

R. Elior (ed.), *The Sabbatian Movement and Its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism and Frankism*, vol. I (Hebrew Section), pp. 594, vol. II (English Section), pp. 122, *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, XVII/2001

Since the publication of Gerschom Scholem's fundamental writings, the research on Sabbatianism and Frankism has had a scattered and diffused character and, consequently, it has not led to a comparable great synthesis of the topic.¹ The research was conducted in various research centers, and its findings were published in different languages, in most cases in periodicals which were hardly accessible. It is not surprising, therefore, that the subject-matter of the research has remained an esoteric discipline, inaccessible to a wider circle of people interested in the above problems. What is worse, the above-mentioned diffusion of research was often accompanied by an isolation of those researchers who for various reasons had no opportunity to consult the results of their research with the findings of other scholars. In this situation, the idea of organizing an international conference, which would give scholars an opportunity to sum up their research to date and present their latest findings, looms in retrospect as an opening of a new chapter in the historiography of the Jewish heterodoxy. The conference which the present publication owes its title to, was held in Jerusalem between 8–10 December, 1997. It constituted yet another session in a series of international meetings of scholars during which the main phases in the development of Jewish mysticism had been analyzed. After conferences devoted to the Heikhalot mysticism (1984), the beginnings of Jewish mysticism in Europe (1986), the book of Zohar (1988) and the Lurianic kabala (1991), there came a time for Sabbatianism and Frankism.

In a short presentation, it is difficult to draw attention to the whole wealth of topics which have been raised in the recently published materials. The spectrum of the presented issues comprises of studies which have the character of general syntheses to detailed, philological-historical analyses of the sources. In the Hebrew section of the publication, Y. Liebes continues his research on the dual – destructive and positive – character of the messiah in the kabala writings. Starting with the work of R. Joseph Ashkenzie, Liebes describes the motive of the split in the messianic nature and its development in the writings of Nathan of Gaza. J. Dan, on the other hand, points to the analogy between Sabbatianism and the attempt inspired by the Rose Crusaders to enthrone Fredrick V, prince elector of Palatinate, as the protestant Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. B. Huss deals with the impact of Sabbatianism on the spread of the text of *Zohar* and the emergence of voices appealing for restricting access to it, or even questioning its authority. On the basis of a scrupulous and in-depth analysis of the 18th century manuscript *Sefer Gehalei Esh*, M. Oron sheds additional light on the well-known argument between R. Yonathan Eybeschuetz and R. Yaacov Emden. J. Sadan analyzes the Arabic sources relating to the eruption of Sabbatianism in Yemen, whereas Y. Tobi reveals that the Messianism of the Yemen Jews had its own specificity which was independent of the main current of Sabbatianism. J. Barnai points out the need for supplementing the perception of Sabbatianism through the perspective of Judaism and the study of religions with the possibilities which are opened up by the methodology of social history. In turn, A. Rapoport-Albert, in her vast study, describes the transition from the halachic limitation of the role of the woman in the cult, to granting her fundamental significance within the conception of presentivist messianism. The author analyzes in detail the heterodox reevaluation of sexualism and the revolutionary change in the perception of the ritual function of the woman in Sabbatianism and Frankism which is associated with it. In light of P. Fenton's article, one can distinguish both Derwish and Bektashi influences in the

¹ G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, Princeton 1973.

Sabbatian hymns Z. Gries, on the other hand, emphasizes the need for introducing a generic typology of Sabbatian literature and focuses on the description of the different functions of hagiographic literature. M. Fogel questions the uniformly Sabbatian character of the cabbalistic work *Hemdut Yamim*. Although he notices in it certain influences of Sabbatianism, he also points to its limited scope. A particularly interesting study was presented by A. Asulin. She analyzes in it the christological commentary to the *Book of Zohar* by J. Kempper, in reality a Kraków rabbi and Sabbatian convert to Christianity R. Moshe ben Aharon Kohen who in the end settled down in Uppsala as a university Hebraist. R. Elijor, the organizer of the conference and editor of post-conference materials, makes use of Turner's conception of the liminal phase as well as Bachtin's analyses of carnival elements in culture to describe the silhouette of Frank. In this light, he portrays him as yet another example, after that of Szataj Cwi, of permanent transgression of Halakhist Judaism.

In the English section, E. Carlebach ponders the reception of Sabbatianism among the Ashkenazi Jews and likewise Scholem, he points out and proves, yet again, that the view which portrays them as skeptical and passive in relation to the Sabbatian heresy is false. J. J. Schachter supplements Scholem's classic study with a sophisticated analysis of family conditionings of the representatives of the extreme anti-Sabbatian opposition (R. Jacob Sasportas, Moses Hagiz, Jacob Emden). M. Galas analyzes the known and unknown non-Jewish sources to the history of Sabbatianism in Poland. H. Levine engages in a critical evaluation of the different meanings of the concept of messianism which appeared in the studies of Scholem as well as his successors; he then analyzes the messianic revival in Hassidism which was caused by the appearance of Napoleon Bonaparte. Finally, D. Biale tries to place Scholem's research on Sabbatianism against the background of the reception of this movement in the popular 19th-20th century literature and the orientalist type of rhetoric which is characteristic of it.

A brief presentation of the content of the above publications shows that the subject of Sabbatianism and Frankism is anything but exhausted, and that one can still expect many a surprise as regards the above topics. In particular, the presented material encourages one to carry out comparative and typological studies of the problems from the perspective of comparative history of religion. No doubt, a comparison of Sabbatianism and Frankism with Gnostic libertinism, or else the results of contemporary research into the function of sexualism in the new religious movements, would contribute a lot to the understanding of the above movements. One can only hope that at least a part of the materials which were originally published in Hebrew, would soon be available in translation. In the opinion of the author of the above article, the texts which deserve to be translated first are studies by A. Rapoport-Albert, R. Elijor and S. Asulin. In this context, what should deserve our special attention is the editorial excellence of the present publication as well as its graphic perfection; one has to emphasize here that, in this respect, the work of R. Elijor by far exceeds the volumes which have so far been published within the series *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*.

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