

Part I

Models in Kabbalah and Hasidism

Three basic models can be seen competing throughout the history of Jewish mysticism: the theosophical-theurgical one, represented most eminently by Zoharic literature and the Safedian Kabbalah; the ecstatic, expressed in the writings of R. Abraham Abulafia, R. Yizḥaq of Acre, and some ecstatic Kabbalists; and the magical model, which is not expressed in a distinct body of Jewish mystical literature, but is present in certain writings of the other two models. The theosophical-theurgical and ecstatic models were already articulated by the thirteenth century; the magic model entered Kabbalah relatively early, at the end of the same century, though more elaborate examples of it are found in Kabbalistic literature after the fifteenth century. This model, as well as the ecstatic one, became more prominent in the writings of R. Moshe Cordovero, and certain of his followers, and came to the attention of the founders of Hasidism. Openness toward the magical and ecstatic aspects of Jewish mysticism emerged in a period when the most widespread version of the theosophical-theurgical model, Lurianic Kabbalah, was thought by some Jewish mystics and by some of the first Hasidic masters to be problematic. Far from constituting a repudiation of Lurianism, held to be the most sacrosanct body of mystical literature among Jewish mystics, this weakening accompanied a reorientation of spiritual concerns that gave rise to the inclusion of an elaboration upon elements from the other forms of Jewish mysticism: the ecstatic and the magical.

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The Weakening of the Lurianic Kabbalah in the Eighteenth Century

Modern scholars have regarded Lurianic Kabbalah as the most crucial form of Kabbalistic literature to have influenced Hasidism. Lurianic concepts, either in their classical form or in their Sabbatean metamorphosis, were conceived as formative for the new type of mysticism, or at least as provoking new interpretations. As it has already been pointed out, it is necessary to adopt a more panoramic approach to the sources that have nurtured Hasidism; here we must draw attention to a phenomenon that apparently has passed unnoticed; namely, that during the formative decades of the nascent Hasidism, Lurianism did not always go unchallenged, as a form of Kabbalah that must either be accepted or interpreted. In fact, there is evidence for a weakening of the supremacy of Lurianic Kabbalah. This weakening opened the door for the surfacing of other forms of Kabbalah that, together with Lurianism, contributed to the physiognomy of Hasidism.

I. KABBALAH IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CONTROVERSY

The second half of the eighteenth century was a period of bitter controversies between various Jewish groups in Eastern and Central Europe. The battle against the Sabbatean movement and its later metamorphosis into Frankism became famous through the polemical disputes between R. Jacob Emden and R. Yonathan Eibeschutz; the emergence of Hasidism in several centers of Polish Jewry aroused the opposition of famous rabbis in Vilna and Brody. Toward the end of the century, the first representatives of the Jewish Enlightenment were bitterly fought by the rabbinic establishments of Central and Eastern Europe. The first two controversies focused upon two differing versions of Kabbalah: the Sabbatean version, stemming from further complications of Lurianic theosophy, which was mainly interested in the various maneuvers of the pretended Messiah Shabbetai Zevi, in his eschatological fight with evil; and the Hasidic version of Kabbalah, pointing the way to a new

mystical *modus vivendi* to be achieved through enthusiastic prayer, various types of mystical union, and communion with God. The great opponents of these two brands of Kabbalah, like R. Jacob Emden and R. Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna, were themselves well-known Kabbalists. Therefore, Kabbalah itself was never the subject of a comprehensive criticism, but only its “heretical” interpretation, which was felt to have dangerous theological and social implications. With respect to the third important controversy, over the Enlightenment, Kabbalah was never a main issue: the majority of the opponents of the Enlightenment were Kabbalists or figures whose attitude toward Kabbalah was positive or reserved, but not totally critical.¹ In this tense atmosphere, where so many groups were critical, or at least suspicious of one another, Kabbalah enjoyed a peculiar status: it was almost universally accepted as the sacrosanct Jewish esoteric theology. Nevertheless, we do find occasional critical remarks regarding the nature of this lore, remarks that stem from unequivocally Kabbalistic authorities.²

2. THE STANDS OF THE CONSERVATIVES

The best-known instance of the orthodox criticism of Kabbalah in the eighteenth century was the incisive reexamination of Zoharic texts by R. Jacob Emden. The centrality of the *Zohar* for both Sabbateans and Frankists pushed their fervent adversary to a new and close perusal of this pivotal text. His conclusions were far from orthodox; according to his erudite inquiries, the *Zohar* was formed of at least three layers: an ancient one, authored by R. Shimeon bar Yoḥai; another layer, including *Ra'ya Meheimna*³ and *Tiqqunei Zohar*; and an even later part, the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*.³ Moreover, he argued that later glosses had been incorporated into the original Zoharic text. Even though some of Emden's conclusions concerning the layers of the *Zohar* have not been accepted by modern scholarship of Kabbalah,⁴ some of his textual analyses, when viewed from the perspective of literary criticism of the *Zohar*, are interesting achievements. In Emden's view, however, the problems Kabbalah posed went much further than the quandaries connected with parts of the *Zohar* or its glosses, and the ways they were misused or abused by heretical Jewish “sectarians.” In Emden's period, the whole Kabbalistic body of literature became problematic. A highly significant passage from his *Mitpaḥat Sefarim* illustrates the confusion one faces when learning Kabbalistic works:

Let no student imagine that he can study *Zohar* only from written texts,⁵ since some persons “looked and were smitten,”⁶ as we have heard and has been demonstrated by our sins - the sect of . . . Shabbatai Zevi . . . and we must be careful not to fail to recognize the real nature of the works of Shabbatai Zevi and his accursed disciples, which mixed together with the authentic Kabbalistic books, especially the works of the ARI, which were falsified by those abominable persons⁷ . . . who all their days study only the esoteric lore, as I

have heard regarding the new custom which became widespread in the Eastern countries.⁸ They do not intend to study the knowledge of the performance of the commandments, but only look for the mystery of the Torah by the exclusive study of *Zohar* and Luria's works. Due to our sins it became a sinful obstacle and it [the study of Kabbalah] caused a large disruption in Israel's camp since by it [i.e. the study] they throw away the fulfillment of the Torah. . . .⁹

For Emden, the dangers of Kabbalah are implicit not only in its distortion and fabrication of pseudo-Lurianic books of a Sabbatean provenance; the very predominance of Kabbalistic studies imperiled, he believed, the integrity of the Jewish way of life, based principally upon the observance of the commandments.¹⁰ Although his criticism was directed mainly toward the Sabbatean attachment to, and abuse of, Kabbalah, similar statements directed toward Hasidism may be found shortly after the above passage was written, in which the author also attacked the Hasidic way of prayer.¹¹ Therefore, not only is the text of the *Zohar* problematic, but all Lurianic texts, and the uncoordinated study of Kabbalah in general. Moreover, it seems that the quandary was even greater than this; according to Emden, who was, we must remember, a Kabbalist himself,¹²

... all the teachings of R. Yiṣḥaq Luria, may his memory be blessed, in *‘Ez Ḥayyim* and his other books on these matters, are true from one point of view, and not true from another. They are true as understood by R. Yiṣḥaq Luria and others like him, but not true at all, in the way we understand them, since all that is stated in books and [other] works is the plain sense of the Kabbalah, which is not true, but the esoteric sense of the Kabbalah alone is true, and it cannot be written in any book.¹³

Although the importance of the inner sense of Kabbalah is not disputed by Emden, this lore is seen as distorted by the literal dimension of Kabbalistic literature: by committing Kabbalah to writing, its real meaning is lost. This is why Emden firmly recommends the oral study of the *Zohar*. As far as Lurianic Kabbalah is concerned, Emden believed its true meaning was ignored in his own time. A similar stand was taken by an illustrious synthesizer of Lurianic Kabbalah, R. Shelomo Eliashov, who maintained that

all the teachings of Ari . . . are like the teachings of the Torah, which include the *Pardes*, and whatever was discussed here is only the plain sense, the esoteric one being very elusive.¹⁴

Another authority in Kabbalistic lore made interesting observations about the pernicious effects of the dissemination of Kabbalah in his time; Emden's deadly enemy, R. Yonathan Eibeschuetz, remarks in his approbation, or *haskamah*, of the printing of the book *‘Aspaqlariah ha-Me’irah*, a commentary on the book of the *Zohar*, by R. Zevi Horowitz:

I don't agree at all to the printing of Kabbalistic books, since the secret things belong unto the Lord our God [Deut. 29:28] and we are not permitted to expound the work of the [divine] chariot publicly. Whoever published something, his printing is tantamount to its exposition to large masses, and the text is equally available to everyone, worthy or unworthy. . . . On account of our great sins, they [i.e. the printed books] were pernicious for us, and some damage occurred because of the printing and their silence was more worthwhile than their speech. However, these booklets do not deal with the emanational chain according to ARI, blessed be his memory, like the teachings on the restorations of the worlds and the divine anthropomorphic configurations, concerning which it was said: it is the glory of God to conceal a thing [Prov. 25:2].¹⁵

The confession of an outstanding Kabbalist like Eibeschuetz that Lurianic teachings are dangerous when published is highly significant. These dangers are commonly viewed as connected with the Sabbatean anthropomorphic interpretations of them. However, even Eibeschuetz, whose links to the sect are by now better known,¹⁶ is sensitive to the distortions that may result from Lurianic books. Having examined the Lurianic attitude to Kabbalah among eighteenth-century masters, let us now inspect various approaches of Hasidic masters to Luria's mystical thought.

3. HASIDIC MASTERS' QUANDARIES CONCERNING LURIANIC KABBALAH

One of the younger contemporaries of R. Yonathan Eibeschuetz, R. Abraham ha-Mallakh, the son of R. Dov Baer of Miedzyrec, deplors the plight of Kabbalah:

The true Torah, called Kabbalah, became corporeal, and it is indeed the true Torah, but it became very obscure and corporeal, because of our sins.¹⁷

An important disciple of the Great Maggid proposed an explanation for this plight. In the introduction to his *Dibrat Shelomo*, R. Shelomo of Lutzk indicates that the Lurianic teachings are focused upon anthropomorphic subjects, since they were intended for Luria's disciples, who had already studied the Cordoverian Kabbalah,¹⁸ "wherein the real spiritual significance of anthropomorphism was exposed."¹⁹ Only the deterioration of the generations caused, according to this author, the simplistic understanding of Lurianic Kabbalah; the actual role of Hasidism is to restore the real spiritual Kabbalah.²⁰ R. Shelomo of Lutzk tacitly implies that such a reversal means, *inter alia*, the restoration to prominence of Cordovero, whose work, as we shall later see, was of utmost importance for Hasidic thought.²¹ A similar stand may be discerned in a work by R. Meshullam Phoebus of Zbarazh, *Yosher Divrei 'Emet*. He restricted the study of the *Zohar* and Lurianic works to a limited elite who have experienced supreme spiritual states; and this author approvingly quotes R. Menahem de Lonzano,²² who asserts that these works were written for persons

who are able to leave behind the corporeal world and attain a high spiritual status. R. Meshullam Phoebus and others like him imagine interpretations of these works that are totally different from the original intention of the texts.²³ The main mentor of R. Meshullam, R. Menaḥem Mendel of Premislan, is quoted as asserting that only those who have attained “cleaving with God” can truly understand the *Zohar* and Luria’s writings.²⁴ Even the illustrious Kabbalist R. Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna, is reported to have been uneasy with the authoritative Kabbalah of Luria; R. Shneur Zalman of Liady maintained that²⁵

it is known to us for sure that the pious Gaon (the Hasid) does not believe in the Kabbalah of R. Yiṣḥaq Luria . . . in its entirety, that it was [received] from the mouth of Elijah . . . but only a small part of it was [received] from the mouth of Elijah . . . and the remaining part was from his [Luria’s] great wisdom, and [therefore] we are not obliged to believe in it²⁶ . . . and [the Lurianic] writings are very corrupt.²⁷

The aforementioned passages present a very curious situation: though Kabbalah *per se* was not attacked in the major polemics of the eighteenth century, the greatest authorities in matters of Kabbalah were uncomfortable with some of its major facets—its diffusion by print, the acceptance of Luria’s authority as a divinely inspired Kabbalist, and his peculiar method of prayer by *kavvanot*.²⁸

This uneasiness was prominent among the Kabbalists themselves, though they never openly intended to undermine the centrality or importance of Kabbalah in matters of theology. However, certain steps were taken to reduce the possible pernicious effects of the premature study of Kabbalah; Luzzatto, for instance, was compelled to sign in Frankfurt a declaration in which he agreed not to study the works of Luria except under the guidance of, or in the company of, a worthy scholar, and only when both were over the age of forty.²⁹ At Brody, an assembly of rabbis declared in its excommunication of the Frankists that no one was permitted to study even reliable Lurianic texts before the age of forty, and that only the *Zohar* and some “simple” Kabbalistic works could be studied after the age of thirty.³⁰ These restrictions were not eighteenth-century innovations;³¹ they had been in existence for centuries, but had never received the patronage and authority of a rabbinic assembly. Furthermore, at Frankfurt am Main, an interdiction against printing Kabbalistic works, including Lurianic ones, was issued after the crisis connected with Luzzatto’s Kabbalistic books.³²

4. THE VIEW OF SHELOMO MAIMON

In the background of these reservations to certain aspects of Kabbalah is the specter of sectarian interpretation of the esoteric lore. However, two similar positions regarding the nature of Kabbalah may also be found among Jewish philosophers in the late eighteenth century. In his autobiography, Shelomo Maimon asserts that

originally, the Kabbalah was nothing but psychology, physics, morals, politics, and such sciences represented by means of symbols and hieroglyphics³³ in fables and allegories, the occult meaning of which was disclosed only to those who were competent to understand it. By and by, however, perhaps as the result of many revolutions, this occult meaning was lost, and the signs were taken for the things signified. But as it was easy to perceive that these signs necessarily had meant something, it was left to the imagination to invent an occult meaning that had long been lost. The remotest analogies between signs and things were seized, till at last the Kabbalah degenerated into an art of madness according to method, or a systematic science resting on conceits.³⁴

Maimon apparently applies Maimonides' view on the "secrets of Torah" to Kabbalah. The medieval master indicated that in the Bible and Midrashic literature there are hints of esoteric tenets that were lost during the hard times of dispersion. In Maimon's view, the Kabbalah consisted of a body of truths that were transmitted in a ciphered way; however, the Jews lost the cipher, and the written form of the Kabbalah was misunderstood by imaginary interpretations.³⁵ We may therefore suppose that, according to Maimon, there is a core of true and valid knowledge that was the original and authentic Kabbalah, whereas its later common forms are degenerations of this core. Maimon believed that he was able to reconstruct the archaic meaning of Jewish esotericism by an adequate interpretation of Kabbalistic books and concepts; we shall therefore try to describe Maimon's attempt. However, it is worthwhile to note the obvious critical implication of his thinking toward the Kabbalah and toward Kabbalists of his time, who in his view deal only with a degenerate science far removed from its pristine value.³⁶ Moreover, in Maimon's autobiography we read:

Unsatisfied with the literary knowledge of this science, [i.e. Kabbalah], I sought to penetrate into its spirit; and as I perceived that the whole science [again, "the Kabbalah"], if it deserves this name, can contain nothing but the secrets of nature concealed in fables and allegories, I labored to find out these secrets, and thereby to raise my merely literary knowledge to a rational knowledge. This, however, I could accomplish only in a very imperfect manner at the time, because I had yet very few ideas of the sciences in general. Still, by independent reflection, I hit upon many applications of this kind.³⁷

Maimon then goes on to indicate how he interpreted the Lurianic doctrine of withdrawal (*zimzum*); for now it is enough to observe that he was confident in the possibility of decoding the real message of the Kabbalistic lore even in its "degenerate" form. This is the background of another passage in the autobiography:³⁸

Sha'arei Qedushah, or The Gates of Holiness, was the title of this book; and leaving out of account what was visionary and exaggerated, it contained the

principal doctrines of psychology. I did with it, therefore, as the talmudic rabbis say that Rabbi Meir did, who had a heretic for his teacher:³⁹ “He found a pomegranate—he ate the fruit and threw away the peel.”

Maimon, then, maintains that in his early youth he read Kabbalah in a very peculiar way, trying to penetrate to the undistorted truth of the source. By unearthing this truth, he discovered the true ancient Jewish lore, which for him seems to coincide with the sciences—the secrets of nature and psychology that can serve as important tools for the restoration of the original meaning of texts. We may infer that a comprehensive understanding of natural sciences and human psychology would be considered by Maimon as important preconditions for the proper study of Kabbalah. It appears that philosophy should also be added to these sciences; according to Maimon’s early work, entitled *Hesheq Shelomo*,

whoever has not studied the books of the divine philosophers, especially the *Guide* of Maimonides, in order to comprehend the issue of rejection of all attributes, changes, and passions from God, has no way to enter the chambers of Kabbalah whatsoever. This gate should be closed, and not open [Ezek. 44:20].⁴⁰

Philosophy, therefore, may well serve as a useful servant of its lady, the Kabbalah, and save the Kabbalists from theosophical errors. Moreover, we learn from another discussion found in *Hesheq Shelomo* that philosophy or philosophically oriented speculations are keys for the decoding of the “sealed” books of Kabbalah, which⁴¹ are otherwise meaningless. Maimon reacts to the attacks that R. Nissim Gerondi (HaRaN)⁴² and some Kabbalists⁴³ launched against Maimonides’ identification of *Ma’aseh Merkavah* with metaphysics and of *Ma’aseh Bereshit* with physics by saying that⁴⁴

according to their [i.e. Kabbalists’] opinion, *Ma’aseh Bereshit* and *Ma’aseh Merkavah* are secrets [belonging to] the lore of Kabbalah . . . that if Maimonides’ intention was that *Ma’aseh Bereshit* and *Ma’aseh Merkavah* are solely what is explained in the Book of Physics and in philosophy, and no more, then all the deriders [of Maimonides] were certainly right. However, since he speaks of physics and metaphysics, his view includes all that was explained in those books, together with what remained still unexplained, namely everything that is possible to be comprehended by human reason. Hence there is no reason to deride him at all . . . and let us say that the opinions of the Kabbalists are certainly true regarding *Ma’aseh Bereshit* and *Ma’aseh Merkavah*, as secrets more profound and marvelous than those that were conceived by the philosophers dealing with natural science. They [the secrets] are really the Kabbalistic secrets. However, what can we do, for in spite of the fact that the table and meat are here, we cannot eat, since their [the Kabbalists’] words are sealed and are like the words of sealed books, of which a literate person, when presented with them will say: I cannot [understand] since it is a sealed [book], and they are like a dream that is not

decoded. And if you will ask me and say, "It is because you have not comprehended anything concerning the lore of Kabbalah that you assert that there is no way to comprehend it, and look, we find out and see that in all the dispersion of Israel there are hundreds and thousands who study the lore of Kabbalah," my answer is, I am an intelligent man too, like the others, knowing the plain meaning of the [Kabbalistic] things and the significance of the words, as well as they do, and I am not inferior to them in any respect as regards this lore. However, what is the profit of the knowledge of these things that 'Abba' and 'Imma' enclose the 'Arikh' ['Anpin] under the beard⁴⁵ . . . and of other similar subjects, since their knowledge cannot be considered to be understanding or comprehension, but hearing or sight or tradition or tale [and] it is possible to teach the plain meaning of these things to a five-year-old child who is neither wise nor stupid.

Kabbalah is, therefore, a sealed book; it can be understood using two approaches: the content of classical philosophy, i.e., physics and metaphysics, which nevertheless do not exhaust the larger area of Kabbalistic lore; and human speculation, which is able to complement the already acquired body of knowledge. Only in this way will the Kabbalistic mythology become meaningful. We may, perhaps, put the matter in another way: Kabbalah can be partially identified with Maimonidean philosophy, though the former includes other subjects. This perception of Kabbalah as Maimonidean philosophy together with achievements of the human mind seems to be related to Maimon's qualification of Kabbalah; later, in his autobiography, he asserts:

In fact the Kabbalah is nothing but an expanded Spinozism, in which not only is the origin of the world explained by the limitation of the divine being, but also the origin of every kind of being and its relation to the rest, are derived from a separate attribute of God.⁴⁶

The general structure of this passage reminds one of Maimon's stand in *Hesheq Shelomo*: for the understanding of Kabbalah the framework of some speculative system is required, be it Spinozism,⁴⁷ Maimonides' philosophy,⁴⁸ or astral magic.⁴⁹ However, no system is sufficient for an exhaustive understanding of the Kabbalah; each has to be complemented by independent speculation, which may elucidate particular aspects of Kabbalah. No wonder Maimon irritated his contemporary Kabbalists, who considered Kabbalah a "divine science," i.e., a lore having no reasonable meaning.⁵⁰ Moses Mendelssohn described Kabbalah in a manner similar to Maimon: according to Friedrich Nicolai's testimony,⁵¹ Mendelssohn conceived the Kabbalah as having a "consequent meaning," which was "dressed"; that is, which is rendered confusing by oriental metaphors. Moreover, the lack of philosophical terminology in ancient, "uncultivated" Hebrew resulted in frequent use of allegory. The specific content of this "consequent meaning" remains vague; however, since Mendelssohn uses the expressions "*orientalischen Philosophen*"⁵² and

“*Kabbalistik Philosophie*,” we may suppose that this meaning was connected with philosophical concepts or, at least, with philosophically expressible concepts. Since Mendelssohn and Maimon were—for a significant period in the latter’s life—in close contact, it seems highly probable that the affinity between their conceptions of the degeneration of the Kabbalah is the result of the influence the two philosophers exercised on each other: Maimon had written his *Autobiography* in 1792, several years after Mendelssohn’s death, but he indicated that he still viewed the Kabbalah as he had described it in his youth. His assertion is seemingly corroborated by the passages from *Hesheq Shelomo* that we discussed beforehand; therefore it is plausible that Maimon’s view might have influenced Mendelssohn’s appreciation of Kabbalah.

5. REORGANIZATION OF KABBALAH

For some of the more orthodox Kabbalists, then, the ultimate meaning of Lurianic Kabbalah was to some extent elusive; there was a feeling that its real message had escaped them. Others were overtly discontent with the way Kabbalah was studied and understood, although they assumed that a coherent significance underlay the distorted form in which Kabbalah reached them. This feeling of uneasiness regarding classical Kabbalah also found indirect expression in the second part of the eighteenth century in at least two closely related forms:

a) in the reorganization of older Kabbalistic values, i.e., in a reconstruction of Kabbalistic lore as Hasidism, focusing now upon the centrality of its mystical and magical as opposed to its theurgic aspects.⁵³

b) in the reinterpretation of the classical texts, again in Hasidism, emphasizing now their psychological elements. Although there is an obvious affinity between these two “reconstructions,” historically they may represent the interests and influences of different groups. A Kabbalist like R. Pinḥas Eliyahu Hurwitz may stress the importance of *devequt*,⁵⁴ combatting at the same time the psychologization of Kabbalah,⁵⁵ while a scholar like Maimon could be interested in the psychological aspects of the Kabbalah⁵⁶ without even discussing the problem of *devequt*. The mystical trend might be interested solely in developing a psychological system and technique that make mystical experience possible, whether the *unio mystica* or Maggidic revelation, neglecting discussions of a more theosophic nature.

6. BETWEEN LURIA AND CORDOVERO

The evidence presented above suggests that the status of Lurianic Kabbalah became problematic around the middle of the eighteenth century. While it still remained the apex of Jewish mysticism in the eyes of Kabbalists, its restriction to an elite, the prohibition against studying it before the age of forty, and the plight of the Lurianic texts, which reached Europe in at least two substantial

versions⁵⁷ and were interpreted in at least two different ways⁵⁸ (together with Sabbatean works attributed to Luria),⁵⁹ rendered Lurianic Kabbalah suspect in the eyes of some, while to others it was too sublime. This situation permitted other forms of Kabbalah, whose importance was secondary and even marginal, to gain more prominence in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It was primarily Cordovero's system that gained from the weakness of Luria's Kabbalah. Several facts support the thesis that Cordoverian thought became more central in the period during which Hasidism emerged.⁶⁰

(a) By the middle of the eighteenth century some of Cordovero's works had already been in print for more than a century,⁶¹ some in more than one edition.

(b) Cordovero's followers propagated his Kabbalistic thought in their works. For example, R. Elijah de Vidas's *Reshit Hokhmah*,⁶² R. Abraham Azulai's *Ḥesed le-ʿAvraham*, and R. Isaiah Horowitz's *Shene Luhot ha-Berit* are to a great extent popularizations of the teachings of Cordovero.⁶³ We need not describe the extent of the influence of these works on Jewish culture in general and on Hasidism in particular.⁶⁴

(c) Cordovero's books, unlike those of Luria, were studied and printed without restriction.⁶⁵

(d) Some authors even preferred Cordovero's Kabbalah to the Lurianic texts; see, for example, Maimon's classification of Kabbalah:⁶⁶

There are two main systems of the Kabbalah: the system of Rabbi Moses Cordovero, and that of Rabbi Yiḏḥaq Luria. The former is more real, that is, it approximates more closely to reason. The latter, on the other hand, is more formal, that is, it is more complete in the structure of its system. The modern Kabbalists prefer the latter, because they hold that alone to be genuine Kabbalah in which there is no rational meaning.⁶⁷ The principal work of Rabbi Moses Cordovero is the *Pardes*. Of Rabbi Yiḏḥaq Luria himself we have some disconnected writings; but his pupil, Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital, wrote a large work under the title *ʿEz Ḥayyim* (The Tree of Life), in which the whole system of his master is contained. This work is held by the Jews to be so sacred that they do not allow it to be committed to print.⁶⁸ Naturally, I have more taste for the Kabbalah of Rabbi Moses than for that of Rabbi Yiḏḥaq, but durst not give utterance to my opinion on this point.⁶⁹

This passage deals only with the preference of one person, Maimon, for Cordoverian Kabbalah; this fact is presented by Maimon himself as an exception. However, it remains true that Luria's writings are described as "disconnected," whereas the most important systematic Lurianic work, *ʿEz Ḥayyim*, remained in manuscript.

(e) Last but not least, Cordovero's thought was considered a necessary introduction to Lurianic Kabbalah. See, for example, the opinion of R. Shelomo of Lutzk quoted above.⁷⁰ Moreover, when certain Hasidic doctrines were

criticized, the Besht and the Great Maggid indicated Cordovero as their source.⁷¹

In the next few chapters we will look at “reconstruction” in the realm of prayer and Torah study and discuss additional forms of criticism directed at Lurianism, more precisely the Lurianic mystical way of prayer.⁷² An attempt will be made to show that views about prayer, the study of Torah, and the notion of the *Zaddiq*, as presented in Cordovero’s own writings and in those of his followers were based on magical sources and were preferred by Hasidic masters, whereas the Lurianic *kavvanot* and other related issues did not attract most of the Hasidic masters. In fact, in some legends, we find evidence of a certain tension between Luria and the Besht;⁷³ however, I prefer to address here the more theoretical interpretations of the issues.