

“My Beloved is Like a Gazelle”  
(*Domeh Dodi li-Tsevi*):  
The Esthetic Messiah  
(An Essai in Rabbinic Surrealism,  
or Another Jewish Bestiary)<sup>1</sup>

IN THE SONG OF SONGS, King Solomon writes:

My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart; behold, he stands behind our wall, he looks in through the windows, he peers through the lattice.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Midrash, the verse describes the elusive character of the Redeemer: “Just as a deer appears and disappears and reappears, so the first Redeemer is revealed and occulted and revealed.”<sup>3</sup> The commentators limn for us the timetable of the first Redeemer, Moses, who after an initial contact with the Children of Israel subjugated in Egypt, absented himself, only to reappear on the scene at a later time.<sup>4</sup> (Some make the astute observation that in the Bible code known as *Atbash*, the Hebrew word *tsevi* [deer] is permuted to *Moshe*.) And so too, we are told, the *future* process of redemption will be a symphony in three movements: revelation/occultation/revelation.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, there is another sense in which the Beloved is compared to a deer. Besides its elusive behavior, the deer symbolizes the entire esthetic dimension. Part and parcel of the redemption of the soul of mankind is the redemption of the esthetic (perhaps erotic is the better word) dimension of being.

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I will not commit the *faux pas* of writing that the Hebrew word for “deer,” *tsevi*, has an additional meaning of “beauty,” because I know that though they look alike, these are actually two different words derived from separate proto-Semitic roots.

Be that as it may, the works of Solomon, Song of Songs and Proverbs (but especially the former) are replete with the image of the Beloved portrayed as a deer.

Your two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies.<sup>6</sup>

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles, and by the hinds of the field, that you awaken not, nor stir up love, until it please.<sup>7</sup>

A lovely hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; with her love be you ravished always.<sup>8</sup>

This fascination with the gazelle is common to both Hebrew and Arabic literature. Classical Arabic poetry abounds with the imagery of beautiful gazelles (i.e., women, metaphorically speaking). Appreciated for its grace, the gazelle is a symbol most commonly associated in Arabic literature with female beauty. One of the traditional themes of Arabic love poetry involves comparing the gazelle with the beloved, and linguists theorize that *ghazal*, the word for love poetry in Arabic, is related to the word for gazelle. Finally, it is thought that through the Persian *gazal*, the word “gazelle” entered the European languages.

In medieval Arabic and Persian civilization, the fawning (pun intended) on the graceful hind did not remain restricted to the realm of poetry (as in Hebraic civilization), but extended into the visual arts as well. In the Jewish world, the deer as visual image would be kept waiting in the woods for several centuries.

Belated as its arrival may have been, come the seventeenth century the icon of the deer exploded upon the Jewish world with full force. In 1666 (“the Year of the Beast” from the perspective of English Protestant millenarians), a Turkish Jew by the name of “Tsevi” (first name “Shabbetai”) captured the Messianic imagination of the Jewish People the world over. The symbolism of the deer was lost neither on Shabbetai Tsevi (he signed himself “*Tavya de-vei 'ila'ah*,” Aramaic for “celestial deer”)<sup>9</sup> and his admirers, nor on his eventual critics (after the necessary sobering) who punned on his name “*tsevi shavur*” (“a broken deer,” a Mishnaic reference).<sup>10</sup> Sabbatian iconography (the little that has survived in frontispieces of books) makes ample use of deer representation.<sup>11</sup>

The great visionary of Israel’s rebirth, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook (1865-1935), first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Erets Israel, saw a simi-



larity between Shabbetai Tsevi and Nietzsche.

What Nietzsche is to humanity, Shabbetai Tsevi (may the name of the wicked rot) is to Judaism; and just as Nietzsche took leave of his senses, so Shabbetai Tsevi took leave of his religion. One shell (*kelipah*) related to the Footsteps of Messiah.<sup>12</sup>

Rav Kook's intriguing *pensée* has left many of us in suspense. Could he by some stretch be alluding to Nietzsche's triumphing of the Dionysian element over the Apollonian element?<sup>13</sup>

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Speaking of Rav Kook. In his seminal work, *Orot* (1920), Rav Kook would devote two crucial chapters to the "power of imagination" (*"ko'ah ha-medameh"*) and the role it is destined to play in the redemptive process.

Initially, Rav Kook's survey of the contemporary scene assumes a rather pessimistic tone:

All of contemporary culture is built on the foundation of the imaginative faculty. This is the pagan legacy of the civilized nations caught up in the imaginative faculty, from which developed physical beauty, both in action and in representation. The imaginative faculty progresses, and with it, the applied and empirical sciences, and in proportion to the ascendance of the imaginative faculty and its hold upon life, the light of intellect recedes, because the entire world supposes that all happiness depends on the development of the imaginative faculty. So things continue gradually, until the remains of reason in the spirit of secular wisdom are also converted to the imaginative faculty. The speakers and raconteurs, the dramaturges and all engaged in *les beaux arts*, assume prominence in society, while philosophy hobbles and totters because pure reason disappears. As much as reason recedes, so "impudence increases, and the wisdom of sages rots, the sin-fearing are reviled and truth is absent, and the face of the generation is as the face of a dog."<sup>14</sup> That inner gentleness, which comes from the spirit of wisdom, disappears. The longing for spirituality and transcendence; for divine communion; for the higher world; for the clarity of ethics in the apex of its purity; for the concepts of intellect in and of their eternal selves, become a rare spectacle. This global phenomenon is reflected proportionately in Israel vis-à-vis divine inspiration and love of Torah with an inner spirit and essential freshness of faithful Judaism. There rules in the world a material spirit. *Woe unto you, O land, when your king is a lad and your princes eat in the morning!*<sup>15</sup>

And then in an abrupt turnabout, we are treated to a glint of the brilliant ironic wit which is the signature of Kookian vision:

But all of this is a far-reaching plan, the Lord's plan to perfect the imaginative faculty, for imagination is the healthy basis for the supernal spirit that will descend on it . . . the supreme divine spirit destined to come through King Messiah. Therefore, now the imaginative faculty is being firmly established. When it is completely finished, the seat will be ready and perfect for the supernal spirit of the Lord, fit to receive the light of the divine spirit, which is the spirit of the Lord, *a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and awe of the Lord.*<sup>16</sup>

Not content with sociological study and survey of modern intellectual history, Rav Kook, a kabbalist of note, goes on to provide Lurianic underpinnings to his observations, whereby the harlotry first addressed by Joshua (or rather his spies) with only partial success, is later confronted by King Solomon, with complete (or near complete) success. In the Kookian interpretation of this Lurianic myth, Rahab the Harlot and the Two Harlots symbolize the unbridled power of imagination:<sup>17</sup>

When the time had as yet not arrived for all the purity to appear at the final heights, there were sent by Joshua two spies to reconnoiter the land, and they came to the home of a harlot by the name of Rahab.<sup>18</sup> All is tied together with holiness and the highest good, but the attribute of judgment is aroused and true fear of punishment is required in proportion to the empowerment of the imagination and its deepening. But in the essence of the national will, the imaginative dimension—which entails the embodiment of knowledge on the one hand, and all description of beauty on the other—was still not completed at that time. This was brought to completion in the days of Solomon: *Then two harlots came before the judgment of the King of Israel, who sits on the throne of the Lord.*<sup>19</sup>

Rav Kook continues to trace the historic process of “*birur ko'ah ha-medameh*,” the clarification of the power of imagination (to employ the terminology of Rabbi Nahman of Breslov), through the idolatrous leanings of King Solomon in the First Temple period (attributed by the Bible to the influence of his foreign wives), which in turn prompted the hamstringing of imagination by the Men of the Great Assembly at the beginning of the Second Temple period, and finally culminating in the re-emergence and re-empowerment of imagination at the time of the national renaissance in the Land of Israel:

However, through the interference of the foreign women,<sup>20</sup> together with the inability to digest foreign things, there resulted the wickedness that caused the founding of the great city of Rome,<sup>21</sup> and the siftings of elements had to be stretched out for eons, until the imagination was disempowered in Israel. The drive for idolatry was captured in a “lead pot” and “slaughtered.”<sup>22</sup> By the same token, *there is no more any prophet*,<sup>23</sup> and the flame of love for nation and land is not felt in the same profound way as in the good days. This is related to the pain of the entire world. Until at the End of Days, the traces of the power of imagination are revealed and the love of the Land is aroused. The thing appears with its dregs, but it is destined to be purified. *The smallest will become a thousand, and the youngest, a powerful nation, I am the Lord, in its time I will hasten it.*<sup>24</sup>

In Rav Kook’s vision, a reactivation of the imagination is necessary for the return of prophecy to Israel. *U-be-yad ha-nevi’im adameh. By means of the prophets I have spoken in images.*<sup>25</sup> Rav Kook is indebted to Maimonides for placing the *ko’ah ha-medameh*, the imaginative faculty, front and center, rendering it an essential component, perhaps even *the* essential component of prophecy.<sup>26</sup> While a dormant imagination may not pose an obstacle to the intellectual pursuit of Torah study, Israel’s renewed quest for prophecy in its land makes the revival of the moribund “*medameh*” an absolute necessity.



Rav Kook may not have been alone in the belief that the non-cerebral (or right-hemispheric) dimension, so long missing from Judaism, would play a vital part in the national renaissance. There is an intriguing remark of the Rebbe of Sokhatchov that leads one to suspect that he too may have been thinking in such terms, that Israel in its struggle for final redemption must encompass a dimension hitherto almost alien to its being. His oral remarks (which fortunately, were preserved for posterity) take the form of commentary to the *Haftarah*, the reading from the Prophets for the Intermediate Sabbath of the Festival of *Sukkot* (Booths). According to Talmudic tradition, on that Sabbath morning we read *Be-Yom bo’ Gog*,<sup>27</sup> Ezekiel’s apocalyptic vision of the confrontation between the army of Gog and Magog on the one hand, and Jerusalem on the other.<sup>28</sup> Rav Hai Gaon, quoted in the *Tur*, explained that this occasion was deemed appropriate for that reading, because the War of Gog and Magog will take place on *Sukkot*.<sup>29</sup>

Rabbi Samuel Bornstein (1855-1926), the Rebbe of Sokhatchov (a school of Polish Hasidism known for its penetrating thought), could not

leave matters at that. He probed for some intrinsic connection between the prophesied cosmic struggle and the observance of the commandment of *sukkot*, those booths or huts that serve as temporary residences throughout the festival.

But first, the \$64,000 question: Who are Gog and Magog? Some say that they symbolize the seventy nations of the world, all lined up against Israel. (The Hebrew words “*Gog u-Magog*” have the numerical value of 70.<sup>30</sup>) The Sokhatchover, drawing on a Midrash, traces Gog back to his ancestor Yephet, son of Noah. Likewise, Israel is traced back to Shem, son of Noah.<sup>31</sup> In the post-diluvian world, Yephet received the dimension of “*hitsoniyut*” (“outwardness”), and Shem, the dimension of “*penimiyut*” (“inwardness”).<sup>32</sup> In the apocalyptic struggle of titans, Israel’s eleventh-hour salvation will hinge on its ability to take hold of the outward dimension, symbolized by the commandment of the *sukkah* or booth, which may be fulfilled by the mere act of sleeping in the *sukkah*. In sleep, one is stripped of the cerebral and reduced to the external, bodily aspect of one’s being.<sup>33</sup> (Though the Sokhatchover does not couch it in such terms, sleep is also a window of opportunity for imagination to run wild; for the soul to enter the ‘*alam al-mithal*, as the Sufi mystics termed it, translated by Henri Corbin into Latin as *mundus imaginialis*, or imaginal world.<sup>34</sup>)

Rabbi Gershon Hanokh Leiner (1839-1890), the Rebbe of Radzyn, in his analysis of the confrontation between Gog and Israel, focuses specifically on the Greek connection. In this regard, the Radzyner quotes the Talmud: “Our rabbis permitted [to write a Torah scroll in] Greek.”<sup>35</sup> As is well known, the civilization of *Yavan*, or Greece, excelled in the arts and appreciation of the esthetic dimension of being. The Talmud will justify the practice of writing a Torah scroll in Greek by invoking the verse “*Yapht Elohim le-Yephet ve-yishkon be-aholei Shem*” (“May God enlarge the boundaries of Yephet, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem”), which they paraphrased as “*Yaphyuto shel Yephet yehe be-aholei Shem*” (“The beauty of Yephet shall be in the tents of Shem”).<sup>36</sup> To the Radzyner’s thinking, implicit in Ezekiel’s prophecy, “And it shall come to pass on that day that I will give unto Gog a place there for a grave in Israel,”<sup>37</sup> is the prediction that the good, positive element of Gog—or Greece—once extracted from the dross, will be incorporated within Israel’s collective consciousness. Gog being buried in Israel, which is to say, the soil of Israel receiving into its midst the body of Gog, symbolizes the introjection of Greek civilization—or rather the salient, redeeming feature thereof—into the nation of Israel.<sup>38</sup> “And the precious, the good, found in this victory, will remain in Israel for eternity.”<sup>39</sup>



There is no denying that *Hazal*, the Sages of blessed memory, were open to allowing the *or hozer*, the reflected light of Hellenic (or Japhetic) civilization, shine upon Hebraic (or Semitic) civilization, but we find in the writings of the Rabbis another strain of thought whereby beauty shines upon Zion not as an '*or hozer*, a reflection of a foreign civilization, but as an '*or yashar*, a direct illumination from the source of Israel, whose rays extend to the entire world.

The sages say: "From Zion was created the world, for it is said, *A psalm of Asaph. The God of gods, the Lord, spoke, and called earth, from the rising of the sun until its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty (m-Tsiyon mikhlal yophi)*—from it is perfected the beauty of the world (*mimenu mukhlal 'olam*)."<sup>40</sup>

Ten measures (*kabin*) of beauty (*yophi*) descended to the world; nine, Jerusalem took, and one, the rest of the world."<sup>41</sup>

In the mystical *Hekhalot* literature, we discover that the name of the "Prince of Torah" (*Sar ha-Torah*) is *Yophiel*, or in other texts, *Yepheiphayah*.<sup>42</sup> At first glance, this might strike us as a strange name for an angel: "The Beauty of Yah." However, as scholars have pointed out, the setting for the visionary experiences recorded in the *Hekhalot* is the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>43</sup> A student of the Talmud will recall that on the seventh day of Sukkot (or *Hoshana Rabba*) in the Temple, at the conclusion of the seven *hakafot* or circumambulations, they would bade farewell: "*Yophi lakh, mizbe'ah! Yophi lakh, mizbe'ah!*" ("Beauty to you, Altar! Beauty to you, Altar!"). According to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer [ben Jacob], they would say: "*Yophi le-Yah ve-lakh, mizbe'ah! Yophi le-Yah ve-lakh, mizbe'ah!*" ("Beauty to Yah, and to you, Altar! Beauty to Yah, and to you, Altar!").<sup>44</sup> One speculates that the name of the angel *Yepheiphayah* derived from this salutation: "*Yophi le-Yah!*" Verily, the Temple in Jerusalem is the source of all beauty in the world.

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Said Rav Hisda: "What is written, *The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob?*<sup>45</sup> The Lord loves gates distinguished by *Halakha* more than synagogues and study-houses."

This is what Rabbi Hiyya bar Ammi said in the name of Ulla: "From the day the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One, blessed be He, has naught in His world except the four ells of *Halakha*."<sup>46</sup>

With the return of the lovely *Shekhinah* to Zion, all of the beauty and romance which are hers will reappear in the Gates of Zion. If, as the Sages say, the *Sha'arei Tsiyon* (Gates of Zion) are "*she'arim metsuyanim ba-halakha*" ("gates distinguished by *Halakha*"), then they are also "*she'arim metsuyanim*" ("decorative gates") without further modification.<sup>47</sup> With the destruction of the Temple, the Holy One's world was reduced to "four ells of *Halakhah*,"<sup>48</sup> but with the national rebirth, the Holy One's world broadens to encompass other dimensions as well. "*Ohev Hashem Sha'arei Tsiyon.*" "The Lord loves the Gates of Zion."

And my Beloved, the Messiah, with his nose pushed up against the glass window like that of a fawn, is taking it all in.

## NOTES

1. In 2012, Bezael Naor published *The Kabbalah of Relation: "We Would Have Learned the 'Way of the Earth' From the Cock"* (A Jewish Bestiary), which dealt with the symbol of the cock in Talmud, Kabbalah and the surrealist art of Marc Chagall.
2. Song of Songs 2:9; cf. *ibid.*, 2:17.
3. *Numbers Rabbah* 11:2; *Song of Songs Rabbah*, Parashah 2.
4. See Rabbi Ze'ev Wolf Einhorn, *Peirush Maharzu to Exodus Rabbah* 5:19.
5. *Numbers Rabbah* and *Song of Songs Rabbah*, loc. cit.
6. Song of Songs 4:5.

The recent shocking statement by author Melissa Mohr is an apt description of the contortions like verses are put through in various quarters: "Some of these euphemisms are obvious, as in the Song of Songs...It is almost painful to watch scholars insist that this passage has nothing at all to do with sex. No, it is truly and *only* about God's love for Israel, Christ's love for the Church, or the soul's spiritual union with God." Melissa Mohr, *Holy Sh\*t: A Brief History of Swearing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 83-84 (*italics mine*).

7. Song of Songs 2:7; 3:5. I am still undecided whether the comment by some that "*tseva'ot*" is a pun on the divine name *Tseva'ot* and "*ayelot ha-sadeh*" a pun on the divine cognomen *El Shaddai*, constitutes genuine Bible commentary or merely *letsanut* (comedy).
8. Proverbs 5:19.
9. *b. Hullin* 59b.
10. *Mishnah, Bava Metsi'a* 1:4.
11. See Bezael Naor, *Post-Sabbatian Sabbatianism* (Spring Valley, NY: Orot, 1999), 79-82, concerning the frontispiece to Rabbi Tsevi Chotsh, *Hemdat Tsevi* (Amsterdam, 1706).
12. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, *Kevatsim mi-Khetav Yad Kodesho*, Vol. I, ed. Ofen (Jerusalem, 5766/2006), *Pinkas "Aharon be-Boisk,"* par. 40 (56).
13. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872).
14. *Mishnah, Sotah* 9:15.

15. Ecclesiastes 10:16.
16. Isaiah 11:2.  
Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, *Orot* (1920), *Yisrael u-Tehiyato* (Israel and Its Renaissance), chap. 17.
17. See Shlomo Katz, "Rahav and Yehoshua: Imagination and Intellect," *Orot: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Judaism* I (5751/1991), 49-64, and Editor's Apercu, 65-67.
18. Joshua 2.
19. I Kings 3. See Rabbi Hayyim Vital, *Sefer ha-Likkutim*, Joshua 2; I Kings 3; idem, *Likkutei Torah*, Joshua 2; I Kings 3.
20. I Kings 11:1-8.
21. *b. Shabbat* 56b, *Sanhedrin* 21b. However, a different version of the founding of Rome is recorded in Rashi, *Megillah* 6b.
22. *b. Yoma* 69b, *Sanhedrin* 64a, *Avodah Zarah* 17.
23. Psalm 74:9. According to the *Sefer Hasidim*, Vilna Gaon and Rabbi Zadok Hakohen of Lublin, the cessation of prophecy was linked to the eradication of idolatry. See Bezalel Naor, *Lights of Prophecy/Orot ha-Nevu'ah* (1990).
24. Isaiah 60:22.  
*Orot, Yisrael u-Tehiyato*, chap. 18.  
In *Shemonah Kevatsim* 5:190 the conclusion reads: "The smallest will become a thousand," "the thousand for you, Solomon" (Song of Songs 8:12). This is actually the more logical conclusion. Logic would dictate that Solomon reappear in the conclusion to the *pensée*.  
(The author of this essay is in the process of preparing a new edition of his English translation of *Orot*, which will address the textual variants of *Orot*, edited by Rav Zevi Yehudah Hakohen Kook, son of the Chief Rabbi, and the original manuscript version of *Shemonah Kevatsim*.)
25. Hosea 12:11.
26. See Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* II, 36. Another latter-day visionary who pursued this line (while downplaying the indebtedness to Maimonides, of course) was Rabbi Nahman of Breslov. Rabbi Nahman, as Rav Kook (who was very attached to and inspired by the writings of Breslov), is intent on the rectification and clarification of imagination as a means to revive prophecy. See, e.g., *Likkutei Moharan* II, 8 (*Tik'u Tokhaha*), pars. 7-8. See also Zvi Mark, *Mistikah ve-Shiga'on bi-Yetsirat R. Nahman mi-Breslov* [*Mysticism and Madness in the Work of R. Nahman of Bratslav*] (Tel Aviv: 2003), chap. 5 ("Dimyon, *Nevu'ah ve-Emunah*"), especially 86-95.
27. Ezekiel 38:18.
28. *b. Megillah* 31a.
29. Rabbi Jacob ben Asher, *Arba'ah Turim, Tur Orah Hayyim*, 490.
30. *Midrash Tanhuma*, end *Korah*.
31. *Genesis Rabbah* 36:6. See Genesis 10:2: "The children of Yephet: Gomer and Magog and Media and Yavan and Tubal and Meshekh and Tiras." Cf. Ezekiel 39:1: ". . . Gog, chief prince of Meshekh and Tubal."
32. Rabbi Samuel Bornstein recorded this insight in the name of his father Rabbi Abraham Bornstein, author of the *Responsa Avnei Nezer*.  
It would be apposite to point out that Noah's blessing to Yephet bespeaks the assignation of outwardness to Yephet and inwardness to Shem. "May God enlarge Yephet and may he dwell in the tents of Shem." In the Hebrew original it reads: "Yapht Elohim le-Yephet ve-yishkon be-aholei Shem" (Genesis 9:27).

*Yapht* may, by a stretch, be related to the Hebrew word for beauty (*yophi*). As the Rabbis paraphrased the verse: “The beauty (*yaphyuto*) of Yepheth shall be in the tents of Shem” (*b. Megillah* 9b). The halakhic discussion there concerns the permissibility of writing Torah scrolls in the very esthetic Greek script. But this Rabbinic coopting of the term is the stuff of *derash* or homily.

From a perspective of *peshuto shel mikra*, the simple sense of the verse, *yapht* as a verb (*pth*) is an expression of width or spatial extension. (See Onkelos, Rashi and Ibn Ezra to Genesis 9:27; the last-mentioned in opposition to Sa’adya Gaon.) At the other extreme stand the “tents of Shem,” archetypical domiciles symbolic of inwardness.

One notes that whereas in the Sokhatchover analysis Yepheth and Shem in their new incarnations of Gog-and-Magog and Israel are pitted against one another, in the passage from the Talmud cited above there is expressed an ideal marriage of the two *Weltanschauungen*. Out of the confrontation of the two ideational continents of Yepheth and Shem may yet come a synthesis, or better yet, a creative tension.

33. Rabbi Samuel Bornstein, *Shem mi-Shemuel, Rosh Hashanah—Sukkot* (Jerusalem, 5734/1974), *Yom Shabbat Hol ha-Mo’ed Sukkot*, Year 5677 (191b-192a).
34. See Henri Corbin, “*Mundus Imaginalis* or, the imaginary and the imaginal,” *Cahiers internationaux de symbolisme*, Vol. 6 (1964): 3-26.
35. *b. Megillah* 9a.
36. Genesis 9:27; *b. Megillah* 9b.
37. Ezekiel 39:11.
38. Rabbi Gershon Hanokh Leiner, *Sod Yesharim, Sukkot* (Warsaw, 1903), *Shalosh Se’udot shel Hol ha-Mo’ed Sukkot*, par. 39, s.v. *Ve-hayah ba-yom ha-hu be-yom bo’ Gog ‘al admat Yisrael* (63c-64a).

Historically speaking, Sokhatchov and Radzyn were on opposite sides of the barricades that went up after the Kotsk (Polish, Kock)-Izbitsa (Polish, Izbica) schism in 1839. Rabbi Abraham Bornstein of Sokhatchov (Polish, Sochaczew) was the son-in-law of the Kotsker Rebbe, Menahem Mendel Morgenstern. Rabbi Gershon Hanokh Leiner of Radzyn was the grandson of Rabbi Mordechai Joseph Leiner of Izbica, author *Mei ha-Shilo’ah*. Both the Kotsker and the Izbitser had studied under Rabbi Simha Bunem of Peshiskha (Polish, Przysucha). It was in Peshiskha that this uniquely intellectual form of Polish Hasidism was born.

39. *Sod Yesharim, Sukkot*, 64a, end par. 39.
40. Psalms 50:1-2; *b. Yoma* 54b. In Lurianic Kabbalah, the beauty of Zion is associated with Joseph, of whom it was said, “And Joseph was handsome in form and handsome in appearance (*yephe to’ar vi-yphe mar’eh*)” (Genesis 39:6). See Rabbi Hayyim Vital, ‘*Ets Hayyim* 32:5 (= *Sha’ar He’arat ha-Mohin*, 5). There is Midrashic precedent for equating Zion with Joseph: “Whatever befell Joseph, befell Zion” (*Midrash Tanhuma, Vayyigash* 10). Astute commentators point out that both Joseph and Zion share the numerical value of 156.

An exploration of the esthetic dimension of the Biblical Joseph in Midrash and Kabbalah would make for a fascinating study. The famed Gaon of Rogatchov (1858-1936) dropped some tantalizing hints in this connection. See Rabbi Joseph Rosen, *Tsaphnat Pa’ne’ah, Bereshit* (Jerusalem, 1967), *Vayyeshev*, Genesis 39:2, 6 and *Haphtarot Vayyeshev* (pp. 143-147). In those spartan notes, the Rogatchover atypically references Lurianic Kabbalah, and sketches the features of an androgynous Joseph!

41. b. *Kiddushin* 49b.

42. See Reuben Margaliyot, *Mal'akhei 'Elyon* (Jerusalem, 1945), s.v. *Yophiel* (65-67) and s.v. *Yepheiphayah* (68); Gershom G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1965), 12-13. In Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Deuteronomy 34:6, both *Yophiel* and *Yepheiphayah* occur as "*rabbanei hokhmeta*" ("teachers of wisdom"). The enigmatic Galician kabbalist who perished in Siberian exile during the Second World War, Isaac Messer (1891-1942), lavished great attention on the Prince of Torah, *Yophiel/Yepheiphayah*. See Isaac Messer, *U-Mi-Midbar Matanah*, ed. Moshe Hallamish (Jerusalem, 1985), 40, 43-44. Concerning this mysterious student of Hillel Zeitlin, see Bezalel Naor, *Kabbalah and the Holocaust* (Spring Valley, NY: 2001), 103-117.

The Lithuanian Kabbalist, Rabbi Eizik Haver offered an explanation for the association of *yophi*, or beauty, with "*razin de-'oraita*" (mysteries of Torah). See Y.E. Haver (Wildman), *Afikei Yam*, Vol. I (Jerusalem, 1994), *Kiddushin* 49b, s.v. '*Assarah kabin yophi* (300). Note that his explanation differs from those of the Vilna Gaon (whom he quotes). See Elijah Gaon, *Yahel 'Or*, ed. Naphtali Herz Halevi [Weidenbaum] (Vilna, 1882), *Zohar* II, 247b (*Hekhalot*) (20d).

43. See Michael D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, 1996), 64-65; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through A Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, 1994), 19-20; Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, 1988), 168. Also Ithamar Gruenwald, "Mekoman shel masorot kohaniyot bi-yetsiratah shel ha-mistikah shel ha-merkavah ve-shel shi'ur komah" in *Early Jewish Mysticism*, ed. Joseph Dan (Jerusalem, 1987) [= *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. 6, nos. 1-2], 65-120; Rachel Elior, "Sifrut ha-heikhalot ve-ha-merkavah: zikatah la-mikdash, la-mikdash ha-shamaymi u-le-mikdash me'at," *Retsef u-Temurah* (2004), 107-142; idem, "The priestly nature of the mystical heritage in Heykalot literature," *Expérience et écriture mystiques dans les religions du livre*, ed. Fenton and Goetschel (2000), 41-54; idem, "The Merkavah tradition and the emergence of Jewish mysticism: from Temple to Merkavah, from Hekhal to Hekhalot, from priestly opposition to gazing upon the Merkavah," *Sino-Judaica* (1999), 101-158; idem, "Bein ha-heikhal ha-arts'i la-heikhalot ha-shamaymiyim: ha-tefilah ve-shirat ha-kodesh be-sifrut ha-heikhalot ve-zikatan la-masorot ha-keshurot ba-mikdash," *Tarbiz* 64:3 (1995), 341-380.

Inter alia, see Bezalel Naor, *The Limit of Intellectual Freedom: The Letters of Rav Kook* (Spring Valley, 2011), 109, concerning the focus of Talmud Yerushalmi on the Temple in Jerusalem.

44. *Tosephta*, *Sukkah* 3:2; b. *Sukkah* 45b. Though this passage occurs in some versions of the *Mishnah*, *Sukkah* 4:5 (not Maimonides', to be sure), it is actually not a *mishnah* but rather a *beraita*. See *Hagahot B[ayit] H[adash]*; N. N. Rabinowicz, *Dikdukei Soferim*; S. Lieberman, *Tosephta ki-Peshutah*; J. Kafah, *Peirush ha-Mishnah la-Rambam*. Though it should be obvious enough, my inclusion of the word "*Yophi*" in the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer [ben Jacob] is spelled out in Rabbenu Menahem ha-Meiri, *Beit ha-Behirah, Sukkah*, ed. Liss (Jerusalem, 1966), 161 (col. a).

Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger was perplexed why Maimonides omitted this farewell salutation from his *Mishneh Torah*, *Hil. Lulav* 7:23. His proffered solution that Maimonides restricts his remarks to legal obligations, omitting mere custom, is less than satisfactory. (In that very *halakhah*, Maimonides mentions a *minhag Yisrael!*) See Rabbi J. Ettlinger, *Arukh le-Ner, Sukkah* 45a. My own suspicion is that

Maimonides was squeamish about a formula that so readily lent itself to syncretistic interpretation. See the objection raised by the Talmud: “*Ve-ha ka meshatef shem shamayim ve-davar aher?*” “Is he not combining the name of Heaven and something else [i.e., combining *Yah* and the altar in a single salute]?” (*Sukkah* 45b). And though the Talmud reconciles the practice, Maimonides may have found the answer given to be forced, and being hypersensitive to any practices at all smacking of syncretism, saw fit to omit the custom from his code (for as *Arukh le-Ner* pointed out, it was but a custom, not an obligation). In *Sefer ha-Mitsvot*, positive commandment 7, Maimonides quotes the *beraita* marshalled by the Talmud (*ibid.*): “Whoever combines the name of Heaven with something else, is uprooted from the world.” (See further Maimonides, *Moreh Nevukhim*, ed. Michael Schwarz [2002], Vol. I, 142-143, n. 3.)

I surmise that deciding the *halakha* in favor of the *tanna kamma* over Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob was not an option for Maimonides, in view of the accepted principle of Talmudic jurisprudence that the *halakha* is in accordance with Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob, for “the Mishnah of Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob is trim and clean (*kav ve-naki*)” (*b. Yevamot* 49b, *Gittin* 67a).

Postscript: I once heard from Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik of Boston that his grandfather Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik of Brisk refused to utter the prayer “*Berikh Shemeh*” (a passage from *Zohar* II, 369a) before the open ark because he found syncretistic the passage “*sagidna kammeh u-mi-kamma di-ykar oraiteh*” [“I prostrate myself before Him and before the honor of His Torah”]. Evidently, from the perspective of Halakha, not only the altar, but the Torah too, is subject to syncretism.

45. Psalms 87:2.

46. *b. Berakhot* 8a.

47. See Rashi, *Shabbat* 145b, s.v. *metsuyyanin—mekushatin*. As Rabbi Nahman of Breslov expressed it in Yiddish: “*Ikh mein takeh dos Eretz Yisroel mit die shtieber, mit die heizer*” [“I mean literally this Land of Israel, with these homes, with these houses”].

48. However, Rabbi Joseph Engel noted that both the anonymous author of the *Halakhot Gedolot* and Maimonides (Introduction to the Commentary to the Mishnah) do not have in their text of the Talmud the words “*Mi-yom she-harav beit ha-mikdash*” [“From the day the Temple was destroyed”]. See Rabbi Joseph Engel, *Gilyonei ha-Shass, Berakhot* 8a.