-1300 C.E.), generally did not comment on these specific martyrdoms, nor on the Chronicles and the arguments that they offered, even though many tosafists, as has recently been recognized, dealt with some esoteric ideas and practices.[14] In their halahkic commentaries on the Talmud and other writings, however, they generally followed the seminal opinion of Rabbenu Tam, written at the beginning of the tosafist period (c. 1100-1170) as a comment on a talmudic discussion of suicide, who daringly expanded the talmudic prescriptions of martyrdom as a passive act. He asserted that Jews who feared that unbearable torture during a religious persecution would cause them to leave their faith, or commit other major halakhic transgressions, were permitted (and, in some versions of his commentary, required) to commit suicide pre-emptively.[15] A few tosafists even permitted the murder of children in such circumstances.[16]

This rationale, so far as we can ascertain from the Chronicles, did not apply to, nor govern, the motives and actions of the 1096 martyrs. Fear of unbearable torture was *not* the reason for the martyrs' actions; defiance of their persecutors was. This gap between what the tosafists permitted and what the martyrs did, in the face of the tosafists' undoubted awareness of the content of the Chronicles of the martyrs' actions and the community understanding of these actions that the Chronicles reflect, raises serious questions about the halakhic authenticity and legitimacy of the martyrdoms. I have not found this problem commented upon in my research. It is noteworthy in this regard that Rabbenu Tam, the lead-

[12]Chazan, *First Crusade*, pp. 40-9, 280.

[13]*Ibid.,* pp. 155-8 and the Appendix. As Jacob Katz concluded, ordinary Jews martyred themselves, in David Berger's paraphrase, "not because of familiarity with the niceties of their halakhic obligations, but because they had been reared on *stories* of heroic self-sacrifice." See Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (New York: Behrman House, 1983), pp. 84-5; David Berger, "Jacob Katz on Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages," *The Pride of Jacob*, ed. Jay Harris (Jacob Katz Memorial Volume) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 45.

[14]Ephraim Kanarfogel, "*Peering Through the Lattices*" (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), *passim*.

[15]*Avodah Zarah* 18a; *Gittin* 57b; *Rash mi-Shantz* on *Avodah Zarah* 18a; *Da`at Zeqenim* on Gen. 9:5; *Perushei ha-Torah leBa`alei ha-Tosafot* on Gen. 9:5; *Tosafot Elhanan* on *Avodah Zarah* 18a; and *Hiddushei Ritva* on *Avodah Zarah* 18a, citing *Gilyonei Tosafot*, "Great Sages of France" and the "Old One" (presumably - and probably erroneously - Rabbenu Tam), for the proposition that murdering children to prevent conversion is also at least permitted; see also Soloveitchik, "Religious Law," p. 210, n. 8. Some opinions refer to other authorities that prohibit suicide (and murder). See also Dov I. Frimer, "Masada in Light of Halakhah," *Tradition* (1971): 27-43.Cf. Rabbi Meir ben Barukh of Rothenburg, *Teshuvot*, *Pesaqim u-Minhagim*, ed. I.Z. Cahana (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1957-1962), II:54; writing at the end of the tosafist period, c. 1300, he seems to make no reference to a need for fear of torture, or else it is assumed without evidence. There may have been a personal reason for the strong support which R. Tam received by contemporary and later tosafists, as one who could - better than they - put himself in the shoes of the martyrs through his own experience. As H. H. Ben Sasson notes: "Nor should we regard as an empty legend…that Christian knights dragged [R. Tam] out and attempted to inflict the 'wounds of Jesus' upon his flesh, in order to take vengeance upon the acknowledged leader of the Jews for the alleged transgression against their messiah." ("The Middle Ages," *A History of the Jewish People,* ed. H. H. Ben Sasson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 527.)
Rabbenu Tam's special treatment of martyrs where torture is involved is consistent with his rationalism; see Kanarfogel, *Peering,* pp. 166-175. An objection to his halakhic innovation is that the Sages were presumably aware that the earlier Maccabee martyrs faced "the most inhuman tortures" to force them to participate in heathen rituals and, nevertheless, made no provision in the laws of martyrdom for suicide (or murder) induced by fear of such torture; see Elias Bickerman, "The Maccabean Uprising: An Interpretation," Judah Goldin, ed., *The Jewish Expression* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1976) pp. 67-68; and Josephus, *Complete Works*¸ tr. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1981) p. 257 (from *Antiquities of The Jews*, Book XII, Ch. V).

[16]See note 13. (See further, Appendix 5).

ing tosafist, who pioneered the tosafist position in which the martyrdoms of 1096 were not mentioned, specifically lauded the *passive* martyrdom at Blois, France, around 1170, about the time when the last major chronicle of the 1096 events was being produced.[17] But while this may support the view that the tosafists' silence about the permissibility of the 1096 martyrdoms may fairly be construed as disapproval, Haym Soloveitchick has provided the basis for the opposite conclusion, namely, that the tosafists were strongly committed to the religious behavior of the German-Franco Jewish community of which they were a part – a self-image unique to the medieval Ashkenazic community. Tosafist silence in these circumstances may therefore be construed as tacit approval of the new martyrdoms – at least with respect to the suicides - based on an empathy and an identification with them, and a deep religious conviction, notwithstanding the absence of *formal* halakhic authorization, that the acts of martyrdom of a pious community could not and should not be challenged. Further support for this conclusion arises from the silent acquiescence of the tosafists in the incorporation in the *qinot* liturgy for *Tish`a be-Av* of references to the active martyrdoms of 1096, and the explicit recommendation of suicide by an English tosafist to the martyrs of York, England in the twelfth century.[18]

Perplexing questions persist about the 1096 martyrdom. Knowing that the martyrs had probably violated even the now radically expanded law of martyrdom, why didn't the tosafists say something to that effect? Did they think that it was too late to criticize the martyrs' actions because the martyrs were already dead? But didn't they have an obligation to provide clearer, more explicit halakhic guidance for future situations that might arise? They had other options as well: regretting that the law had probably been violated because of the absence of halakhic guidelines to guide the martyrs in this unforeseen situation; or excusing the martyrs' radical behavior as occurring under great duress. The gap between what the tosafists approved and what the martyrs did remains a fact – and unremarked upon, until now. [19]

In any case, this new martyrological and mystical impulse, as Yitzhak Baer has described it, to flee the world and ascend to Heaven to commune with God so as to escape the pervasive evil in the real world, soon became an accepted element of mainstream Judaism, moving from Germany to France and Spain. It developed into a major element in Ashkenazi literature and belief, formalized first as kabbalah, and, during the last three centuries, as Hasidism, which together became the primary, long-lasting, mystical progeny of the 1096 suicides and murders over the ensuing centuries.[20] There is an evident connection – not fully documented in the scholarly literature – among the *aqedah* as it came to be understood after the destruction of the Temple (70 C.E.) in Jewish midrashic literature; Jewish martyrdom, which so strongly relies on it; and the strong support for martyrdom, especially in Ashkenazi communities, under the influence of kabbalah, throughout the ages, as exemplified by the poetry of the early kabbalist leaders, Nahmanides and R. Solomon b. Abraham (thirteenth century), glorifying the killing of

[17]Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), p. 49; see also note 12.
[18]*Kinot for the Ninth of Av*, tr. and ann. Abraham Rosenfeld (New York: Judaica Press, 1979), pp. 138-42, 148-9, and especially 168-72. A Christian commentator traced the Jewish suicides in 1190 to an innate tendency going back to Masada; Barrie Dobson, "The Medieval York Jewry Reconsidered," *Jewish Culture and History* (Winter 2000):10. On the tosafist empathy with the martyrs, see Soloveitchik, "Religious Law." On the precedence given to *minhag* in Ashkenazi Judaism, see Israel Ta-Shma, *Minhag Ashkenaz ha-Qadmon* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1994), pp. 86-7, 98. (See further Appendix 3.)
[19]I did refer to it very briefly in my review of David Berger's recent book on Habad messianism; see "Challenging the New Chabad Messianism," *Midstream* (December 2001): 30-35. . (See further Appendix 3.)
[20]See note 9; Idel, "Nahmanides: Kabbalah, Halakhah and Spiritual Leadership," in Idel and Ostow, eds., *Jewish Mystical Leaders*, pp. 91-94; and Israel Ta-Shma, "Rabbi Jonah Gerondi: Spirituality and Leadership," *ibid.*, p. 177. The inclination toward kabbalah existed already from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, even among mainstream rabbis who were not kabbalists; *ibid*. Kabbalah came to dominate Jewish piety and religious thought from the sixteenth century to the modern era; Berger, "Judaism and General Culture," p. 87 and *passim*.

children by their parents as acts of martyrdom.[21]

Out of the martyrs' experience emerged four facets of Ashkenazi mystical spirituality that strongly influenced its religious outlook for the entire second millennium.[22] *First*, a sense of despair over life in the world, and a yearning to escape its tribulations and misfortunes for the eternal bliss and purity of living in heaven and paradise, in a world of light, seeing God "eye to eye." *Second*, feelings of indifference, hostility, and fear toward the Christian world and a "frenzied vilification" of it, coupled with a sense of religious, moral and cultural superiority over it. *Third*, a desire to separate from that world, which seemed to offer nothing but suffering, immorality and ignorance. *Fourth*, the discovery of the religious rationale for radical, mystical acts of suicide and murder, not in a reasoned, logical deduction from existing halakhic sources, but from an axiomatic belief in what was required of them based on their deepest religious intuitions – what we might describe as an internally generated knowledge or even revelation. "Who I am" determined for them how to respond to this sudden, new, powerful, and seemingly successful Christian onslaught to destroy Jews and Judaism totally and finally. Their models were Daniel and his friends; Hannah and her seven sons; Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Hananiah ben Teradion; and, of course, Abraham at the *aqedah*. All of them faced new situations without clear-cut religious guidance, extended the religious "envelope" that they had acquired, and added a new dimension to the traditional conception of proving one's devotion to God to fit the special, new circumstances they faced. The heroic new character of Christianity and Judaism at the end of the eleventh century precipitated a new level of Christian persecution *of* the Jews and, in turn, a new level of radical response *by* the Jews, based not on existing law, but on a frenzied fervor of separation, vilification, escapism, and heavenly ascent, and on the elevation of internal revelation over reason as the source of religious understanding and truth. In these ways, the permanent victims of a new, popular, triumphant Christianity sought to become the permanent victors. Martyrdom and ascent to heaven turned what was experienced as final religious defeat in world history to the "ultimate validation of religious triumph" and life in the eternity of the Divine domain.[23]

[21]See, e.g., Nahmanides' Hebrew poems, "*Me'ah Batim*" and "*Tefillah al Horvot Yerushalayim," Kitvei Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman*, ed. Charles B. Chavel (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1963), vol. I. It is startling that Nahmanides closely paraphrases the language of Micah 5:7 *condemning* child sacrifice in his poem "… *Horvot Yerushalayim" praising* martyrological fathers who kill their children! See also the comments of Ben Shalom (Appendix 3) in "Between Sepharad and Ashkenaz," p. 259; and the Hebrew poem "*Eloqim hayyim, atsim ve-nogesim*" on suicide as *qiddush ha-shem*, by the kabbalist, R. Solomon b. Abraham of Montepellier, in *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz ve-Tsorfat*, ed. A.M. Habermann (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1946). See, relatedly, Ivan G. Marcus, *Piety and Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), pp. 150-51; Norman Lamm, ed. and ann., *The Religious Thought of Hasidism*, (Hoboken: Ktav, 1999), pp. 63, 68-9, 73, 552-3; and Shulamit Elitzur, "*Aqedat yitzhak: bi-vekhi o be-simha? Hashpa`at masa`ei ha-tselav al ha-sippur ha-miqra'i," Ets ha-Da`at I* (1997), pp. 15-36, comparing the joy of Ashkenazim with the sadness of Sephardim at martyrdoms in their respective martyrological poetry. See generally, Jose Faur, "Two Models of Jewish Spirituality, *Shofar* (Spring 1992):5-46; *idem*., "A Crisis of Categories: Kabbalah and the Rise of Apostasy in Spain" in *The Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492*, ed. Moshe Lazar and Stephen Haliczer (Lancaster CA: Labyrinthos, 1997), pp. 41-64. Faur notes that those who participated in the mass conversions after the Disputation at Tortosa (1413-1414) were those simple people "more susceptible to mystical lore than to philosophy"; *ibid*., p. 63; *idem, In the Shadow of History*, pp, 26, 44. (See further Appendix 4.) Given the dominant role of kabbalah in Jewish piety and religious thought since the sixteenth century (see note 3), I sometimes will cite a non-kabbalist or non-hasidic individual to make a point about the pervasive influence of mysticism in Jewish thought for the last thousand years, unless they are known to be anti-mystical in outlook.

[22]See, e.g., the 1096 Chronicles (see note 10 above); Shepkaru, "Martyrdom," pp. 41-4; Jacob Katz., *Tradition and Crisis* (New York: NYU Press, 1993), pp. 3-30, 183-213; *idem., Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, chapters VII and XI; Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*; , vol. IV, Chapter 7, discussing mysticism and the views of Scholem, *Wissenschaft* scholars, and Eliezer Schweid; Israel Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigleh she-ba-Nistar* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad, 2001); and David Berger, "Jacob Katz," and "Judaism and General Culture," p. 87. It is appropriate, notwithstanding differences between different forms of Jewish mysticism, to make comparisons and generalizations based on shared similarities; see, e.g., Moshe Idel, *Hasidism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), pp. 225, 234.

[23]See Chazan, *First Crusade*, Appendix; and Shepkaru, "Martyrdom," p. 41.

In considering the question of whether this "new" mysticism - abandoning the material world for repose in the heavenly world - arose within the talmudic tradition, specifically in *hekhalot* mysticism starting in the second or third century C.E., we find that it probably arose outside of it. *Hekhalot* elements that are *contra* that tradition include ascent to heaven by *human* initiative; the magical, instantaneous and complete acquisition of Torah knowledge from *Sar ha-Torah*; and other mystical ideas that are so significant that the view of this mysticism as produced "by and for rabbinic authorities" is a highly problematic, probably minority, position.[24] Citing these and other factors, Joseph Dan has demonstrated that *hekhalot* mysticism was, in fact, a *rebellious* position, radically different from rabbinic tradition that grew outside of talmudic circles, and this appears now to be the prevailing view.[25]

A related issue is whether the increase in the ascetic ideas and practices among the German pietists (*hasidei ashkenaz*), and the mystical elements of Judaism among the tosafists and kabbalists in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries should be seen *not* as a response to the Crusader pogroms and Christianity's apparent triumph in history over Judaism (and Islam),[26] but as an internal development in rabbinic Judaism from *hekhalot* roots. To the extent that this position rests on the assumption that those roots were embedded within talmudic culture, it is, as shown above, an untenable and minority view. In addition, it begs the question: the new mysticism may have had 500-year-old or even older roots, but what was the reason pietism and mysticism emerged *when* and *how* they did? The evidence I have presented and the underlying chronology suggest that the cause was the trauma to Judaism that suddenly seemed to destroy Judaism's most cherished beliefs about its destiny. Why else was this alleged organic development of mysticism and asceticism so late in coming? As Dan has noted,[27] mysticism arose in Christianity and Islam within two centuries of their births, which suggests organic growth; in Judaism, it took more than fifteen centuries (from Sinai, around 1200 B.C.E., to the *hekhalot* literature of 200-500 C.E); and then it first arose *outside* of mainstream Judaism - which certainly suggests external causes. One is not likely to find such a causal attribution in mystical literature because, as Dan has noted, new religious ideas seek to portray themselves as having an organic continuity with ancient tradition rather than be seen as merely a psychological response to a transient historical event.[28] For mystics, their truths have no beginning that is subject to historical inquiry; their truths are eternal, and have been secretly transmitted only to them, through an elite in history whose identity is unknown. Similarly, kabbalah, in all its forms, does not attribute its ideas to historical events like persecution or expulsion, but to secret revelations going back to Sinai, which elevates them to the authority and sanctity of Torah. Nor should this come as a surprise, given the understandable desire to point to the most sacred and ancient roots of its truths.[29]

[24]See note 3; but cf. Kanarfogel, *Peering*, pp. 253-4.

[25]Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I, Introduction and Chapters 1, 2 and 3; see also Jose Faur, *Homo Mysticus* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), p. 31. Idel tries to argue that *hekhalot* mysticism was not in conflict with Talmudic Judaism, but his evidence is unpersuasive in the face of Dan's analysis; see Idel, *Kabbalah,* p. 262.

[26]See, e.g., Ivan Marcus, *Piety*; and Kanarfogel, *Peering, passim*.

[27]Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. II, p. xi.

[28]*Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 44. See also Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 80-7, 104-5, and the discussion in Marcus, *Piety*, pp. 150-1. Because he can't find references in pietist literature to the anti-Jewish attacks of 1096 and the resulting martyrdom (p. 151), among other reasons, Marcus is reluctant to connect them to pietist asceticism and mysticism. Dan asserts that martyrdom is the model for ascetic renunciation of this-worldly pleasure, for viewing life as a trial and a preparation for the next world for those who merit it, as in martyrdom (*ibid*.). Marcus' response is unpersuasive. Besides Scholem and Dan, Joseph Hacker also sees 1096 as a turning point in Christian persecution of Jewry and in Jewish responses to it. Of course, pietistic sources don't suggest that Christian persecution was the cause of their pietism (*ibid*.); that would undermine pietism's *religious* foundation of having received an ancient, secret tradition (see Dan, *Jewish Mysticm*, vol. III, p. 42), and make pietism simply a psychological phenomenon, in response to exoteric pressure; *ibid*., vol. II, p. 31.

The evidence supports the powerful impact of external causes. From the facts uncovered by Chazan, Soloveitchick and Kanarfogel,[30] it appears that a milder form of asceticism and esotericism developed before the First Crusade in response to a milder Christian hostility at that earlier time, and a more radical Jewish response developed after it – and continued to do so in various forms in the face of new developments and an ever more pervasive, insistent and continuing Christian hostility to Jewry in its Diaspora environment.[31] Therefore, any attempt to discount outside influences as a cause of Jewish mysticism simultaneously ignores not only the psychological mechanism of mystical responses, but that sense of continuing threat and vulnerability created by a triumphant, powerful, zealous, and hostile Christianity during virtually all of the last thousand years. Moreover, looking for *immediate* cause and effect manifestations reflects a too rigid and fragmented understanding and expectation regarding the nature of mystical responses, and in particular the pervasive and continuing nature of Christian threats and pressures on Jewry, and the Jewish responses to it. Sometimes the impetus to a mystical or messianic response may even be an event that provides hope that an apocalyptic end to history is imminent.[32] But, that, too, is in no way inconsistent with the paradigm I have described. Psychoanalytic studies have shown that mysticism is a psychologically based response to a perceived threat to one's identity, presented by the abyss between the real and the ideal in the world, and can lie dormant for a prolonged period.[33]

Knowing that the martyrs had probably violated even the now radically expanded law of martyrdom, why didn't the tosafists say something to that effect?

Therefore the new ascetic-mystical spirituality of Ashkenazi Jewry arose not as an inevitable organic development from within rabbinic culture, but as a result of on-going Christian persecution and pressure, and a resulting sense of vulnerability and hopelessness of any redemption through history. If so, the progeny of that historical trauma, represented in Jewish mystical movements and their many forms of escapist, separatist, antirationalist, esoteric, and ascent religiosity, which have engulfed Judaism in the last one thousand years, culminating in Hasidism for the past two hundred and fifty years,[34] is subject to reexamination and question in the radically new situation of Jews and Judaism in the twenty-first century. This is especially the case given that this venerable religiosity was a response to a continuing psychological state of Jewish hopelessness and helplessness in *galut* - understandable, to be sure - over the succeeding centuries in the face of a continually hostile and threatening Christian Europe, far beyond anything encountered by classical Biblical and Rabbinic Judaism theretofore. Therefore, today's scholars have a right and even a duty to consider whether at least some of these ascetic and

[29]See, e.g., Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, p. 41, vol. IV, p. 14. Idel looks for explicit connections in testing Scholem's ideas, e.g. in kabbalah, p. 265 ("Lurianic texts never mention the [Spanish] expulsion"). I suggest that such a search is in vain, and the test is invalid, as indicated above. Idel admits that "kabbalah preferred an understanding of cosmic processes to…historical ones" (*ibid*., p. 155). His similar attempt to prove the antiquity of the Lurianic ideas of God's contraction (*tsimtsum*) and the "breaking of the vessels" (*shevirat ha-kelim*) during creation are, for Dan, "unconvincing"; *Jewish Mysticism* , vol. IV, p. 229, and to the same effect, Scholem's attempt to trace *hekhalot* mysticism to talmudic culture (*ibid*., p. 231).

[30]See Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 80-7, 104-5; Haym Soloveitchik, "Three Themes in *Sefer Hasidim*, *AJS Review* (1976): 311-57; Chazan, *First Crusade*, *Op. cit*, pp. 217-222; and Kanarfogel, *Peering*, *passim*.

[31]See, e.g. Nissim Rejwan, *Israel's Place in the Middle East* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1998), pp. 81-100. A traumatic external cause may also induce a mystical effect that is not immediate, but survives, "underground" as it were, for a long period, emerging when circumstances are propitious; Ostow, *Ultimate Intimacy*, pp. 140-1, and particular case histories cited, *passim*.

[32]Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, e.g., pp. 79-84, 97-100, 137, 144-52. A mystic who waits until the time seems propitious for a suicidal act that will bring an apocalyptic and messianic end to history and the suffering of his people still acts out of hopelessness and not - as Idel suggests - out of hope; compare *ibid*., and Idel and Ostow, *Jewish Mystical Leaders*, p. 7. See also note 2.

[33]See note 22; Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I, pp. 69-70, and vol. II, pp. 350-5.

[34]See, e.g., Scholem, *Major Trends*, *passim*. (See further Appendix 5.)

mystical ideas and practices, having arisen as responses to historical trauma, may no longer be relevant, and may perhaps even be dangerous to Judaism today.

In conducting this analysis, historians should inquire, among other things, into the parallel, and the reasons for it, between Judaism's response to the cultural advances of Christian civilization in the last five hundred years, and that of Islam. The latter is characterized by a persistent disdain for a culture seen as hostile and inferior to Islam's self-sufficiency and superiority, based on its doctrines of an esoteric tradition dating back to Abraham, and Ishmael as his successor; successive revelations culminating in the final revelation to Muhammad; the treasuries of Moslem learning in Arabic texts; and the Islamic "feeling of timelessness, that nothing really changes."[35] The Moslem world has certainly maintained the loyalty of its masses to Islamic religious traditions and to its clergy, who are its guardians and interpreters and enjoy concomitant religious and political power. But the price paid by Islam – in the form of the backwardness, destructive zealotry and resistance to all change in that society, and the rest of the civilized word's response to it – has been a heavy one to this very day.

Has the anti-rationalist, mystical strain in Judaism caused a similar response to advances in Western civilization, with similar consequences? How does that strain, with its separation from, and hostility to, the non-Jewish world, allow for the fulfillment of God's command to Adam to "fill the land and conquer it" (Gen. 1:28)? How does it allow for sanctification of God's Name among non-Jewish nations and peoples in fulfillment of God's blessing to Abraham that the nations will bless his progeny through the achievements of Jews for the benefit of mankind, and make the Jewish people a model for mankind's children (Gen. 12:4 and Rashi *ad loc*.)? Is that not the highest form of *qiddush Ha-Shem*, sanctification of God's name, and certainly the most creative and desirable form of this precept? How does separation from, and hostility to, the world and its pursuits contribute to the fulfillment of the Jewish hope – which is a thematic high point of the High Holy Day liturgy – for the time when all of mankind will "blend into one brotherhood," and "peoples…in all parts of the world…will unite to worship God with one heart…and [God] will abolish the rule of tyranny on Earth"? How does it contribute to Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 42:6) that Israel will be a "light unto the nations"? How does it contribute to the promise of the ancient *Aleinu* prayer that man's purpose is to help "repair the world to be a kingdom of Heaven"? Viewing Israel and Judaism as a people *and* a religion, both of which are tied to a "promised land," how can Israel produce engineers, scientists, financiers, economists, historians, soldiers - workers and experts in every field necessary for the health, safety and welfare of the nation - if the only way of life that is the ideal for all is one based on mysticism, kabbalah, Hasidism and their beliefs, practices, and goals?

This new martyrological and mystical impulse to flee the world and ascend to Heaven to commune with God soon became an accepted element of mainstream Judaism, moving from Germany to France and Spain.

In considering these and other contradictions between mysticism and classical Jewish ideals, it is noteworthy that

[35]Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), pp. 295-308. See also *idem., What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), *passim*; and Karen Elliot House's review, "Why Islam Fell From Grace," *Wall Street Journal*, January 11, 2002, pp. W1 and 10. Lewis argues that Islam's failure to match the Western world's rise in the last 300 years is because of three major factors: its continuing integration of church and state, religion and politics; its unwillingness, because of a religion-based hubris, to consider what might be of value in other cultures; and its propensity to blame others for its decline instead of examining its own culture for causes. In contrast, Western civilization has drawn its strength from its simultaneous embrace of Greek knowledge and Jewish holiness or morality; see also Jeffrey Hart, *Smiling Through the Cultural Catastrophe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). These books raise questions that require serious introspection by Jewish scholars, including not only rabbis but academic scholars as well. I see no reasons, based on the need for academic objectivity, for the latter to avoid these issues. To the contrary; we need their objectivity to address the questions.

Judaism has recently elicited powerful admiration even in Christian scholarship for pioneering the *opposite* idea – that progress in history, in the spiritual and material senses, far from being relegated to the dustbin of history by a flight to personal, mystical salvation, is both desirable and possible, as part of the Divine plan of creation. But that praise was directed at classical biblical and rabbinic Judaism, and not to the escapist, separatist and culturally hostile mystical religiosity of the last one thousand years.[36]

Historians should perhaps also consider whether post-Zionism's one-sided and self-destructive questioning of the very legitimacy of the State of Israel from its inception, is, as the Israeli writer Aharon Megged has suggested, a suicidal impulse, which may be considered a secular form of Judaism's thousand-year mystical drive to spiritually annihilate the real world,[37] with all of its seemingly insoluble problems and inherent imperfections, and achieve a mystical union with an unidentified realm of absolute purity. Both positions thereby seek to escape from a perpetually hostile world in which one cannot achieve material solace and moral perfection.

In addition to addressing these kinds of questions, other problematic aspects of Jewish mysticism, many of which have been criticized by J.B. Soloveitchik and other scholars,[38] should be considered. These include, or subsume, an ideology of myth and magic including belief in evil as an independent power-for some, like Luria, part of the Godhead itself; a spiritual hubris based on an ideology that assumes a mystic's unique, reciprocal access to God

[36]See Thomas Cahill, *The Gifts of the Jews* (New York: Random House 1998). Some of the other contradictions I have alluded to include the following: How are mystical separation and anti-rationalism consistent with the talmudic dictum that there is wisdom in the non-Jewish world (*Sanhedrin* 17a and *Menahot* 65a; *Lam. Rabbah.* 2:13, 17)? How do they allow Jewry to carry out the biblical injunction of destroying Amalek in every generation in which nations appear that deliberately attack and terrorize defenseless, innocent non-combatants (Deut. 25:17-19)? How do they allow Jewry to engage in *imitatio dei* (Ex. 34:6-7), by which Jews are commanded, *inter alia*, to be creative in improving the world (*tiqqun olam*), as God did in the process of Creation? (See, e.g., Irving A. Agus, ed., *Responsa of the Tosafists* [New York: Talpiot-Yeshiva University, 1954], Responsum 12-where the rationalist Rabbenu Tam [see n. 15] embraces *tiqqun olam*; and Walter Wurzburger, comparing kabbalistic and modern Orthodox views on *imitatio dei*, "Rav Soloveitchik as a Posek of Postmodern Orthodoxy," in *Engaging Modernity*, ed. Moshe Sokol [Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc. 1997], p. 124, and "Confronting the Challenge of the Value of Modernity," *The Torah u-Madda Journal* [1989]:104-112.) And, finally, how does the separatist, anti-rationalist worldview, with its core belief in an independent power of evil in the world, allow for the concept of man's free will to conquer evil by the use of his human faculties (Deut. 8:1-20, 11:26-8, 27:1-26, 28:1-69, 29:1-28, and 30:1-20)?
Contrast these obligations (recently discussed by Saul Berman, "How a Jew Faces Evil," *The Jerusalem Report*, January 28, 2002, p. 55) with Hasidism's approach to the Holocaust, which was essentially passive acceptance of this evil as God's will, a test of a mystic's faith, and an opportunity to experience communion with God (*devequt*); see Pesach Schindler, *Hasidic Responses to the Holocaust in Light of Hasidic Thought* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1990). Compare Israel Yuval, "Vengeance and Damnation, Blood and Defamation: From Jewish Martyrdom to Blood Libel Accusations," *Zion* (1993):33-90, and the various responses and Yuval's reply in *Zion* (1994):169-414, dealing with the attitude of despair over any future for Jewry that motivated the suicidal martyrs of 1096, with Cahill's *The Gifts of the Jews*, pp. 146, 156, 240, 249. What shall Jewry do with the extremist vision of redemption in Lurianic kabbalah that, when Israel "mends" the world, it does not mend the nations of the world nor bring them closer to holiness, "but rather extracts the holiness from them and thereby destroys their ability to exist…," so that this form of kabbalah, which is so prominent today in Jewish religious thought, rejects the idea that Israel serves to "elevate the rest of humanity"? See Gerald J. Blidstein, "*Tikkun Olam*," (citing I. Tishby's analysis, and a similar overall perspective in the work of Gershom Scholem), in David Shatz, Chaim I. Waxman, Nathan J. Diament, eds., *Tikkun Olam: Social Responsibility in Jewish Thought and Law* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1997), p. 49. Contrast this with the classical view of Judaism's gifts to the world in Jonathan Sacks, *A Letter in the Scroll: Understanding Our Jewish Identity and Exploring the Legacy of the World's Oldest Religion* (New York: The Free Press, 2000).
[37]"The Israel Suicide Drive," *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, July 2, 1994, p. 15; see also, Yoram Hazony, *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); and Yoram Hazony, Michal B. Oren, and Daniel Polisar, *The Quiet Revolution in the Teaching of Zionist History: A Comparative Study of Education Ministry Textbooks on the 20th Century* (Jerusalem: The Shalem Center, 2000), Research Report No. 1. Perhaps the common European Ashkenazic heritage of post-Zionist secularists and ultra-Orthodox mystics provides a causal linkage; see, e.g., Shepkaru, "From After Death," pp.41-4.
[38]*Halakhic Man*, tr. Lawrence Kaplan (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), pp. 30-82; Faur, *Homo Mysticus*, *passim*.

and to religious truth by revelation and union, and a fragmented Divinity dependent on human acts of mystical ritual for the restoration of Divine harmony,[39] disengagement from worldly affairs that embody mankind's striving for dignity and freedom, including the self-empowerment of Jews in the diaspora and their achievement of independence in their homeland;[40] a hostile and fearful isolation from all forms of non-Jewish cultural achievement (*madda*), including science, history and the humanities,[41] coupled with religious stringencies, a lock-step uniformity in practice, and dependence on religious leaders on all issues, from politics to dress codes; and an evident indifference not only to the non-Jewish world's activities, but to that world's opinion of Jews and Judaism. These have certainly contributed to the "massive" defections from traditional Judaism since the Enlightenment some two hundred years ago.[42] Are these aspects of the "sanctification of God's Name," or the opposite?

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly as a destructive element in Jewish history, is divisiveness. This element in Jewish mysticism has two aspects: separation from the established Jewish community; and attacks, usually in concert with other extreme elements, against moderate religious elements in Judaism who might successfully question mysticism's claims to an exclusive access to an ancient secret truth, and who are perceived as a threat to mysticism's beliefs, practices, and power in the Jewish community. Separation from, and attacks on, the physical and cultural structures of Judaism are, indeed, based on mysticism's esoteric claim to religious authority that is beyond the scope of reason, coupled with its pessimism regarding the implacable evil that it sees in the material world, impelling it to escape the material realm and unite with the divine world.[43]

Martyrdom and ascent to heaven turned what was experience as final religious defeat in world history to the validation of religious triumph.

This dual separation process can be found, with varying degrees of emphasis, in the emergence of the *hekhalot* mystics of the second and third centuries;[44] the pietists of Germany in the twelfth century[45] and even to some extent

[39]See, e.g., Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism,* Chapter 1; Dan *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. II, pp. xviii, 208, vol. III, p. 331, and vol. IV, p. 196; Scholem, *Major Trends, passim*; Allan Nadler, *The Faith of the Mithnagdim* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); and Idel, *Kabbalah,* Chapters 3-6. The strong element of mystical union in kabbalah stresses God's immanence, with its pantheistic elements, in contrast to the importance of divine transcendence in classical biblical and rabbinic Judaism; see, e.g., Arlow, "The Emergence of Mystical Leadership: A Multidisciplinary Analysis," in Idel and Ostow, eds., *Jewish Mystical Leaders* , p. 203. Mystical union with God "meant to Jews - at least to Jews living inside the Muslim civilization - nothing but blasphemy and self-deification"; S.D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs* (New York: Schocken, 1974), pp. 153-4. On the issue of evil, see also note 65. In the *Zohar* (III 152a; see the *Sulam* edition [Jerusalem: Yeshivat Kol Yehudah, 1991], vol. 13, *parashat be-ha`alotekha*, nos. 57 ff.), only those who "stood on Mount Sinai" can penetrate to "the root principal of all, namely, the real Torah." I assume that this must refer to those who claim to have secretly received this secret meaning over the centuries between Sinai and the emergence of kabbalah, some 2500 years later. (See further Appendix 6.)

[40]See , e.g., Katz, *Out of the Ghetto* (New York: Schocken, 1978), pp. 161-2; Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1971), pp. 190-193 (but Tishby disagrees, *ibid*.); Ostow, *Ultimate Intimacy*, passim; and compare Jonathan Sacks, "Markets and Morals," *First Things* (August-September 2000): 23-8; Scholem, *Major Trends,* Ninth Lecture. See also notes 34 and 54.

[41]See, generally, Faur, *Homo Mysticus,* pp. 1-19, 79-82, 126, and *idem*., *In the Shadow of History*, pp. 1-25; Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, p. 42; *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures*, ed. J.J. Schacter (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1997), *passim*; Allan Nadler, "Rationalism, Romanticism, Rabbis and Rebbes," Inaugural Lecture of Director of Research (YIVO Institute for Jewish Research 1992), *passim;* Blidstein, "*Tikkun Olam*," pp. 48-50. The conflict between the rationalism of classical rabbinic Judaism compared to Jewish mystical movements is exemplified by Nahmanides' stated intention to "free his people from the embrace of the outside world and the lure of its culture…and favors…"; see Baer, *Jews in Christian Spain,* vol. I, p. 104. (See further Appendix 7.)

[42]Lawrence Kaplan, "*Daas Torah*: A Modern Conception of Rabbinic Authority," in *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy*, ed. Moshe Z. Sokol (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1992), pp. 1-60; and Moshe Z. Sokol, "Personal Autonomy and Religious Authority," *ibid*., p. 171. On the flight of Jews from Orthodox Judaism as soon as the opportunity to do so arose, see

among tosafists of that period;[46] the kabbalists of northern Spain and southern France at the end of the twelfth century,[47] and the Hasidic movement in Eastern Europe in the middle of the eighteenth century.[48] With regard to Hasidism, Dan writes:

> Modern Hasidism could be regarded as a model example of a mystical movement creating a schism within an existing religious structure, establishing its own institutions, dress codes, particular prayer book and customs, and style of ritual performance, as well as a mystical structure of leadership. The only unusual element in this picture…is that the establishment from which [Hasidism] separated was (and still is) led by a leadership that is [also!] motivated by kabbalistic theology and symbolism.[49]

Attacks by these mystical movements against those who do not share their anti-rationalist worldview have occurred often and have succeeded in the last thousand years in keeping Ashkenazi Jewry in frequent, divisive turmoil, preventing the emergence of a successful, moderate, rationalist Judaism up until our own day.

1. In what became known as the Maimonidean Controversy (c. 1230), the new kabbalists of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries – presenting themselves as talmudists and traditionalists but actually motivated by their secret tradition – penetrated, with the support of tosafists and pietists, into southern France and northern Spain (Catalonia), looking for spiritual guidance to the ascetic and mystical traditions of the Franco-German communities, and attacking Maimonidean philosophy, rationalism, and the rabbinic tradition that had been centered in Andalusia. The goal of the anti-Maimonideans was to protect against the perceived threat of apostasy and the undermining of kabbalah and of Franco-German religious culture-though the latter, to be sure, was not monolithic. It was the kabbalists who were the decisive spiritual force in the challenge to Maimonides' philosophic works and to his rationalist supporters. The anti-Maimonideans were led by the kabbalists Solomon b. Abraham of Montpellier and Jonah Gerondi, supported by the kabbalist poet, Meshullam b. Solomon Dapiera. The results were catastrophic, including the burning by the Church of Maimonides' philosophic work, *The Guide for the Perplexed*. The controversy erupted again at the beginning of the fourteenth century, with the anti-Maimonideans now led by the mystically oriented Solomon ibn Adret (Rashba) (a disciple of Jonah Girondi) and by the anti-rationalist Asher b. Yehiel (Rosh) (a disciple of Meir b. Barukh of Rothenberg), after the Rosh had emigrated from Germany to Spain in 1302. It culminated in the two bans of Barcelona of 1305: the first forbade the study by persons under twenty-five years of age of "Greek" works of science (except

Haym Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy," *Tradition* (Summer 1994):64-130, at p. 70; and Jeffrey S. Gurock, "Twentieth Century American Orthodoxy's Era of Non-Observance," *The Torah U-Madda Journal* (2000):99.The trend to stringencies can be traced from German pietism, to the *Zohar* (which elevates poverty), Lurianic kabbalah, Hasidism, the Musar movement, and the recent history of stringencies discussed by Haym Soloveitchik in "Rupture and Reconstruction," *passim*; Simcha Krauss, "Orthodoxy's Retreat From Modernity," *The Jewish Week*, December 14, 2001, p. 28. See also note 21. (See further Appendix 8.)

[43]Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, ch. 1, and vol. IV, ch. 4 (competition with non-Hasidic *haredi* groups); Scholem, *Major Trends* , pp. 2, 8, 19-20, 146-9; *Zohar* III 152a. Sometimes, the extreme application of the separatist impulse of Hasidism can cause self-inflicted harm, e.g., the harm to the gene pool from the prohibition by some sects of inter-sect marriages; see Erik Schechter, "Rising from the Ashes," *Jerusalem Report*, May 22, 2000, p. 28.

[44]Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I, pp. xvii-xxvii, and Chapter 1, esp. pp. 75 and 101.

[45]*Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 19-62, 315-27; Ivan Marcus, *Piety, passim*, esp. pp. 21-3, 117-18, 150-1; Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 80-118. See also, Judah the Pious (Yehudah he-Hasid), *Sefer Hasidim*, ed. Judah Wistinetzki (Frankfurt am Main: M.A. Wahrmann, 1924), sec. 1530.

[46]Scholem, *Major Trends*, Third Lecture; Y. Baer, *Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. II, pp. 196-7; Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Peering, passim.*

[47]Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, pp. 40-3.

[48]Ibid.

[49]*Ibid.*, p. 42.

for medicine) and metaphysics; the second limited the use of allegory in the interpretation of Scripture. The final result of the Controversy, according to Faur's analysis, was the undermining of the Sephardi community and its leaders and of their will to resist forced conversion under Christian pogroms and persecution, and, finally, expulsion.[50]

The new ascetic-mystical spirituality of Ashkenazi Jewry arose not as an inevitable organic development from within rabbinic culture, but as a result of on-going Christian persecution.

Because of Nahmanides' stature, his role in this matter requires special comment. As Baer notes, "He identified himself unequivocally at the outset with the position taken by the zealots of Montpellier, but his tactics were different."[51] In his efforts to mediate the dispute, he sent a letter to the rabbis of northern France, the tosafists, urging them to rescind the ban on Maimonides' philosophic works, to prevent a schism in the ranks of Jewry. "The Torah would be divided into two Torahs, and all Israel into two sects." This much was clearly an effort at mediation. But the letter also included elements that could only make the existing schism worse. Thus, he praised Maimonides for erecting "a talmudic stronghold, a tower of strength to the Lord," but then he felt compelled to add "and a shrine for the ignorant masses, who breach the fences…," adding, to make his meaning clear, that Maimonides' writings were not for the pious Ashkenazi Jews of France and northern Spain, but for the wayward Jews of the southern lands, the Sephardim, who were, in Baer's words, "consumed by the sword of freethinking and apostasy." The subtle messages conveyed by Nahmanides are that Maimonides' words were good but unnecessary for good Jews, and well intentioned in 1190 (when the *Guide for the Perplexed* was written, forty years earlier), but evidently ineffective, and perhaps worse. Finally, Nahmanides reveals his disapproval of Maimonidean rationalism and its adherents in language that could only deepen the schism between the two contending groups, whatever the final outcome of their bans and counterbans. His letter is inconsistent with the admirable intent of some scholars to portray Nahmanides, in Dan's words, as trying "not to take any

[50]Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. II, pp. 51-2, 179-200, 347-51, and vol. IV, p. 152; Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R. J. Zvi Werblowsky, tr. Allan Arkush (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 404-8; Daniel Jeremy Silver, *Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), ch. 9 and p. 98. See also Ben-Sasson, *Jewish People*, pp. 543-544; Faur, "A Crisis of Categories, pp. 41-62, "Two Models," pp. 5-46, *In the Shadow of History*, pp. 14-18, and "Anti-Maimonidean Demons," *The Annual of Rabbinic Judaism* (2003), forthcoming. Yitzhak Baer claims that the ban on science and metaphysics excluded astronomy and Maimonides' works, including the *Guide; Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. 1, pp. 301-302. There is a debatable story that Jonah Girondi changed his view about Maimonides' philosophic works in the early 1240s, after witnessing the burning of the Talmud in Paris in 1240, which he interpreted as punishment for the successful anti-Maimonidean incitement of the Inquisition to burn Maimonides' works about ten years earlier; see Ta-Shma, "Rabbi Jonah Girondi…," in Idel and Ostow, *Jewish Mystical Leaders*, p. 157. Ta-Shma makes much of the fact that Spanish rabbis continued to accept philosophy (as well as kabbalah) even after the Maimonidean Controversy, until the fifteenth century (*ibid*., pp. 164-5, 175-6). But this is not nearly as important as the power and influence that kabbalah, and kabbalists, acquired through their activity in that controversy, to the point where they more than equaled the influence of Maimonidean rationalism and its supporters by the end of that period (*ibid*.). See generally, Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), ch. 4. Cf. on this entire matter, Berger, "Judaism and General Culture," pp. 85-108; Moshe Idel, "Nahmanides: Halakhah, Kabbalah and Spiritual Leadership," in Idel and Ostow, *Jewish Mystical Leaders*, p. 90. Their view of Ramban's role is more favorable than the conclusion I draw from Baer's discussion (see text at note 51).

[51](The balance of the text discussion here, to paragraph "2." dealing with Moses Isserles and Mordecai Jaffee, is based on the citations in this note, except as otherwise stated.) See Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 96-110; Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. II, p. 181 and vol. III, p. 42; Joseph Hacker, "The Intellectual Activity of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire," *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 95-136; Ben-Sasson, *Jewish People*, pp. 632-633, 734-735; H. J. Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim* (London: Marla Publications, 1976), pp. 44-45. See also, *contra* Baer, Berger, "Judaism and General Culture," p. 114: "There is little evidence for the outright Averroist - style skepticism that Yitzhak Baer blames for the apostasy of beleaguered Iberian Jews"; Faur, "Anti-Maimonidean Demons." See also, note 50.

side," to be "acceptable to both camps," to "hide his own ideological preferences," and to "preach unity to the quarreling radicals on the two sides." In Nahmanides' words:

> May, you, Sirs, be spared a pain such as ours; for the sons have strayed for from the father's table, and have contaminated themselves with the food and wine of the Gentiles; they mingled among the nations and learned their ways…Men in the royal service have been permitted to study Greek sciences, to learn the art of healing and the science of measurement, and all the other sciences and their application, so that they may earn their livelihood in the courts and palaces of the kings.

Yitzhak Baer, quoting this, comments: "Nahmanides' intentions are clear. He hoped to free his people from the embrace of the outside world and the lure of its culture and royal favors…" – a culture which, in Maimonides' view, contained wisdom. Moreover, Nahmanides cannot condemn the "sons" in this way without implying some condemnation of the "father" and the spiritual food that he placed on his "table" before them, which must not have been strong or satisfying enough to prevent the "sons'" from straying.

Does the mystical strain, with its separation from the non-Jewish world, allow for the fulfillment of God's command to Adam to "fill the land and conquer it"? For sanctification of God's Name in fulfillment of God's blessing to Abraham through the achievements of Jews for the benefit of mankind?

It is, therefore, all too true that the Maimonidean controversy is with us still, with no little thanks to the great Jewish thinker and leader, Nahmanides, who – given his leadership abilities and stature – could have stamped out the schism started by R. Solomon b. Abraham and his fellow kabbalists by insisting that there is more than one way to live a life of Torah and to come close to God. But to say that, to press that fundamental *anti*-schismatic idea, he would have had to believe it. As a kabbalist, he did not. And we are still struggling with this dispute, and writing about it, to this day.

Ever since Baer's history of the Jews of Spain, it has been taken as a truism that Jewish apostasy in Spain was the result of secular acculturation caused by the values of Maimonidean rationalism and philosophy. But a study of the history of the main body of Spanish exiles, who emigrated to the Ottoman Empire in 1492 at its invitation, suggests strongly that Baer was wrong. For some two centuries thereafter, Jewish history is marked by the many contributions of the exiled Spanish Jews to the life of the Empire, in trade, military organization and procurement, finance, and other professions. If Baer had been correct, these are rationalist exiles who would have chosen conversion over exile!

2. Kabbalah had its next major impact on the moderate rationalism of Moses Isserles and Mordecai Jaffe in Poland, and of Judah Loew (Maharal) and David Gans in Prague. Under the influence of the European Renaissance and Reformation during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, these scholars confronted the new scientific breakthroughs of the period, especially the astronomy of Copernicus, Brahe and Kepler. They represented a unique and promising Jewish openness to new ideas and discoveries, by non-Jewish and Jewish scholars, in science and religion. But this Jewish opening to the world quickly closed under the pressing and spreading influence of Lurianic kabbalah, as it rose to preeminence in Jewish piety and religious thought and imposed its own claim to exclusive truth about creation and the cosmos. Kabbalists promoted a hidden truth revealed at Sinai as the deeper and authentic meaning of the revealed Torah, taught to and transmitted secretly by initiates over the centuries They rejected science and philosophy, human reason and experience, as sources of truth, despite the warnings of *Hazal* about the spiritual peril in the study of mystical secrets.

Judaism and Jewry in the sixteenth century thus suffered the tragedy of losing what we may describe as Renaissance-influenced, syncretistic, rationalistic rabbinic

figures like Maharal and Isserles, Ovadiah Sforno and Eliezer Ashkenazi, with their selective involvements with science and kabbalah in a rationalistic framework. Also lost were philosophically and scientifically oriented, eclectic Renaissance kabbalistis like Yohanan Alemanno and Abraham Yagel. These misfortunes were compounded during the early seventeenth century by the loss of similar eclectic figures and their acquaintances, like Simone Luzzatto, Leone Modena, Joseph del Medigo, and Menashe ben Israel, who variously accepted, rejected and modified kabbalistic ideas philosophically and theologically, and who died shortly before the advent of Sabbateanism. The combination in these outstanding figures of philosophy, science, *halakhah*, and sometimes even kabbalistic ideas, portended something new in Judaism, reflecting in various ways Renaissance and Marrano rationalism and openness; they remind us in some ways of the multi-faceted thought of Rav Kook. Idel describes the tragedy of their untimely loss:

> The passing of these figures, together with the banishment of rationalistic trends in Amsterdam and Hamburg, caused a void…a void that was filled immediately afterwards by Sabbatean frenzy. Only a century after their disappearance, Modena, del Medigo, and ben Israel became paragons of Jewish enlightenment.[52]

Idel's idea applies in many ways today as well. The void that has taken place in Judaism through the absence of a successful, modern, vibrant Jewish enlightenment, represented so modestly today by Modern Orthodoxy and the *Torah u-Madda* movement, has been filled by a gradually escalating extremism, again making claims to exclusive access to truth and to unconditional supremacy, culminating in Habad messianism and-for some-even deification of their deceased leader, the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

3. Hasidism allied itself in the nineteenth century with its

[52]Idel, "Differing Conceptions of Kabbalah in the Early 17th Century," *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 196. See also Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, p. 136 (but cf. the scholarly debate on Katz's formulation in David Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995], pp. 60 ff.); *ibid., passim*, esp. ch. 2; David Berger, "Judaism and General Culture, pp. 87, 123, 134-40; Shlomo Riskin, "Cloud of the Unknown," *Jewish World*, March 8-14, 2002, p. 7. This opening, for a short time, of Judaism to new ideas and attitudes is reflected in a number of studies; e.g., Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, Chapter 3; Robert Bonfil, "Some Reflections on the Place of Azariah de Rossi's *Me'or Enayim* in the Cultural Milieu of Italian Renaissance Jewry"; and Mordechai Breuer, "Modernism and Traditionalism in Sixteenth Century Jewish Historiography: A Study of David Gans' *Tzemach David*" - all of which appear in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Bernard Dov Cooperman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 23-88. (Note the reference to the connections between the cosmopolitan intelligentsia of Prague and the Cracow community of Isserles, *ibid*., pp. 52-53). On Isserles and the propriety of studying the material world and its nature, see R. Moses Isserles, *She'eilot u-Teshuvot* (Amsterdam, 1711), #7, #4c, citing *Megillah* 16a. See also Ben-Sasson, "The Middle Ages," *Jewish People*, pp. 707-15. It is worth noting that, although they knew kabbalah, and used it in some of their writings, the eclectic rabbinic figures discussed above, e.g., Maharal and Menasseh Ben Israel, were generally not kabbalists; see, e.g., Dan, "Manasseh ben Israel: His Attitude Toward the *Zohar* and Lurianic Kabbalah," and "Gershom Scholem: Between History and Historiosophy," *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. IV, pp. 57-66, 160-61 . (See further Appendix 9.)As to Idel's idea about what might have been, and my elaboration of it, see his "Differing Concepts of Kabbalah in the Early 17th Century," *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 150-2, 178, 196-7 (the papers by Alexander Altmann, Robert Bonfil, Joseph Dan, and David Ruderman, in that volume are also relevant); *idem*., "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of the Kabbalah in the Renaissance," *Essential Papers On Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: NYU Press, 1992), pp. 107-69; Ben-Sasson, *Jewish People*, pp. 707-15; Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy," *Tradition* (Summer 1994): 64-130. Marvin Fox applied a kind of hybrid analysis, similar to my own in some respects, in concluding that Rav Kook was - a poet! See his "Rav Kook: Neither Philosopher Nor Kabbalist," *Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Jewish Spirituality*, ed. David Shatz and Lawrence Kaplan (New York: NYU Press, 1995), pp. 78-87. I would describe all of these medieval-early modern personalities, mentioned above in connection with Idel's idea, as rational-philosophical rather than mythical; they were inquiring, optimistic and open to new ideas, with varied interests, and not wedded even to Cordoverian kabbalah as their exclusive or even primary access to truth.In their embrace of the world, they hearken back to Immanuel of Rome (fourteenth century) and the great figures of Golden Age Spain; see, e.g., Berger, "Judaism and General Culture," p. 126.

erstwhile antagonists, the Mitnagdim, who actually shared their belief in kabbalah (though not for the masses), against the emerging *Haskalah* movement, which sought a synthesis of traditional Judaism with elements of modernity. *Haskalah* lost out, and the result was another missed opportunity for a rabbinic Judaism leavened with compatible elements of the important new thinking of the *Haskalah*. This occurred even though *Haskalah* was beginning to emerge among the disciples of the Vilna Gaon - who, despite his acceptance of kabbalah, also accepted a role for reason and science in Judaism.[53]

Kabbalists were the decisive spiritual force in the challenge to Maimonides' philosophic works and to his rationalist supporters. The results were catastrophic.

4. Hasidism, which largely carried on the kabbalistic tradition, likewise allied itself in the nineteenth century with extremist followers of the Hungarian religious leader, Moses Sofer (*Hatam Sofer*). After his death, they united against even those elements of modernity that this very conservative, anti-*Haskalah* rabbi – like other rabbis of his time, e.g., Jacob Emden and Ya'ir Hayyim Bacharach - had accepted in his own lifetime. These extremists succeeded in their opposition to the eminent Orthodox religious leaders, Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer and Moses (Maharam) Schick, after years of attacks on their moderate, somewhat modern views. And, at the end of the nineteenth century, Hasidism helped cause the failure of the incipient Zionist movement of the *hovevei tsiyyon*, even though it had the support of some of the greatest Orthodox rabbis.[54]

5. The first half of the twentieth century again witnessed aggressive attacks by Hasidism allied with other *haredi* elements in Orthodoxy against those Jewish groups that did not adhere to their ideology or program. Their zealousness, including charges of heresy against their opponents, succeeded in driving from public Jewish life, and from leadership of a developing Modern Orthodoxy, another esteemed and learned rabbi, Yehiel Jacob Weinberg, who stood for Zionism, the study of Hebrew, academic Jewish studies, secular studies, tolerance of non-Orthodox Jewish groups, and the use of reason in the understanding and application of Jewish law. Weinberg also stood against Judaism's long-standing hatred and contempt for other religions and cultures – which he feared was reciprocated – and against religious and Orthodox factionalism and strife.[55]

6. More recently, despite the stature of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *z.ts"l*, during his lifetime, the Modern Orthodox and related *torah u-madda* movements have been under siege, suffering a leadership crisis. Within the last few years, the threat of further divisiveness has arisen from the claims being made for the deceased Lubavitcher Rebbe as messiah and divine – claims which relate directly to Hasidism's kabbalistically based pantheistic views, which were a factor in the Vilna Gaon's

[53]Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, p. 42; Nadler, *Mithnagdim*, Chapter 6; Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985), Chapter 2; Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 34-35; David Fishman, "A Polish Rabbi Meets the Berlin : The Case of R. Barukh Schick," *AJS Rev*. (1987):95-121; Jacob Katz, Introduction; Emanuel Etkes, "Immanent Factors and External Influences in the Development of the Haskalah in Russia," in *Toward Modernity*, ed. Jacob Katz (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction, 1987), pp. 1-32; Israel Bartal, "'The Heavenly City of Germany' and Absolutism a la Mode d'Autriche: The Rise of the Haskalah in Galicia," *ibid*., pp. 33-42; Emanuel Etkes, "The Gaon of Vilna and the Haskalah: Image and Reality," in Joseph Dan, ed., *BINAH: Studies in Jewish Thought* (New York: Praeger, 1989) vol. 2, pp. 147 ff.

[54]Moshe Samet, "The Beginnings of Orthodoxy," *Modern Judaism* (October 1988):249-70; Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, 166-8; *idem., Jewish Emancipation and Self-Emancipation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), pp. 128, 162. See also Berger, "Judaism and General Culture," pp. 138-9. Allan Nadler, discussing Hungarian Hasidic groups, alludes to their causing a bitter split in Hungarian Jewry in the nineteenth century; Eric Siblin, "Dancing to the Maple Leaf Rav," *The Jerusalem Report*, March 27, 2000, p. 46.

[55]Marc B. Shapiro, *Between the Yeshiva World and Modern Orthodoxy: The Life and Works of Rabbi Jehiel Jacob Weinberg, 1884-1966* (Portland, Oregon: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2000); *idem*., "Scholars and Friends: Rabbi Jehiel Jacob Weinberg and Professor Samuel Atlas," *The Tora u-Madda Journal* (1997):105-21; David Singer, "Rabbi Weinberg's Agony," *First Things* (2001):34-41, a review essay of Shapiro's book.

issuance of a ban on the new, mystical movement some two centuries ago.[56] In any case, the persistent attacks from the more aggressive, zealous Orthodox groups, with their predominantly Hasidic component, have largely succeeded in keeping the moderate Orthodox forces on the defensive. (A limited exception has been the increasing success of recent initiatives in Modern Orthodoxy, including a growing movement among Orthodox women, for a greater role for women in Judaism.)

Scholars should consider whether there is a consistent, centuries-old pattern here of mystical and other *haredi* Jews allying themselves against any perceived threat from more modern, tolerant and rationalist forms of Orthodoxy, and, if so, what elements of belief, doctrines, ideas, and values they may share that has contributed to this pattern of alliances over the years. For example, the possibility that this consistent opposition to Jewish rationalism derives from a jointly held theological idea: that, under the influence of kabbalistic mysticism and pietism, non-Hasidic and Hasidic *haredi* Judaism long ago agreed that the evil of the material world is inherent and insurmountable. The non-Hasidic *haredim* seek escape through asceticism, while Hasidic Jews seek escape through *devequt*, union with the Divine.[57] The one seeks to escape the evil of reality by self-denial, the other by transcending reality as an illusion. Neither has sought an active, creative and beneficent engagement with the world, and neither regards *madda* as a divine gift to be perfected.

The void that has taken place in Judaism through the absence of a successful, modern, vibrant Jewish enlightenment, represented by Modern Orthodoxy and the Torah u-Madda movement, has been filled by a gradually escalating extremism.

A hundred years ago, there was an important debate about Hasidism among historians and other intellectuals. They argued over who should shepherd Judaism from the restrictive life of the ghetto towards greater spiritual freedom and national autonomy.[58] While the "debate" had no winner, the real winner in Jewish life was Hasidism, which continues to thrive to this day, having permeated traditional Judaism in *galut* with its mystical outlook of separation from, and hostility toward, the Jewish Enlightenment as well as other peoples and cultures, and its dangerous ideas of pantheism, escapism, and anti-rationalism[59].

But there was something hopeful about that debate: its assumption was that there were elements of the ascetic and mystical Jewish way of life that may have served Jewry well in the past, but needed reexamination in the

[56]Nadler, "Rabbis and Rebbes," p. 4; see also David Berger's recent book, *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference* (Portland, Oregon: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001), and my review essay, "Challenging Lubavitch's New Messianic Claims," *Midstream* (December, 2001): pp. 30-5.

[57]Nadler, *Mithnagdim*, Chapters 4-5.

[58]*Idem*., "Rabbis and Rebbes," ; see also, Dan, "Gershom Scholem: Between Mysticsm and Scholarship," *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. IV, pp. 225-58.

[59]See, e.g., Kanarfogel, *Peering*, p. 208, commenting on David Ruderman's observation that the German pietists had a scientific awareness. See also Faur, *Homo Mysticus*, p. 126; and David Fromkin, *The Way of the World* (NewYork: Vintage Books, 2000), pp. 132-3, noting that the early seventeenth century marked the separation of science from kabbalah and other magic and esoteric activity and belief. The problematic nature of Ruderman's broader view on the compatibility of kabbalah and science is reflected historically in the challenges by kabbalists to the introduction of rationalistic elements into Judaism during the past five hundred years, discussed above, and reflected currently, for example, in the basic incompatibility between Modern Orthodoxy (and its embrace of *madda*, or secular knowledge) and kabbalah; see David Shatz, "Rav Kook and Modern Orthodoxy: the Ambiguities of 'Openness,'" in Sokol ed., *Engaging Modernity*, pp. 97-98. As Faur observes: "Mythical ideology will affect and finally dominate and subvert scientific progress"; *Homo Mysticus*, p. 126. See also note 60. The continuing attraction of Hasidism to modern Jews, secular as well as religious, whether of Ashkenazi or Oriental origin, seems to be attributable to the mystical leadership of the *zaddik* or the *rebbe* of a particular Hasidic group. Another cause may be their fascination with the idea of mystical connection with the Divine, the ideas of the "nothingness" and "death" that accompany that union, and its erotic, sexual aspects; see e.g., Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, pp. 66-69, 126, and vol. IV, pp. 76-85.

modern world. Let me cite one example.

Nahmanides, a physician and an early leader of kabbalah, stated: "One cannot…profess the faith of Moses unless he believes that all of the phenomena to which we are subject are miracles every one, *not caused by any natural law*" (emphasis added).[60] Thus, given the dominance of kabbalah in Jewish tradition since the sixteenth century, it is not surprising that, prior to Jewish Emancipation in the modern era, Jews could not possibly be expected, much less encouraged, to pursue science, technology, or even medicine. Not only was religious community support for such activity lacking; but, as a matter of principle, if there are only divine miracles on which to rely and no "laws" supporting these disciplines, what is there to study?

Idolatry results from feeling impotent in a world controlled by external and irrational forces that we humans can 'bribe' but can never work with in partnership.

I have left for final and separate consideration the complex and, as will soon appear, related issues of whether Jewish mysticism may be considered a form of idolatry, a matter that inevitably impinges on any Jewish embrace of mysticism. This challenge was made to kabbalah as far back as the thirteenth century;[61] it suggested the idea of the ten *sefirot* (emanations, aspects or powers of God) was inconsistent with the Divine unity.[62]

Moshe Halbertal has elaborated four aspects or definitions of idolatry in Jewish tradition:[63] (1) betrayal and rebellion against God, whose omnipotence and status as exclusive leader and protector of Israel, mankind and the created universe is thereby negated; (2) metaphysical error, having an erroneous concept of God in mind during prayer - in particular, anthropomorphic conceptions or other projections of human qualities onto God, thereby also reducing or denying the divine authority of God's

[60]See, e.g., Nahmanides on Gen. 17:1 and 46:15, Exod. 13:16, and Lev. 26:11; see also his statement at Lev. 18:4 that Jews should abandon affairs of the world for *yihud* (communing or uniting with God). See generally, Ta-Shma, "Rabbi Jonah Girondi," p. 176; Faur, "Two Models," and *idem*., "A Crisis of Categories," pp. 41-64; cf. Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, pp. 411-13, arguing that Nahmanides used witchcraft and demonology as symbols of the miraculous element in the world under God's continuing governance. This sounds apologetic to me, because the idea of the miraculous as part of God's providence can be argued without recourse to witchcraft and demonology as symbols or otherwise. In a similar apologetic vein is Septimus' attempt to show how Nahmanides, viewed in a certain way, embraced a concept of nature, while conceding that the kabbalist's "nature" is "quite different from its rationalistic counterpart"; Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture*, p. 111. Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, "Torah and General Culture: Confluence or Conflict," in Schacter, ed., *Judaism's Encounter* , pp. 237-39, shows that Nahmanides' attitude to science and philosophy was, at best, ambivalent. He "took pains to *insist upon their problematic aspects as avenues to truth*, and to note that recourse to them, while perhaps necessary in certain circumstances, reflected weakness rather than strength, *perhaps even with respect to the scientific and medieval realms*" (emphasis added). Note the connection between mystical *yihud* and the same term used in 1096 as synonymous with martyrdom; see Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance,* pp. 88-9. Regarding Nahmanides' view that the world operates only by divine miracles, see Saul Berman's insightful address, "Patriotism, Zionism and the Hand of God in History," as reported by Abigail Klein Leichman, "Berman Urges Action, Shopping, Prayer," *The Jewish Standard*, April 19, 2002, p. 9, explaining Maimonides' view contrary to Nahmanides' and the benefits of his reconciliation of human free will and the laws of nature with God's omnipotent ability - rarely used and never apprehended in advance - to control all events in humanity's and nature's realms. (See further Appendix 10.)

[61]Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry,* tr. Naomi Goldblum (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 199-200; Faur, "Two Models," pp. 7-17 (Faur regards idolatry as an aspect of mystical anthropocentrism - see note 25); Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, pp. 114-16; Abraham P. Socher, "Of Divine Cunning and Prolonged Madness: Amos Funkenstein on Maimonides' Historical Reasoning," *Jewish Social Studies*, n.s. (Fall 1999): 6-29, esp. p. 20; Gershom Scholem, R.J. Zvi Werblowsky, ed., and Allan Arkush, tr., *Origins of the Kabbalah* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987, 1990), pp. 54, 398-99; Faur, *Homo Mysticus*, pp. 4, 9-13, 94, 121; and *idem., In the Shadow of History*, pp. 10, 46, 74, 112, 127. Kanarfogel touches on issues of idolatry in *Peering,* pp. 194-95.

[62]Nahmanides, a founder of formal kabbalah, asserted that idolatry only exists in kabbalah when one prays to *one* of the ten *sefirot* in isolation from the Divinity as a whole; see Halbertal, *Idolatry,* pp. 194-95. On Nahmanides and trinitarian doctrines in kabbalah, see Faur, "Two Models," pp. 43-46, and "Anti-Maimonidean Demons," sec. V.

[63]Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*, pp. 236-41.

commandments by blurring the abyss between the Commander and those who are commanded; (3) the view of God as comprising a multiplicity of aspects or powers or intermediaries that depend on man, and human actions, to become unified, thereby blurring the distinction between polytheism and monotheism;[64] and (4) worshiping God in a wrong or erroneous manner.

In kabbalah, the realms of evil in the world – known as *qelippot* ("husks") – are inhabited by destructive angels, or evil spirits, says the modern kabbalist, Adin Steinsaltz, who has written that there is so much evil in the world that these angels "appear to be *independent beings*…, *subjects of a sovereign realm of evil*" (emphasis added). This gnostic statement from Lurianic kabbalah,[65] which postulates evil as an independent power and an aspect of the Divinity that emerged during the process of Creation as God sought to purify the Divine pleroma of evil, appears to contain aspects of idolatry as described by Halbertal. It invites the kind of despair that can find solace solely in an escapist, mystical ideology and way of life. Shlomo Riskin has concisely expressed the crucial psychological connection between mysticism and idolatry: "Idolatry results from feeling impotent in a world controlled by external and irrational forces which we humans can, at best, 'bribe,' but can never work with in partnership."[66]

The worst fears of the Vilna Gaon and other *mitnagdim*, in the wake of the then-recent Shabbtai Zevi episode of a false messiah engendering widespread Jewish apocalyptic excitement, have recently been again realized with the advent within Habad of messianic and divinity claims for the deceased Lubavitcher Rebbe and associated practices in worship that raise the specter of idolatry.[67] The idea of a nation or people being redeemed through the death and (expected) return to life of a "messiah" before completion of his messianic mission is based on kabbalistic doctrines and has distinct and obvious parallels to Christian messianic doctrines.[68] In turn, these have roots in certain dangerous Jewish midrashic and liturgical texts dealing with the *aqedah*, in which Isaac was actually sacrificed and then returned to life by God to father the Jewish people.[69] The redemptive value of human death and union with God (or the universe) is part of Jewish – indeed, all –

[64]See, e.g., *ibid*., pp. 194, 198. Pantheism, with all of its dangers to monotheistic belief and normative practices, is an aspect of mysticism; see Scholem, *Major Trends,* pp. 221-25, 347-48.

[65]See his "Worlds, Angels and Men," *Jewish Spectator* (Fall, 2000):10. The issue between the kabbalist Isaac Luria, whose ideas dominated Jewish ideology after the sixteenth century, and his contemporary in Safed, Moses Cordovero, on the Divine roots of evil, is discussed in Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I, p. 21 and vol. III, Chapter 16. Cf. Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 41-2, on the impact of Shabbetai Zevi on Lurianic kabbalah's primacy. While Buber sought to portray Hasidism as changing Lurianic kabbalah's anti-worldly approach, the better view of scholars is that he was incorrect; see Jerome Gellman, "Buber's Blunder," pp. 20-40. Buber's romanticized view, which has proved attractive to many, is discussed in Joseph Dan, "A Bow to Frumkinian Hasidism," *Modern Judaism* (May 1991):175-94. Idel portrays kabbalah and its mythological components as part of an "inner process" in Jewish thought. This defies the historical record that it first erupted as *hekhalot* mysticism, *outside* of talmudic culture (200-500 C.E.), and then again, around the thirteenth century, as kabbalah, seeking redemption by escape from history into prehistory and preventing appropriate Jewish responses to contemporary challenges of history, based on a mythology that was contrary to the rationalism of classical rabbinic culture; see the discussion of opposing views in Moshe Idel, "Rabbinism Versus Kabbalism: On G. Scholem's Phenomenology of Judaism," *Modern Judaism* (October 1991):281 ff., esp. 290-5; Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. IV, ch. 7, pp. 149, 153, 177, 179, and *passim*; see also Elior, "Messianic Expectations and the Spiritualization of Religious Life in the Sixteenth Century," in *Essential Papers*, ed. Ruderman,pp. 289-91. (See further Appendix 11.)

[66]Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I, p. 21; Shlomo Riskin, "God's Algebra," *The Jerusalem Post, International Edition*, March 16, 2001, p. 39.

[67]Berger, *The Rebbe, passim*. The nature of the experience of *devequt* and *unio mystica* as envisioned by the leaders of Hasidism, with its notion of retrieving Divine knowledge of use to the community as a result of the hasid's ascent experience, and the powers required to achieve that level of spirituality, inevitably meant that the *zaddik* or *rebbe* would soon acquire unique status in this regard and, thereby, in all aspects of community life. Even non-Hasidic Jews accepted his special powers. The *zaddik* also inevitably superseded the rabbi of the community in his claim to greater authority because of what we might loosely call his "divine connections"; see Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. IV, pp. 112-28; Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, chs. 21-22. In a sense, the Rebbe – as he is now viewed as a quasi-deity by many in Habad – serves a function similar to the *shekhinah*, as an object of adoration and devotion, perhaps even worship, that is interposed between God and the male worshipper. This role of the *shekhinah* arose in the twelfth century in parallel with, and as a response to, the revival of Mary, the mother of Jesus, to an analogous position, interposed between Jesus and Christian worshippers, to both of which feminine figures the male worshipper could be

mystical thought.[70] Its potential to undermine the foundations of Jewish identity has now become readily apparent, as has its adverse effect on Judaism's role as a member of the larger family of nations.[71]

In sum, what I call the "culture of mysticism and asceticism" was an understandable and excusable response to a thousand-year-long, pervasively oppressive era of Christian triumphalism and the concomitant persecution of European Jewry. But it now is time to ask whether there have been enough changes – including the emergence of the State of Israel and significant alteration of Christian attitudes toward Jews and Judaism – to warrant a comprehensive, multi-discipline reconsideration of some elements of that response that may have weakened Judaism and Jewry over the past ten centuries. Indeed, the foregoing discussion suggests that such reconsideration is long overdue. Certainly, the unquestioning verdict that the mystical response offers unmitigated and continuing benefit and enrichment to Jewry and Judaism, and the almost universal rabbinic adoption of that view – even among many Modern Orthodox Jews today – need to be reexamined. Indeed, perhaps the most important benefit from such a reexamination would be to help develop an authoritative and attractive intellectual presentation of a traditional Judaism that will fill the void that now exists - especially in Israel - between the *haredi* and secular societies, which threatens the future of Jewry as a nation and as a religion.[72]

The most important benefit from such a reexamination would be to help develop an authoritative and attractive intellectual presentation of a traditional Judaism to fill the void between the haredi and secular societies, which threatens the future of Jewry as a nation and as a religion.

A published symposium of outstanding historians, rabbis and other scholars, with an opportunity to respond to one another, addressing these issues would be an excellent beginning to a long overdue project. Considerable relevant published scholarship already exists, but much more analysis seems necessary to fully set out the relevant issues and evidence.[73]

One of the outcomes that I foresee from such a study is the development of a solid intellectual foundation for a

devoted; Arthur Green, "*Shekhinah*, The Virgin Mary, and the Song of Songs," *AJS Rev.* (April 2002):1-52. Of course, in the case of the Rebbe, this puts the male worshipper in a male-to-male relationship. It may be noted, however, that homoerotic relationships are not uncommon in kabbalah; Wolfson, *Speculum*, pp. 369-72, 396.

[68]Berger, *The Rebbe*; see also my article cited in note 53; and Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

[69]*Ibid;* and Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial* (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights, 1993), pp. 32-44. See also Jose Faur, "De-Authorization of the Law: Paul and the Oedipal Model," *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, Joseph H. Smith, ed. and Susan Handelman, assoc. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) pp. 222-244.

[70]Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, pp. 33-46; Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 4, 15, 146, 249. See also Idel, *Kabbalah*, pp. xvi, 44-7, 56, 65-70; and Ostow, *Ultimate Intimacy*, p. 28.

[71]According to I. Tishby and other scholars, the effect of mystical union is to extract holiness from other nations and destroy their viability and ability to exist; see Blidstein's discussion in *Tikkun Olam*, p. 49.

[72]The current situation is described, e.g., in Seffi Rachlevsky, *Hamoro shel Mashiah* ("The Messiah's Donkey") (Tel Aviv, *Yediot Ahronot*, 1998); and Lauren Gelford, "Between the Divide," *The Jerusalem Post Magazine*, *The Jerusalem Post*, October 27, 2000, pp. 10-11, 13. A start in filling the void between Israel's *haredi* and secular extremes - apart from the Conservative and Reform movements, which are still struggling for a recognition of authenticity from secular Israelis - can be found in *The Torah U- Madda Journal*, which commenced publication in 1989 by Yeshiva University; The Orthodox Forum series of conference volumes, initiated by Dr. Norman Lamm, in 1989, and published by Jason Aronson, Inc. since that date; and the collection of papers edited by Jacob J. Schacter, *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures*, published by Jason Aronson, Inc. in 1997. These papers - generally favorable to Judaism's constructive encounter with other cultures – contain little discussion of the problematic aspects of pietism and mysticism in preventing and delegitimizing any integration of non-Jewish culture with Judaism; but cf. note 71.

[73]See Appendix 12.

form of Modern Orthodoxy as a viable counterweight to the beliefs and many of the practices of Hasidic and *haredi* Jewry today.[74] Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's worldview, summarized recently by Eugene Korn, is that "Jews bear a double burden: to cooperate with humanity to improve society and conquer nature, and yet to withdraw to their exclusive covenantal confrontation."[75]

The view of Gershom Scholem, probably the greatest objective scholarly defender of Jewish mysticism, is that it is caused by terror, and fear of evil in the world which is viewed as coming from demonic forces, which Scholem considers "one of the most dangerous factors in the development of kabbalah." He concludes: "Anyone who concerns himself seriously with the thinking of the great kabbalists will be torn between feelings of admiration and revulsion."[76] It is time, I believe, to begin to move from the former to the latter.

Perhaps it is inevitable in our modern age that both types of Judaism, rationalist and anti-rationalist, this worldly and otherworldly, will exist. Yet it is doubtful that Judaism can thrive with the strife of such competing ideologies, each claiming superiority and primacy.[77] But, if there is such a need, or if in any case we cannot avoid such competition, the analysis and the debates that I propose will demonstrate also that this fragmented Jewish identity can only exist and thrive on the basis that each side recognizes and acknowledges Judaism's need for the other in order to fulfill their common destiny.

[74]See Walter Wurzburger's view that Modern Orthodoxy offers the greatest promise for the future; "The Sea Change in American Orthodox Judaism: A Symposium," *Tradition* (Summer, 1998): 136-8. See also Lichtenstein, "Torah and General Culture, Confluence and Conflict" in Schacter, ed., *Judaism's Encounter*, pp. 220-92; and Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction," p. 81. (See further Appendix 13.)

[75]"*Nitzhuni Banai*: A Review Essay of *Love and Terror in the God Encounter, The Theological Legacy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* by David Hartman." *The Edah Journal* (2:1) *Tevet* 5762, p. 7.

[76]Gershom Scholem, On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism (NY: Schocken, l965), pp.99-100; see also ibid.,pp.88-98, 101-107(kabbalah as a revolt against classsical Biblical and Rabbinic Judaism, including its insistence on divine transcendence and divine unity and its rejection of mythical and pantheistic ideologies) and pp. 108-117 (kabbalah's view of evil as demonic forces originating in the Godhead at the time of Creation, and redemption as the union of God with the Shekhinah through the "secret magic of human acts" and not from human efforts in history to perfect the world nor even from the efforts of the Messiah against the forces of evil on the battlefield).

[77]See, e.g., Nadler, "Rabbis and Rebbes," pp. 21-2. Jose Faur – rather surprisingly, given his prior emphasis on the importance of a multi-dimensional Judaism – suggests the benefits of such a role specialization at the end of his penetrating paper, "One-Dimensional Jew, Zero-Dimensional Jew," in *The Annual of Rabbinic Judaism*, ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck, William Scott Green and Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 50 and n. 76. In such cases, I believe each group will inevitably strive to prove its superiority and assert its dominance.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

The 1096 martyrs were undoubtedly aware of the anonymously written historical work, the book of *Yosippon*, which appeared circa 953 C.E., and was accepted and revered by medieval Jewry as the original account by Josephus of the fall of Masada in 73 C.E. *Yosippon* repeats, and thereby supports, from Josephus' original account, in his *Wars of the Jews*, Eleazar's plea to his fellow defenders of Masada to kill their families and themselves and heed the *ancient mystical Indian philosophy* that death is more to be cherished than life, and will liberate their immortal souls to join God in the afterlife that is free of the world's evil and miseries, in a place of eternal purity and peace. See, e.g., Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), pp. 35-7; *Josephus, Complete Works*, tr. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1981), pp. 601-3. The Talmud's negative attitude toward such martyrdom is evidenced by its silence about Masada. Family murders and suicides similar to those in Rhineland Germany took place in Spain in 1391, when Jews were faced with the choice of death or forced conversion to Christianity; see Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1978), vol. II, pp. 72, 102, 105-7, 130. It is noteworthy that the Rhineland martyrs recognized that their martyrdom was unprecedented (see the Appendix in Chazan, *First Crusade*, pp. 232, 237); indeed, some Jews who insincerely converted to save their children (and their wives and themselves) were praised for their continued loyalty to God and received from the martyrs messages of consolation and hope that things would work out (*ibid*., p. 229). This sounds like a recognition that martyrdom by suicide and murder was not required by *halakhah*, yet the martyrs recited a blessing before killing their families and themselves, with the formulaic words "Who commanded us" (*ibid*., p. 230). All of this makes the martyrs' actions so much more problematic and helps explain why the approval of suicide by the tosafists was so limited and conditional (see text at notes 15-16).

Appendix 2

In offering their own radical but limited expansion of the talmudic doctrine of passive martyrdom where fear of unbearable torture is involved, R. Tam and the tosafists who followed his lead were rejecting *aggadah*-based and other arguments that some historians have recently offered, eight hundred years after the fact, to support the 1096 martyrdoms from a halakhic standpoint. These arguments are based on material that - like the material in the Chronicles - was surely known to the tosafists over the two-hundred-year period spanned by their rulings, in which they generally sanctioned suicide *only in the face of unbearable torture.* Indeed, under the circumstances, I don't understand the point of trying to develop such arguments long after the tosafists spoke on the issue; see Berger, "Jacob Katz," pp. 47-8. Berger's own reliance on the response of R. Meir of Rothenburg (*ibid*., p. 48) does not derogate from the fact that the prevailing view among tosafists follows R. Tam's formulation requiring fear of unbearable torture. R. Meir relied on the prior acts of pious Jews (*ibid.*). There is only one notable case in the 1096 Chronicles of a mass suicide (or murder) done out of fear of torture. (Chazan, *First Crusade*, p. 278)

Appendix 3

A similar pattern of *ex-post* approval of martyrological family murders and suicides occurred in Spain at the time of the 1391 Christian pogroms; see above, note 9 and Ram Ben-Shalom, "Sanctification of God's Name and Jewish Martyrdom in Aragon and Castile in 1391: Between Sepharad and Ashkenaz," *Tarbiz* (*Tevet-Adar* 2001): 227-77 [Hebrew]. Ben-Shalom attributes the change in the Sephardi attitude when faced with conversion or martyrdom - from conversion in 1148 (by the fanatical Moslem Almohades tribes) to martyrdom in 1391 (by Christian mobs) - to Jewish absorption of Christian theology and ideology in the interim, glorifying suffering and martyrdom at the hands of their enemies. See also, on the transfer of the *aqedah* sacrifice paradigm from Judaism to Christianity, when the latter looked for a model for the sacrifice of God's only begotten son, and

then back to Judaism, when it looked for a model for its suffering as God's chosen people, Lippman Bodoff, "The Binding of Isaac: Religious Paradoxes, Permutations and Problems," *Midstream* (November 2001): 25-28.

Appendix 4

Ashkenazi rabbis of Germany and Northern France, under Christian rule, who came to Provence in Southern France, and Catalonia in Northern Spain, starting in the thirteenth century, joined with kabbalists there in encouraging martyrdom, in contrast to Sephardi rabbis of the Maimonidean, Andalusian, tradition, who discouraged it except where clearly required by talmudic law, as Faur notes (in "Two Models" and "A Crisis of Categories"). See also, Berger, "Judaism and General Culture," p. 114; and Soloveitchik, "Religious Law," p. 208. In this regard, the Chronicles of the 1096 martyrdom repeatedly emphasize that their *method* was unprecedented; see, e.g., Chazan, *First Crusade*, pp. 232, 237, 256. Indeed, at one point the Chronicles state that whoever speaks ill of those who converted "insults the countenance of the Divine Presence"; ibid., p. 294.

Appendix 5

The two causes identified by Dan – i.e., new approaches to prayer and to ethical conduct-as explaining the simultaneous emergence of pietism in Germany and kabbalah in southwest Europe as mainstream forms of Jewish mysticism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries reflect a single common cause: viz., what Dan describes elsewhere (in the context of second-century *hekhalot* mysticism) as a "spiritual crisis" experienced by the Jewish community, here caused by the historical trauma of persecution and persistent pressure by a triumphalist Christian civilization beginning with the First Crusade in 1096. Prayer is a call for help, comfort and consolation from a loving parent, sought through union with God, *the* loving Parent, and the necessary new theosophic understanding of the dynamic process among the *sefirot* within the Godhead that made such union doctrinally possible. This new understanding and opportunity for union represent a rebirth or a utopia that is – to use another formulation by Dan - an "expression of one's attitude toward the [terrible] present and the [glorious] past." Relatedly, the new ethics focuses on God's closeness to the Jewish people through the revealed commandments; Jewry's ability through their strict observance to theurgically restore harmony and completeness to the divine realm; and the need of Jews to withdraw from the inherent evil of the material world represented by man's body, by means of an ascetic ethic that conditions its followers for mystical union and its ultimate physical form experienced as martyrdom. See Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I, p. 110, and vol. II, pp. 57-63; *idem., Jewish Mysticism and Jewish Ethics*, chs. 3-5; Marcus, *Piety* , pp. 150-1, n. 57. Of course, the mystics do not see themselves as reacting to these historically conditioned causes and responses, since they have "a deep faith in the eternal truth of their revelations and ideas," as Dan notes in *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I, p. 78 and Berger concurs in, e.g., "Judaism and General Culture," p. 87. See also note 28; but cf. Marcus, *Piety*, p. 151, n. 57.

See also, Jerome Gellman, "Buber's Blunder: Buber's Replies to Scholem and Schatz-Uffenheimer," *Modern Judaism* (February 2000):20-40; Walter S. Wurzburger, "Rav Soloveitchik as a *Posek* of Postmodern Orthodoxy," in *Engaging Modernity*, ed. Moshe Z. Sokol (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1997), p. 124; Ostow, *Ultimate Intimacy; Faur, Homo Mysticus, passim, and idem, In the Shadow of History*, (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1992), Introduction, Chapter 1, and p. 88. Faur treats these and related aspects of mysticism, such as those discussed by J.B. Soloveitchik (see note 29), as "anthropocentric." On the talmudic treatment of asceticism, see Sara Epstein Weinstein, *Piety and Fanaticism* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1997).

Appendix 6

Lurianic kabbalah, considered by them as the only true meaning of the Torah, was viewed by its adherents as the meta-text of the mythology and meaning secretly revealed at Sinai and transmitted secretly to an elite few over the centuries; see Shaul Magid, "Lurianic Exegesis and the Garden of Eden," *AJS Review* (1997):37-76; see

also Bruce Rosenstock, "Abraham Miguel Cardoso's Messianism: A Reappraisal," *AJS Review* (1998): 63-104. This mythology postulates that evil existed *within the Godhead*, which sought to cleanse itself through the process of Creation. Thus, it thrives as a divine power in the world even now; Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. I, p. 21. While theurgy in kabbalah, which postulates that man can restore the harmony that was lost within the Godhead during Creation, is hubristic on an external, formal, level, it bespeaks a radical pessimism, signifying - especially in its Lurianic formulation - that redemption can come about only if fallible human Jews can manage to mend the divinity and overcome the divine power of evil in the world by the performance of ritual and ethical commandments. This inherently pessimistic view regarding the possibility of the coming of the messiah and Jewish redemption succeeded, according to Dan, because it best mirrored Israel's plight among the nations at that time (sixteenth century and thereafter), scattered, in exile, busy fighting off intractable evil; see, e.g., Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, pp. 329-48. If Jewish reality today no longer corresponds to this description, isn't a new "mirror" appropriate, and isn't it possible - even probable - that the old mirror is distorting Jewish reality and Jewry's wisest response to it?

Appendix 7

A specific example is the reaction of traditional Jewish communities in early modern Europe toward the Jewish practice of medicine. When Jewish doctors, newly accepted and trained in medicine, returned to their communities, they were often not welcomed, but treated as competitors of the "folk-healers and *rebbes*," and their new science frowned upon. Indeed, Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav, the great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidism, urged his followers to eschew medicines in favor of the "prayers of the *tsaddiq*" (the "righteous one") of the community. When the renowned *musar* (ethics) teacher, Rabbi Israel Salanter, learned that his son had "gone to Berlin to study medicine, he…observed *shiv`ah*, seven days of mourning." Many Jews saw these new Jewish doctors as "acculturated destroyers of the tradition," and the level of their religious observance was questioned. We may well surmise the influence that these doctors had on the best and the brightest young Jews with whom they subsequently came in contact, regarding traditional Judaism, and the resultant defections that ensued from what these young men came to see as superstitious and narrow-minded religion. See Michael Nevins, *The Jewish Doctor* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1994), pp. 71-75; see also John M. Efron, "Images of the Jewish Body: Three Medical Views from the Jewish Enlightenment," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (1995):349-66. See also *Berakhot* 60a; and Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 61-96, 356-514 (on the attitude of classical Judaism toward science and rationalism).

Appendix 8

It should be emphasized that there is little consequential difference between "Lithuanian" and other *haredi* Jewry regarding the absorption of Jewish mysticism and its dismal view of this world and its escapist theology; see Nadler, *Mithnagdim*, pp. 106-7. The Sephardi tradition is significantly different, perhaps because it developed in the tolerant and culturally rich and stimulating environment of medieval Islamic Spain, and - with the subsequent decline of Islam in the modern period - Sephardic Jewry did not have to face the challenges of modernity until their return to the State of Israel; see, e.g., Berger, "Judaism and General Culture," pp. 137; Ostow, "Jewish Response," p. 245; remarks of Zvi Zohar on Sephardi ideals of inclusiveness and the integration of Jewish learning with knowledge of general world culture in *A Word from Jerusalem*, Shalom Hartman Institute (September, 2000):6. For a recent twist on this comparison, see Michael Arnold, "Rabbis' Edict on Land Use Sprouts Furor," *Forward*, September 8, 2000, p. 3 (Sephardi Chief Rabbi "bow[s] to threats of excommunication from Lithuanian *haredi* or fervently Orthodox circles" regarding the rules for observing the sabbatical year [*shemitah*] in Israel).

Appendix 9

David Ruderman notes the view among scholars that the decline, by the early seventeenth century, of the brief flowering of Jewish interest in science in the sixteenth century, from "openness to insularity" (except in Italy, which was always unique in its openness; see, e.g., Moshe Idel, "Major Currents in Italian kabbalah between 1560-1660," in *Essential Papers On Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman [New York: NYU Press, 1992], pp. 345-72), was caused by the rise of Lurianic kabbalah to dominance in Jewish piety and religious thought by that time; see Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, ch. 2; Dan, "Manasseh ben Israel" *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, pp. 64-6. That strain of kabbalah has continued, of course, in a somewhat changed form since the middle of the eighteenth century, in Hasidism, which, as Norman Lamm notes, has generally rejected "organized secular education," "rational investigation" and "scientific thinking"; see *ibid*.; and Lamm, ed., *Hasidism*, pp. 67-71. Ruderman argues unpersuasively against the view that Lurianic kabbalah is the cause of the seventeenth-century decline in Jewish interest in science.

1. While Israel Ta-Shma, cited by Ruderman, questions the extent of Lurianic kabbalah's dominance in Europe, and is joined in this opinion by Moshe Idel, theirs seems to be, from Ruderman's discussion, a minority view; Ruderman, *Jewish Thought*, pp. 58-9. Moreover, their view fails to take into account the impact on the masses caused by the mediative role of their rabbis teaching them Lurianic kabbalah; thus, they learned it from an intellectual elite, who were familiar with it. In this regard, if, as Idel states, non-Jewish European thinkers were also familiar with it "from the late fifteenth to the late nineteenth century," surely many Jews were, too; see Idel, *Kabbalah*, pp. 258-64.

2. Ta-Shma cites the broad cultural interests of the two eighteenth century rabbis, Emden and Eybeshitz, but neither was a kabbalist; the former was strongly opposed to Lurianic kabbalah and its Sabbatean offspring, which he accused Eybeshitz of embracing, and the latter strongly denied any sympathies with this strain of kabbalah. In any case, neither was a supporter much less an enthusiast of science, accepting it only to a limited extent and for a limited purpose; see, e.g., Berger, "Judaism and General Culture," p. 139; cf. Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 257.

3. While Ruderman is puzzled by the claim that Lurianic kabbalah produced "closure" while the previously adhered to Cordoverian kabbalah "sustained openness," one answer seems clear enough: the former - in contrast to the latter - postulated a pessimistic mythology in which evil was part of the Godhead; Dan, "No Evil Descends from Heaven," *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, pp. 329-348, 353. What point could there be in the human pursuit of scientific or any other form of progress in the world if evil was an inherent condition of God and His creation? Cordovero's optimistic approach, that man caused evil, and had the power to relieve, reduce and eradicate it by acting to achieve progress in the world, coincided with the temporary Jewish openness, hope, and relative freedom from persecution in the Renaissance-Reformation dominated sixteenth century; Luria's pessimistic departure from Cordoverian-Safedian kabbalah coincided with the Counter-Reformation and the general return of Jewish persecution, "when history developing all around them was proving…the rule of evil in this world," thereby providing to Jews the perception of "a harmony between its [new, Lurianic] symbols and the [new] Jewish reality… [by] destroying the harmony in the divine worlds and postulating that evil did indeed descend from heaven" (*ibid*., p. 348).

4. The factors cited by Ruderman in lieu of Lurianic kabbalah to explain the decline of budding rationalism by the early seventeenth century (*Jewish Thought*, p. 92), would necessarily have had the *same* kind of impact on *non-Jewish* scientific interest and achievement, but we know that, in fact, this was not the case (*ibid*., pp. 370-1).

5. Ruderman suggests that kabbalah should not be viewed as incompatible with scientific endeavors because

some scientists, such as Newton, were sometimes interested in kabbalah; *Jewish Thought*, pp. 310-31 and *passim.* However, it is incorrect to reason from the interest of scientists in kabbalah to the interest of kabbalists in science; science is an *open* system of thought, and scientists are therefore interested in any idea, from whatever source, that may help provide a clue or a key to solving a scientific problem that has proved unsolvable by accepted scientific knowledge. In contrast, kabbalah is a *closed* system of thought that claims to have an exclusive claim to truth and the method of its ascertainment and that specifically excludes reason, logic, experience, or the senses, including scientific theories, hypotheses and experimentation; see, e.g., Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 9; and Idel, *Kabbalah*, p. 241.

Appendix 10

Amos Funkenstein concludes that the absence of any significant Jewish participation in science, as it flowered in the early modern period, was significantly caused by "the absence of a sense of the relative autonomy of such [scientific] pursuits as legitimate or even God-willed," referring undoubtedly to the anti-rationalist, separatist, and mystical orientation of Jewish religious thought in this period. David Ruderman disagrees; see *Jewish Thought*, pp. 370-1. I think Ruderman's case is unpersuasive, especially in light of other evidence, including that in his book and in his article, "The Impact of Science on Jewish Culture and Society in Venice (with special reference to Jewish graduates of Padua's Medical School)," in *Essential Papers*, pp. 519-53; see also Dan, "No Evil," *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. III, pp. 329-348; Daniel Boorstin, *The Discoverers* (New York: Random House, 1983), pp. 294-420; and Ben-Sasson, *Jewish People*, pp. 670-90; cf. Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 254-7. What is required is to reconcile a number of essentially uncontested facts, as shown in those sources:

1. There was an elite layer of broadly scientifically aware Jews during this period who studied, practiced and wrote in this field, including Tobias Cohen, David Nieto, and Joseph Delmedigo.

2. There was strong support for this activity in classical Jewish sources, including rabbinic and Sephardi rationalist-philosophical ideas, but not in kabbalistic or other mystical works.

3. Jewish professional activities were primarily in medicine and related fields, e.g., botany and zoology - but they were utilitarian activities like patient care, not experimentation geared to new scientific discoveries.

4. The major scientific discoveries in this period were in physical sciences, like mechanics, pneumatics and astronomy, by Christians.

5. Most of these discoveries came about as a result of experiments outside the universities.

6. Most of these experiments and related activities were performed by the discoverers individually, with limited - usually their own - funds, performed as side, non-money-making activities or avocations to their normal, full-time economic activities, which ranged from teaching to commerce.

7. Secular studies were largely excluded from Jewish school curricula because of rabbinical and community opposition. This was true even during the Jewish Enlightenment, c. 1750-1880 - except, not surprisingly, in Italy, where such studies had long been included.

8. The scientifically informed Jewish elite (see "*1.*," above) recognized that Jews were too poorly educated in science to be prepared for university level studies. However, there were some Jewish preparatory schools for entrance to university medical schools, with rabbinic and scientific curricula.

9. The Jewish community and its religious tradition during this period were opposed to scientific study and experimentation.

10. The universities, including the medical schools, sporadically accepted Jewish students in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries, mainly in Italy and France, and increasingly thereafter throughout Europe, as part of the Enlightenment, and finally in England in the 19th century. The universities provided a broad education in various scientific fields, and the Jewish graduates brought this growing knowledge to their communities throughout Europe.

11. Jewish institutions, e.g., the Council of Four Lands, had taxing authority for projects deemed important to the community, but these did not generally include support for scientific studies or experiments. However, some Jews did receive support from Christian governments and private persons, especially in the translation of scientific texts.

12.Scientific textbooks were widely available, from the sixteenth century on, within and outside the universities.

13. Jewish thinkers who followed emerging scientific advances recognized that Jewish inferiority in scientific study, knowledge and activity was based on a prevailing and persisting cultural inferiority; there was no claim made that this inferiority was caused by externally imposed restrictions on Jewish opportunities.

14. Given the notable and influential personalities discussed by Ruderman, who were aware of, and knowledgeable in, science, and the many Jewish students who gained a broad background in science, from their medical school studies (see "*10.*," above), the question arises: Why were Jewish interest, study, experimentation, and discovery in science in early modern Europe so lacking, apart from the study and practice of medicine, if not because of internal, cultural factors?

15. There is also the evidence of the *modern* period, in which virtually all institutions involved in scientific activity have become open to interested and qualified Jewish students, and yet, kabbalistically oriented religious Jews (see, e.g., Berger, "Judaism and General Culture," p. 87) have continued their early-modern-period record of inconsequential scientific interest and achievement.

My reconciliation of these facts is represented by the following comments of Ruderman and Boorstin. As Ruderman observes:

> *The contest between science and Jewish tradition* had left its shattering mark on the cultural sensibilities of Jews like [Tobias] Cohen, [David] Nieto, [Joseph] Delmedigo, and many others in Padua and elsewhere. The results of the new scientific explosion were imposing, and they no longer could be explained away solely by appeals to the grandiose cultural achievement of an ancient past. *The emerging sense of Jewish inferiority* among such impressionable Jewish observers of enlightened Christian society would become a propensity for an increasing number of university-educated Jews in subsequent years (emphasis added). See Ruderman, "The Impact of Science," p. 539.

Boorstin covers the issue of mysticism's attitude toward science similarly, much as Faur does, as noted above (see note 59):

> "While Hindus and Buddhists sought ways out of history, Christianity and Islam sought ways into history. Instead of promising escape from experience, they sought meaning in experience… both rooted in [classical] Judaism…." *The Discoverers*, pp. 566-7.

On balance Funkenstein was correct.

Appendix 11

Norman Lamm's recent book, defending Hasidism as not anti-intellectual, is an anomaly in terms of the author's motive. He seems to admire those who have little admiration for the *Torah u-Madda* program that Lamm has so strongly endorsed for so long. It is also unpersuasive in terms of any suggestion that Hasidism, and the kabbalah on which it is based, are, in any realistic sense, rational,

notwithstanding that much mystical thought, including Hasidism, may be characterized as the fruit of "intellectual" activity; see Lamm, ed., *Hasidism, passim*. For example, Hasidism, with a radical innocence that leads to passivity in the face of evil, as evident from its response to the Holocaust (see note 36), sees all phenomena as being in states of "smallness" and "greatness," and evil is, therefore, illusory because it is just the good in a state of "smallness" that, with faith and confidence, can flower into goodness; *ibid*., p. 483. This view hardly helps mankind, including the Jewish people, to know how to respond to the Bin Ladens, Stalins, Hitlers, and the Amalek nations that arise in history to devour the weak, defenseless and innocent. It stands in stark contrast to the simpler and more understandable and useful conception of biblical and rabbinic Judaism of human free will, humanity's capacity to choose between good and evil, and mankind's responsibility to destroy evil, to punish it and eliminate it, wherever and whenever it appears. Hasidism also certainly seems at odds with Modern Orthodoxy and *Torah u-Madda* Judaism regarding the value of secular education, the status of Zionism and the State of Israel, the role of women, and attitudes towards non-Orthodox Jews, non-Jews, and non-Jewish culture; see, e.g., *ibid*., pp. 67, 426, 513, 516, 530, 585-8; and Berger, *The Rebbe* , p. 7, n.2.

When we contrast Lamm's book on Hasidism with his subsequently published collection of earlier essays, *Seventy Faces: Articles of Faith* (Hoboken: Ktav, 2002) and his numerous previous books, we can readily see that Hasidic thought is an intellectual creation, but *obscurantist* in nature, and a search for a life of the spirit, while Lamm's Modern Orthodoxy, featured in his many books and essays, is an intellectual creation, *rationalist* in nature, and also in search of the life of the spirit. I say this notwithstanding Lamm's occasional attempts to bolster a rationalist argument with an incomprehensible kabbalistic idea, e.g., at p. 87: "In His absoluteness, the kabbalists taught, the world does not even exist for Him. In this respect, God is the 'Great Mystery' and man must forever despair of being able to understand Him." It seems to me that the kabbalists spent a lot of time and effort trying to do so, and did not despair of such effort. It is difficult to accept, therefore, Bernard Dov Cooperman's notion that in analyzing Jewish intellectual history it is "tendentious" to see an "interpretive grid" in the categories of philosophy and kabbalah that we may reasonably characterize as "rationalism *versus* obscurantism"; see Cooperman's "Afterward" in Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, pp. 250-1. The fact that Jewish mysticism and rationalism may share the same end, a life of the spirit, should not obscure the fact that they represent very different means to achieving it - nor should it obscure the possibility that those differences may now be more important than the common purpose they pursue.

Appendix 12

See e.g., the debate by early 20th century Jewish historians concerning Hasidim vs. Mitnagdim as "the spiritual forebears of the Jewish passage from the restrictive life of the ghetto towards greater spiritual freedom and national autonomy," discussed by Nadler in his monograph, "Rabbis and Rebbes." (The balanced presentation is marred by Nadler's attribution of the quality of "freedom and individualism" to the Izbitzer Rebbe's "expression of... religious determinism" based on Hasidism's view of divine immanence, by which all of the human spirit must be divine even when it sins; *ibid*., pp. 5, 21-2). See also the various views on Jewish mysticism of Heinrich Graetz and other *Wissenschaft* scholars; Gershom Scholem; Eliezer Schweid; and Joseph Dan, in "Gershom Scholem," *Jewish Mysticism*, vol. IV, pp. 131-90. All three seem to agree, however, even Scholem, that Jewish mysticism is an attempt to escape from the reality of life to a primordial past, through communion with God; that this involves abstaining from practical messianic or any other rational historical action or engagement in worldly affairs; and that this also involves an annulment of the world's value through achieving a sublime union with God. It is, indeed, for these reasons, that Graetz believed, as Schweid defends him, that Jewish mysticism:

> distorted man's ability to orient himself and to respond appropriately to concrete reality... and to

> grapple with its problems... These philosophers and scholars [N. Krachmal, Zunz, Graetz, and Geiger] saw in kabbalah's domination of the thoughts, feelings, and responses of Jews regarding the reality that surrounded them a major stumbling block that needed to be overcome to save the nation from [further?] decline.

It is difficult, given Scholem's definition of Jewish mysticism (*ibid*., p. 153), to agree with his view that kabbalah was the "core of the ongoing revolution that gave Judaism the power to survive in a hostile environment and prevented its spiritual fossilization and stagnation (ibid., at p. 148); survival power, yes, but fossilization – once that survival power was no longer needed – perhaps was the price! Schweid, therefore, seems substantially correct in his approach to the problematic nature of mysticism in Jewish history.

The "Postscript" by Yerushalmi in the 1996 edition of his *Zakhor* contains stimulating ideas touching on the separate realms of tradition and the search for historical truth, and how they feasibly might interact. See also, Seth Farber, "Jewish Orthodoxy as an Academic Discipline," *Le'Ela* (June 2000):35-40.

Appendix 13

For some indications that Modern Orthodoxy is in need of intellectual and institutional strengthening, see Moshe Sokolow, "Soloveitchik Lite," *The Jerusalem Report*, January 31, 2000, pp. 48-9. Lichtenstein adds the important recognition that encountering and engaging the world through *madda* entails statistical risks that some who are so engaged may sometimes, to some extent, falter religiously, but that the *Torah u-Madda* position can "still be sustained," depending, in each situation, on the overall anticipated "balance of benefit and loss" ("Torah and General Culture," p. 286). On the issue of *madda*, see *Yoma* 86a; *Yerushalmi Bava Metsi`a* 2:5; Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei HaTorah*, ch. 5; *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De`ah* 157. Lichtenstein's paper is, to my knowledge, the most comprehensive and nuanced single exposition of the *Torah u-Madda* position. It should be noted that he emphasizes the value of *madda* in enhancing Torah understanding and values. While he does not explicitly relate *madda* to *tiqqun olam* or *qiddush Ha-Shem* as I have discussed them the connection seems implicit in his analysis. However, he does note that an absence of *madda* has sometimes led to a *hillul Ha-Shem* (p. 236).

In any case, the connection of *madda* to *qiddush Ha-Shem* was expressly made by Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer at the end of the nineteenth century. There was a scholarly debate on whether Rabbi Hildesheimer considered *madda* as having "inherent worth" or just "practical value." Given that he expressly stated that Jewish excellence in secular studies and activities was a *qiddush Ha-Shem*, how could anyone possibly argue that such effort had no inherent worth? See Marc B. Shapiro, "Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer's Program of *Torah U-Madda*," *The Torah U-Madda Journal* (2000): 82, 84. Rav Kook offers the strongest and simplest argument for secular activities, dispensing with kabbalistic ideas of mystical exegesis, sefirotic emanations, and the intricate structure of mystical ritual activity. For him, spirituality is the *result* of using the tools of modern culture to guide the historical, earthly process of redemption; it is not achieved by casting off corporeality or by the negation of the self; see Eliezer Schweid, "'Prophetic Mysticism in Twentieth Century Jewish Thought," *Modern Judaism* (May 1994):166-9.