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# Book of the Occurrences of the Times to Jeshurun in the Land of Israel - Korot ha-‘itim li-Yeshurun be- Erets Yiśra’el

David G. Cook

Sol P. Cohen

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# Book of the Occurrences of the Times to Jeshurun in the Land of Israel - Korot ha-'itim li-Yeshurun be-<sup>3</sup>Erets Yisra<sup>3</sup>el

## **Abstract**

This work was authored by Menahem Mendel me-Kaminitz (an ancestor of one of the current translators David Cook) following his first attempt to settle in the Land of Israel in 1834.

## **Keywords**

Land of Israel, Ottoman Palestine, Menahem Mendel me-Kaminitz, Korat ha-'itim, history memoirs

## **Disciplines**

Islamic World and Near East History | Jewish Studies | Religion

## **Comments**

This is an English translation of Sefer Korot Ha-'Itim ([First Edition, 1839](#); [Reprint with Critical Introduction, 1975](#))

**The Book of the Occurrences of the Times to  
Jeshurun in the Land of Israel**

**Sefer  
KOROT HA-‘ITIM  
li-Yeshurun be-Eretz Yisra’el**

by

Menahem Mendel ben Aharon of Kamenitz

Translation by:  
David G. Cook, M.D.  
Sol P. Cohen, Ph.D.

## Translators' Introduction

This work was authored by Menahem Mendel me-Kaminitz, an ancestor of one of us (DGC), following his first attempt to settle in the Land of Israel in 1834. Additional biographical and textual information are contained in the two sections (also translated from the Hebrew) appended at the end of the translation, one from the “Encyclopedia of Pioneers of the Settlement and its Builders”, while the other derives from a 1975 critical edition of the Hebrew text.

In order to better appreciate the content of this book, it is necessary to acquaint the reader with background information regarding the era in which it originated. Nearly two centuries have elapsed since the years recounted in this book, two centuries which have seen massive societal, economic and political changes in, as well as the disappearance of, the two worlds of the text, Tsarist Russia and Ottoman Palestine.

The plight of Jewry in Tsarist Russia, especially under the reigns of Alexander I (1801-1825) and Nicholas I (1825-1855), was a difficult one. Jews formed a minimal portion of the Russian populace until the late 18<sup>th</sup> C. saw the repeated partitioning of Poland and the “transfer” of millions of Jews and other ethnic groups to the rule of the Tsars. While striking changes occurred to Western European Jewry due to the French Revolution and ensuing Napoleonic wars (the fostering of civic equality, the emergence of Haskalah\*<sup>1</sup> [Enlightenment] and the nascent development of Reform Judaism), increased repression and persecution were the order of the day in the Pale of Settlement\*, including Lithuania. The “Jewish Statute” of 1804<sup>2</sup> severely limited the social (forced expulsion from villages) and economic (prohibition of all leasing activities) life of the Jews. A more direct and cruel blow at the heart of the Jewish community was the enactment of the “Cantonist”\* system in 1827 which required the forced conscription (with resulting death or assimilation) of Jewish youths into military schools and, eventually, into the mandated quarter-century of army service as well as forced conversion to Russian Orthodoxy. Thus, while the major impetus for Aliyah\* to the Land of Israel may have been religious, as will be discussed shortly, it is also likely that conditions in the Pale fostered some quantum of his desire to leave.

The religious world of Eastern European Jewry was a divided one. The rise of Hasidism\* in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> C was countered vigorously by followers of more traditional Halakhic\* principles (*Mitnaggedim\** – opponents) who objected to the messianic and pantheistic ideas which they observed among the Hassidim. The intensity of this conflict was severe. Among the major foes of Hasidism was the Gaon of Vilna (Elijah ben Solomon Zalman\*)(1720-1797) whose followers included a group of students later to become “*Perushim*”<sup>3</sup> (those who “separated” themselves from daily concerns to study Torah and Talmud). Leaders of this movement included Menahem Mendel of Shklov\* and Israel ben Samuel of Shklov\*, prominent in the first wave of Ashkenazic

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on this and the remainder of items marked by \*, please see the various articles in the Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>2</sup> “Russia”, Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>3</sup> Halper, J Between Redemption and Revival: The Jewish Yishuv in Jerusalem in the Nineteenth Century, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991) 40-41

Aliyah. While Menahem Mendel of Shklov passed away prior to the author's arrival in the Land of Israel, his son, Natan Neta', is mentioned as accompanying the author on his return voyage to Lithuania. Israel of Shklov is a major character in the first part of this text, appearing as the leader of the Safed community of *Perushim* and accepted by the author as his religious authority. Israel of Shklov provided Menahem Mendel with dispensation to leave the Land (a practice which was against Halakhah\*).

The rapid increase in Ashkenazic immigration to Ottoman Palestine in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries had been preceded by various abortive attempts at settlement in the 17<sup>th</sup> C (Shabbetai Zevi\*) and early 18<sup>th</sup> C (followers of Judah he-Hasid [Segal] Ha-Levi\*). Before 1800 Ottoman Jewry was overwhelmingly Sephardic, its roots stretching back to medieval times with an additional influx after the expulsions from the Iberian peninsula in the late 15<sup>th</sup> C. and early 16<sup>th</sup> C. Their place in Ottoman society was similar to that of Christians, namely that of a dhimmi (people of protection) who were self-governing under the millet system. They were allowed certain social and religious freedoms in return for poll tax payments to the authorities. The Sephardic community was, therefore, integrated into the life of the larger Ottoman society and its members were considered citizens. Sephardis were conversant in Arabic and had substantial economic ties to the community as a whole. Lacking any direct familiarity with Sephardic culture and practice, Menahem Mendel appears to have found Sephardim sufficiently unusual to require comment.

The first Ashkenazic influx, of Hasidim, occurred in the late 18<sup>th</sup> C. As settlement in (the preferred) Jerusalem was problematic (lack of an adequate water supply, opposition by the Sephardim to any incursion which might dilute the support of Jews outside the Land under their own halukah\* system, ongoing debts owed to the Muslim money-lenders left over from an abortive attempt by the followers of Yehudah he-Hasid to build a synagogue), they found their place in Tiberias and Safed (home to the holy graves of Biblical prophets, tannaim\*, amoraim\* and Kabbalists\* and locations allied with messianic traditions).

A major impediment to a larger and more organized mainstream Ashkenazic Aliyah had been the long-standing prohibitions delineated in the Three Oaths<sup>4</sup>. Elaborated in the Talmud (Ketubot 110b and 111a), they derive from the Midrashic interpretation of 3 verses (2:7, 3:5, 8:4) from the Song of Songs, as stated: "*What are these Three Oaths? One, that Israel should not storm the wall. Two, the Holy One made Israel take an oath not to rebel against the nations of the world. Three, the Holy One made the nations vow that they would not oppress Israel too much*". The first was interpreted as forbidding the (premature) rebuilding en masse of the Land of Israel (before the Messiah's arrival) and requiring all to await his coming. This view persists even today among certain ultra-Orthodox, anti-Zionists groups. The weight of these prohibitions was undermined by the direct attacks of Tsarist Russia against the Jews (seen to abrogate the third oath) as well as the views of the Gaon of Vilna who determined that the Land may be redeemed first, before the arrival of the Messiah. The Gaon, himself, attempted to make Aliyah, without his family, in 1783 but returned without a reason being recorded.

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<sup>4</sup> Morgenstern, A Hastening Redemption Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006 pp. 87-88

The Aliyah of *Perushim* during the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> C. was led by the notables of Shklov, all of whom initially settled in Safed (for reasons noted above) but soon split, after the plague years of the early 1810's, with Menahem Mendel eventually succeeding in the creation of a Jerusalem settlement. While the desire to make Aliyah was a notable part of the tradition of the *Perushim*, a greater attraction must have been present to counter the perceived and real travails awaiting the immigrants, both the dangers of the journey and the difficulties awaiting them in this somewhat lawless backwater of the Ottoman Empire which was early 19<sup>th</sup> C. Palestine. One attraction was likely the belief that the Jewish year 5600 (1840) would see the coming of the Messiah<sup>5</sup>. The two major sources which fixed that year as the one of redemption were based in part in the long-standing belief that this world was to last 6000 years (Sanhedrin 97a) and on two explicit statements in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 99a) and the Zohar (concerning Vayeira, sec 117). The Messiah was expected to arrive 400 years prior to the end of the current world, thus the year 5600. This belief in the imminence of redemption was further fostered by the upheavals in society which occurred surrounding the Napoleonic wars, including Napoleon's foray into the Levant in 1798-1799.

Furthermore, to be discussed below, Muhammad Ali's conquest of and governmental reorganization of Palestine in 1831 was seen as further proof of some near-term change in the condition of the world. While the author alludes to Messianic salvation in his hopes for the future, such messianic leanings do not directly form his rationale for making Aliyah in 1834, though one must assume he was aware of the currents of belief then extant. As he states, at the beginning of Part Two, his emigration was prompted by a desire to serve the God who saved him from death by illness, by pursuit of religious study. It is also unclear if he had originally intended to reach Jerusalem, as his stated reason for choosing Safed was that it was the destination of the more notable members of his voyaging party. The author did, finally, reach his goal of settling in Jerusalem following his return to the Land in the 1840's. This occurred subsequent to the Safed earthquake (of 1837) which had decimated the Jewish community there and had forced it to seek shelter among the *Perushim* of Jerusalem. By the 1840's Jerusalem was safer and more economically viable for European Jews.

The conquest of and the ensuing nine year (1831-1840) reign over Syria – Palestine by Muhammad Ali\* brought substantial changes to the region, changes which were both favorable and unfavorable to the Jewish communities. Muhammad Ali, then ruler of Egypt under the Ottoman Sultan, sought to expand his economic and political power base by conquering the region north of his holdings, utilizing the military talents of his son-in-law, Ibrahim Pasha\*. A modernizer who courted favor with Western European powers, Muhammad Ali introduced many reforms affecting the Jewish community including a decrease in arbitrary fees and taxes, increased access to the Western Wall, permission to rebuild and/or substantially repair synagogues (forbidden under the Sultanate) and the allowing of increased consular influence (providing additional protection for the Ashkenazic community, few, if any, of whom were Ottoman citizens). As may be expected, many of his reforms angered the local Muslim populace. The reforms also included: increased legal and economic equality for the Jews, decreased local power to the various city leaders, and a monetary policy which set the stage for

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<sup>5</sup> Morgenstern, Chap 2

inflation and a more unstable currency. Nonetheless, the greatest anger was engendered by the forced military conscription of the peasant population. This set the stage for the 1834 rebellion against Muhammad Ali and Ibrahim Pasha, during which the peasants (in collusion with city leaders) attacked the Jewish population with the severity so harrowingly described in this book. Eventually the Western European powers, concerned over the viability of the Sultanate as a countering force against perceived Russian expansionism in the Levant (the “Eastern Question”), forced Muhammad Ali to surrender his conquests in 1840. This, of course, created more difficulties for the Jews as they had been seen by the Muslim majority as having allied with and benefited from Ali’s rule.

The text is divided into two sections. The first deals in detail with the peasant revolt of 1834, with only brief mention of the 1837 earthquake which killed a major portion of the Safed Jewish population. It would appear that the author’s aim, among others, was to foster sympathy among the Jews of Europe, to whom the content is directed, in order to increase contributions for the support of Jews in the Land of Israel through the Halukah system. The first section cannot be said to be an appealing advertisement for immigration, though it is attached, somewhat counterintuitively, to his guide to making Aliyah and living in the land in Part Two. The date(s) of publication [1839 Vilna; 1840 Warsaw (Yiddish)] may serve as further clues to his rationale for including the description of the revolt’s depredations. Given the death in 1838 of Israel of Shklov and the tenuous condition of the Safed community of *Perushim*, whose remnants were attempting to integrate into the Jewish population of Jerusalem, it would have been most problematic for any of the Jewish communities in the Land to absorb more immigrants. If they were obliged to do so, such would have put a great strain on the Halukah funds. The severe economic straits of 1837 are probably reflected in the departure from the Land by Shmaryahu Luria (also from Shklov), who accompanied the author on his voyage back to Europe. Luria, a wealthy religious Jew, had experienced increasing financial problems and saw the need to return to protect his holdings in Russia.

Alternatively, could the description of the horrors occurring in 1834 have in some way been provided to evoke a further suggestion of the end of days, of the struggles which had long been foretold to occur just prior to the arrival of the Messiah? This suggestion is provided with hesitation given the lack of other mention of messianic expectations in the text.

This text is an important original source concerning the Land of Israel during the early days of the Old *Yishuv*<sup>6</sup>. It reflects a world view still current among many in Israel and reveals much about the dedication to the ideal of Zion of one man and many of his generation.

David G. Cook, M.D.  
Sol P. Cohen, Ph.D.

August, 2011

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<sup>6</sup> See Haohen, M Land of Israel: Religious Life and Communities, Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

## Translators' Note

Certain aspects of this translation require comment in order for the reader to more readily appreciate the text.

The author's usage of punctuation is variable, to say the least. We have taken substantial liberties in re-dividing the text so as to improve its flow. We have attempted to simultaneously provide the reader in addition to a readable text, one which also reflects the author's own style.

Given his background in Biblical and Rabbinic Judaism, much of which was likely inculcated by rote learning, it is not surprising that the author makes frequent use of quotations from and allusions to the Bible and references to the Talmud. While we have utilized the JPS<sup>7</sup> translation for rendering the text into English, it should be recognized that we have been obliged to rework some of the wording to fit the English text. We did, however, want to highlight, with extensive footnoting of these references, the author's background and mindset as an observant Jew, one dedicated to learning.

We have purposely omitted the author's very frequent (common to the literature of that era) use of honorifics which follow the names of deceased individuals mentioned in the text or titles which extend well beyond the use of *Rav*.

Regarding style, we have italicized all foreign transliterated common nouns, leaving the many names in regular type face. The bracketed portions of the translation include "filler" material in cases where the author skips certain terms and assumes that the reader understands the material by context alone.

We wish to express our appreciation to Daniel J. Cook, Ph.D. for his helpful review of and comments on the translated text.

David G. Cook, M.D.  
Sol P. Cohen, Ph.D.

August, 2011

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<sup>7</sup> JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1999



**SEFER**  
**KOROT HA-‘ITIM**  
**li-Yeshurun<sup>1</sup> be-Eretz Yisra’el<sup>2</sup>**

**Concerning** the cup of His reeling<sup>3,4</sup>, which was passed to them at the hands of plunderers and robbers [during] the year 5694 [1834], and the commotions and the earthquake which caused the mountains to quake<sup>5</sup> and the cliffs<sup>6</sup> to fall<sup>7</sup> [during] the year 5697 [1837], [yet] God left us some survivors<sup>8</sup> whom he redeemed according to His mercy and His great kindness<sup>9</sup>.

**In Order** for all Israel to know that the Lord, their God, is with them in all their dwelling places and all their troubles are his; that His hand is stretched out over us to save us from our troubles and from the burden of suffering, in every time and year. Thus, God will send His hand to gather up his beloved Sons of Abraham who were His treasure and delight. Amen, may it be His will.

**This Author**, humble and meager among all Israel’s multitudes – Menahem Mendel ben Aharon from Kamenitz, in Lita<sup>10</sup>, author of the book, Seyag La-Tora.

**PRINTED IN**

**VILNO**

**in the Year 5600 [1840]**

**Or<sup>11</sup>**

**The Calamity Befalling the Jews in Palestine during 1834-1837**

**Vilna**

**Typography M. Romm**

**1839**

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<sup>1</sup> Jeshurun, a poetic name for [The People of] Israel, occurring four times in the Bible and taken by the Septuagint and Vulgate as implying “beloved”. Others suggest that it refers to the uprightness of Israel in contrast to the name Jacob, an appellation which hints at deceitfulness. “Jeshurun,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>2</sup> “The Book of the Occurrences of the Times to Jeshurun in the Land of Israel”

<sup>3</sup> Translators’ Note: Throughout the text the author quotes directly from or indirectly refers to the Hebrew Bible and Talmud. All translations of biblical quotations derive from the JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1999

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 51:17 Footnote page 968: “A figure of speech for a dire fate”

<sup>5</sup> Nahum 1:5, Jeremiah 4:24, Psalms 46:4

<sup>6</sup> “steps”, in modern Hebrew, reflecting the tiered hillside location of the houses in Safed

<sup>7</sup> Ezekiel 38:20

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 1:9

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 63:7

<sup>10</sup> Lithuania

<sup>11</sup> The following is printed in Russian, Cyrillic Typeface.

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Passed by Permission of the Censor in Vilno,  
25, October 1839  
Censor: Professor Ivan Vashkevich<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Russian, Cyrillic Typeface

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

As is well known, every man loves his people and land; thus he seeks to learn of the diverse happenings and misfortunes which have transpired over the years and afflicted his people and his land during his absence from them in one of many places. From this arises a worthwhile effort to accomplish a lofty goal, to learn wisdom and ethics from God's conduct (Blessed be He), proper conduct in order to despise evil and choose good. As the Scripture said, "Zion, whom no one seeks after<sup>13</sup>; hence, Zion requires inquiry. Therefore, there is a great obligation and duty upon us, the nation of the Sons of Israel, to contemplate and know of the misfortunes which are taking place in our land and upon the people residing in it during these days. It is a land which the Lord looks after<sup>14</sup>; His heart and eyes shall always be there<sup>15</sup>. As a man disciplines his son, He disciplines its inhabitants, thus bringing them to account for their sins<sup>16</sup> even if we are far from fathoming Him<sup>17</sup>. Hence, I am as a survivor of the various afflictions and misfortunes which recently occurred while I lived there. I find myself obliged to relate and narrate in written form of all the torment which befell them in the years 5694 to 5697 [1834-1837]. The arrows of time struck me and I was as a target for arrows<sup>18</sup> due to the plague which occurred then (Heaven Forbid<sup>19</sup>); to the attack of robbers and plunderers which took place then, and to the earthquake which occurred as described in this book and from which I almost despaired of my life. However, God, in His great mercy, saved me from all these and I swore to thank His name publicly<sup>20</sup>. I will fulfill my vow<sup>21</sup> with this book; may they listen and take heed. Our brothers residing outside the Land should pay attention and pray to God for the Land and its inhabitants, each to assist according to his blessings with a gift from his hand<sup>22</sup>, to assist and support the remnant of the nation on it [the Land]. If there should be one who is advanced in years<sup>23</sup>, who is capable and has the necessary funds, he should take his money-bag<sup>24</sup> in hand and travel to the Holy Land to pray at its holy sites and at the graves of the righteous of the world. He will experience with great awe that which occurs there to a person due to the pure air which impassions and enlightens those who seek wisdom and purity. Through either prayer or [the study of] Torah he will quickly become a different person. It is because of these continuing misfortunes and teachings that we can understand why God inflicted such upon it<sup>25</sup> more than on any other land. It is because it is where His holy name rests, as was said by the prophet, I will

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<sup>13</sup> Jeremiah 30:17 Representing a prophetic prediction of better times to come despite having been exiled.

<sup>14</sup> Deuteronomy 11:12

<sup>15</sup> II Chronicles 7:16

<sup>16</sup> Exodus 32:34

<sup>17</sup> Jeremiah 17:9

<sup>18</sup> Lamentations 3:12

<sup>19</sup> Aramaic acronym for *Rahmana L'tsalan*

<sup>20</sup> Proverbs 5:4

<sup>21</sup> Jonah 2:10

<sup>22</sup> Deuteronomy 16:17

<sup>23</sup> Genesis 24:1

<sup>24</sup> Genesis 42:35

<sup>25</sup> Deuteronomy 29:21

call you to account for all your sins<sup>26</sup>. Thus, we continue to trust that God will look down and see, from the heavens, the tears of the downtrodden as they have no COMFORTER; and He will send the offspring of the comforter.<sup>27</sup>

**THUS**, I have entitled this book KOROT HA-‘ITIM, for as its name implies, it speaks of and allows to be heard in all the streets the vicissitudes and misfortunes which are occurring at this very time. I have entitled the second section ALIYOT HA-ARETS as it concerns the virtues of the Land and its beneficence, as well as the manner of coming up to the Land for he who desires to do so, and those issues required for one who resides in the Land.

**THUS**, since he who has mercy on all creatures will gain compassion from the heavens, I request of the entire nation, House of Israel, to assist me in any small way and purchase this book according to their generosity. It is of importance to me and surely your souls will enjoy knowing all that is written here; listen to me and your spirit will be enlivened and from the heavens [you will receive] twofold compassion.

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## MANY THANKS TO GOD<sup>28</sup>

**I come as one of the four who is required to give thanks.<sup>29</sup> Thus, I am about to write here the acknowledgement and praise which I expressed to God who saves me from all trouble.<sup>30</sup>**

I praise and extol our God who saved our lives from the hand of plunderers and robbers; He also saved our souls and spared the remnant<sup>31</sup> of our people, lest our name be erased and cut off from the Land<sup>32</sup>.

We were persecuted for no reason while we were tranquil in our homes; our enemies almost destroyed us were it not for God’s benevolence which strongly prevailed, allowing us to live.

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<sup>26</sup> Amos 3:2

<sup>27</sup> Perhaps a reference to the Messiah

<sup>28</sup> The following section of poetic prayer is arranged as an acrostic, with the first letter of each Hebrew verse spelling: Menahem Mendel ben Aharon

<sup>29</sup> Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berachot, 54b. There are four types of people who must give thanks: seafarers who have arrived safely, those who have traversed the wilderness safely, those who were ill and have recovered and those who were imprisoned and then released.

<sup>30</sup> Psalms 34:18

<sup>31</sup> Jeremiah 42:17

<sup>32</sup> Isaiah 48:19

We have set a law and time, upon ourselves and our descendants, to tell of our sufferings, year after year, and to recount and make heard our salvation.

We fled from mountain to valley<sup>33</sup>, as our enemy pursued us upon the mountains; even in the valley we found no rest, as our strength departed us.

Our houses of study and prayer were destroyed<sup>34</sup> and were filled with silence and stillness. Alas! Our Torah scrolls were trampled; none said “Give back” as they were given over to despoilment<sup>35</sup>, rent as by a barber’s blade<sup>36</sup> and left lying in all the streets. Alas! What has become of us, as we are powerless.<sup>37</sup>

Because of this, I will, for all time<sup>38</sup>, lament<sup>39</sup> and wail dirges and lamentations<sup>40</sup> as jackals; our comforter abandoned us to destruction after destruction<sup>41</sup>. This I will call to mind<sup>42</sup> and remain diligent; I look forward to seeing the [re]building as one who has seen the destruction is healed in witnessing the restoration.

The wicked have set a trap for me<sup>43</sup>, to entrap me with fire, as we came to clefts in the rocks<sup>44</sup>; they exposed me naked and barefoot, the old and the young<sup>45</sup>; the gate is battered to ruins<sup>46</sup>.

Before God my eyes shed tears<sup>47</sup>, where oh where are my wife and children; we did not eat bread then but were sated with trouble and shame<sup>48</sup>; tears and weeping<sup>49</sup> [were heard] in our squares; we witnessed the tears of the oppressed<sup>50</sup> with the cruelty of fury<sup>51</sup>; our eyes are spent with tears<sup>52</sup> because we were powerless.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Song of Songs 2:8

<sup>34</sup> Isaiah 5:9

<sup>35</sup> Isaiah 42:22-24

<sup>36</sup> Ezekiel 5:1

<sup>37</sup> Nehemiah 5:5

<sup>38</sup> Daniel 7:25

<sup>39</sup> Micah 1:8

<sup>40</sup> Ezekiel 2:10

<sup>41</sup> Job 16:14

<sup>42</sup> Lamentations 3:21

<sup>43</sup> Psalms 119:110

<sup>44</sup> Isaiah 2:21

<sup>45</sup> Isaiah 20:4

<sup>46</sup> Isaiah 24:12

<sup>47</sup> Job 17:20

<sup>48</sup> Job 14:1

<sup>49</sup> Malachi 2:13

<sup>50</sup> Ecclesiastes 4:1

<sup>51</sup> Proverbs 27:4

<sup>52</sup> Lamentations 2:11

<sup>53</sup> Nehemiah 5:5

Lord, our God, Lords other than You possessed us.<sup>54</sup> They would have already wiped us off the earth<sup>55</sup> had You not been mindful of Your compassion<sup>56</sup>. When You gird on the last bit of fury<sup>57</sup>, You will gather people who willingly come forward<sup>58</sup> to Jerusalem and Zion and You will root out and defeat our plunderers.

This I will call to mind<sup>59</sup>, this is the day we hoped for<sup>60</sup>, to narrate and recount that which we have witnessed, the hand of God stretched out to destroy the greater Upper Galilee, the city of Safed, [by] the remnants of the sword, during 33 days.

When we visited the grave of the prophet Hosea, son of Be'eri, a terrible death assailed us<sup>61</sup>; we fled from the sword<sup>62</sup> and were not able to pause.

I risked my life in order to rescue the Sifrei Torah<sup>63</sup> which were abandoned in the synagogue in great disgrace; they were trampled under the foot<sup>64</sup> of our enemies, our flagrantly criminal enemies who trod upon the sheets of parchment with their shoes.

Then, on the day after Shavuot, the 8<sup>th</sup> of Sivan [5594] [1834], we were sated with bitterness<sup>65</sup> and unable to hold our heads high<sup>66</sup>; because hardships<sup>67</sup> assembled against us<sup>68</sup> and it was sheer horror to grasp the message.<sup>69</sup>

Oy, va-avoy, is wailed<sup>70</sup> in our streets; look down from heaven and see not for our sake but to bring Your Name glory<sup>71</sup> in our days; because our eyes are upon You<sup>72</sup>.

We were sated with many misfortunes, until the mercy of heaven [was] extended to us, leading us from sorrow and sighing<sup>73</sup> but we were deserving as there was relief<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> Isaiah 26:13

<sup>55</sup> Psalms 119:87

<sup>56</sup> Psalms 25:6

<sup>57</sup> Psalms 76:11, JPS Translation suggests that the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

<sup>58</sup> Psalms 110:3

<sup>59</sup> Lamentations 3:21

<sup>60</sup> Lamentations 2:16

<sup>61</sup> Psalms 55:5

<sup>62</sup> Leviticus 26:36

<sup>63</sup> Scrolls of the Pentateuch, Five Books of Moses, in manuscript form

<sup>64</sup> Isaiah 26:6

<sup>65</sup> Job 9:18

<sup>66</sup> Psalms 110:7

<sup>67</sup> Exodus 18:8

<sup>68</sup> Micah 4:11

<sup>69</sup> Isaiah 28:19

<sup>70</sup> Psalms 144:14

<sup>71</sup> Psalms 115:1

<sup>72</sup> II Chronicles 20:12

<sup>73</sup> Isaiah 35:10

<sup>74</sup> Exodus 8:11

I have firmly sworn<sup>75</sup> to record such in [this] book: all its readers will cherish the words<sup>76</sup> so that they will remain in memory; the future generation will arise and sing out. In majesty, God will be revealed and seen in our days; we will then rejoice as we all together witness, with our own eyes, the seven shepherds<sup>77</sup> and our righteous Messiah.

## OCCURENCES OF THE TIMES

Upon my arrival in the Holy Land, in the year 5693 [1833], in the month of Elul [Aug.–Sept.], I saw in Safed a number of severely damaged ruins, that is to say, wherein the domes of the houses had collapsed. They explained to me that in the month of Tevet [Dec.–Jan.] of that year much snow had fallen from the heavens and rested on the domes until they disintegrated and fell after 10 days. Another loss was [that of] the spoilage of the etrog<sup>78</sup> trees, as the etrogim [pl.] are [still] on the trees in winter. A further loss from the snow and cold was the death of all the donkeys which were carrying loads on the road. Roads there are not as in our<sup>79</sup> country. Thus, because of the great amount of snow, travelers on the roads could not find a path to use to their appointed destinations and all the donkeys on the road died, causing the cost of living to rise in the Land.

On the New Year of 5694 [1834], a scorpion bit and killed a young woman from Jerusalem. Soon after, at the end of the holiday, a plague came upon the whole country, and, in Jerusalem, it was worse due to the beginning of the Sabbatical year. During that period the plague struck many times in the Land, as described in the Mishnah<sup>80</sup>, ceasing only at the time of Hanukah with the help of God. I thanked God (Blessed is His Name) and saw that now we will enjoy a respite.

During that year, on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of the Omer<sup>81</sup>, the ground shook twice. The first time occurred at noon and the second at 9 in the night, with the quaking and trembling increasing. We were thus forced to leave our belongings in our houses and flee outside, as there is little to fear from the quaking outside. Only being inside was fatal, as the quaking collapsed the walls, which fell upon the people within.

I now must relate the severe loss and damages, due to the plunderers and robbers who were about in the land, which occurred among the Jews coming from our native land, called

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<sup>75</sup> Psalms 119:106

<sup>76</sup> Genesis 49:21

<sup>77</sup> Micah 5:5 In Jewish tradition these are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David, eminent personages in Jewish history who are said to have influence even now.

<sup>78</sup> Yellow citron used ceremonially during Sukkot

<sup>79</sup> The author, writing this book following his return to, and for those living in, Eastern Europe, refers throughout the text to “here” denoting Europe and “there” as the Land of Israel.

<sup>80</sup> Ta’anit 3,4 in which Rabbi Akiba defines the number of deaths in a certain time period required for a plague to be declared.

<sup>81</sup> The 49 days between Passover and Shavuot

Ashkenazim, and the Sephardim, called *Frenken*<sup>82</sup>, in the four regions of the Land. They are Jerusalem, Hebron, Upper Galilee, that is Safed, and Lower Galilee, that is the town of Tiberias.

On Sunday, the eighth of Sivan<sup>83</sup>, plunderers came, inhabitants of the villages who were allied with the residents of the town. They carried weapons in their hands, including shields and spears and fell upon all the Jews there [in Safed]. They tore the clothes off men and women and sent them naked out of the city; they plundered all their belongings, tore the cushions, scattering the feathers outside, took the pillowcases for themselves and destroyed even the cheaper items. The people who remained were raped, both men and women. They tore the Torah scrolls, tallit [prayer shawl] and tefillin [phylacteries] and the town was devastated; "the gate was battered to ruins"<sup>84</sup>. Eventually, snakes, scorpions and leopards attacked them. This occurred over thirty-three days in the town of Safed; they also perpetrated such in the remainder of the towns, though over a shorter time.

Why did they do this? Three years earlier the Land had been conquered by the Egyptian leader, (Mehmed Ali)<sup>85</sup> who proclaimed an edict that he be given men for army service, as it was customary to teach them to fight. They did not want to respond to the call as up to that time it was not their practice to enter army service until the enemy had come and it was necessary for all to go to expel the invaders from the Land. Thus, the inhabitants of Shechem decided to invade Jerusalem and put at their head a leader named Kasah Lahma, of Shechem. They were then joined by the inhabitants of the villages in a war party.

Jerusalem was very well fortified due to its surrounding wall upon which there was much weaponry and to its four iron gates. Near the wall, stood a large building filled with an army garrison called *Kalah*. Because of this they entered Jerusalem by way of caves and tunnels on the eve of Shabbat Kodesh [The Holy Sabbath] preceding Shavuot<sup>86</sup>. The few soldiers in the city hid themselves, while those who had attacked robbed and plundered the town. At the same

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<sup>82</sup> A confusing and somewhat derogatory term applied by Ashkenazic (Eastern European) Jews to Sephardic Jews (those emigrating from Spain after the late 15c expulsions). The derivation is problematic in that it may have arisen from the similarly derogatory term applied to all Europeans by Muslims, supposedly reminiscent of the Crusades which were said to have been led by the "Franks". Kosover, M. Arabic Elements in Palestinian Yiddish, (Jerusalem: Rubin Maas, 1966) 214-217

<sup>83</sup> June 15, 1834

<sup>84</sup> Isaiah 24:12

<sup>85</sup> Muhammad [Mehmed] Ali (1769-1849) Ruler of Egypt from 1805-1849 who conquered Palestine and Syria and introduced a variety of reforms, some of which provided an improvement in the condition of and greater equality for the Jewish population. Some of his reforms were resented by the Muslim Ottoman population. He was unable to maintain his hold on Syria and Palestine after 1840 due to the intervention of the great powers, See Landau, J.M. "Muhammad Ali," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed. See also Lieber, S. Mystics and Missionaries: The Jews in Palestine 1799-1840, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992) Chapter 9

<sup>86</sup> Shavuot ("weeks," Pentecost) the festival celebrated on the sixth of Sivan. The biblical names for the festival are: "Hag Shavuot" ("Feast of Weeks," Ex. 34:22; Deut. 16:10); "Yom ha-Bikkurim" ("The Day of the First-fruits," Num. 28:26), and "Hag ha-Kazir" ("The Harvest Feast," Ex. 23:16). See Jacobs, L. "Shavuot." Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2007 ed.



time there was a severe drought in the city, such that a leather water-bottle cost 6 taler<sup>87</sup>, and the Jews were in great danger.

After 7 days the leader (Ibrahim) [Ibrahim Pasha]<sup>88</sup> came with his few soldiers and entered Jerusalem; upon seeing them, the men from Shechem exited the city. Since he had few soldiers, he also exited the town towards Jaffa. Upon seeing that the commander [Ibrahim Pasha] had left, the plunderers from Shechem returned to Jerusalem.

When the inhabitants of Safed heard of what those from Shechem had begun to do in Jerusalem, they assembled and went to the ruler of Safed to ask him what to do. He advised them to do as the men from Shechem and assail the Jews. They then attacked the town, tearing off their [the Jews'] clothes and driving them from their homes. When they did this in my courtyard, they stripped us of our clothes. When we saw that they also wanted to shoot us with their rifles, we fled to the Bet Midrash [House of Study] of the *Perushim*<sup>89</sup>. Rav<sup>90</sup> Yisrael<sup>91</sup>, author of the book Taklin Hadetin, was there along with many wounded and bruised Jews. We prayed and also blew the shofar because of this misfortune; screams were heard in our streets: “Oy, how we are being robbed” and they were chased out naked with those remaining being raped, both men and women.

The pillagers came soon afterwards to the Bet Midrash in which we were and took Rav Yisrael (mentioned above), wanting to kill him in order to take the money of the Kolel<sup>92</sup> from him. He pleaded intensely with them and they were satisfied with his giving them 7 *rendlach* [ducats] as they did not kill him.

Rav Yisrael then said to the Jews who were then in the Bet Midrash: “Brothers, let us flee lest they cast evil upon us”. We fled out of town to a place called Kerem [Vineyard] (I had heard

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<sup>87</sup> Taler: a silver coin used throughout Europe for almost four hundred years and serving as the derivation for the “dollar”.

<sup>88</sup> Military commander under and son of Muhammad Ali. See Landau, J, “Ibrahim Pasha,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>89</sup> Literally “those who have withdrawn” and derived from the term Pharisees. The *Perushim* were followers and students of the Gaon, Eliyahu of Vilna, who “withdrew” from the ongoing conflict with the Hasidic community and settled in Palestine under the leadership of Menahem Mendel and Israel of Shklov. See Halper, J Between Redemption and Revival: The Jewish Yishuv in Jerusalem in the Nineteenth Century, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991) 40-41

<sup>90</sup> While “Rav” is a title of respect given to learned students and teachers, it is also a more generic title given to men of the Ashkenazic community. Translator’s note – many of the personages named in the text are preceded by a variety of honorifics, usually in the form of acronyms, and have not been reproduced in this translation.

<sup>91</sup> Israel ben Samuel of Shklov, Talmudic scholar and important disciple of the Vilna Gaon, leader of the community of *Perushim* in the Land of Israel in the early 19c. He immigrated in 1809 but returned to Europe in 1810-1813 to raise funds to support those in Palestine. He was instrumental in leading and maintaining the kolel of *Perushim* in Safed until the 1837 earthquake, following which he moved to Jerusalem, where he died in 1839. See Yaari, A, “Israel ben Samuel of Shklov,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>92</sup> Literally “comprehensive” or “embracing all” and referring to a group of Ashkenazic Jews in the Land of Israel all originally from one country or district, whose members received allocations of funds collected in their region of origin. “Kolel,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

from Rav Yisrael, mentioned above, that Hannah and her seven sons<sup>93</sup> had been slain there) without the old and weak who remained in the Bet Midrash and in the city.

While we remained in that place and without our knowledge, Rav Moshe Hasat<sup>94</sup> with his father-in-law Rav Shmuel of Pinsk and Rav Reuven Cohen<sup>95</sup> went to the village, Ein Zeitim<sup>96</sup>, and arranged with the *Yishmaelim*<sup>97</sup> of the village of Ein Zeitim that they be given a package of money with which to go to the above-mentioned place [the vineyard] to save Rav Yisrael from the hands of the pillagers, so that they would not kill him. The *Yishmaelim* came to our place in the vineyard and took Rav Yisrael from us and led him to the village of Ein Zeitim; we were unaware of all this and thus were surprised and cried as if we were orphans. When the affair was made fully known, a number of men who were in the vineyard also went there [to be] with the above-mentioned Rav Yisrael.

Rav Natan Neta<sup>98</sup>, son of Rav Mendel<sup>99</sup>, from Jerusalem, was, at that time in Safed. When we had fled from the Bet Midrash to the field and vineyard, the above-mentioned Rav fled to a cemetery near the vineyard where we were hiding and hid in a cave. The pillagers found him and stabbed [out] his eye; he suffered many torments and we witnessed all this from our place. We then cried in anguish and trembling upon beholding this suffering. Many other Jews, wounded from head to toe<sup>100</sup>, showing bruises and blood, also came to our hiding place in the vineyard.

Thereupon, a man from the city of Safed came to our hiding place and told us the good news, that the teacher and Rav Gershon Margaliot, the head of the Hasidic Kolel, found favor in the eyes of the Safed city ruler, called [the] Kadi. This favor was due to his having given him all the funds of the Kolel which were then in his possession in order to save his life and all those in his courtyard. We then approached the town in order to find a *Yishmaeli*<sup>101</sup> of our acquaintance

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<sup>93</sup> Apocrypha: II Maccabees 6:12-17

<sup>94</sup> Rav Moshe ha' Ashin, know by the name "Solovitzer" was among the first Ashkenazi immigrants to Safed and afterwards among the builders of the Yishuv in Jerusalem. He traveled to Russia, founding there the Minsk Kolel. He died on the 12<sup>th</sup> of Iyar 5632. Referenced in Kressel, G Menahem Mendel Mi-Kamenitz: Korot Ha-'Itim (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1947) 38. This text rendered the original into modern Hebrew typeface and provides numerous helpful footnotes. It also contains an extended introduction and supplementary material comprised of other original source material and letters of contemporaries.

<sup>95</sup> Also among the first Ashkenazi immigrants to Safed and later was involved with the Jerusalem community. He died on the 28 of Iyar 5641 [1881] (He was the father-in-law of the Kolel Secretary Yosef Yoel Rivlin). Kressel, 38

<sup>96</sup> Ein Zeitim (Arabic, Ayn Zaton), "Spring of Olives" is located about 5 miles north of Safed, on the road to Mt. Meiron.

<sup>97</sup> Term applied throughout this text to Arabs or Muslims. Ishmael, son of Abraham by Hagar, by Islamic tradition, is considered to be the ancestor of the Arab people. "Arabia," Encyclopedia Britannica, 1995 ed.

<sup>98</sup> He was, with Israel of Shklov, among the pioneers of the Aliyah of *Perushim* and Hasidim and the students of the "G'ra" [Vilna Ga'on]. He immigrated in 5569 [1809] and died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Tishrei 5607 [1847]. Kressel, p.39

<sup>99</sup> Menahem Mendel of Shklov, an outstanding student of the Vilna Ga'on. Emigrated to the Land of Israel in 1808, initially settling in Safed but driven by the plague to Jerusalem in 1812, eventually settling there in 1816. Died in 1827, Kaniel, J. "Menahem Mendel of Shklov," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>100</sup> Isaiah 1:6

<sup>101</sup> Singular of *Yishmaelim*

and we found one, named ABAAD, who was the agent for all the merchandise which the Jews needed to purchase; he profited much from this. We approached him saying: “Isn’t our settling here of benefit to you”, and that he, [being] from the city, should help us by bringing us safely to the Kadi of the city. Therefore, he should be a guardian for us and bring us to the courtyard of ha-Rav Gershon, who would perhaps give us shelter and a hiding place from the pillagers. The *Yishameli* did thus and accompanied us to (the Kadi) but, on the way, he changed his mind [and acted] as if he did not know us. He was joined by a few pillagers who seized us and stole all that they found on us and then went on their way, leaving us in great bewilderment.

We then walked disappointedly by ourselves to the city and when we arrived at the street of the Turkish Bathhouse, we saw pillagers standing on the roofs of their houses (as it is their custom to stand on the roofs) equipped with their weapons. They said “Hear us, Jews, we want to take revenge” and we took fright; our hearts melted and became like water; we pleaded with them, crying and shouting to heaven until they relented and released us. We then left them rapidly and went out of the city to hide ourselves. We arrived at a ruin outside of the city and in a few hours it was made known to the pillagers that they would find Jews hiding in the ruin and that they [the Jews] would surely have with them many belongings; they set out to attack us and do as they wished.

When we saw that they were coming to destroy us, we fled from there to the top of a hill upon which was a large ruin with metal gates and two wells. We arrived there early at night but soon suffered from the severe cold as well the dew; as it is written concerning Jacob, “frost by night”<sup>102</sup>. There is much dew found there during the nights which are long during the month of Sivan [May-June]. Additionally, we suffered from hearing the rejoicing of the pillagers in the city celebrating all the booty which they had plundered from the Jews, as we could hear the sounds of their happiness from afar.

Presently, our Rav and Master Yaakov Hirsch from Mohilev and the Sephardic *Hakham*<sup>103</sup> closed the gates of their courtyard and brought many stones to the roofs of their houses; they climbed upon the roofs in order to throw stones at those who approached the courtyard. This angered the pillagers who then fired their rifles and killed the Sephardic *Hakham* and Rabbi Yaakov Hirsch, causing injuries and burns<sup>104</sup>. They then entered the courtyard, plundering and pillaging all within; they also stripped the corpses and defiled the women found in the courtyard. All this occurred during that night which we spent on the hill.

At the righteous place, that is, the Bet Midrash of the city of Safed in which they hid a number of older men and women, [the pillagers] attacked and struck them from soles of their feet to their heads with great cruelty. Among them was the *Magid* [Preacher] Rav from the Kehilat Kodesh<sup>105</sup> Satanev as well as the Rav from Pietkova and other older, learned men who were not

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<sup>102</sup> Genesis 31:40

<sup>103</sup> Title used by Sephardic Jews for their local rabbi (*Hakham Bashi* became, in the 1830’s, the title of the Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman Empire) “Hakham,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2007 ed.

<sup>104</sup> Exodus 21:25

<sup>105</sup> Literally “holy community”, it denotes the title of the Jewish community of any city or town.

able to flee. They stood over them and struck them with many severe blows and very great cruelty. A great miracle occurred there to our Rav Moshe from Antipolia as he had been hiding in the Bet Midrash under the platform in a hollow which was underneath the place from which the Torah is read. The pillagers stuck their swords into this hole and stabbed in every place, in order to find someone inside. Thus they penetrated this Rav Moshe's clothing but he escaped injury from under their hand as the swords did not touch his body. Other Batei Midrash were destroyed to their foundations, including the Bet Midrash of the Rav of the Kehilat Kodesh (Waltziszek); [the pillagers] burned the ceiling. All this transpired that night including the tearing apart of all the Sifrei Torah which they found.

At the same time, they destroyed the printing house of the important, consummate scholar, ha-Rav Yisrael Bak<sup>106</sup> in the Upper Galilee, that is, Safed, and destroyed all the holy books which they found there, all the holy books which they found in Safed among the Jews, and all their tallitot and tefillin. They also beat Rav Yisrael so severely that his legs were wounded.

Ha-Rav Yisrael, author of the book Taklin Hadetin, while he was in the village of Ein Zeitim, heard about the extent of the events as well as the injured eye of the above-mentioned Rav Natan Neta in the city of Safed. He requested and entreated one of the *Yishmaelim* of the village of Ein Zeitim, as well as the Jews who wear the clothes of *Yishmaelim*, to go to the city of Safed in order to bring back the Jews who were sick and wounded; perhaps they might also find funds of the Kolel which they could bring from there. They agreed to this, listened to his advice and went there but found no money, as it had already been taken. They brought the injured whom they found to the village of Ein Zeitim, all the sick people who had the strength to ride on donkeys.

Those of us hiding in the above-mentioned ruin on the hill numbered about 600 persons while the remainder of the people were scattered in places unknown, each did not know [the whereabouts] of his wife or children. Among us were many motherless, nursing infants who had not eaten anything for several days, thus their throats were parched and their tongues stuck to their palates<sup>107</sup>. We waited until morning and sent a number of men to the city to find out what was happening. We selected Rav Leib Cohen<sup>108</sup> and Rav Shalom Chait as they both understood and spoke their [*Yishmaelim*'s] language eloquently and also had acquaintances among the *Yishmaelim* who had sewn clothes for them. Upon arriving in the city they heard some proclaiming, from the roofs and streets, words of peace, that is a call for "*Taman*"<sup>109</sup> (that is to say that the edict was lifted). They hurried and reported, "There is peace and that we should return to the city". We returned to the city; nearing it, we hesitated before we entered in order to inquire as to what was happening. I went with Rav Lieb Cohen and he asked me to go into the

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<sup>106</sup> Israel Bak (1797-1874) immigrated to Palestine in 1831 and founded the first Hebrew printing press in Eretz Yisrael in modern times, initially in Safed (destroyed during the peasant revolt) and then in Jerusalem for 22 years following the Safed earthquake of 1837 and Druze rebellion of 1838. Kressel, G. "Bak," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>107</sup> Psalm 137:6

<sup>108</sup> Originally from Vilna; among the founders of the Safed Yishuv. Died 29<sup>th</sup> of Elul, 5607 [1847]. Kressel, 42

<sup>109</sup> Arabic for "complete", "cessation"

courtyard in which his house was located in order to see what had happened. I did not want to go but went with Rav Leib Cohen to his courtyard as he could understand and speak their language, while I do not understand [it] well, and, perhaps, that something would happen and I would not know what to say. We came to the courtyard of Rav Leib Cohen which was completely destroyed; we searched as perhaps we might find a tallit or tefillin, but found nothing. On the road, Rav Leib found a cane the head of which was overlaid with silver. He held onto the cane and stood outside his house to repair his window. We then entered the house and I then heard Rav Leib cry out bitterly, as someone was trying to take the cane from him and he did not want to surrender it saying: "Have they not already announced "*Taman*", but they did not pay attention to him. We went outside to see what was happening and when the pillager saw me, he turned towards me and struck, wounding me. I fled from him but he pursued me. I then met a *Yishmaeli* who was proclaiming ["*Taman*"] who told the one pursuing me to stop and leave me alone, "Can't you see that he has nothing" and he left me be. I requested of the *Yishmaeli* who had been proclaiming to accompany me to the courtyard of Rav Leib Cohen to save him from those attacking him. He went with me and, on the way, began to ask me for money. In truth, I had on my person a few *rendlach* [ducats] hidden in my stockings. Because of such, I left him and approached the rest of the people who were near the city in order to discover the condition of the city. When Rav Leib Cohen had seen that I had fled and that the pillager was chasing me, he took his children and spouse and fled to the house of a Christian in order to hide there, as the Christians are good men. He asked a number of people about me and one boy said that he had seen the pillager chase after me; they thus thought that the pillager had surely killed me. My wife requested of Rav Leib Cohen to search for me and, perhaps, at least, to find my body. It was made known to Rav Leib that I was with the rest of the people outside of the city<sup>110</sup>.

Those of us who were near the city saw that the crier had lied as not all of them [the pillagers] had agreed. We then asked the *Yishmaelim* who had announced "*Taman*" to accompany us themselves in order to guard us until we reached the courtyard of the *Kadi* of the city of Safed (he is the one in charge of issues of prayer and worship) and to bring us to ha-Rav he-Hasid Gershon Margalio; and they brought us there.

It was made known to Rav Leib Cohen that I was with (the *Kadi*); he then came to the courtyard of the *Kadi* to take me from there to the house of the Christian, to my wife. He also took Rav Eliezer, the *Hazzan* [Cantor] from Karlin. With him was a small infant who had not been fed for a while as his wife was with the Christian; (with God's help) we arrived at the courtyard of the Christians and our hearts were gladdened as each man [was] with his family. We were all alive and each recounted that which had happened to him.

After we had been at the courtyard of the Christians for two hours, Rav Avraham Baruch came to tell us that the pillagers had heard that three Jews, that is Hakham Shemaya as well as

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<sup>110</sup> Translators Note: Confusing conclusion in light of the following text.

two Ashkenazi men, had gone to inform the consul<sup>111</sup> of what had been done to the Jews. They said that these men must be turned over to them and, if we did not turn over these three men, their only recourse<sup>112</sup> would be to kill all the Jews in the city. Because of this we rushed to flee to the courtyard of the Kadi, to the rest of the Jews who were already there, about 1000 people. We heeded him and all fled from the courtyard of the Christian to the courtyard of the Kadi.

Upon arriving there we found that the gate was closed and that a woman from among those of the courtyard of the Kadi stood guard in front of the gate and would not let us enter. The woman who was guarding the gate spotted an amber<sup>113</sup> necklace on the neck of one of our young girls and grabbed the necklace to rip it off. The string was strong and thus cut the flesh of the neck of the infant who then cried out loudly. This cry was heard inside the courtyard and the gate was opened; we all entered the courtyard and slept there one night. The next day we heard that a woman from Safed had given many of her belongings to one of the pillagers to save her life and, on the basis of a promise, she herself, the above-mentioned woman, took in the famous and righteous woman Sarah, daughter of ha-Rav Yehoshua, who was the Rav of the Kehilat Kodesh of Pinsk, in order to hide her. But the pillager reneged, as he had taken what he wanted and promised not to harm them; he then sought to rape them. We were most upset. A number of men were sent to rescue and ransom them for 4 *rendlach* [ducats] and bring them to the courtyard of the Kadi to be with us.

On the third day from the onset of the disturbances we ran out of bread<sup>114</sup> and a number of people had nothing to eat. The Rav he-Hasid Gershon Margalioth asked the Kadi that he send one of his men to town to buy the flat round bread baked on coals which they called *pita* weighing one quarter measure<sup>115</sup>. He did so and one *pita* for the morning and one for the evening were distributed to each.

On the fifth day after our having arrived at the courtyard of the Kadi, who said that it was not proper that so many Jews were staying in his courtyard. He thus decreed that Rav Gershon with his retinue should remain in his courtyard while Rav Avraham Baer of Avrutz<sup>116</sup> and his

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<sup>111</sup> All Jews in Palestine and the Ottoman Empire were viewed by the governmental authorities as having a special status in the pluralistic society of the Muslim majority. They were considered *dhimmis* or “people of protection” under the system of “millets” (self-governing religious minorities). Additionally, since the Ashkenazis (unlike the Sephardis) were not citizens of the Empire, they were viewed as being under the protection of foreign “consuls” (under the system of “Capitulation” and trade agreements issued by the Sultan to each country). By 1815 Russia had appointed a consul in Acre. Such consuls could apply diplomatic pressure in order to protect their wards. Given Mehmed Ali’s desire to solidify his governance of Palestine and Syria, appeals to a consul would carry some weight and bring action if mistreatment of the Jews was brought to the attention of the authorities. By the latter part of the 19 C., the British consul played a notable role in the diplomatic life of Jerusalem and Menahem Mendel himself was granted rights as a British ward. See Lieber, Pp. 31-34 and “Menahem Mendel Me-Kamenitz (Baum)” Tidhar, D Encyclopedia of Pioneers of the Settlement and Its Builders Tel-Aviv, 1947-

<sup>112</sup> Esther 4:11

<sup>113</sup> Yiddish term for “amber”

<sup>114</sup> I Samuel 9:7

<sup>115</sup> See Mishnah Keilim 27:12

<sup>116</sup> Head of the *Beth Din* [Religious Law Court] in Zitomer (Ukraine). Student of Rav Mordechai of Chernobyl Immigrated to the Land in 5592 [1832] and resided in Safed, dying there on 12<sup>th</sup> of Kislev 5601 [1841].

retinue [of Hasidim] and the *Perushim* staying in the courtyard should go to the ruins on the hill outside of Safed where we had stayed at the outset. We were forced to do so and went to the above-mentioned ruin – among us several hundred Jews – and stayed there for several weeks but were fearful, both night and day, lest they attack us. Rav Avraham Baer of Avruz went with us and fed us each every day: one (pita) in the morning and one (pita) in the evening. On Shabbat 3 onions to each, one onion for each meal, were also distributed. This [occurred] despite that Rav Avraham had been left without any possessions, as the pillagers had not even left him his robe. They finally sent him a robe from Tiberias. Despite this he distributed everything that he had for food, both bread and oil. Every day we saw God’s kindly supervision and noted that, although they had planned to attack us, they were retreating.

On the top of the hill, we sat and wept as we thought of<sup>117</sup> the many Sifrei Torah which had been in the synagogues of Safed. Thus, I took an oath to contribute one *rendl* from my remaining funds to give to one of the men of the Kadi to go with us to the synagogues and see what had happened to the Sifrei Torah. If we were to find such, we would take them with us. I did so and one of the Kadi went with me; also accompanying me to the synagogues was the eminent scholar David from Mohilev<sup>118</sup>. He was originally a rich man, faultless in his dealings; the pillagers left him bereft, wearing only his tallit *katan*<sup>119</sup>. Also traveling with us was Rav Shalom Chait, the elder, as he was acquainted with a number of *Yishmaelim* for whom he sewed clothing. He was also skilled in their language. We came to the synagogues (there were 13 synagogues in Safed) where there were approximately 500 Sifrei Torah, excluding the Sefer Torah which the eminent Rabbi Yitshak Aboab<sup>120</sup> had placed in the synagogue of “Ari” Luria<sup>121</sup>. It was only read on the holiday of Shavuot. Upon arriving there we saw the great extent of the damage and desolation which had been done to all the synagogues. The Sifrei Torah were torn and strewn upon the ground; in great grief we rent our clothing [upon] seeing the damage which they had done in every synagogue; we also saw that they had made shoes and blacksmith aprons from the parchment. We cried “Oy, that our eyes must see this. Is this the Torah and is this its rewards!?” The Sefer Torah of ha-Rav Yitshak Aboab, with which several miracles had been accomplished, was now caught up in their perversion and torn into many pieces<sup>122</sup>. Also, the *Sefer Torah*, which had been in the synagogue in the courtyard over the grave of Rashbi<sup>123 124</sup> in

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Kressel, p 45

<sup>117</sup> Psalms 137:1

<sup>118</sup> Father in law of Menahem Mendl of Shklov; died 2<sup>nd</sup> of Tammuz 5597 [1837] Kressel, p. 45

<sup>119</sup> Tallit Katan, a rectangular garment of white cotton, linen, or wool with *ziziyyot* ("fringes") on its four corners.

Whereas the ordinary *tallit* is worn only at the morning service, strictly observant Jews wear the *tallit katan* under their upper garment the whole day, so as constantly to fulfill the biblical commandment in Num. 15:39, a reminder to observe all the commandments of the Torah. "Tallit Katan." Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>120</sup> Rabbinic author and preacher from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> C.; probably lived in Spain. "Aboab, Isaac," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>121</sup> Luria, Isaac ben Solomon (1534–1572), kabbalist, referred to as “Ha-Ari” from the initials of *Ha-Elohi Rabbi Yizhak*, “the divine Rabbi”). Resided and taught in Safed. Scholem, G, “Luria, Isaac ben Solomon,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>122</sup> From the Yiddish “legions”

<sup>123</sup> An acronym for the name of Shimon bar Yoh’ai. A 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE Palestinian tanna, rabbinic leader, mystic and ascetic and one of the prominent students of Rav Akiva. Zahavy, T, “Shimon Bar Yoh’ai,” Encyclopedia

the village of Meiron, was also torn. We called out in the name of God: “Not to us, but to Your name bring glory”.<sup>125</sup> We collected the pieces which we found in the squares of the city and on every street corner<sup>126</sup> and placed them into the Holy Ark. May God remember me with favor!

Upon our return to the rest of our people in the ruins on the hill, one of the pillagers confronted us with a drawn sword in his hand. He placed the sword on the neck of Rav Shalom Chait who was with us and wanted to cut off his head. Although one of the men (of the *Kadi*) went with us and shouted at him, he took no heed. Rav Shalom pleaded with him: “Do you remember the times when I had sewn clothes for you. You used to like me. How is it you turned into one who hates me, for what, as I have no money. Also, see that I have grown old and wish to die in my bed; why kill me?” He then relented and we left him. When we came to the street of the Poles, we heard a bitter cry screaming: “Our brothers, Children of Israel, get me out of this”. We went to the source of the cries and there was a man lying in trash up to his neck. We wanted to extricate him but saw that his legs were injured and he could not walk. We then quickly left him in order to tell Rav Avraham Baer who was with us. He sent several men and we brought him on a donkey, but he died 3 days later in the mountains. Several other people who were with us died due to the fear and dread which fell upon us. They asked us what happened to the Sifrei Torah and we told them what we had seen: Sifrei Torah torn and thrown on every street corner with which they had made shoes and blacksmith’s aprons. They had torn the tefillin and used the straps to tie bundles. From the tallit they made sashes for their bodies and tore the books of the Talmud. In every street we saw villagers with donkeys taking loot, clothing and all the utensils of the Jews, all being sent to the villages. The pillagers stayed in the houses, destroying the homes in order to find hiding places in which the Jews may have been hiding silver or gold. When they did find a box with valuables, they fought among themselves as they could not divide it, thereby destroying the houses of the Jews down to their foundations.

When the residents of Tiberias heard what the pillagers had done in Safed they also wanted to slay the Jews in Tiberias; they [the Jews] appeased them by giving them 100 bags of money (each bag [containing] 500 gold piastres<sup>127</sup>); despite this they feared for their lives as every day they [the residents] regretted their decision, still wanting to attack them, until the end of 33 days when the Palestinians<sup>128</sup> came to Safed and Tiberias, as I will note shortly.

The plunderers now feared for their own lives as regards the rest of their neighbors lest they become envious of all the spoils taken from the Jews; perhaps they would attack them and

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Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>124</sup> Throughout the text and most notably at its end, with the listing of the graves Menahem Mendel visited, reference is made to tanna (pl. tannaim) and amora (pl. amoraim). The tannaim were the sages from the period of Hillel to the compilation of the Mishna (i.e. 1C – 2C C.E.) The amoraim succeeded the tannaim and were active between approximately 220 C.E. and 360 C.E. in the Land of Israel Sperber, D, “Tanna, Tannaim,” and Gray, A, “Amoraim,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>125</sup> Psalms 115:1

<sup>126</sup> Lamentations 2:11 and 2:19

<sup>127</sup> v. i. p.36

<sup>128</sup> Druze soldiers under Ibrahim Pasha



take such. They decided to scare them and show that they were many and strong and in possession of weapons of war. They set themselves up as an army of war. They took the sheets of the Jews and made themselves three flags, as battle flags and took [Russian term for “pans”], that is pans of iron and copper to strike with clubs as drums to make a great noise while carrying rifles in their hands. On each of their Sabbath days, that is our sixth day, a day when those nearby come for marketing, they would repeatedly go back and forth in the markets and the streets, each at a distance from one another in order to appear as if they were many. In the middle of the street they made themselves a tent from mats of the Jews and hung on it their arms and flags in order to frighten others from taking the spoils from them. In spite of all this, at night they slept on their roofs to see if an army might be coming. They stationed watchmen on a spotter roof near the city of Yodpat - this roof said to be from the time of Yosef Ben-Gurion<sup>129</sup> - in order to see if anyone was coming.

After three weeks spent in the ruins on the above-mentioned hill, we, a group of *Perushim*, traveled from there to the village of Ein Zeitim in order to unite with Rav Yisrael, the author of Taklin Hadetin and Rav Avraham Baer with the Kolel of Hasidim who were still hiding there. Near the village of Ein Zeitim are buried a number of Tannaim, including: Rav Il'ai, Rav Yehudah son of Rav Il'ai and Rav Cruspadei<sup>130</sup>. Every day we went to pray at their graves so that God would have mercy on the last remnant and save us from their hands from henceforth. In that village there was a good stream; we sat near that stream, even then in fear and dread.

Four weeks after the onset of these evil occurrences, an army of Palestinians [Druze] was sent by the general of the Egyptians to punish the plunderers of Safed and Tiberias and take revenge for the tears of the oppressed<sup>131</sup>. They were led by 2 commanders and encamped one day's walking distance from Safed. The Kadi went to them and made peace with them. The men of the town, its merchants and traders, also wanted to make peace with them. But the arrogant ones in the city did not want to make peace and [the negotiations] stretched out over 7 days as they were delayed from day to day with back and forth [discussions].

On the 33<sup>rd</sup> day from the onset of the great disturbances the leaders of the city made peace with the above-mentioned commanders but the arrogant ones in the city continued to fight. They [the holdouts] forced the Jews to help them in transporting two pieces of armament, called “cannon”, placing them on towers in order to combat the Palestinian army. Among them was Rav Mordechai from Pinsk. All the Jews who had been in the ruin atop the hill were chased away so that they [the holdouts] would be able to fight from there as well. The Jews who had

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<sup>129</sup> The term provided in the text is “Yorpat”, perhaps a misprint for “Yodfat” though that location is not in the area of Safed. Kressel, (p 48) suggests that he is referring to the Citadel of Safed, a crusader fortress. According to Jewish tradition it was said to have been used in the war against the Romans (1<sup>st</sup> C.C.E.) by Yosef ben Matityahu, the Jewish general, later known as Josephus, thus identifying the city as “Sepph”. Avi-Yonah, M, “Safed,” and Schalit, A, “Josephus,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed. Information concerning the confusion surround the name Josephus may be found in Flusser, D, “Jossipon,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>130</sup> See notes on pp. 36-37 referring to the various grave sites visited by Menahem Mendel

<sup>131</sup> Ecclesiastes 4:1

been in the ruin went to the courtyard of ha-Rav Bet Yosef<sup>132</sup>. However, none of this helped; as soon as the leaders of the city brought in the Palestinian commanders, fear and dread fell upon them [the Jews] and they hid themselves in holes and crevices. The commanders saw this and were amazed as to how the town was razed to its foundations. They proclaimed, calling out throughout the city, that all the Jews were to return, every one to his home and courtyard without fear. The people who had been in various hiding places then came out and went to the courtyard of ha-Rav Bet Yosef, while the kolel of the *Perushim* was still in Ein Zeitim. They were still frightened of returning to their homes as they saw that the army was small, not even 500 men.

When the arrogant ones saw that the army was only 500 strong they wanted to do battle with them. Immediately, the commander brought in another 1000 Palestinian soldiers and their [the pillagers] spirits weakened; they became confused and hurried away in mortal dread. The commander then announced that everyone who had stolen from the Jews must return all their belongings and, if not, they would be severely punished. However, they did not do so, returning only the cheap items, not wanting to return any of the better clothing. Many were severely beaten but despite this [they] did not want to return [any items]. Also, thirteen of them, leaders of the pillagers, were taken to the place of justice (Acre) to be tried. They were sentenced to cruel deaths, as they deserved. Also, the ruler of Safed, who had colluded with the plunderers, was put to death and his body thrown outside the wall of Acre.

The residents of Hebron did not want to heed the Egyptian general, as the men of Shechem had done in Jerusalem, (as written above), and they [the army] attacked them. When successful, he gave his army permission to loot the city of Hebron for 6 hours; thus “they drank the cup of wrath”<sup>133</sup> and the Jews of Hebron were plundered as well and all the women they found were desecrated. Nothing of theirs was left except for that which was hidden.

When the army of the Egyptian general arrived in Jerusalem to defeat the plunderers, the eminent Rav Yosef Miladi was killed by one of the soldiers, shedding blood of war in peacetime<sup>134</sup>, when one of the soldiers came to the door of the above-mentioned Rav Yosef and knocked on it, saying “open up”. When he opened it for him they killed him with a rifle and left without taking anything. And the goodness of God was upon the remainder of the People of Israel so that no further harm came to them.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz we wailed in mourning<sup>135</sup> and also cried at the report that the city of Hebron was once again put to ruin by the [Egyptian] commander’s army which had routed the plunderers, and which also plundered the Jews in Hebron and desecrated the women whom they

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<sup>132</sup> Joseph ben Ephraim Caro (1488-1575), author of the *Shulhan Arukh* and religious and secular leader of the Jewish community in Safed. Rabinowitz, L. “Caro, Joseph ben Ephraim,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2007 ed.

<sup>133</sup> Isaiah 51:17

<sup>134</sup> I Kings 2:5

<sup>135</sup> The Seventeenth of Tammuz is a minor Jewish fast day commemorating a variety of calamities, including the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem at the time of the destruction of both the First and Second Temple. “Fast of Tammuz,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2007 ed.

found during the 6 hours allotted them. Rav Yisrael, author of Taklin Hadetin and Pa'at ha-Shulhan, eulogized them.

Our brothers, Children of Israel!: If I were to elaborate upon all the suffering which had occurred it would not fit on the page; everyone would be embittered and every person's hair would stand on end. However, in order not to burden the one who reads my writing by elaborating, I will keep [silent], without relating what happened to them, "A truthful witness for a time that will come".<sup>136</sup> After this, in the year 5597 [1837], on the 24<sup>th</sup> of the month of Tevet [January 1], He [God] poured forth his anger and the earth raged and trembled in a great earthquake in the cities of Safed and Tiberias.<sup>137</sup> It was not as most imagine that the earth split open; no, it moved as a horse ripples its hide. The domes of the houses fell on those within and their houses became their graves, with the worst happening to the houses on the hills. Those who were outside did not suffer. Approximately 2000 people died in these two cities while many people were injured and suffered severe wounds and lost limbs. Many of those in the Batei Midrash died in their tallit and tefillin, including the righteous Rav Eliezer from Slonim, Rav Yosef from Czerkov and Rav David from Visoke, in Lithuania. In Tiberias also killed was the righteous Rav David, the younger, whose practice of prayer was that of Rav Akiva (moving from corner to corner)<sup>138</sup>. All these were acquaintances of mine from our [former] country, excluding the Sephardim and great and good Hasidim who were killed; the page is too short to contain [my description]. Also included was the pious woman Sarah, daughter of the Rav Yehoshua, the Rav of the Kehillat Kodosh of Pinsk, who was killed in her home. It is appropriate to remember her in particular for all the good deeds and many favors which she readily extended to everyone, in our own country and in Eretz Yisrael [Land of Israel], [as the] wife of the famous, wealthy and deceased Rav Tzvi Hirsch Hayim of the Kehilat Kodosh Mezritz of Poland. Concerning this our hearts suffered [in pain]: night and day our eyes teared as they suffered for all our sins; may the Heavens show mercy upon us. Those who escaped and remained made great efforts and spent thousands in order to locate the many who were killed in the destruction and to bury them as is appropriate for the seed of Abraham.

## **For the Sound of Wailing is Heard from Zion<sup>139</sup>**

My language is that of an experienced writer's pen, to arouse lamentations and dirges<sup>140</sup> and inscribe in a book to the many who are not educated; "Let him put his mouth to the dust."<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Habakkuk 2:3

<sup>137</sup> According to various accounts, the earthquake struck at the time of Minha [afternoon prayers], thus at a time when most of the populace would have been indoors.

<sup>138</sup> Babylonian Talmud Berachot 31a – It was Rav Akiva's custom, during solitary prayer, to place himself in one spot while they would later find him in another, all due to the intensity of his worship

<sup>139</sup> Jeremiah 9:18

<sup>140</sup> Ezekiel 2:10

<sup>141</sup> Lamentations 3:29

Those who are literate shall lament as sadly as jackals<sup>142</sup>. Those who reside in it [Eretz Yisrael] respond: As we who traversed the mighty waters<sup>143</sup> and those who reside outside of the Land mourn the demise of the well-known, great ha-Rav Hayyim son of *Morenu* [Our Teacher] Avigdor of the Kehilat Kodesh of Pinsk<sup>144</sup>, of excellent pedigree, who died in his bed. I attended his Bet Midrash. During [his] brief stay in Eretz Yisrael he showed excellence in his efforts, both in teaching at the Yeshivot which he established and also in paying off old debts incurred by the Jews in the Land. He collected and repaid more than half. Immediately after his death our hearts sank upon hearing the report which came that this Tzadik [righteous one] was taken away because of evil<sup>145</sup>.

**Woe** unto me said the Holy Land and woe unto me said my soul; as upon your arrival here I was filled with joy, I have gained a new man of God.<sup>146</sup>

Here, Hayyim, with all your strength you labored; you established houses of study for the glory of Torah. You collected ready funds for our benefit. The hand of my creditor did not displace us from our home and with all this you were perpetually engaged, with great intensity, in [the study of] Torah.

Man born of woman is short-lived<sup>147</sup>; sated with anger and enraged countenance. After 18 weeks He rose to the circuit of the heavens<sup>148</sup>; His splendor fills the skies and the radiance of his hands covers the heavens<sup>149,150</sup> and many other righteous departed as precious jewels.

Your arrival to my land was my gain; now my calamity is as great as the sea; while they moved on to tranquil rest, we were left behind with our sighs; for after his death despair and mourning is multiplied due to the earthquake and the sword.

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<sup>142</sup> Micah 1:8

<sup>143</sup> Exodus 15:10

<sup>144</sup> Died on Adar 22, 5594, Kressel, 52

<sup>145</sup> Isaiah 57:1

<sup>146</sup> Genesis 4:1

<sup>147</sup> Job 14:1

<sup>148</sup> Job 22:14

<sup>149</sup> Habakkuk 3:3

<sup>150</sup> Job 36:32

We then said that the righteous one was taken from us due to evil; and when the report came, the inhabitants fled from the sword; in the morning they exclaimed: “If it were only evening”<sup>151</sup>: Oy, who will defend us; our eyes look only to [with hope]God.<sup>152</sup>

Oh Heavens, may I see your salvation in our days, by the hand of the Angel of the Covenant<sup>153</sup> who will make us whole again in two days<sup>154</sup>; your deceased will be revived, my body brought to life [Hayyim]<sup>155</sup>; then, we shall all rejoice.

After the destruction and devastation which was perpetrated in the Land [Eretz Yisrael], I was left naked, without clothing, tallit and tefillin. I also saw that it was not possible for me to earn a living there; then ha-Rav Yisrael, author of Taklin Hadetin and Pa’ at ha-Shulhan, allowed me to travel outside of the Land as explained in the letter in my hand from that Rav. At the same time, ha-Rav Natan Neta, son of ha-Rav Mendel traveled from Eretz Yisrael. Rav Yisrael ordered me to accompany Rav Neta while traveling outside of the Land to instruct the rest of our brethren outside of the Land about the suffering of the people of our Land in order that they would have compassion on them. Wealthy and well-known for his noble deeds and righteousness to all, Rav Shmaryahu Luria from Mohilev<sup>156</sup>, traveled from Jerusalem to outside of the Land and helped us greatly in all these travels. While we were on the ship he was zealous [in seeing] that we would all have a *shofar* [ram’s horn] on Rosh Hashanah [Jewish New Year], on Sukkot<sup>157</sup> that we would have a Sukkah and he saw to our needs until we arrived at Odessa. God will do well for us now and in the future [in this world and in the next]. Ha-Rav, the eminent and complete Avraham David, son of Yehudah Strausner of Vilna, [also] did well by me and his righteousness greatly strengthened me during my time in the Kehilat Kodesh of Odessa. All who concerned themselves with the needs of our people Israel in such a time may there be a complete reward for them. May God continue to do well for us in this and the next world. In two days he will make us whole again<sup>158</sup>, all those who are inscribed for life in Jerusalem<sup>159</sup>

## END OF PART ONE

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<sup>151</sup> Deuteronomy 28:67

<sup>152</sup> Numbers 11:6

<sup>153</sup> Malachi 3:1

<sup>154</sup> Hosea 6:2

<sup>155</sup> Isaiah 26:19

<sup>156</sup> Father-in-law of Rav Hillel Rivlin of Shklov Kressel, p. 53

<sup>157</sup> Sukkot ("booths" or "tabernacles"), the festival, beginning on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Tishre, which commemorates the *sukkot* [booths] in which the Children of Israel dwelt in the wilderness after the Exodus. ,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>158</sup> Hosea 6:2

<sup>159</sup> Isaiah 4:3

**PART TWO**

**The Book of**

**COMING UP TO THE LAND**

Titled such that in it will be explained the manner of going up to the Land and the particulars of the journey, for one who wants to know the way to come; also [included are] the names of the excellent locations in it, such as the Temple Mount and the appearance of the Temple Mount as it is today, as well as the graves of the righteous ones in the Land. These righteous are greater in death than in life and thus one goes to pray there and joyfully celebrate the performance of the mitzvah.

Also, [included is] an account of the excellence of the Land and the good fruits found there, the trade in each kind, also details of the various coins and all the necessities, the types of springs found there and the various types of languages which a resident needs to understand well.

[I write] in order that all men will know the way taken to Eretz Yisrael, to the graves of our forefathers, to determine out the well-being of Jerusalem, our righteous city, which inspired us to travel to it [the Land] to fulfill the vow which I took at the time of cholera (Heaven Protect Us) which occurred here. That is to say: “Should God save me from this death, I promise that I will go and pray at the graves of our holy forefathers and enjoy its [Israel’s] pure air and devote myself to Torah and prayer”. I took my store of funds in hand. Thus, I will write of the sequence of my journey, from beginning to end; any who will want to travel, [they] shall see and then do so.

On the first of the month of Nissan [Mar.– Apr.] 5693 [1833] my passport from Evgeny, *Governator Kaniaz* of Dolgorokov<sup>160</sup> (may God grant him success and well-being) arrived in my hands, written by the order of His Exalted Majesty the Tsar, as the goal of my travel was to pray at the graves of the Fathers. Thus, I set out<sup>161</sup> from Kehilat Kodesh of Kamenitz, in Lithuania, with all the members of my household on the eve of the first of the month of Tammuz [June-July] in the year 5693 [1833]. With the help of God we safely reached the Kehilat Kodesh of Odessa in 4 weeks and there found a ship from the land of Italy. Even though it was within my means to travel by steamship, I did not want to travel on such for several reasons: 1. Such could travel only to Istanbul and no farther; 2. It would have been necessary to pay [extra] for the luggage and possessions which we each had. The sailing vessels, however, could travel farther, even to Eretz Yisrael itself. Additionally, there would be no need to pay for luggage and possessions carried on the ship. But it is important to be sure that the ship is not old. Those who want to travel to the holy city of Jerusalem need to express such to the captain of the ship [of his wish] to be transported to the port of Jaffa; he who wishes to travel to Safed or Tiberias should stipulate to the boatman to be brought to Haifa. However, if one finds a boat to Beirut, such is also acceptable because from there one can travel overland to the Land. Similarly, a ship to Tyre

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<sup>160</sup> Transliteration of Russian name and title

<sup>161</sup> Psalms 57:7

or Sidon is also acceptable, as from there one can travel overland to Eretz Yisrael. We paid for passage on a ship going from Italy to Eretz Yisrael: 5 ducats for each adult and two for the price of one for children under 12. I gave him half the fare in Odessa with the remainder to be paid when we would disembark. We also agreed that the ship's captain would supply us with wood and water during the entire voyage. Nonetheless, it is better to purchase a supply of coal and a cooking stove in Odessa, in order to cook whatever and whenever one wishes. Prior to embarking on the ship, the captain instructed each and every one to purchase, in Odessa, bread called *galatin*<sup>162</sup> and also *macarans*<sup>163</sup>, in order that each would be prepared to cook enough for one month, as well as to purchase various medications to refresh and revive each and all, as he who is not used to travel by sea and its weather conditions may lose strength and heart. We did not want to sail until [after] the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av [July-Aug.], as they are our days of judgment [mourning]<sup>164</sup>; thus we remained until the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month. On the same voyage were 80 Jews, as well as two Torahs and one slaughterer, Rav Shlomo from Vilna.

On Friday, Sabbath Eve, the 10<sup>th</sup> of Menahem-Av<sup>165</sup> we began our voyage and, in the evening, we greeted the Sabbath with great joy. The wind was very strong that night causing the ship to move very rapidly and it appeared to us as if the world was reeling like a drunkard. Everyone vomited severely and we became as ones "lying atop the rigging"<sup>166</sup> and all manner of medications did not cure us; in the morning we almost did not pray due to the severity of our weakness. We remained thus until Sunday. Also, all of our clay utensils were broken due to the movement of the ship which had been rocking severely from side to side. All the material aboard the ship, such as the cannons and water barrels for our needs, were tied to the sides of the ship in order that they would not roll out of place. My wife, Chipa, became ill due to this and I asked the captain to [allow her] to come up from the depths of the ship in order to breathe the good air. He did so and, God is Blessed, she recovered. We experienced all this during the first three days that we were on the ship.

On the third night, as we were nearing Istanbul, a storm arose. We were also obliged to traverse straits between two large mountains where, during the previous year, a ship had been smashed by the wind onto the mountainside. The darkness was severe and one could not make out the way. In the middle of the sea one could not drop anchor to have the vessel remain in one place. The captain told us that we were in danger. What did he do? He took down the sail in order that the ship would stand in one place, to float about to and fro. We cried out to God intensely until the light of the morning and God answered our prayers. By morning the captain determined the best way, the wind had calmed down and we arrived at the city of Istanbul. The captain went alone into the city to discover if, Heaven forbid, plague was there and, therefore, we would not land there. He returned and said that, at the moment, there was nothing evil in the city. We sailed to the city of Tophane, one of the suburbs of Istanbul, and he [the captain] went

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<sup>162</sup> Transliterated from Russian or Yiddish, probably ship's biscuits

<sup>163</sup> Transliterated from Russian or Yiddish, probably macaroni

<sup>164</sup> The three weeks prior to the Ninth of Av (from the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz) are considered a period of mourning for the various losses and tragedies suffered by the Jewish people since the destruction of the Solomon's Temple. The nine days prior to Tisha Be-Av constitute a period of more intense mourning "Three Weeks," and Ydit, M, "Tisha Be-Av," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>165</sup> A variant of the name for the month of Av.

<sup>166</sup> Proverbs 23:34; JPS Tanakh suggests the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

to show our passports to the minister of our exalted and mighty tsar. The minister took them and gave us different ones, written in the local language. As the sea flowed into all the streets there, we took a small boat and went to Istanbul in order to purchase our necessities. I bought medication for my wife. The city is an enormously large one<sup>167</sup>, with a great and mixed population, and very inexpensive merchandise, including drink and fruit. The language there was, for the most part, that of the *Yishmaelim*. One can also exchange coins there, *rendlach* [ducats] for their money, which I will write about shortly.

While we stayed there for 9 days, I went to visit the burial society to inquire about the ship which had sunk the year before and if they had found Jews who were aboard, because one had been a man from the city of my birth. They told me that they had recovered only 7 persons who were then buried. Afterwards we sailed in the city of Istanbul alongside the courtyard of the king of the *Yishmaelim* [Sultan] and saw many cedars planted in front of his courtyard. We then came to the Dardanelles, that is the Black Sea, where it passes between two great mountains, made [sic] by Alexander of Macedonia. Inside the mountains, facing the sea, were placed many cannons. From there we arrived at the Mediterranean Sea upon which we traveled for 10 days without seeing a settlement or city. After this, the captain showed us the city of Tzipor [Cyprus], about two days journey from Eretz Yisrael. From there we sailed to the port of Haifa, a city in Eretz Yisrael, but there are no Jews there from our country, only Jews called *Frenken* [Sephardi Jews] at whose sole synagogue we prayed. These Jews greeted us with excellent fruits, such as figs, grapes and pomegranates.

The captain said: Those among you who want to travel to Jerusalem should transfer their belongings from this ship to the ship traveling to Jerusalem by way of the sea to Tarshish<sup>168</sup>. I also had planned to travel to Jerusalem but was afraid to go by way of Tarshish, as the sea there is without wind and the ships which go there are thrust about by the tide. Also, as the more important people on the boat were traveling specifically to Safed or Tiberias, I did not want to separate myself from them. We entered the city of Haifa on the first day of Elul and showed our passports to the consul. From there one travels overland to Safed or Tiberias; we sent a letter from there to the Kolel in Safed. Since there were distinguished ones among us, [it was requested that] they should send a person from among the Jews who understands the [local] language in order to join us here [in Haifa] and hire donkeys or mules to travel to Safed; and they did so.

It is two hours travel from Haifa to Mount Carmel, which is near the sea. There we went to the Cave of Elijah which is cut out of Mount Carmel, a large cave in which are still to be found stone benches upon which his students sat. People from many nations go there to pray and, upon leaving, write or etch their names on the walls. We first immersed ourselves in the sea and then went there to pray and found many Jews. When we began to pray the prayers poured forth from our mouths and tears flowed from our eyes; I had never prayed so in my life. I then understood that this was the Holy Land and I also wrote my name on the wall.

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<sup>167</sup> Jonah 3:3, referring to Nineveh

<sup>168</sup> Alluding to the port of Jaffa, so named in the Book of Jonah



Upon his arrival, a Jew from the Safed Kolel hired donkeys for us, in order that we might ride on them, and camels to carry our possessions; the camel is too tall to ride upon and one must sit on a chest attached to it, thus it is better to ride on a donkey. On the third day of Elul [Aug.-Sept.] the entire caravan set out to arrive safely in the city of Safed. At night we crossed the Kishon river while riding. At the first light of day we neared Acre. During the next night we passed the Megiddo<sup>169</sup> stream, arriving safely in the city of Safed on the 6<sup>th</sup> of Elul.

The holy city of Safed was then (prior to the earthquake and plunder which occurred there, as I wrote above) a large city of 2000 householders and divided up into 4 Kolels: one kolel was that of the Sephardim, one of *Perushim* and one of Hasidim. Each kolel had a chosen leader. In charge of the Kolel of *Perushim* was Rav Yisrael, author of the books Taklin Hadetin and Pa'at ha-Shulhan. The Kolel of Hasidim was led by Rav Gershon Margaliof from the Kehillat Kodesh of Skalit<sup>170</sup> and the Kolel of Sephardim was led by Rav Avraham Anhuri, *Sephardi Tahor*<sup>171</sup>. There were other Hakhamim [pl. of hakham] in the Kolel of Sephardim. There soon arrived a holy person, ha-Rav Avraham Baer from the Kehillat Kodesh of Avruz, who was made head of the Kolel of the Hasidim from the country of Poland. Also found there are many Jews from the near West and far West<sup>172</sup>. Each kolel has its own synagogue with its own rituals. There are 13 synagogues among which are two synagogues where they prayed according to the liturgy of ha-Ari. Their practice is that of ha-Gaon Rav Yaakov Emdin, to hang ostrich egg shells in every synagogue. There is also a mikveh<sup>173</sup> located there (from the spring of ha-Ari). Also to be found there is a large courtyard called the courtyard of ha-Rav Bet Yosef as well as a walled building said to be the Bet Midrash of Shem and Eber<sup>174</sup>. Nearby are the ruins called the bath of our father, Jacob.

The city of Safed stands on the slope of a mountain, about halfway from the peak; at the foot of the mountain is their cemetery. The houses are built in tiers, with the attics of the houses on the lower street being the ground in front of the house of the second step, such repeating to the top. The first street is the street of the *Perushim*, the one above, of the Sephardim and, on top, the Hasidim. All these are located on the side of the mountain, across from Mount Tabor<sup>175</sup>. At the bottom of the slope of Safed flows the Megiddo [sic] stream along which stand 6 water mills, one next to the other. On the east side of that mountain stands a town of *Yishmaelim* called Savi'ikah near the city of Yodpat<sup>176</sup> where a large tower may be found, built in the days of Yosef Ben-Gurion to serve for scouting, as well as many walls built for defense.

In Safed there are also many shops of Jews and *Yishmaelim* with all kinds of merchandise. Market day is Friday when the villagers bring varied items for sale. Apart from

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<sup>169</sup> Misnamed, correctly named the Meiron stream

<sup>170</sup> Transliteration; perhaps referring to Skalat in the Ukraine

<sup>171</sup> "Pure Sephardi", a Sephardic Jew whose lineage is documented and unquestioned

<sup>172</sup> Refers to areas of Europe in relation to Lithuania

<sup>173</sup> A pool or bath of clear water, immersion in which renders pure one who is ritually unclean. Baskin, J "Mikveh," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>174</sup> Eber, the descendant of Shem (son of Noah) was believed to have maintained schools and oracles. Jastrow, M Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature, New York: Title Publishing Co., 1943, p. 1040

<sup>175</sup> The author mistakenly refers to the Mount in question as Tabor, located substantially south of Safed. Reference is most likely to Mount Meiron (Jermak)

<sup>176</sup> See footnote 129

that, every day is a market day for the purchase of fruits and vegetables. For any resident of the town who wishes to bake warm bread daily there are 3 bakers' ovens (that is, large ovens) found in the city, [all] belonging to Jews and available for paid use to all who need to bake. The price is six large [coins] per month for one person as well as for everyone in the household. One can bake any day, including Shabbat<sup>177</sup>. One cannot buy baked bread in the marketplace, only from a *Yishmaeli* shopkeeper. There are also 3 good streams near Safed.

I established my residence in Safed on the street of the *Perushim*, in the courtyard of Rav Zalman Cohen. On this street are a synagogue, Bet Midrash and bath house built by Rav Mendel (of Shklov), all done according to the custom of our bath houses. The furnace was built from stones, as with us, and they use branches of laurel leaves to bring heat to the body, as is our custom, in order to sweat. However, there are no similar baths in other cities, only those [built] according to the custom of the *Yishmaelim*: solely hot water in which to wash. Additionally, the custom of the *Perushim* there is that every day after prayers Rav Yisrael (author of Taklin Hadetin) expounds on a page of the Talmud and a section of the Pentateuch with Rashi's<sup>178</sup> commentary. Their custom is also for the Kohanim to "raise their hands" every day<sup>179</sup>. Many go to the mikvah of ha-Ari and during the 10 Days of Repentance we went to pray at the grave of Rav Shimon bar Yohai<sup>180</sup>, in the village of Meiron. On Rosh HaShanah we prayed according to our rite. On the holiday of Sukkot we built Sukkot and each decorated his Sukkah with figs and pomegranates. As the year before there had been snow for 10 days, the etrogim had spoiled and were expensive, that is 3 gold [coins] for one etrog, while here such an etrog would cost 5 or 6 silver rubles. On the eve of Sukkot the *Yishmaelim* brought many bunches of lovely, green lulavim [palm branches] on the backs of donkeys; we selected choice ones for the mitzvah, each for the price of 5 large [coins], with the remainder used to cover the Sukkah. They brought new myrtle [branches] every day as we do here with willow. This was inexpensive, and they also brought willow [branches]. Thus, we had joy which is not to be described.

That year was the one following the Sabbatical<sup>181</sup> year. Plague came to the cities of Jerusalem and Safed where many succumbed before Hanukah. Thank God that He saved us from it, myself and my wife, but my son died during that time and was deemed [worthy] to be buried in Eretz Yisra'el, on the first of Kislev [Nov.-Dec.]. And on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev we went to pray for rain at the grave on Honi ha-Me'aggel<sup>182</sup> in a village to which we were accompanied by

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<sup>177</sup> The author is most likely referring to keeping previously-baked or -cooked food warm which avoids contravening the laws of Shabbat

<sup>178</sup> Acronym of Rabbi Shelomoh ben Yitshaq of Troyes (1040–1105), the most influential Jewish commentator on the Bible and the Babylonian Talmud. Marcus, I "Rashi", Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>179</sup> Recitation by the descendants of Aaron of the formula in Numbers 6:24–26 ordained by God and transmitted to the priests by Moses for the blessing of Israel. Originally the Priestly Blessing was part of the morning service each weekday, but as the daily business of the people did not allow them to concentrate with proper devotion, it was reserved, in the Diaspora, for Sabbaths and holidays. Brichto, H. "Priestly Blessing," Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>180</sup> A Palestinian tanna, rabbinic leader, mystic, and ascetic (2<sup>nd</sup> C. CE) is the subject of many Rabbinic legends. Zahavy, T "Shim'om bar Yoh'ai," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>181</sup> According to the Bible, during the seventh year all land had to be fallow and debts were to be remitted (Ex. 23:10–11; Lev. 25:1–7, 18–22; Deut. 15:1–11). Lieber, D. et al "Sabbatical Year and Jubilee", Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>182</sup> Renowned miracle worker during the period of the Second Temple (1c C.E.) Gruber, M, "Honi ha-Me'Aggel,"

Rav Yisrael, author of Taklin Hadetin, and Rav Hayim from Pinsk<sup>183</sup> They rode on donkeys and we went on foot. Upon our return home it rained and the wells filled with water.

After some deliberation I decided to go to Jerusalem on the first of Adar I [Feb.-Mar.], to pray at the Western Wall as well as at the graves of the righteous ones there. We traveled in a caravan with a number of men who either rode or walked. On the first night we slept at a village in which was situated the grave of Jethro, father-in-law of Moses; there are a number of good streams there. On the second night we slept in a cave near the city of Ein Ganim (Jenin). On the third day we arrived at Shechem and passed between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ibal and saw that on Mount Gerizim a city-wall has been built in which the *Yishmaelim* resided. The city of Shechem is large, surrounded by a wall made of the sides of the houses themselves, built one next to the other, thus forming a wall. 3 Jewish minyans<sup>184</sup>, 2 Sephardic and one Ashkenazic were there. Around Shechem were many water mills standing by streams. Next to the city I saw the plot of land which our forefather, Jacob, had purchased for 100 coins, this plot being equidistant between two small hills. Most of the area of Shechem was sloped. Here, about 3 miles<sup>185</sup> from Jerusalem, are two hills whose length is [that of] about two Shabbat distances<sup>186</sup> The slope was [cultivated] in row upon row, like the steps of a ladder, and on every step were planted a number of varieties of fruit, such as figs and pomegranates, as well as the rest of the types [of fruits] and in the middle of the slope was a very good spring.

Approaching the holy city of Jerusalem, we rent [our clothing] because of its destruction. Jerusalem is a large city, similar [in size] to Vilna in Lithuania. It has a surrounding high wall and weapons, called cannons, mounted on the wall. It has 5 gates with doors of iron. The east gate is called the Gate of Mercy<sup>187</sup>, in front of the Temple Mount. It is now blocked with stones. The second eastern gate is near the northeast corner and is called Lion's Gate. On the south side, near the southwest corner, is a gate which is the route used by travelers to Zion and Hebron. On the north side, near the northwest corner, is a gate used to depart for Shechem, Safed and, also, Tiberias<sup>188</sup>. On the western side, near the northwest corner, is the gate used to go to Jaffa. All the streets are very narrow so that if two donkeys meet one opposite the other they cannot both pass at once. Soldiers stand guard on each street. The houses are very beautiful, without roofs, only concrete [coverings] of stone chippings, which is applied with something called a *Kasr mill*<sup>189</sup> making it smooth and hard so that the rains will not soften the material but will fall below. (However, in the rest of the cities, they use only concrete and for fear of the rain the material is smoothed with a roller to make it as hard as stone). It has a large population with about 3000 Jews and their Hakham is currently ha-Rav Yonah Moshe (Sephardi *Tahor*)

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Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>183</sup> Rav Hayim, son of Rav Avigdor mourned by the author above, pp. 19-20

<sup>184</sup> Minyan ("number"), designation for the quorum of ten male adults, aged 13 years or over, necessary for public synagogue service and certain other religious ceremonies. "Minyan." Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>185</sup> Each "mile" measures 2000 cubits, Jastrow, p.773

<sup>186</sup> The distance which an observant Jew may walk during Shabbat, approximately 2000 cubits. The estimated length of a cubit varied, as best as can be calculated, in Biblical and Hellenistic times between 1.46 and 1.71 feet. The distance here would be about 1000-1100 yards. Berenbaum, M "Eruv." and Bashan, E "Weights and Measures," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>187</sup> Referring to the Golden Gate

<sup>188</sup> Damascus Gate

<sup>189</sup> Transliterated

Sephardi<sup>190</sup>. Many stores are located there as well as some craftsmen. Market day occurs every day with much merchandise [available], and we very much enjoyed being there, as one can buy much fruit and wine – all very good and inexpensive.

We went to pray at the Western Wall of the Temple Mount, as it is the custom to go there every Holy Shabbat Eve. A few poor people sit there to receive alms. They read a number of Psalms, after which they recite *Minha* and, following that, recite *Kabbalat Shabbat*<sup>191</sup>. The cantor stands near one stone which, it is said, is where the Divine Presence [of God] was revealed to a righteous one (and whoever approaches the wall removes his shoes). Afterwards, we went to recite *Ma'ariv* at the Zion Synagogue.

The Temple Mount stands in the southeast of the city and is surrounded on four sides. The east wall is the city wall and in the south stands the building of *Midrash Shlomo*<sup>192</sup>. There are houses built to the west and among them is the Western Wall; there are also houses to the north. Near the western side houses were built with an alley-like space between them, where the worshippers stand. Cedars are planted within the south wall of the Temple Mount, facing the window of the *Midrash Shlomo*. Near the north side, over the “foundation rock”, stands the house of prayer of the *Yishmaelim*; every Friday is called by them the day of assembly (*Amzumah*) when they come to pray. The building has 12 corners and 12 gates; it is light blue and it has a sloped roof, such as we have. Pigeons constantly sit and coo on the roof.

The area of the Temple Mount measures 500 by 300 cubits and the stones of the wall of the Temple Mount are placed 6 stones lying atop one another, each stone is hewn and square and rests on top of the other without soil [mortar]; on the top are laid 3 rows of smaller stones, one atop the other. The bottom stones have projecting sides. Over the length of the Western Wall it extends [above the ground] 18 cubits. Nearby, outside the Western Wall, are many domes and it is said that this was the location of the Sanhedrin; these are now shops. Nearby stands their place of justice, called “*Mahkimah*”. Also close to the Western Wall is a good fountain but the *Yishmaelim* have sealed it so that one must buy water from those who bring it for sale from the fountain outside of the city walls (called the fountain of Joab ben Zeruiah<sup>193</sup>).

The City of Zion may be seen from afar but one is not allowed to enter there since the commander, Ibrahim [Pasha], lives there, afraid that the plague would be brought into his city. The Mount of Olives is to the east of Jerusalem and between them is a large valley. Also standing between them is a large marble column with the hand of a scribe on top, called *Yad Avshalom*<sup>194</sup>. When Napoleon, King of France, fought at the Mount of Olives, the cannons

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<sup>190</sup> Yonah Moshe ben Benyamin Navon. Died Tevet 23, 5641 [1881] David, A, “Navon, Jonah,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>191</sup> Kabbalat Shabbat (“Reception of the Sabbath”), term designating the inauguration of the Sabbath in general and, in a more specifically liturgical sense, that part of the Friday evening service which precedes the regular evening prayer and solemnly welcomes the Sabbath. Ydit, M. “Kabbalat Shabbat.” Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>192</sup> Currently known as “Solomon’s Stables”

<sup>193</sup> King David’s commander in chief; son of Zeruiah, one of David’s sisters (I Chron. 2:16) Oded, B et al “Joab.” Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>194</sup> Situated in the Kidron Valley, close to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, are a number of monumental rock-hewn tombs of which one has been attributed by tradition to Absalom in reference to II Samuel 18:18, where it is stated that Absalom set up for himself a “pillar” in the King’s Valley. The structure likely dates from the Roman period. Gibson, S, “Absalom, Monument of,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

broke off fingers from it.<sup>195</sup> I went there to pray at the graves of the righteous, as will be described, if God wills it, below. Near the grave of the prophet Zechariah (to be discussed shortly) stands a small dome. Above the dome there is blood in several places, congealed blood (becoming red with the application of water). It is said that this is the blood of the Jews who were slain by Nevuzaradan<sup>196</sup> for the blood of Zechariah.

After seven days' stay in Jerusalem, we went to the city of Hebron. It is a nine hour walk. The walk between Jerusalem and the grave of our mother, Rachel, is approximately two hours, in a village close to Bethlehem. A house was built over her grave with a threshold and opening high above the ground, about ½ cubit. On her grave rests a very large tombstone reaching from one wall of the house to the other, wide on the bottom and becoming slightly narrower towards the top. There is no writing on it. We prayed there with "great measures of tears".<sup>197</sup> In about a 4 hour walk there is the pool where, as Abner said to Joab: "Let the young men come and sport before us."<sup>198</sup>

We arrived in Hebron safely on Sunday evening. Hebron is a large city with 2 kolelim of Jews: One Kolel of Sephardim and one Kolel of Chabad<sup>199</sup>. The members of the Chabad Kolel are very important, practicing charity, particularly the mitzvah of welcoming all guests and providing for each. There are many stores [located] there; the avenue of the stores leads to the Cave of (the) *Machpelah*<sup>200</sup>. Above the Cave stand many structures and no one enters the cave; one just stands outside to pray. Above these structures, atop the cave, there is a large house which is a mosque in which the *Yishmaelim* enter to pray by way of steps; the Jews, however, stand and pray near the steps. There is a hole in the wall leading to the cave and it is the custom for each person to write their heartfelt [concerns] on a card and throw it into the hole, God willing. I will soon expand on the graves of the righteous ones. I also saw Abraham's tent there as well as his tamarisk<sup>201</sup> but it is now destroyed with only a foundation extant.

One day I found a caravan wishing to travel to Jerusalem – two men from among the Sephardim who rode horses. I traveled with them to Jerusalem and hired a donkey. Since they rode horses, they traveled rapidly whereas I lagged behind distantly with the owner of my donkey. Also, the owner of their horses rode along with the donkey and told me in their language that I must give him the money and then struck me with a rod. I cried out bitterly to the men of the caravan so that they would return and save me from the hands of the attacker. They heard, turned back, and saved me from him. We then arrived safely to Jerusalem and I said a prayer of thanksgiving (this is their custom, that everyone who arrives from travel pronounces a blessing of thanks).

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<sup>195</sup> Part of a local legend as Napoleon never reached Jerusalem during his campaign in Palestine. (Morgenstern p.11)

<sup>196</sup> See Babylonian Talmud Gittin 57a

<sup>197</sup> Psalms 80:6

<sup>198</sup> II Samuel 2:13-14

<sup>199</sup> CHABAD is a branch in the Hasidic movement founded in the 18<sup>th</sup>C by Israel Ba'al Shem Tov. The term is an acronymic for Hokhmah, Binah and Da'at (Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge) Lior, R "CHABAD"

Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>200</sup> The Cave of the Patriarchs – By Jewish tradition the burial place of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob and Leah. Gibson, S "Machpelah, Cave of," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>201</sup> Genesis 21:33

I remained in Jerusalem for several days and a messenger arrived from Safed with a letter in hand for me saying that the “four lands”<sup>202</sup> had issued an edict of fasting on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Adar II [Feb.-Mar. in leap years] and [containing information] regarding the death of Rav Hayim from Pinsk (see above). I then hired a mule to travel to my home in Safed. I [first] purchased there mustard, plums, and fish, as it was [then] near Purim and there, in Jerusalem, such is much less expensive than in Safed. I took [with me] the messenger, who was a *Yishmaeli*, in order to guard me on the way. On that fast day, I left Jerusalem with the messenger but unaccompanied by another Jew. About 2 Shabbat distances from the city we met a soldier from the Pasha’s army who went ahead of me, [he was] carrying two weapons under his sash and a rifle on his shoulder. I saw that he took the rifle off his shoulder and put gunpowder into it. He then told me to ride in front and that he would travel behind. I realized that he wanted to kill and rob me. I pleaded with him and swore that I had no funds but that when we would reach the city of Shechem - where my house was - I would give him the money in my house. He was satisfied with this. We reached a village and he entered demanding taxes from them, [the task] for which he had been sent. In that village they told him that it was not necessary to travel to Shechem, but that he should go a different way. He then followed me and grabbed the large, good scarf from my head and went on his way. I told myself that this was a miracle as I was traveling with charity which had been sent by the Kolel Chabad in Hebron – the funds for Pesach to a member of their Kolel living in Safed. I arrived in Safed and uttered the prayer of thanks; I had come to the city by miracle as I had traveled without a caravan and was saved. I rejoiced during Purim regarding all this, and distributed presents from among the items which I had brought from Jerusalem.

The customs of the city of Safed (May it be built and established quickly in our days): Every day, around 2 hours before daylight, the Shamash [beadle or sexton] stands on the roofs of the houses and shouts: “Arise to Pray to the Creator”, and all go to the synagogue to recite the midnight prayer after which they study until dawn. The Sephardim pray every day exactly at dawn. On every Shabbat Eve they take myrtle [branches] in order to smell them in their house prior to Kiddush<sup>203</sup>. In the synagogues, as well, men bring their myrtle [branches] and honor all to bless them. On the eve of every *Rosh Hodesh*<sup>204</sup> they gather in the Bet Midrash to study the holy Book of the Zohar<sup>205</sup> for the entire night. On Purim they read the *Megilla* [Book of Esther in scroll form] on two days due to uncertainty<sup>206</sup>. Only men deal with the [the baking of] Passover matzot and the hakham supervises them. Regarding a woman who gives birth, it is their custom that, until the day of the *[Brit] Milah* [circumcision], neighbors come every night and study the entire night in order to watch over the birth mother; such is called “*Velein*”.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>202</sup> Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias and Safed i.e. the 4 urban settlements of the Jews then in Palestine.

<sup>203</sup> The prayer recited over a cup of wine in the home and the synagogue to consecrate the Sabbath or festival. Rothkoff, A. "Kiddush." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2007 ed.

<sup>204</sup> New Month

<sup>205</sup> The central book of Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah) Idel, M “Zohar”, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2007 ed.

<sup>206</sup> “Purim” [“The Feast of Lots”] Due to the differences in the celebration of the holiday in Shushan (a walled city) and elsewhere, the day is celebrated on a different day by Jews living in cities which had a wall around them “from the days of Joshua” as opposed to those without. Thus, in present-day Israel Purim is celebrated in Jerusalem (a walled city) on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar, but in Tel Aviv on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Some will read the Megilla on both days if there is some doubt regarding a city’s status. Jacobs, L, “Purim,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2007 ed. See also, Mishna, *Megillah*, 1:1-2

<sup>207</sup> Suggested derivation from the liqueur, “Vele”, which was prepared for those studying. Kressel, p.87

When they accompany the baby to be circumcised, they do so with joy and drums and candles; heading the procession are the boys reciting the Great Hallel<sup>208</sup>.

They also fulfill the mitzvah of the first shearing and the redemption of the donkey's first-born male<sup>209</sup>. In my time they performed the redemption of the donkey's first born male for the wealthy Rav Hirsch Lehren from Amsterdam<sup>210</sup>, who had sent the Kohen funds in order to fulfill for him the mitzvah of redemption of the donkey's first born male, crown the animal with pearls and gold and accompany it to the synagogue with joy and drums. Rav Bezalal from Pinsk, who served as the Kohen, and all the Jews in the city gathered in the synagogue at the hour of fulfilling the mitzvah. The redemption was supervised by Rav Yisrael, author of Taklin Hadetin, and was performed in the synagogue.

On the second day of Passover they celebrate at the grave of Rav Bana'ah at the place described below. On Lag Ba'Omer<sup>211</sup>, many Jews gather from several towns to Safed and then travel to the village of Meiron, to the courtyard above the grave of Shimon Bar Yohai. In the same courtyard is a synagogue with a Sefer Torah and a round Menorah in which are 100 wicks, all of which are lit. There is a column of marble standing in the courtyard on top of which is a large enclosed space and on the eve of the Yahrzeit [the anniversary of a death], called the festival of Rav Shimon Bar Yohai, they take bids for the purchase of the mitzvah of lighting a fire on the column. Some [men] donate 1000 taler or more; the buyer removes his large shawl and places it inside the enclosed space, setting fire to it. All this is in honor of Rav Shimon Bar Yohai, may peace be with him. They then recite Ma'ariv and study the Idra Kadisha<sup>212</sup> the entire night and, in the morning, pray, after which they sing songs and dance in joy to honor Rav Shimon Bar Yohai.

[When] small boys must have their hair cut for the first time, it is not done at home. They wait until this time to celebrate. The women bring their sons and everyone carries a large candle, the size of their son. The Hakham then starts to cut the hair and afterwards the mother completes the trimming and shapes side-locks for him. On the eve of the 34<sup>th</sup> day of the Omer they repeat the previously-mentioned ceremony in honor of Rav Elazar, his son [Shimon Bar Yohai], who is also buried near him. On the third night they go to the grave of Rav Yohanan ha-Sandler<sup>213</sup>, where there is also a column, and celebrate, as noted above. On the day after

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<sup>208</sup> The general term designating Psalm 136 as a unit in the liturgy. This psalm is essentially an expression of thanksgiving and joy for divine redemption. "Hallel," Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>209</sup> Exodus 13 and Levine, B, "First-Born," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed. regarding the need to "redeem" the first born of man and animal from dedication to God.

<sup>210</sup> Zvi Hirsch Lehren (1784-1853), President of the "Pekidim and Amarkalim of Amsterdam" (an organization founded to raise funds for distribution in the Land of Israel under the halukah system), was instrumental in the rebuilding of the Jewish community, especially in Jerusalem. Michman, J, "Lehren," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>211</sup> The 33<sup>rd</sup> day of the counting of the Omer, which is reckoned from the second day of Passover until Shavuot. It occurs on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of Iyyar and has been celebrated as a semi-holiday since the time of the Mishnah. Ydit, M, "Lag Ba-Omer," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>212</sup> Text of Kabbalah

<sup>213</sup> One of the main students of Rabbi Akiva and a contemporary of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai. He is one of the Tannaim whose teachings are quoted in the Mishnah. His name, "ha-Sandler", could either refer to the fact that he earned his living as a sandal maker, or that he was a native of Alexandria. "Yochanan Hasandler", [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

Shavuot they celebrate at the grave of Hosea<sup>214</sup>, son of Be'eri, in Safed. On the first of the month of every Iyar [Apr.-May] most of them travel to the city of Tiberias, in order to pray at the graves of the righteous ones, as described below; at the same time they also immerse themselves in the hot springs of Tiberias.

Tiberias is surrounded by a wall on three sides and on one side the Sea of Galilee is its [fourth] border, as it is close to the houses. The Jews from the Kolel Hasidim consisting of the men of Reisen<sup>215</sup> are very pious. When there is no wind on the Sea of Galilee, one can see the shape of a circle in it, such as made when one throws a stone into the water and they say that it is Miriam's well<sup>216</sup>. This [describes] the new Tiberias and in the location of the ruins of Tiberias one can see large and wide black columns, said to be the columns of the Bet Midrash of Rav Ami, where he sat and learned, as explained in the Mishna<sup>217</sup>. The cemetery is near the Sea of Galilee.

It is a custom throughout all of Eretz Yisrael not to delay overnight in the burial of a dead person. When they carry the corpse to the cemetery, they all recite Psalm 91, intoning sentence after sentence. They dig a grave in the ground and lower [the corpse] without a coffin, covering it with large stones in a [such a] manner that it will not be touched, and on top [they place] soil and pebbles.

## THE VIRTUE[S] OF THE LAND

The [most utilized] water of Eretz Yisrael is rain water, for at the time of the *Yoreh* [first rain] – that is from the month of Heshvan [Oct.-Nov.] and after – one begins to pray for dew and rain. The rains then begin and continue for about 4 weeks, sometimes without stopping, [at times] with thunder and lightning, as here during the summer. Grass then appears on the land and in every courtyard large cisterns are dug and tiled with stones, so that they will not lose a drop. If water is lost, they must purchase spring water from merchants. On the mouth of each cistern a stone is placed; all the water that falls from the roofs of each courtyard descends in pipes placed near the roofs into the cistern. That water is very good<sup>218</sup>; B. They [also] have spring water. In Tiberias it is unnecessary to cook in rain water. They must cover up all their water at night so the snakes found there do not drink and spit into it. C. They also have hot springs in Tiberias. A spring comes out of the mountain, facing the Sea of Galilee, and descends to the Sea. The waters are very hot, such that if someone placed in it a pot with an egg, it would be cooked. A person can be scalded in it. It is impossible for a person to wash in them until they [the waters] cool for four hours. The water tastes salty but despite this those who immerse themselves do drink small amounts as a medication. After one enters for the first time his skin

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<sup>214</sup> Hosea, Book of, the first of the 12 books that make up the Minor Prophets

<sup>215</sup> Rydzyna in Polish (Reisen in German), located south of Poznan

<sup>216</sup> Miriam, sister of Moses and Aaron. Legend speaks of a miraculous well, created during the twilight on the eve of the first Sabbath (Mishnah Avot 5:6), which accompanied the Children of Israel in the desert due to her merits (Babylonian Talmud Ta'an. 9a) Hirschberg, H, "Miriam," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>217</sup> Babylonian Talmud Berachot 8a

<sup>218</sup> The original text has no "A"



appears leprous but after he enters the second and third time he is healed. Currently Pasha Mehmed Ali is building a new bath house, better than the old one. The [admission] price is 5 *par'es*<sup>219</sup> per person. The waters are very healing.

There are four varieties of drink: A: wine (Jerusalem wine is the best of all); B. spirits made from grape-stones; C. date brandy; D. fig brandy. There are 3 varieties of honey there: A. date honey; B. bee honey; C. rose honey. Three varieties of oil are found there: A. olive oil; B. almond oil; C. sesame oil (not similar to our very small poppy seeds but more like flax seed, and also white). Goose fat is not to be found since there are no geese or ducks. Also, milk is expensive. Butter and cheese are not available and must be bought from the *Yishmaelim* who bring it for sale. There are 4 varieties of grain crops: A. wheat; B. barley; C. rice; and coarse and fine flours are made from wheat. The fine flour is made into bread while the other flour, which is thicker, is made into cakes and the like for Shabbat. The fine flour is such that it is mixed with equal amounts of water, which is considered a blessing.

All varieties of vegetables found there are [also] found here. Each vegetable has its own month of ripening. Beetroots ripen in the month of *Marheshvan* [variant of Heshvan] [Oct.-Nov.], turnips in the month of Kislev [Nov.-Dec.], carrots in the month of Tevet [Dec.-Jan.], cabbage in Shevat [Jan.-Feb.] and cucumbers in Nisan [Mar.-Apr.]. Since they require much rain, they are not grown except during the rainy season. They also have onions there with a peel which is white; garlic is also grown there. All are inexpensive. During the warm season the rest of the vegetables grow due to the copious amount of dew. In irrigated fields are squash, tomatoes, pumpkin and many others not found in our country. Parsley is grown there year-round as are celery, lettuce and marjoram, but there is no horseradish. In place of horseradish they eat meat with mustard. Also, fungi and mushrooms are found along with varieties of grasses for medicinal [uses]. There are few doctors there but blood-letters and leeches are available. Lime-blossom is very expensive there, it is therefore imported from outside the Land.

The varieties of fruit are: figs, pomegranates of two types – sweet and sour, grapes of two types – white and black and a large black type similar to our plums, olives, dates and almonds. Almonds flower around *Tu Bishevat* [15<sup>th</sup> of Shevat (Jan.-Feb.)]<sup>220</sup> and are of two types – sweet and bitter. 3 varieties of nuts: “*Valshe*”<sup>221</sup> and small ones called “*Turkisches*” and “*Finanas*” which are long and slightly curved, tasting like rich cream<sup>222</sup>. Also found are etrogim (not found in all towns), many carobs, a great many palm branches, a type of fruit called the “fruit of the first man” whose peel is full of small thorns while the edible portion is inside [*sabra* cactus], oranges which are bitter, lemons of two types – the first like ours and another variety which is sweeter than ours, apricots as large as eggs and shaped like white plums, while apples, pears and plums are brought from Damascus. Cherries called “*Vinshil*” are not found there; raspberries are raised in the forest, but red currants are not grown there. The trees bud in Nisan [Mar.-Apr.] as with us.

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<sup>219</sup> The author discusses coinage below

<sup>220</sup> The Festival of the New Year of Trees and supposedly related to the end of the rainy season in Israel Ydit, M, “*Tu Bi-Shevat*” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2007 ed.

<sup>221</sup> Transliterated, as are a number of the subsequent terms

<sup>222</sup> Numbers 11:3

The varieties of legumes are peas and plain beans and both grown during Adar [Feb.-Mar.]. Small beans are found there as are chickpeas called *hummus* but larger than ours. There is also one type called Turkish wheat which cooks with difficulty and is sold one by one in the stores. The lentils are like ours. There is a type of lentil called “*ma’az*” which is green and not round. There is also a lentil called sorghum with a snow-white appearance and is used as bird food. Another type is called *karshina* and is used as food for camels. *Kohl* grows there with the appearance of black lentils and is used to color women’s eyes and as a medication for eye diseases. There is no hay there, just grass. Cows graze on fallow land.

Wood is scarce – just small amounts brought in bundles for sale on the backs of donkeys and is used for baking. There are no winter furnaces as there is no real winter there, just days of rain. They have coals for cooking brought by the villagers in sacks on the backs of donkeys.

Their baking ovens are of two types. In the cities they have a furnace similar to our baking ovens, although they are [made] from stones and not bricks, as they have no bricks. In the villages they rest a sheet of metal on top of stones, place a fire underneath and bake thin round flat cakes on top. They also have an oven similar to a large clay barrel and place a fire within, later baking bread in it. They have cooking stoves made from closed boxes atop which there are 3 holes, used for setting cooking pots; they put coals inside and then pots on top. In these holes they have small iron [screens] through which they place coals so they will not fall below and on the side there is a large hole through which they ventilate with bellows. They also have a stove called a brazier, similar to a pot and above, near the location of the fire, are pieces of clay which stick out like hands, upon which to place the pot while the coals are put underneath. The flat round cakes are baked on the coals inside the large ovens. They have no yeast, and dough is made by leavening<sup>223</sup>. During the cold of winter they have copper utensils called *mangal* similar to our *vases* into which they place coals for heating. They also have drying ovens for pulses after which they crush them between their hands until the skin drops off and eat them with raisins called *kadamis*.

Much of the meat eaten is goat, sheep and a small amount of beef, when available. At times they slaughter black oxen, called buffalo. All of their animals are not fat, thus there is no suet. There are only ewes – these are large fat-tailed sheep<sup>224</sup> which produce about 10 liters [when processed].

Fowl are not found there except for chickens which are larger than ours. Turtle doves and pigeons (rock partridges) [are available], but geese and ducks are not. They brought from Alexandria; turkeys are also imported from there. Safed has many fish from the Sea of Galilee and the other seas, while herring is available. Also found is a thick, salted fish, sold in pieces and called *lacerda*, which is oily and very good.

[Large][Metal] utensils are not found there, only large clay ones, such as small casks like tubs. In Jerusalem one also finds utensils made of stone, even stone barrels. Most use [small] copper utensils as well as green glass utensils from Hebron while white ones are imported from England as are the glass lamps which provide the Shabbat light; they are lit with oil since no candles are to be found there.

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<sup>223</sup> Apparently “starter dough” as in sourdough bread baking

<sup>224</sup> Leviticus 3:9

Livelihood information: Some livelihoods are nonexistent there, such as the sale of liquor, as the religion of the *Yishmaelim* forbids them to drink alcoholic beverages. One makes little profit in selling it to Jews as there are few Jews in each city and from so few one cannot earn a living from such beverages. There is no livelihood from the sale of fruit as every *Yishmaeli* has so much, both in the cities and villages. There is no dairy livelihood there as the need for such is brief, that is the month of Shevat [Jan.-Feb.], which is during the cold season. They do not have hats on their heads, only wraps (shawls). Livelihood in ironwork needed for wagon repairs does not exist as they have no wagons; riding [animals are used]. Outside of those mentioned, there are all sorts of livelihoods as we have; for example silk – it is plentiful and cheap as it is imported from Sidon where there are orchards of trees upon which are found silkworms. Much cotton is brought from Shechem. The remainder of merchandise and clothing is imported from the other countries such as England and Italy. In Damascus there is a silk factory, called *Sa'abi Sal'atin*. Everything is inexpensive and a person can trade in all; it is only necessary to pay 6% customs [tax], which the first merchant [seller] pays out of hand.

All these items<sup>225</sup>, the fruits, vegetables or flour are sold by weight, that weight – *kanta'r*<sup>226</sup> – is 120 liters; smaller than this weight is the *rot'l*<sup>227</sup>, that is 6 of our liters. Another, even smaller, weight is called *onse*<sup>228</sup>, weighing our ½ liter. An even smaller one is called *dahram*. Regarding wheat and its products, in Safed there is a weight called *harmot*, about 4 of our pots. Regarding liquid measures there is one also called a *rotl*, 3 of our quarts. Smaller than that is also called *onse*, ¼ of our liters. [Cloth] goods are sold according to the *dara* – that is the *arshin*<sup>229</sup> measure.

The prices of the above-mentioned were, during my time there:  
wheat flour weighing 1 *rotl* – 40 *pa'res*<sup>230</sup>, bean groats, one *onse* – 6 *pa'res*, grapes -1 *rotl* – 12 *pa'res*, similarly the price of dried figs was slightly more than this. Pomegranates, 1 *rotl* – 24 *pa'res*, dried raisins -1 *rotl* sometimes 60 or 70 *pa'res*, liquor made from raisins, 1 *onse* – 24 *pa'res*, the best wine, 1 bottle – 60 *pa'res*, plain wine – 5 *pa'res* for one *onse*. The choicest olive oil – 7 *thaler*, sesame oil, 1 *rot'l* – 9 *thaler*. Everything was much less expensive in Jerusalem. Bee honey – 7 *thaler* and date honey: 1 *rot'l* – 60 *pa'res*; sugar, 1 *rot'l* – 13 *thaler*, coffee, 1 *onse* is 40 *pa'res*. The *pa're* is 1/3 of our large [coins] and the *thaler* is 13 and ½ or more large [coins] – worth 40 *pa'res*. Beef, 1 pound – 8 of our large [coins], fat-tail of sheep 1 pound – 18 large [coins]; fish 1 pound – 10 or 12 large [coins]. Milk 1 quart – 10 large [coins], citrons and oranges are sold by the number. The better ones are sold for 5 *pa'res*, that is 1½ large [coins].

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<sup>225</sup> Regarding the following paragraphs, the reference utilized: Kosover, M Arabic Elements in Palestinian Yiddish, Jerusalem, 1966

<sup>226</sup> *kanta'r* = 100 *rotl* = 288 kg

<sup>227</sup> *rotl* = 2.88 kg

<sup>228</sup> *onse* = 240 grams

<sup>229</sup> *arshin* = 71 cm.

<sup>230</sup> *pa're* = 1/40 *grush* (smallest silver coin)

## A Lesson in Coin Exchange in Eretz Yisrael

*Rendlach*<sup>231</sup> of a usual weight is at times 45 or more taler, and if its weight is even greater, one then adds a few *pa'res*, all according to its worth. Therefore, it is good to bring heavier ducats; Liebenthaler [Lion's Thaler] are called *re'al*, a silver one is 21 taler.

Their coins are as follows: a *rivika* of gold – is 21 *thaler*, *bisli'k*, if of silver – 5 *thaler*, a silver *yaazlik* – 2 ½ *piastres*. In Istanbul the *thaler* is called a *piastre*, which is 40 *pa'res* and in Eretz Yisra'el they call the *piastre* by three names: that is *thaler*, *grush*, *kirt*. There is a silver coin called *zalata* – that is 30 *pa'res*. There are silver coins worth 20 *pa'res*, 10 *pa'res*, 5 *pa'res* and 1 *pa're* but copper and base metal coins are not found there.

## BURIAL PLACES OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Here I write of the graves of the righteous to which I paid my respects.

Hebron – Described above is the character and order of behavior of those coming to pray at the Cave of ha-Machpelah. I went there, between the stores, over the grave of Avner ben Ner<sup>232</sup> and was required to pay a *Yishmaeli* – the grave was in his courtyard – to allow me to enter. Outside of the city I went to the grave of Othniel ben Kenaz<sup>233</sup> and, next to him, are laid to rest 9 students in niches in the wall of a shelter standing in a vineyard. I gave 20 *pa'res* to the owner of the vineyard. Also in the vineyard was a shelter with 2 graves: one of Jesse, father of David, and one of Ruth, the Moabite. I gave the vineyard owner 20 *pa'res*. I also went to a grave said to be that of the Righteous Rav, author of “Reshit Hokhma”<sup>234</sup>

Jerusalem – I attended at the graves of the Great Sanhedrin, resting in niches, row upon row, one row in front of the other [all] inside large cave outside of the city. One must go there with lamps (there are 71 niches); afterwards I went to the grave of Shimon ha-Tzadik<sup>235</sup> atop which there is a building near a gushing stream. I then went to the grave of Calba Sabua<sup>236</sup> above which are engraved two loaves of bread and 2 grape clusters, while the courtyard is in ruins. I also visited the Mount of Olives – to the grave of Hulda the Prophetess<sup>237</sup>. Near the

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<sup>231</sup> Rendl or rendlach - Yiddish for ducat

<sup>232</sup> Army Commander under King Saul See II Samuel 2:8

<sup>233</sup> Early Biblical Judge See Judges 3:9

<sup>234</sup> Rav Eliyahu DeVidas – 16<sup>th</sup> C Kabbalist and disciple of Rav Moshe Cordovero who died in Hebron.

Scholem, G, “Vidas, Elijah Ben Moses De,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>235</sup> Simeon the Just, high priest in the time of Alexander the Great who was surnamed “the Just” both because of his piety toward God and his benevolence to his countrymen. A member of the Great Sanhedrin, he is mentioned in Ethics of The Fathers (Pirke Avot) 1:2 Rappaport, U, “Simeon the Just,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>236</sup> Early 1st Century CE wealthy resident of Jerusalem known for his generosity Kaplan, Z, “Ben Kalba Savu’a,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>237</sup> One of the five women in the Bible referred to as a “female prophet” and the only woman prophet in the book of

Mount of Olives is the grave of the prophet Zechariah and on his grave rests a large stone within which is a crevice. Nearby is a large cave, the size of which is unknown, where Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi [Biblical prophets] are laid to rest. Atop the Mount of Olives is a cemetery of the City of Jerusalem. Buried there are ha-Rav<sup>238</sup>, author of Or ha-Hayim with his sister-in-law whom he married [after the death of his childless brother]. On his grave is a tombstone with their names engraved thereon. At the base of the mountain is the grave of Rav Ovadiah Bertinoro<sup>239</sup> upon which there is a column with his name engraved on it.

In a plot of field in Shechem, purchased by our father, Jacob (may peace be with him), on the side opposite Jerusalem, is buried Yosef ha-Tzadik<sup>240</sup> near which there is a wall.

Safed – the cemetery in Safed is at the base of the mountain of the city, as I wrote above. Across from Mount Tabor [sic], is a deep pit and it is said that buried there is the head of Rav Hotzpit, the translator<sup>241</sup>. Near the cemetery are the graves of the prophet, Hosea ben Be'eri<sup>242</sup> and Pinhas ben Yair<sup>243</sup>. At the base of the mountain is the grave of ha-Yanuka<sup>244</sup>, mentioned in the Zohar with his mother; as well as the graves of ha-Ari, ha-Rav Bet Yosef and ha-Rav Alsheikh<sup>245</sup>. On their graves stands a monument upon which their names are incised. In the city itself is the grave of Rav Banai<sup>246</sup> who marked the caves. In a village near Safed, I visited the grave of Jethro, father-in-law of Moses. In the village of Ein Zeitim, a two hour walk from the city, are the graves of Rav Ilai<sup>247</sup>, Rav Yehudah Bar Ilai<sup>248</sup> and Rav Cruspedai<sup>249</sup>. In a village four hours from the city of Safed are the graves of Honi ha-Me'aggel<sup>250</sup>, Abba Hilkiyah<sup>251</sup> and others. In the middle of the road is the grave of Benaiah ben Yehoiada<sup>252</sup>; and, in the village of Meron, a two hour walk from the city, are the graves of Rav Shimon bar Yohai and Rav Elazar,

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Kings (II Kings 22:14–20). Sperling, S “Huldah,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>238</sup> Talmudist and kabbalist, died in Jerusalem, 1743 “Attar, Hayyim Ben Moses,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>239</sup> Italian Rabbi and Commentator on the Mishna; died in Jerusalem around 1500 C.E. David, A, “Bertinoro, Obadiah Ben Abraham,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>240</sup> Biblical Patriarch

<sup>241</sup> A Tanna, one of the martyrs of the Hadrianic persecutions Jastrow, p. 438

<sup>242</sup> Biblical prophet

<sup>243</sup> Son-in-law of Rav Shimon bar Yohai

<sup>244</sup> Yanuka ("The Child"), a wonder child, the son of the old man, Rav Hamnuna, who taught his companions profound interpretations of the Grace after Meals and other matters, when they happen to be lodging in his mother's house. The story constitutes a section of the Zohar. Scholem, G, “Zohar” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>245</sup> Moses Alshekh (d. after 1593), Rabbi and Bible commentator, student of and ordained by Joseph Caro. Derovan, D, “Alshekh, Moses,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>246</sup> He was mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Batra 58a) and was known for marking the boundaries of burial crypts so that visitors would not be rendered ritually unclean by inadvertently stepping on a grave.

<sup>247</sup> Rav Ilai (end of third and beginning of fourth century C.E.), Palestinian amora. Kaplan, Z, “Ilai,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>248</sup> Judah bar Ilai (mid–second century C.E.), tanna Wald, SG, “Judah bar Ilai,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>249</sup> Talmudic commentator, see Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah, 16a

<sup>250</sup> See note 170

<sup>251</sup> Abba Hilkiyah, according to the aggadah (non-legal component of tradition) he was a saint who lived in the first century C.E. Wald, SG, “Abba Hilkiyah,” Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>252</sup> One of King David's warriors and King Solomon's commander in chief; II Sam. 23:20–23

his son, as I noted before. Near them are laid Hillel<sup>253</sup> and his students in niches within a cave while his attendants are laid to rest outside of the cave and also in niches – each covered with one stone. Between the graves run streams; one goes there by lantern light. Farther on is the grave of Rav Yohanan ha-Sandler and near his grave one finds pits, where, it is said, he prepared hides. When one passes the waters of Megiddo, one finds laid to rest Shammai<sup>254</sup> and 9 of his students. Nearby is the grave of the bride of Shammai upon which rests one stone, in the shape of two basins in which water is always found. Even if one draws from it, it does not diminish. They say that at the hour of the death of Shammai, his daughter-in-law wept sorely and precipitously gave birth to twins in the field; there was no water there for use as required. A miracle occurred in finding these stones with water and afterwards they were placed on her grave. Nearby may be seen a large stone upon which, it is said, that Elijah [the prophet] once sat.

Tiberias – I went there with all the members of my family to pray at the graves of the righteous there. Near the city is the grave of the Rambam<sup>255</sup> and of ha-Shelah<sup>256</sup>. Near them is the grave of Rav Yohanan ben Zakkai<sup>257</sup> with his 5 students and near the *Har Hayeshimon*<sup>258</sup> is the grave of Rav Kahana<sup>259</sup>, with his students in niches. Near the baths of Tiberias is the tomb of Rav Meir Ba'al ha-Nes<sup>260</sup>. The shelter above his grave is now destroyed. They light [candles] for his soul in every Bet Midrash in Eretz Yisrael. He who stands near his grave sees the snow [topped] mountains across the Sea of Galilee. From there we went to the grave of Rav Akiva<sup>261</sup> with 24,000 of his students on one mountain. Rav Akiva is on the top of the mountain and they [his students] are scattered all about the mountain; one finds tombstones and knows that there are graves. I was in the village of Shezuri at the grave of Rav Shimon Shezuri and from there I went to the grave of Nahum, Man of Gamzu.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Hillel (c. 50 BCE–early first century CE), Jewish sage and teacher. Talmudic tradition portrays Hillel as a great spiritual leader who embodied the qualities of humility, patience, peace, love of Torah, and social concern. Miller, S. "Hillel." Encyclopedia of Religion, Ed. 2

<sup>254</sup> Shammai (50 BCE–30 CE) was a Jewish scholar of the 1st century, and an important figure in Judaism's core work of rabbinic literature, the Mishnah. Herr, MD, "Shammai," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>255</sup> Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) rabbinic authority, codifier, philosopher, and royal physician. The most illustrious figure in Judaism in the post-talmudic era Rabinowitz, L, "Maimonides, Moses," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>256</sup> Rabbi Yitzhak HaLevi Horowitz (?1565-1630), rabbi and kabbalist, known as ha-Shelah ha-Kadosh (The Holy Shelah) from the initials of his major work ("Shenei Luhot Ha-Berit" – "Two Tablets of the Covenant") Ben-Sasson, H, "Horowitz, Isaiah Ben Abraham Ha-Levi," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>257</sup> First century C.E. *tanna*, considered in talmudic tradition the leading sage at the end of the Second Temple period and the years immediately following the destruction of the Temple. Wald, S, "Johanan Ben Zakkai," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>258</sup> "Desolate mountain"

<sup>259</sup> The name of several Babylonian amoraim. Wald, S, "Kahana," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>260</sup> A building on the shores of Lake Kinneret; some scholars connect the grave with the *tanna* Meir (one of the leaders of the post-Bar Kokhba generation), who established his school in Tiberias and there is a miracle related about him. There are however different traditions about his place of burial, as he died in Esia, an area near Ezion Geber, close to Eilat. Oppenheimer, O, "Meir Ba'al ha-Nes, Tomb of," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>261</sup> Akiva ben Yosef (c.50–ca.135 CE) or simply Rabbi Akiva was one of the most outstanding *tannaim*, probably the foremost scholar of his age. A teacher and martyr, he exercised a decisive influence in the development of the halakhah. Freedman, H, "Akiva," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

<sup>262</sup> Nachum of Gamzu was a *tanna* of the 2nd generation (1st century). So named because whatever would happen

In Sidon, I visited at the grave of Zebulun, son of Jacob, in the courtyard of a *Yishmaeli* and I gave him 40 *pa' res* to allow me and all the members of my family to pray. While I was in Sidon, I was shown the place [where once stood] the house of Zarephath which was visited by Elijah<sup>263</sup>, the prophet; may we be worthy to see him.

## THE ARABIC LANGUAGE

To inform [the reader] of some of the language which is spoken there among the *Yishmaelim*:

Three languages are usually spoken there: A' the language of the *Yishmaelim*<sup>264</sup>, B' "Portugal"<sup>265</sup> is spoken among the Jews called Frenken<sup>266</sup>, C' Arabic is spoken by all, villagers and townspeople of all occupations. This is how they recite of their numbers:

*ahad, t'nen, talate, arba, khamse, sitte, seb'a, temaniye, tis'e, ashere, ahad'ash, t'nash, talatha'ash, arba'ash, khamse'ash, sitt'ash, seb'ash, tamantash, tisatash, ashrein, ahad wa-asrin, etc. Talathin, arba'in, khamsin, sittin, sabin, tamanin, tisin, miye, alf.*

Some more of the most useful [words in the] Arabic language:

Jerusalem is called in their language Ir Kodesh<sup>267</sup>, Hebron – *Hebran*, Shechem – *Nablus*, Safed – *Safat*, Tiberias – *Tiberya*. He who inquires of his friend says: *Mah Salami*, and is answered: *Salaam*. He who asks the price says: *qaddes hata*. For instance, to open a door: *aftah baba*; to close: *s'gar el'bab*. He who swears says: *ali rask*, that is "on my head" or *hayya inai*; that is "by the life of his eyes". Concerning money one says: *masari*. When he says to give him money: *hati masari*. *Be'et* is an egg, *batzil* are onions, *mizan* is a weight, *zayt* is olive oil, *kadir* is a cooking pot, *moya* is water, *tahin* is flour, *hubzeh* is bread, *lahma* is meat, *sa'amak* is fish, *inab* are grapes, *tin* are figs, *tafah* are apples, *agas* are pears, *lifat* are carrots. He who wants to say "yes" says: *tayib* or "no" says: *la*. *Lebar* is outside. *Taman* is the word of "end" or completion.

To Briefly Inform of THE CUSTOMS OF THE SEPHARDIC JEWS Called "Frenken"

The language which they speak among themselves is the "Portugal" language and, as for the Holy language [Hebrew], they use it according to the situation in places where the Portugal language is not known. They love Torah and honor the *Talmid Hakham* [lit. wise student] calling such him, Hakham – as what he orders is obeyed. They fulfill the mitzvah of hosting

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to him, he would say "This, too, is for the best" (gam zu letovah). Babylonian Talmud, Taanit 21a

<sup>263</sup> I Kings 17:9 ff

<sup>264</sup> Likely Judeo-Arabic but not specifically stated as such

<sup>265</sup> Most likely Ladino or "Judaeo-Spanish

<sup>266</sup> See footnote 82

<sup>267</sup> Hebrew for Holy City; translated from the Arabic *al-Quds*.

guests; they also marry with us. Their manner of study is “GP’T”<sup>268</sup> as concerning all works of [law] codes. Their custom is to decide according to ha-Rav Yosef Caro<sup>269</sup>. Every Shabbat eve they wash their faces, hands and legs in warm water according to the custom of Rav Yehudah Bar Il’ai<sup>270</sup>. During the days of purity, the women color their eyes blue and their fingernails red. The women cover their heads as do the wives of officers of our country, using a head covering with a piece of gauze, while others wear a plate of silver or gold upon which the image of a city is engraved. They [the women] sit inside at all times and have no business in the market at all. Household necessities are purchased by the men only, both young to old. It is customary among the men to always carry a string of black coral beads numbering 130, paralleling the 130 times of Elijah<sup>271</sup>, constantly moving and rolling them in their hands. On their fingers the men also wear rings of precious stones with their engraved names. They sit on the floor, each according to his station is given a mat on the ground to sit on. At mealtimes, they set in front of them a table of hand’s breadth height above the ground around which they sit and eat. Their food is thick and they eat with their fingers. If one asks why they eat with their fingers they answer jokingly: “As Their Fathers Did With Their Hands”.<sup>272</sup>

## CONCLUSION

My kinsmen and my nation: I shall not be ungrateful, to tell all that I am of the four who must give thanks, to make known to the graciousness of God, as I crossed the sea on two occasions, once going to Eretz Yisrael and once upon my return due to the pressure and blows which I have faithfully recounted; the tears are still on my cheeks because I was forced to leave her. On the first day of Rosh HaShanah, after Minha, a windstorm came up and raised waves; all the sailors were tossed about as drunks and each one shouted to his God<sup>273</sup>. After midnight the sea stopped raging. Our spirits were then calmed and we recited Kiddush, as appropriate, a second time on the first night of Sukkot. We were then at the Dardenelles and met many boats with the area being very narrow as I wrote above. Since it was between two mountains, the sailors called out bitterly that one ship should not touch the other. We were thus in great danger. There were 4 Jews in the boat, that is: ha-Rav Natan Neta, the wealthy Shemaryahu Luria with his servant and I with my family.

Morning brought relief. After this, we passed Istanbul, where there was plague. The plague occurs in their land and God saved us once more. Upon the arrival of our ship to Odessa, we went on a small boat to inform a doctor that we were healthy and the captain also went with us. While we were returning to our ship, a great storm came up in the sea and did not allow us to return to the ship. We thought we were lost until they threw ropes to us from our ship and we held onto the ropes with our hands and shoulders and were thus brought onto the ship.

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<sup>268</sup> *Gemara*, the Interpretation [*Perush*] of Rashi and the *Tosafot*; their sequence of primacy in rendering decisions in Jewish Law.

<sup>269</sup> See footnote 132

<sup>270</sup> Babylonian Talmud - Shabbat 25b

<sup>271</sup> Unclear reference

<sup>272</sup> A reference to the saying “Their father’s tradition is in their hands”.

<sup>273</sup> Jonah 1:5



For all this we are obliged to thank His Name who watches over us in every hour and every minute, saving us from all evil at the hands of various circumstances and happenings. The merit of the righteous one, Rav Yisrael, author of Taklin Hadetin and Pa'at ha-Shulhan, was also with me. He served the Rav ha-Gaon, the righteous and famous Eliyahu of Vilna, and was a leader in Israel for thirty years and allowed me to return to outside The Land, as explained in the letter he gave me and blessed me with the blessing of peace. He died on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Sivan [May-June] 5599 [1839].

And the vow I made – I will fulfill with this book and spread them [books] throughout Israel. May God gather the dispersed in ways not known to them; may he lead brethren in comfort to the land around his Temple; may they be at ease and be led by Elijah and the two Messiahs<sup>274</sup>.

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<sup>274</sup> Messiah, Son of Joseph and Messiah, Son of David. In Rabbinic thought, there was a secondary messianic figure, son of (i.e., of the tribe of) Joseph (or Ephraim), whose coming precedes that of the Messiah, son of David, and who will die in combat with the enemies of God and Israel. Blidstein G, "Messiah," Encyclopedia Judaica, 2007 ed.

