APPENDIX

THE IMPACT OF THE THREE OATHS IN JEWISH HISTORY

THE IDEA AND ITS IMPACT

"The People of Israel is scattered in every land . . . At the time that God shall remember our exile and lift up the horn of His Messiah, each one will say: 'I will lead the Jews and I will gather them [in their land]' . . . Were it not that we fear that the End has not yet come, we would gather together. But we cannot do so until the time of the song-bird is come and the voice of the turtledove is heard [in the land], until the harbingers declare, 'May God be great.' "[1] This early document cited in the *Travels* of Benjamin of Tudela reflects the tensions generated by the question of the redemption and the Land of Israel among twelfth-century German Jews[2]—"mourners of Zion and mourners of Jerusalem."[3] These Jews, like many others before and since, are depicted here as vacillating between two opposing poles—the anticipation of imminent redemption, and the traditional fear of forcing the End prematurely. For them, the Land of Israel and collective *aliyah* are explicitly messianic categories, an expression of their deepest religious longing, whose realization within history is forbidden, "until the time of the song-bird is come." It is noteworthy that these "mourners of Zion" are portrayed as speaking in all innocence and that their words do not represent an explicit ideological or theological position. Hence, the power that informs these words: "Were it not that we fear that the End has not yet come, we would gather together."

As explained in chapter 1, the fear of mass *aliyah* to the Land of Israel

was inherent in the oaths taken by the people of Israel—according to the Talmud and the midrashic literature—to accept the yoke of exile, as well as in the primeval myth regarding the children of Ephraim who went up from Egypt prematurely and fell by the sword.

> What are these three oaths? One, that Israel not ascend the wall;[4] one, that the Holy One, blessed be He, adjured Israel not to rebel against the nations of the world; and one, that the Holy One, blessed be He, adjured the idolaters not to oppress Israel overly much. (BT Ketubbot 111a)

> "For God said, 'The people may have a change of heart when they see war'" [Exod. 13:17]. This is the war of the children of Ephraim . . . because they forced the End, and transgressed the oath. (*Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma'el*)[5]

> Rabbi Helbo said: There are four oaths here: that they not rebel against the kingdoms; that they not force the End; that they not reveal their mystery to the nations of the world; and that they not ascend as a wall from the Exile. Rabbi Onya said: These four oaths correspond to the four generations which forced the End and failed . . . [The children of Ephraim] gathered together and went to war, and many of them died. Why? Because they did not believe in God and did not trust His salvation, because they transgressed the End and the oath, "lest you awaken or excite my love." (*Songs Rab.* 2:7)

These ideas assumed different garbs in the midrashim and the Aramaic Targumim to the Bible.[6] We do not know for certain the exact background that elicited these early warnings against collective activism and premature historical breach. Our present concern, however, is with a different question: What impact would this concept have upon Jewish sources and Jewish history? Was its imprint clear across the generations, from the Middle Ages into the modern period? Why has its influence grown in recent times?

Virtually all the students of religion and Zionism who have pondered these questions are in agreement. In their view, the concrete impact of the three oaths, both in literature and upon the religious consciousness, has never been decisive; rather, these have always been treated as aggadic and nonbinding. Moreover, according to this view, throughout Jewish history the oaths never served as a direct barrier to *aliyah*. Their critical use, which was to emerge in the modern period, was almost exclusively the innovation of Western European proponents of Emancipation and of Eastern European Orthodox opponents of Zionism.

I shall note here the words of only two important scholars. In 1979 Professor Mordecai Breuer wrote:

> Traditional Jewish thought understood the three oaths as landmarks for the people in exile, not as proscriptions addressed against those who wished to go up to Zion. Hence, the oaths did not contradict the ascent of Jews to the Land of Israel, even in large and organized groups, so long as the Jewish dispersion remained in their exiles . . . We have not found the three oaths explicitly cited as an ongoing halakhah . . . Even with the organization of large and cohesive groups of immigrants, from the *aliyah* of R. Judah the Hasid, who came up [to the Land of Israel] at the head of a thousand Jews in 1700, through to the *aliyah* of Hasidim and disciples of the Gaon of Vilna—the question of the three oaths did not arise as a practical halakhic one.[7]

Ehud Luz, in his book *Parallels Meet* (1985), summarized this question in a similar spirit: "It is in any case clear that in and of itself it could not provide a foundation for a halakhic prohibition . . . Most of the pro-Emancipation Orthodox thinkers in Western Europe relied on this midrash to support their claim that no tangible efforts should be made to bring on the redemption before the days of the Messiah . . . By contrast, it hardly appears in Eastern Europe before the advent of Herzlian Zionism."[8]

I had also tended to support this view. However, a survey of the sources, from both the Middle Ages and the modern period, has led me to reconsider this question. Close examination reveals that the wall placed by the oaths between the people and its land was far higher than the historians suggest. It was a wall that sprang up over the generations, resting on two foundations.

First, the three oaths definitely served to create a certain distance and dissociation from the land. They were repeatedly invoked, on various occasions, to deter possible mass *aliyah*. This was certainly the case when the attempt to emigrate to the land was also connected with messianic fervor. It is true that this warning was more often voiced in the twentieth century than in the nineteenth, and in the nineteenth century more often than in the eighteenth; and in the modern period generally more than in the Middle Ages. As I observed in chapter 1, during those long centuries in which neither the Land of Israel nor "ascending the wall" from exile were concrete social options, the very fear of transgressing these oaths was repressed by the nation. By contrast, when *aliyah* was perceived as a substantive possibility, and people stirred themselves to attempt the move, the warning was voiced anew. In a paradoxical manner, the appearance of the oaths serves as a kind of seismograph, measuring, as it were, the impact of the land upon the life of the communities.

Second, the three oaths were cited by those Jewish sages who sought to develop a comprehensive metaphysical understanding of exilic existence. They were interwoven within those theoretical approaches that attributed deep theological meaning to Jewish life in the Diaspora, endowing it with profound symbolic and mystical content. Of course, the two different uses of the oaths were mutually supportive.

In the following sections, I attempt to elucidate these two elements and explore their foundation. To this end, I selected specific sources that integrate the oaths in their context and treat them with reverence. Neglected by historical research, these sources now require renewed proof of their accumulated weight over time.[9]

FIRST IMPRINTS

The oaths first appear (after midrashic literature) in Hebrew poetical literature (*piyyut*). Already in the sixth century CE, Simeon ben Megas ha-Kohen referred to them in one of his *piyyutim:*

> From always and from antiquity
> You who examine innards
> With two oaths
> You adjured the lion cubs
> Saying: one, that they not force the future End
> and one, not to rebel against the four kingdoms.[10]

More than four hundred years later, Rabbi Samuel ben Rabbi Hoshaya, one of the outstanding geonic leaders of Palestine, composed a verse in the same spirit.

> I gave an oath to my multitudes not to rebel against the Wild One
> [Ishmael] and Edom
> Be silent, till the time that I make them as Sodom . . .
> I made you an oath, my careful ones, lest you rebel
> Await the End of Days and do not tremble.[11]

These *piyyutim,* urging the people to accept the yoke of exile, offer no thematic innovations nor any particular historical context beyond the substance of the early midrashim.

During the entire period of the Muslim conquest (634–1099), *aliyah* was rare and of extremely limited scope. Scholars differ as to whether this should be attributed primarily to objective conditions—the economic distress and physical danger in Palestine during this period—or whether it

was also connected with a certain rabbinic recoil regarding *aliyah* in premessianic times.[12] In any event, it is clear that *aliyah* was not then perceived as religious-normative behavior binding on the individual, and certainly not as a practical social option. This is particularly striking in comparison with the repeated calls by the Karaite sages, who admonished their flock to immigrate to the Land of Israel. In 900 CE the Karaite Daniel al-Qumisi severely condemned the ideology of passivity toward the land: "The scoundrels among the people of Israel say to one another: 'We need not go up to Jerusalem until we are ingathered by He who has thrust us out.' These are the words of the fools who provoked God's anger."[13] Al-Qumisi was perhaps protesting against a prevalent rabbinic approach of his time. Even if his remarks were directed solely toward the Karaites, the absence of a parallel call for *aliyah* by rabbinic leadership appears to be no accident.[14]

In other words, one should expect to hear the warning voice of the oaths precisely when *aliyah* out of the Exile "as a wall" was a concrete possibility, and should not look for recognizable traces of the oaths in the contemporary literature.

Likewise, during the twelfth century, although a number of well-known rabbinic sages made pilgrimages to the Land of Israel, individual *aliyah* had not yet become an established form of behavior, let alone collective immigration and settlement. As mentioned above, a document attributing to German Jews an explicit fear of forcing the End by gathering in Zion is quoted in Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela's *Travels*. True, the source and date of this document are not entirely clear, nor is it certain that it was in fact written by Rabbi Benjamin himself. Still, this document clearly exemplifies the reluctance regarding any attempt to actuate the messianic era within history.

Maimonides was probably the first rabbinic figure to adduce the oath as a warning against an actual social upheaval, in his admonition not to follow the imagined messiah who was then agitating the Jews of Yemen. Fearful of the political consequences and persecutions that might befall this community owing to the messianic turmoil, Maimonides tried to dissuade them from this path by every possible means. He wrote the following in the *Epistle to Yemen* (1172):

> Solomon of blessed memory, inspired by the Holy Spirit, foresaw that the prolonged duration of the Exile would incite some of our people to seek to terminate it before the appointed time, and as a consequence they would perish or meet with disaster. Therefore he admonished them and adjured them in metaphorical language to desist, as we read: "I adjure you, O maidens of

> Jerusalem, by gazelles or hinds of the field, do not wake or rouse love until it please" [Song 2:7]. Now, brethren and friends, abide by the oath, and stir not up love until it pleases. And may God, Who created the world with the attribute of mercy, grant us to behold the ingathering of the exiles to the portion of His inheritance.[15]

However, we cannot ascribe decisive importance to the appearance of this idea in the *Epistle to Yemen,* as in it Maimonides drew upon every means at his disposal, even if purely rhetorical, to rescue a Jewish community.[16] There are grounds for suspecting that it was only because of these circumstances that he related in this manner to the oath in question. Not only is no trace of the oaths found in Maimonides' halakhic works, but he had little truck with the interpretation of the Song of Songs as a historical allegory of the relationship between God and the people of Israel, which underlies the midrash of the oaths (as may be seen both in his great halakhic work and in his philosophic writing).[17] It would therefore seem that Maimonides' reference to the oaths bore more of a political, contingent character than a halakhic or theological character.

AWE AND FEAR

The thirteenth century saw an important change in the relation of Diaspora Jews to the Land of Israel. *Aliyah* gradually became a common pattern of behavior among the sages, particularly in Western lands.[18] Already at the beginning of the century, groups of Jews, primarily from the French schools of the Tosaphists, settled in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the Land of Israel.[19] These immigrations, it has recently become clear, had a well-defined, strictly religious motivation: the longing to fulfill the commandments that were conditional on residence in the land, and thereby to attain religious perfection. In other words, because the Land of Israel enables one to live a richer and fuller religious life, allowing for broader Torah observance, the immigrant rabbis performed a pious deed and subjected themselves to a multitude of religious precepts applicable only in the land. Their *aliyah* was prompted neither by a messianic agitation nor by a mystical longing for the Holy; it was, rather, a concrete, normative entry through the halakhic gates of the Land of Israel.

During this same period, however, one of the major figures of Ashkenazic pietism or Hasidism, Eliezer ben Moshe of Würzburg (a nephew of Judah he-Hasid), issued one of the strongest warnings against *aliyah* in the history of Jewish literature. As he saw it, any attempt to break through and

ascend to the land prior to messianic times would involve a metaphysical danger and a gross profanation of the land's sanctity. The Land of Israel was likened by him to Mount Sinai as it was at the very moment of divine revelation—forbidden to approach or touch. Anyone who dared to break through put his very soul in danger! In Eliezer's words,

> "You shall limit the people round about" [Exod. 19:12]: around Jerusalem and around the Land of Israel. "Beware of going up the mountain"—for He has adjured Israel not to force the End and not go up to the land prematurely.
>
> "Into the mountain"—this is the Land of Israel and the Temple Mount; "nor touch its edge"—that they not approach the mount to build the Temple there before its time. Another explanation: "nor touch its edge"—that they neither postpone the End nor force it. And this is: "to touch its edge (*katzehu*)"—the End (*ketz*).
>
> "Whoever touches the mountain shall surely die": whoever hastens to go up to the Land of Israel shall surely die. "No hand shall touch it, for he shall be stoned": whoever hastens [to go there] shall not live—whoever goes up before the End—for while the Exile persists they shall not go free. "And when the horn sounds long, they shall ascend the mountain"—when shall the people of Israel leave the Exile to ascend to the Land of Israel? When the horn shall be blown long [at the time of redemption].[20]

The way to the Land of Israel was thus blocked by an iron wall. The Exile represents the reality of history; the land, the utopia of the End of Days. Any attempt to remove the barriers separating them would be self-destructive: "Whoever hastens shall not live!" The author not only lent compelling, binding power to the oath not to force the messianic realization; he also heightened the traditional religious reluctance to approach the holy precinct, casting the whole Land of Israel as a religious object, a transcendent and awesome entity.

As Israel Ta-Shma has already observed,[21] one may presume that these extreme statements were not uttered in a void; they addressed a specific situation, that is, the concrete drive toward *aliyah* that had been renewed in the nearby schools of northern France. In fact, the very opposition to *aliyah* of a leading Ashkenazic Hasid is hardly surprising. He presumably received the idea from his predecessors, one of whom even wrote that whoever went to the Land of Israel at the present time would not only not expiate his sins but, on the contrary, he "further multiplies his transgression" by "neglecting his marital obligations to multiply, the study of Torah, and prayer."[22] Not until our own time, however, do we again encounter an admonition as fierce as that of Rabbi Eliezer of Würzburg. In any event, this

episode manifests two polarized approaches toward the Land of Israel: one by the French sages who were drawn to the land by bonds of mitzvot and halakhah, and the other by German pietists, who turned away from the land because of their messianic conceptions and their religious fear of breaching the Holy.

THE ALIENATION OF THE SHEKHINAH

Only a few years later, Rabbi Ezra, leader of the Kabbalist circle in Gerona, issued an appeal to the people to make their peace with the yoke of exile. "At this time," he wrote, "the people of Israel are already exempted from the obligation of [living in] the Land of Israel. When they suffer exile for the love of the Holy One, blessed be He, and undergo affliction and subjugation, this serves as an altar of expiation for them; as it is said: 'For Your sake . . . we are slain all day long' [Ps. 44:23]."[23] Thus the concrete Land of Israel is not needed or required until the era of the Messiah; on the contrary, whoever goes there may be seen as forsaking the Shekhinah, which now dwells with the dispersed people of Israel.[24] A similar line was taken by Rabbi Azriel, the disciple of Rabbi Ezra (and apparently also his son-in-law).[25] He too set aside the Land of Israel during the premessianic period, asserting that the Shekhinah no longer dwelt there: "Wherever the people of Israel went into exile, sanctity dwells among them; therefore [the Holy One says], 'I will not come to the city' which has been joined together, to the lower Jerusalem, until the time of the End, when Israel will return there; and [only then] the Shekhinah will return together with them . . . During the time of the Exile, however, because 'the Holy One [is] in your midst,' He will not come to the city [Hosea 11:9]."[26]

The idea of the exile of the Shekhinah illuminated the three oaths in a unique mystical light. The lower, historical exile reflects the metaphysical, supernal exile—the separation of the Shekhinah from its higher, divine source; the oaths disinclined the Jewish people to rebel against their exile while the Shekhinah had not been delivered from its supernal exile. In the language of Rabbi Ezra: " 'I have adjured thee': these are the words of the Shekhinah in the time of exile; adjuring Israel not to force the End and not to arouse love until there comes the time of favor . . . [At the present time, however], the Shekhinah is far from its place."[27] As noted by Haviva Pedaya,[28] the particular notion of the three oaths may have been connected by Rabbi Ezra with specific Kabbalistic ideas regarding the concept of oath as such. According to this idea, the power of an oath forces itself upon the Godhead itself. God, too, is bound by the vow until the End of Days. In any

event, it is clear that these oaths of passivity dovetailed with Ezra's mystical approach. Even at the time of redemption, he believed, the people of Israel will uphold their vow and not rebel against the nations of the world: "Thereafter Israel, the scattered ones who are dispersed among the nations, will place upon themselves one head, that is, Messiah son of David who was with them in exile, and will go up to the Land of Israel by the permission of the kings of the nations and with their help!" That is to say, the Third Temple, like the second one, will also be built only with the consent of the Gentiles.[29]

Is it mere chance that the best-known immigrant to the land in the thirteenth century, Rabbi Moses Nahmanides, emerged from this same circle of mystics in Gerona, but profoundly disagreed with them as to the mystical status of the Land of Israel? Nahmanides took a diametrically opposed position on all the above questions. In contrast to the view exempting contemporary Jews from the obligation of living in the Land of Israel, Nahmanides was the first to formally establish the act of dwelling in the land as "a positive commandment incumbent upon any individual in every generation, even in the time of exile."[30] In contrast to Rabbi Ezra's insistence that even in the messianic age the people of Israel will settle their land with the permission of other nations, Nahmanides insisted that "we not leave it [the land] in the hands of other nations, in any generation."[31] Moreover, as opposed to the view distancing the Shekhinah from the land until the messianic End, Nahmanides ascribed a supreme, exclusive significance to the religious life in the Holy Land. In fact, he denied any independent, inherent value to observing the commandments in the lands of exile.[32] No one before him had gone so far in placing the Land of Israel at the very center of Jewish teaching—not only in the age of the Messiah, but in present historical time.[33]

Does this ideological polarization—between the passive position of Ezra and Azriel, who would defer *aliyah* to the messianic era, and the activist stance of Nahmanides—indicate the existence of a dialogue and confrontation over this subject among the Gerona Kabbalists? It is not impossible. Apparently, the young Nahmanides learned Kabbalah from the elderly Ezra, while the latter used a work by the youthful Nahmanides.[34] By the time that Rabbi Ezra, in his last years, had set down his thoughts regarding the oaths and the permission of the nations, Nahmanides was already in his forties. Of course, we do not know the formative wellspring of Nahmanides' doctrine of the Land of Israel. Nevertheless, we may presume that the passive posture adopted by Ezra and Azriel on this question was not divorced from the living presence of the land in the

consciousness of others, nor from the growing tendency toward *aliyah* in their own generation.

"THAT THEY NOT GO UP EN MASSE"[35]

Beginning with the fourteenth century, our assumption that a dialectical relationship existed between the references to oaths and the phenomena of *aliyah* is no longer based on circumstantial evidence alone. It has a clear basis in fact. Indeed, during this period the edict of the oaths, which had originated in midrash and in Jewish thought, found its way directly into halakhic literature too. Apparently, only after Nahmanides' ruling that made dwelling in the land an obligatory precept for future generations, and only when this ruling became widely known, was there a counterreaction, in which the three oaths were powerfully reinvoked and even worked into the realm of halakhic discussion.

Interestingly, this reaction is first apparent in the writings of those very sages who felt drawn to the Land of Israel, but considered themselves obligated by the oaths to qualify their positive attitude toward *aliyah*. They therefore distinguished clearly between the piously motivated move of an individual to the land, which was blessed, and a collective break out of exile, which was forbidden.

Thus Estori ha-Parhi, an aficionado of the Land of Israel and a researcher of its antiquities, although citing a Talmudic saying praising those who dwell in the land, yet hedged it with restrictions and denied any Jewish longing to acquire political control there in the present age: "[We read] in the Jerusalem Talmud, Shekalim (3:4): 'It was taught in the name of Rabbi Meir: Whoever dwells permanently in the Land of Israel and speaks the Holy Tongue, etc., is assured his share in the World to Come.' However, they may not go up in order to conquer until the End comes, as is stated at the end of tractate Ketubbot: '"Lest you arouse and awaken [the love]" . . . they should not ascend the wall.'"[36]

This restriction was formulated in the Land of Israel itself at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Indeed, its author saw fit to characterize his own personal *aliyah* in the same spirit: "[God,] who knows every secret, knows that our [only] intention is to become sanctified by the holiness of the soil of Israel. We go there in awe [*eimah*], not to ascend the wall [*ḥomah*]!"[37] Estori ha-Parhi may have been responding here directly to contemporary opposition to *aliyah*.

At the end of the century we find similar restrictions in a halakhic responsum written in North Africa by Isaac bar Sheshet, "Ribash." This

sage, a refugee of the persecutions of 1391 in Spain, ruled on the question of *aliyah* in accordance with Nahmanides: "Aliyah to the Land of Israel is a mitzvah." Surely, this dictum reflected the situation of Spanish Jewry following the pogroms, which inspired the move to the land. At the same time, the writer warned against any attempt to make a mass break from the Exile: "The prophet said to the people—'Build houses . . .' [Jer. 29:5]—addressing himself to those living in the Exile decreed upon them . . . Now, too, one of the three oaths the Holy One, blessed be He, made Israel take is not to ascend the wall."[38]

Similarly, Solomon ben Simeon Duran, "Rashbash," of Algiers, a son of refugees from those same pogroms, was asked a concrete halakhic question pertaining to *aliyah*. He responded in like spirit, taking great care to eliminate any possible messianic connotation accruing to *aliyah:* "It is incumbent upon every individual to go up to live [in the Land of Israel]." He wrote: "However, this is not an all-inclusive commandment for all of Israel in their exile, but is withheld from the collectivity[39] . . . For it is one of the oaths which the Holy One, blessed be He, has adjured Israel, that they not hasten the End, and not go up in the wall. Consider what happened to the children of Ephraim when they forced the End prematurely."[40]

Just as the opponents of *aliyah* made the Land of Israel a strictly messianic category, the proponents of *aliyah* attempted to dissociate the land from any messianic context. To go to the land, the latter said, is in fact an ongoing, binding commandment, but those who obey it are expected to be doubly careful to observe the high barriers separating the age of exile from that of redemption. They may not go up "in order to conquer" (Estori ha-Parḥi); they may not "ascend the wall" against the will of the ruling peoples (Ribash); and they may not go up collectively—"the entire people" (Rashbash).[41]

During the second half of the fifteenth century, there was a mass movement in Castile; men, women, and children traveled by sea to the Land of Israel. This type of awakening, unprecedented for generations, was probably connected with messianic fervor[42] and, as might be expected, aroused anger and suspicion among other contemporary Jews. The heads of the Jewish community in Saragossa were severely critical, emphasizing in a letter to their Castilian counterparts the dangers involved in a mass voyage to the Holy Land. In this protest it is difficult to separate theological considerations from pragmatic apprehensions of the Gentiles' reaction to such a move. In any event, this mass migration to the Land of Israel was openly denounced as an attempt to force the End and to meddle with messianic redemption. As the Castilians protested in their letter,

> People of small value and great number have set out for the Land of Israel . . . We do not know what gave rise to this great foolishness . . . And if one will say: is it not well known and renowned from days of old that the people have always gone from every corner to the Land of Israel? [We answer:] This is true, but they have done it only in small numbers each time, and with adequate privilegia from the rulers of the lands; never has such a great crowd been reported to go there together . . . Therefore, our learned brothers and leaders, we beseech you: Let all those making this move turn back, let every person return home in peace, and not hasten the End as the children of Ephraim did, heaven forbid . . . [We pray that] our eyes shall see the Lord returning to Zion . . . and all of the people of Israel shall [follow] and ascend there to see the presence of the Lord our God in His chosen house.[43]

Again, the invocation of the oaths thrusts before us the way in which *aliyah* became an actual religious question in different eras and in different places. Their articulation in literature may reveal, paradoxically, the immediate presence of the Land of Israel in Jewish consciousness and its concrete impact upon the life of the communities. Although the three oaths were generally on the margins of Jewish discourse, from time to time they were drawn inside to build a high barrier between the people and the land.

Two questions remain to be dealt with in this context: First, was the edict of the oaths in fact limited to the Jewish collectivity only, to mass *aliyah*, or did it sometimes stand in the way of individual Jews too?[44] As we have seen, already in the thirteenth century one can find some rabbinical reservations concerning *aliyah* as such—whether by individuals or by a group—rendering it an explicitly messianic category. The sixteenth century saw an additional, halakhic (!) attempt in this direction, based explicitly on the old message of the oaths. The author was Rabbi Joseph de Leon, a Spanish immigrant in Italy. In his halakhic work, *Megillat Esther* (on Maimonides' *Sefer ha-mitzvot*), de Leon sought to exempt even individual Jews from the call of the land.

> The commandment to inherit the Land and dwell therein is not observed save in the days of Moses, Joshua and David, and so long as the people of Israel have not been exiled from their land. After they were exiled, however, this commandment is not binding upon subsequent generations until the advent of the Messiah. On the contrary, we are commanded, according to the end of tractate Ketubbot, not to rebel against the nations by conquering the land . . . not to ascend the wall. As for Nahmanides' statement that the Sages conceived the conquest of the land to be an obligatory war, this statement refers to a future time, when we shall not be subjugated to the nations. But with

> regard to his [Nahmanides'] statement that the Sage engaged in hyperbole in praising the act of dwelling in the land, this refers specifically to the time when the Temple stands; now, however, there is no commandment to live there.[45]

The question of the Exile and the land is not discussed here in terms of place, but of time; not with regard to geographical space, but to historical reality—both political and religious. In the absence of Jewish political sovereignty and without the Temple, the Land of Israel is, so to speak, beggared. It loses its power to bind and attract contemporary Jews. De Leon in this reinterpreted Nahmanides' ruling, which made dwelling in the land a positive commandment binding upon all generations. Even if one does not read his comments as a response to an immediate, concrete question of *aliyah,* one does find in them a principled halakhic attempt to cope with the claims of the land.

Second, was the prohibition against "going up en masse" always connected with the apprehension of provoking the Gentiles and of rebelling against world kingdoms? Not necessarily. For example, Rabbi Samuel Yaffe, Ashkenazic rabbi of the community of Constantinople at the end of the sixteenth century, stated that, even if the ruling nations themselves would consent to the ingathering of the Jewish exiles en masse, this would still not free the people from the constraint of the oaths. As Yaffe wrote in his commentary to the Song of Songs: " 'They should not ascend the wall' until they are redeemed by the Messiah . . . It seems to me that this prohibition applies even with the permission of the [Gentile] kingdoms. As God has scattered us to the corners of the world, we have no right to be gathered together 'as a wall' to the Land of Israel until God by His Messiah shall gather us . . . 'they shall not force the end' to be redeemed with strong hand."[46] Yaffe clearly ruled out any possibility of a Jewish return to Zion by natural means, without a prophetic, miraculous revelation. Neither the political-historical reality nor the reaction of the Gentile nations are theologically relevant. We shall see later how Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschütz further elaborated and refined this idea.

EXILE AND ITS MEANING

Many of the examples cited in the previous section reflected the predominant moods among Spanish Jewry and its refugees during a period of decline and displacement. Yet in the wake of the expulsion from Spain and Portugal, which threatened to undermine even the Jewish exilic existence, a

growing tendency emerged among Jewish thinkers to reflect upon Jewish history and destiny and to seek its metaphysical meaning. No wonder, then, that in this context, too, the three oaths found their organic place.

I will begin with a radical expression of this tendency. A major sixteenth-century Kabbalist in Safed, Rabbi Abraham Galante, adduced a striking myth concerning the Portuguese *conversos* and their stubborn allegiance to the oaths. The passage in question appears in Galante's mystical commentary to the Ethics of the Fathers, *Zekhut Avot*.[47] However, the printed version of this passage is confused and marred by lacunae (due to censorship?) and does not reflect its original force. I shall therefore cite the authentic text, as it has survived in manuscript form (Paris, MS.866).

Galante offered a Kabbalistic interpretation to the words of the Mishnah: "Love work and hate rulership, and do not make yourself known to the authorities."

> The Shekhinah was called "work" (*melakhah*) because now, in the secret of exile, it is sentenced to labor, to gives its overflow to the "external ones" [the evil forces] and to the seventy [heavenly] princes [of the Gentiles]. Lilith is called "rulership" (*rabbanut*), because she is now in rule. Go and see how many circuses and theaters are yet standing, while the lodging place of our God lies in waste. [Nevertheless,] the whole struggle [with the powers of evil] is to be performed by prayer and petition only, that is, to take place between you and your Creator alone. But "do not make yourself known to the authorities" (*rashut*), that is, do not take oaths against the [ruling] nations—do not rebel or wage war against them. [Indeed,] such a desire rose up in the hearts of the Jews of Portugal, who were all forced to convert. Realizing that they were twice as numerous as the Gentiles [around them], so they desired to lift up their heads, to kill [their persecutors] and seize the kingship. However, there was an elder one there who inquired concerning this, by means of the Tetragrammaton, and he was answered [from heaven]: "Lest you arouse and awaken the love [prematurely] . . . " As our rabbis interpreted it: "The Holy One, blessed be He, adjured three oaths to Israel, one, that they should not rebel against Him [*sic*]."

In other words, the *converso* Jews, both by virtue of their numbers and their magical power, should have been able to overcome their persecutors and "seize the kingship." During the time of exile, however, the political rule of the nations is paralleled by the metaphysical rule of evil. It is the edict of the Almighty, then, that during this era "kingship" (in both senses) would be in bondage to these foreign powers. Hence, any attempt to break through by physical strength or by magical power, thereby upsetting the

political and cosmic order of exile, is tantamount to open rebellion against the Godhead. The *conversos* therefore took upon themselves not to attempt such a breach and to remain loyal to the oath even at the price of submission and apostasy!

A sweeping metaphysical and mythic burden is thus conferred on the oaths, well beyond their original mundane confines. They not only represent the passive acceptance of the historical exile and political subjugation of the people; they also imply a reconciliation with the cosmic exile and metaphysical captivity of the Shekhinah (see *Sefer ha-Zohar* 2:9a). In fact, Galante presented a striking antithesis to the famous story of Joseph de la Reina. In contrast to de la Reina's unseemly attempt to trap Satan by magical means and to bring about redemption prematurely,[48] the Portuguese *conversos* overcame such a temptation. They accepted exile and subjugation, upholding the divine oath. Thus the proscription of the oaths is directed simultaneously against both physical and mystical activity. It carries even greater force than forced religious conversion.

We turn now to a more central intellectual development of the sixteenth century, one that would have a profound impact upon later generations. This was the doctrine of exile, developed by Judah Löw, "the Maharal," of Prague, and the special role it ascribes to the decree of the oaths. The Maharal considered the phenomenon of exile less from the point of view of Jewish subjugation (like Galante) than from that of Jewish alienation.[49] Of course, exile is a historical situation of a nation that has been driven from its organic home and banished into an estranged existence among the Gentiles. At a deeper level, however, the nation's historical exile represents its metaphysical, existential estrangement from the very nature of the temporal world. Israel, the chosen people, has transcended the given, unredeemed order of reality. It belongs to a different order, which has not yet coalesced; and is consequently fated to experience the present time in an unnatural, exilic existence. The people of Israel is out of place and time—in every place and time—"for the portion of Jacob is the portion of the world to come . . . The people of Israel are persecuted, oppressed, and harassed in this world, because this world is not worthy of them; hence, they confront opposition in this world."[50]

Exile is indeed a divine decree. But it does not so much stem from Israel's sin and punishment as reflect their innate essence. The Exile is indeed an anomaly,[51] yet in an unredeemed world this anomaly itself is the norm for the chosen people. As might be expected, the three oaths dovetail with this idea: they decree that the people of Israel will continue to experience an alien existence; they call upon them to deviate from the natural order of

space and time. At the same time, they produce a kind of "balanced" status quo between Israel and the nations. Israel will be submissive and not rebel, while the nations will allow the Jews to exist under their rule and will not oppress them to excess. The oaths, then, bring into being a unique social and cosmic order.

> Exile represents a change in the order of the world. Such a change of order is difficult to sustain: there is always a desire to negate it—that is, to gather together out of exile and ascend the wall . . . God, therefore, decreed that Israel are not to rebel against the nations by leaving their rule . . . and that the nations not subjugate Israel overly much, for otherwise the Exile could not exist . . . He decreed that they not ascend the wall and ingather the exiles . . . that they not force the End [even] by means of prayer and petition[52] . . . He adjured them by the heavens and earth: just as the latter keep the [cosmic] law ordained by God with no alteration, thus Israel will keep that which God, may He be blessed, has decreed upon them in their exile.[53]

In sum, the three oaths reflect the metahistorical nature of the Jewish people. Indeed, the Maharal took the oaths to an extreme: he demanded that persecuted Jews should sacrifice their life rather than uproot the Exile: "Even if [the Gentiles] wish to kill them with harsh tortures, Israel should not leave exile and not alter this order!"[54]

The Maharal's central position in the history of Jewish thought led scholars and ideologues of the last generation—Zionists and anti-Zionists alike—to reinterpret his words according to their own contemporary conceptions. Some, such as Rabbi Menachem Mendel Kasher, sought to minimize the force of the oaths.[55] According to this interpretation, the Maharal understood the oaths as a supernal decree imposed upon historical reality, rather than as a normative demand placed upon the human race. The oaths were intended to define the objective situation in the time of exile, rather than to place restrictions upon the Jewish people. Such a reading of the Maharal is, however, incompatible with the overall context of his ideas. The Maharal dealt explicitly with both demands upon man and the divine decree on reality. As he wrote in *Be'er ha-golah:* "The sages warned us to accept the dominion of the nations . . . this proscription not to rebel against the nations' kingdom is so harsh, to the point that [if we break it] our flesh may be stripped away, heaven forbid, like that of gazelles or hinds of the field [who fall prey] . . . Israel must not negate God's decree by force, but rather they should pray for the return of the kingship of Israel."[56]

On the other hand, some interpretations of the Maharal take the opposite view, exaggerating the oath's prohibitions. According to the late Sat-

mar Rebbe Yoel Teitelbaum, the Maharal stated, paradoxically, that even if the foreign nations should force the people of Israel to return to their land, they are commanded to resist such a "decree" with great devotion and treat it as though it were "an edict of conversion."[57] They are to prefer death to leaving the Exile! Against this claim, however, it seems clear that the Maharal is referring to the threat of death and "difficult tortures" stemming from the very conditions of life in exile, rather than from expulsion from the Exile. Even so, his words are as hard as diamonds: "If Israel abandon the divine decree of exile, it will be their destruction in exile . . . [Even so] their blood has been spilt like water . . . [Even so] they endured cruel and harsh suffering . . . even if [the nations] should wish to kill them with tortures, they may not leave [exile]."[58]

Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz (*Shelah*), too, a great seventeenth-century sage who settled in the Land of Israel, tended to emphasize the metaphysical significance of the Exile in connection with the oath's decree. According to him, too, the mundane exile symbolizes the supernal exile; hence, one ought to be reconciled to its yoke: "During the period of exile, in which our great sins have engendered a separation within the supernal worlds, we must suffer, as stated in the Midrash, 'I have adjured you' not to rebel. To the contrary, we are commanded to be submissive."[59] Horowitz, it should be emphasized, attached great importance to individual *aliyah* to the land of exile, "so that one might sanctify himself and fulfill the mitzvot that are [applied] there."[60] However, this act of individual ascent occurs entirely in the age of exile, of national political passivity. It does not bring release in any way from the prohibitions dictated by the historical, premessianic realm. As Rabbi Horowitz wrote elsewhere: "All of the [biblical] battles of Jacob with Esau allude to the [national] future . . . Thus do we behave in our own generation, too, toward the children of Esau: our power is in our mouths only, that we may pray to God, may He be blessed, in times of trouble; but war, that is, fighting the nations [by the sword], does not pertain to us. Rather, we make 'war' by the efforts of our community emissaries, who are obligated to show their faces to kings and princes, to speak on behalf of Israel with all their strength . . . This is the pillar of exile . . . until our righteous Messiah comes."[61]

Here is a clear echo of the fourteenth-century teachings of Rabbi Bahya ben Asher, who wrote: "We should follow in the footsteps of our forefathers, that is, prepare ourselves to approach the children of Esau with gifts, and with humble language, and with prayer to God, may He be blessed. It is impossible for us to meet them in war, as it is said, 'I have adjured you, O daughters of Jerusalem' not to provoke war with the na-

tions."[62] This aspect of the oaths, prohibiting the people of Israel from waging war during the time of exile, would resurface more strongly in later generations, beginning with the modern Hibbat Zion movement.[63] Horowitz understood exile less as a punishment than as a moment in the ongoing dialectic process of the sanctification of the nation. Exile is a necessary descent, for the purpose of ascent: "It is all for our good, that we may become refined in the furnace of the nations . . . the light will come from the very darkness . . . the curse itself will be turned into a blessing . . . for destruction is the cause of true construction."[64] In sum, during this age the Land of Israel would sanctify the righteous individuals, while exile would purify the nation as a whole.

LANDMARKS IN THE MODERN PERIOD

We found the three oaths resonating during the Middle Ages in two main, interconnected contexts: in relation to the practical question of *aliyah,* and in relation to the theological question of Jewish existence in exile. In the modern period, the notion of the oaths arose in the same contexts. Indeed, they were invoked with particular frequency following the failure of the Sabbatean movement. I shall note several high points in the later development of the idea.

The most interesting treatment of the midrash of the oaths, following Horowitz, appears in the writings of the two great rivals—Jacob Emden and Jonathan Eybeschütz, both sages eloquent in the praises of the Land of Israel.

Beginning with the second half of the seventeenth century, several large groups of European Jews attempted to settle in the Land of Israel. The most important of these, led by Rabbi Judah he-Hasid, came to the Land of Israel in 1700.[65] The group was driven by messianic fervor, and its members were even suspected of harboring Sabbatean tendencies. Rabbi Jacob Emden, for one, who relentlessly persecuted every remnant of the Sabbatean movement, was severely critical of the group: "There has sprung up a new sect of pietists in Poland, the fellowship of Judah he-Hasid, whose whole enterprise is built upon the fallen, vain foundation of Shabbatei Zevi, may the name of evildoers rot . . . They did bizarre things; they promised to bring the Messiah in a short time and went up as a wall[66] to the Land of Israel!"[67] Emden himself was enthusiastic about *aliyah.* However, he imputed false messianic tendencies to this group, and accused them therefore of forcing the End and going up "as a wall."

Indeed, Emden ascribed considerable importance to the edict of the

oaths, as a tocsin against false messianism. He even devoted a special prayer to it: "Master of the Universe, be Thou for us a God of salvation from the Exile; for You have adjured us with four oaths lest we ourselves do anything to force the End, but only await [Your] salvation."[68] In fact, this strong-minded sage viewed the entire Sabbatean movement as a catastrophic transgression of the oaths. Emden perceived Sabbateanism as a demonic breach—an antimessianic messianism, as it were—that stood as an obstacle to Israel's true redemption, causing the people to miss the hour of supreme grace (the same thing would be said years later by the Satmar Hasidim and the Neturei Karta concerning the Zionist movement). In Emden's words, "One must know that in truth this event [of Sabbateanism] did not happen in a natural way . . . No doubt there was then a fortunate moment; redemption and salvation were imminent, had they not forced the End and violated the oaths . . . The spirit of falsehood was permitted to mislead Israel and to confuse the world.[69] [Shabbatei Zevi] forced the hour; therefore the hour forced him and was turned to evil."[70]

Likewise Rabbi Moses Hagiz, Emden's stalwart colleague in the struggle against the vestiges of Sabbateanism, warned sharply about the punishment for forcing the End: "For at that time [the period of Shabbatei Zevi] the plague began. Nearly all the people of Israel were exposed to the danger . . . and they were on the brink of death, heaven forbid, to be judged as rebels and violators of the oath that the Holy One, blessed be He, imposed upon Israel, while they are in exile among Edom [Christianity] and Ishmael [Islam]."[71] Clearly, then, in that period the edict of the oaths played a role similar to the one designated for it in Maimonides' *Epistle to Yemen*. It was to stand in the breach against any false messianic agitation.

This is not the case in *Ahavat Yehonatan* by Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschütz which contains a strong warning not against messianism but against *aliyah* en masse from the Exile.[72] Eybeschütz's doctrine of exile is a recondite, complex one, which I have discussed at length elsewhere.[73] Suffice it to note that Eybeschütz conferred a definitive, radical interpretation on the edict of the oaths, as only few sages—both before and after him—have done. As he put it,

> The congregation of Israel shouted out their vow—"Lest you arouse and awaken the love"—against the ingathering of Israel. For even if the whole people of Israel is prepared to go to Jerusalem, and even if all the nations consent, nevertheless, it is absolutely forbidden to go there. Because the End is unknown and perhaps this is the wrong time. [Indeed,] tomorrow or the next day they might sin, and will yet again need to go into exile, heaven for-

> bid, and the latter [exile] will be harsher than the former. Therefore the Congregation of Israel beseeched—"until it shall please"—that is to say: until the time comes when the entire world shall be filled with knowledge [of the Lord].[74]

The emphatic assertion that even the hypothetical support of the ruling nations to the ingathering of the exiles would not release Israel from the oaths is of particular interest. As we saw, Rabbi Samuel Yaffe wrote in a similar vein at the end of the sixteenth century. But Eybeschütz went further, applying this assertion even to those who returned to the Land in biblical times from Babylonia to build the Second Jewish Commonwealth.[75] According to him, the call of the prophet Zechariah (4:6)—"not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit"—was directed against the aspiration of these newcomers "to ingather the entire exile by force" before the messianic days.[76] That is to say, not even the declaration of Cyrus the Great overruled the prohibition on the people of Israel not to go up to the land from the Exile en masse. Historical and political reality makes no difference to the basic theological norm. On the contrary, the latter remains valid in all nonmessianic times, precluding collective *aliyah:* "The Holy One, blessed be He, adjured the congregation of Israel not to go up before their time."[77]

The notion of the oaths was later invoked frequently in Hasidic literature.[78] The founders of Hasidism, who neutralized the social-historical element of messianism in everyday religious life, referred to this notion both to warn of rebellion against the Exile by means of political activity, and against forcing the End through spiritual-mystical efforts. On the one hand, Rabbi Ya'akov Yosef of Polonnoye (before 1780) taught the doctrine of political passivity: "The Holy One, blessed be He, adjured Israel neither to rebel against the nations nor leave the Exile until the Last Days."[79] On the other hand, Rabbi Elimelech of Lyzhansk (1786) warned his followers not to overdo their mystical outbursts: "One should not exert oneself to exhaust them [the powers of impurity] completely and thereby cause the immediate coming of the Messiah, for our sages said: It is forbidden to force the End."[80] Warnings of this kind were repeated in dozens of homilies of Hasidic masters, from the Hozeh of Lublin (Rabbi Ya'akov Yosef) and his disciples in the early nineteenth century,[81] until the latter-day Hasidic opponents of Zionism. There is no room here to discuss the numerous Hasidic sources that invoked, over generations, the midrash of the oaths and the edict of Jewish passivity.[82]

Concurrently, the notion of the oaths played a leading role among the Orthodox seekers of emancipation in Western Europe. It provided them

religious grounds for opposing collective *aliyah* as well as any other political-historical initiative during the time of exile. As mentioned in chapter 1, Moses Mendelssohn already declared that the Talmudic sages prohibited taking "the smallest step in the direction of forcing a return and a restoration of our nation." At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the rabbi of the community of Emden, Abraham Lebenstamm, wrote in a similar vein. In his words, even if "we are capable of going up to Jerusalem by force of arms . . . we are not permitted to take any initiative, so as not to violate the divine oaths."[83] This theme was emphasized more firmly by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, the leader of German neo-Orthodoxy. Hirsch, indeed, injected a clear antipolitical slant into the oath "that they not ascend the wall," glossing it to mean "that the children of Israel shall never seek to reestablish their nation by themselves" (this in 1837!).[84] We find echoes of this approach in later generations as well.[85]

The message of the three oaths was also articulated in that period on the fringes of the well-known *aliyah* of the Perushim, associated with the school of Rabbi Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna. "Our sages indeed praise dwelling in the Land of Israel," wrote Zevi Hirsch Lehren in Amsterdam. "But until our Father in heaven shall wish to redeem us, all buildings [in the land] are vanity and emptiness." Lehren repeatedly called upon the dwellers in the Land of Israel to behave even there in accordance with the edict of exile, in both the political and religious spheres. As for the political, "We are servants of the ruling kingdom. It does not become us, therefore, to be lifted above them 'until it please.' " As for the religious realm, one indeed ought to pray for the return of the Shekhinah from its exile, but "one should not make a commotion about this . . . they should not multiply supplications to hasten the End."[86]

As Aryeh Morgenstern has shown, other sages in the Diaspora who opposed the activity of the Perushim also drew on the rhetoric of the oaths. Rabbi Solomon Berliner, rabbi of the Ashkenazic community in London, who protested against the peculiar contacts of the Perushim with members of the London Missionary Society, used the language of the oaths against them.[87] Around the same time, Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum, a leading Hasidic rabbi in Hungary (author of *Yismah Moshe*), expressed himself even more forthrightly. Teitelbaum explicitly blamed the act of *aliyah* for the Safed earthquake of 1837 and for other ill events in the land: "[All these] should teach us that it is the will of God, may He be blessed, that we not go up to the Land of Israel by our own power, but wait until our righteous Messiah leads us there."[88] Similar warnings were also voiced elsewhere at that time.

Moreover, the Perushim themselves took the edict of the oaths very seriously. Consequently, they made an attempt to invalidate the edict with respect to their own time and their specific action.[89] Ironically, perhaps, it was Rabbi Israel of Shklov, head of the Perushim in Safed, who gave a firm, halakhically binding status to the oath "not to ascend the wall." In his *Pe'at ha-shulḥan,* which deals entirely with the laws concerning the Land of Israel, Shklov wrote: "Dwelling in the Land of Israel is equivalent to obeying the entire Torah. Yet it is not an all-inclusive commandment incumbent upon the entire people of Israel. In the time of exile it is incumbent upon each individual only." The author stated explicitly that he qualified the commandment to dwell in the land in order to explain the edict "not to ascend the wall," for were it incumbent upon all Israel, then they would all be obligated to go up collectively.[90] In fact, a similar position had already been expressed by the Rashbash in the fifteenth century (see above). Yet only now, in the nineteenth century, was that position included ab initio in an authoritative halakhic codex.

But let there be no mistake: even in earlier generations, the edict of the oaths was never absent from halakhic discussions. For example, in his novellas on the Talmud, Rabbi Samuel Idels, "the Maharsha," took pains to delimit the permission granted to "every Jewish individual to ascend to the Land of Israel," on the condition that "they not go up together by force to build the walls of Jerusalem."[91] By the early eighteenth century, another distinguished scholar, Rabbi Joshua Heshel Falk (*Penei Yehoshua*) also added his voice, claiming explicitly that the oaths "also apply at the present time."[92] It bears stressing, however, that the three oaths typically reside in the ideological and theological realm, not within the formal halakhic one.[93] Even when the prohibition did enter halakhic literature, it reflected the religious consciousness, or even the religious anxiety, more than it did strictly legal considerations. Hence, the question I have raised in this chapter is not whether the edicts of the oaths were "explicitly cited as an ongoing halakhah." My concern is with their real impact upon Jewish life and literature, including halakhic literature.

CONCLUSION

In light of all the above, it is not surprising that the deep-seated reluctance to rebel against the Exile or to force the End reemerged with renewed force in reaction to the appearance of the modern movement of Hibbat Zion, and even more strongly to the Zionist enterprise and the establishment of the

State of Israel. At its sharpest, of course, we find this reluctance in the ultra-Orthodox polemics against the national movement. But it is equally apparent in the consistent grappling with the notion of the oaths in the writings of the Orthodox supporters of the project of settling the land: from the "Harbingers of Zionism" and the "Lovers of Zion" of the nineteenth century, down to later, contemporary authors (as shown in several chapters of this book).[94] To quote Rabbi Simhah ha-Kohen of Dvinsk, "Many rabbis did not support [the settlement enterprise]; even those who sympathized with it in their hearts and wished to reach fruition kept their peace, lest the enthusiasts would overdo, and because of their fear of the three oaths that the daughters of Jerusalem were adjured. Now, however, Providence has caused an order to be issued at the gathering of the enlightened countries at San Remo that the Land of Israel shall be for the people of Israel. Thus the fear of the oaths has gone . . . It is therefore incumbent upon every person to help in the utmost of his ability to fulfill the commandment [of settling the land]."[95]

Indeed, the three oaths have not been at the crux of Jewish history, contrary to the claim of the radical religious opponents of Zionism. They were understood primarily as a theological guideline rather than as a formal halakhic proscription. Some sages went even further and downplayed the compelling force of the oaths. Rabbi Hayyim Vital, for example, restricted the edict to a particular time frame: "The oath is valid for one thousand years only."[96] On the other hand, Rabbi Phinehas ha-Levi Horowitz (author of *Sefer ha-hafla'ah*) confined it to a specific place: the people was warned not to ascend the wall from Babylonia, in particular, "so as not to forsake the [special] holiness residing there."[97] Moreover, from the words of the Gaon of Vilna one might conclude that the oath prohibited only a particular, clearly defined act: "They have been adjured not to go out by themselves to build the Temple, the supernal rose, until the advent of the Messiah."[98] The most extreme position was taken by Rabbi Moses Hagiz, who protested against "the opinion of several fools, whom I have heard saying that every city and each country in which Israel dwell is today holy soil like the cities of Israel and Judah . . . and supporting their ranting by quoting our sages about the three oaths Israel was adjured by God."[99] Paradoxically, though, this trenchant protest, from an eighteenth-century seeker of Zion, is itself a clear indication of how deeply rooted the oaths were in the consciousness of other contemporary Jews, and hence the barrier they represented to their potential *aliyah*.[100]

Indeed, even today the traditional fear against rising up from exile as a

wall is not confined solely to extreme, outspoken religious groups. It flows in other channels as well, some of them hidden, making its impact upon several religious trends. Thus any attempt, scholarly or ideological, to ignore it or to describe it as a recently created phenomenon, *ex nihilo,* will miss one of the deepest roots of the tense interaction between the Jewish religion and the modern enterprise of Jewish national renewal.

5751 (19 July 1991); cf. the remarks of the rebbe concerning his predecessor, M. M. Schneersohn, *Hitva'aduyot: Tashmav* 1:374–75. Moreover, compare the remarks of Rabbi S. D. Wolpa, *Kefar Ḥabad,* 19 Shevat 5745 (1985): "The Rebbe, *shelita,* incorporates the seven heavens, the earth, and the four corners of the world"; and the words of Rabbi Hanoch Glitstein, *Kefar Ḥabad,* 12 Tammuz 5743 (1983): "There has never yet arisen within the Jewish people a man of his great intellectual abundance . . . He is unique in his generation; and not only in his generation, but sui generis, over many generations of great *ge'onim* in Israel, holy ones and great *Tzaddikim*—[he is] the wonder of the generations!"

61. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, *Torah or* (Brooklyn, 1972), p. 106b.

62. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, *Ma'amarei admor ha-zaken: Taksah* (Brooklyn, 1980), p. 106. Cf. idem, *Ma'amarei admor ha-zaken ha-ketzarim* (Brooklyn, 1981), p. 539; idem, *Ma'amarei admor ha-zaken: Inyanim* (Brooklyn, 1983), p. 431.

63. Menahem Mendel ben Baruch, "Tzemaḥ Tzedek," *Or ha-Torah* (Brooklyn, 1972), 6:1083. See also the remarks of his predecessor, the "Mittler Rebbe," Dov Baer ben Shneur Zalman, *Sha'arei teshuvah* (Brooklyn, 1984), 2:45a; *Ma'amarei ha-admor ha-emtzai* (Brooklyn, 1986), p. 68a.

64. S. D. B. Schneersohn, *Torat shalom,* p. 74.

65. M. M. Schneersohn, *Devar malkhut* 13 (Parashat Emor, 5751 [1991]): 8–10; idem, *Sha'arei geulah,* pp. 270–73.

66. See *Oro shel mashiaḥ,* pp. 5–13.

67. See, for example, M. M. Schneersohn's remarks from 1979, published in *Likkutei siḥot,* vol. 22 (1983), p. 334: "The painful question of the flight from neighborhoods populated by Jews [in New York City] . . . and in a similar way [!] the painful and astonishing 'question' of the return of territories in the Holy Land."

68. See Yair Sheleg, " 'Even though He Tarry' " (in Hebrew), *Kol ha-Ir,* 14 February 1992.

69. See "A False Messiah in the Gate" (in Hebrew), *Yated Ne'eman,* 24 February 1992.

70. S. Zalman, *Iggerot kodesh,* p. 56.

71. See Tishby and Dan, "Hasidic Doctrine and Literature," cols. 783–84; Moshe Halamish, "The Relation between Leader and Community in the Teaching of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady," in Y. Cohen, ed., *Ḥevrah ve-historyah* (Jerusalem, 1980), pp. 79–92; Elior, "Minsk Disputation"; Emanuel Etkes, "Rabbi Shneur Zalman's Path"; idem, "The Ascent of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Lyady to a Position of Leadership" (in Hebrew), *Tarbitz* 54 (1985): 435.

72. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, *Peri ha-aretz* (Jerusalem, 1974), p. 50.

73. See Elior, "Minsk Disputation," p. 193.

74. Rabbi Tuviah Blau is the author of several books on Hasidim and one of the Ḥabad leaders in Israel. I wish to thank Rabbi Blau for his interesting and illuminating conversation.

APPENDIX

1. Benjamin of Tudela, *Travels,* ed. Nathan Adler (London, 1907), p. 72.

2. Scholars are divided as to whether this document was written by Rabbi Ben-

jamin himself or whether it found its way into his book from elsewhere. See S. Schechter, "Jewish Saints in Medieval Germany," in *Studies in Judaism*, 3d ser. (Philadelphia, 1945), pp. 6–8.

3. Thus the language of the document. Concerning the mourners of Zion in Franco-Germany, see Yaakov Gartner, "The Consciousness of the Mourners of Zion as a Factor in the Development of the Customs for Tisha be-Av" (in Hebrew), *Milet* 2 (1984): 204–7.

4. Rashi's comment: " 'not to ascend,' together, by force." Rabbi Jacob Emden and Rabbi Samuel Strashun suggested the reading *ka-ḥomah* (as a wall), based on the language of the Talmud in BT Yoma 9b (cf. Cant. R. 8:11; the novellum of Yavetz and Rashash on Ketubbot 111a in various editions of the Talmud). Salomon Buber suggests the reading *ba-ḥomah*, based on the text brought in his edition of Midrash Tanhuma (Vilna, 1885), Devarim, chap. 4: "That they not go up as multitudes."

5. *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael*, ed. Horovitz-Rabin (Frankfurt am Main, 1931), Masekhta de-Vayehi, Petihta.

6. See, for example, Tanhuma: Devarim, chap. 4; Targ. Ps.-Jon. to Exod. 13:17. For explanations and detailed sources, cf. Joseph Heinemann, *Aggadot ve-toldotehen* (Jerusalem, 1974), pp. 137–47; Yaakov Blidstein, "The Exodus from Egypt of the Children of Ephraim: Further Discussion" (in Hebrew), *Meḥkerei Yerushalayim be-Maḥshevet Yisrael* 5 (1986): 12–13; Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1968), 6:2; David Berger, "Three Typological Themes in Early Jewish Messianism," *AJS Review* 10 (1985): 141 ff.

7. Mordecai Breuer, "The Discussion concerning the Three Oaths in Recent Generations" (in Hebrew), in *Ge'ulah u-medinah* (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 49–57.

8. Ehud Luz, *Parallels Meet* (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 215–17. Cf. Yosef Salmon, *Dat ve-Tzionut* (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 314–15.

9. During the last generation, extensive rabbinic literature regarding the question of the oaths has been written, primarily in response to the book *Va-Yo'el Moshe* by Yo'el Teitelbaum, the late rebbe of Satmar. See Menahem Mendel Kasher, *Ha-tekufah ha-gedolah* (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 150, 174–78, 195–97, 221, 272–81; Samuel ha-Cohen Weingarten, *Hishba'ti etkhem* (Jerusalem, 1966); Shlomo Aviner, "Clarifications regarding 'That They Not Ascend as a Wall' " (in Hebrew), *No'am* 20 (1980): 4–28; Hayyim Zimmerman, *Torah l'Israel* (in English) (Jerusalem, 1978), pp. 9–35; Meir Blumenfeld, "Concerning the Oath That They Not Ascend as a Wall" (in Hebrew), in *Shanah be-shanah* (Jerusalem, 1974), pp. 148–53; A. Y. Waldenberg, *Tzitz Eliezer* (Jerusalem, 1970), vol. 10, sec. 1, "Completions"; Yisrael Stipanski, "The Redemption from Egypt, the Redemption from Babylonia, and the Future Redemption" (in Hebrew), in *Or ha-mizraḥ* (1973), pp. 200–25; S. P. Frank, *Toldot Ze'ev* (Jerusalem, 1964), pt. 2, sec. 24. Cf. Zvi Yehudah Kook, *Mitokh ha-Torah ha-goelet* (Jerusalem, 1982), p. 190.

10. Joseph Yahalom, *Piyyutei Shimon ben Nagas* (Jerusalem, 1984), p. 241.

11. The *piyyut* is published in *Ginzei Schechter* (New York, 1928), pt. 2, pp. 65, 70.

12. See Moshe Gil, *Eretz Yisrael ba-tekufah ha-Muslemit ha-Rishonah, 634–1099* (Tel Aviv, 1983), 1:499–508; idem, "Aliyah and Pilgrimage during the Period

of the First Muslim Conquest, 634–1099" (in Hebrew), *Cathedra* 8 (1978): 124–33; Avraham Grossman, "Aliyah to the Land of Israel during the Period of the First Muslim Conquest" (in Hebrew), *Cathedra* 8 (1978): 136–44. See also the reactions of Shmuel Safrai and Haggi Ben Shammai, in A. Grossman, "Aliyah to the Land of Israel," pp. 134–35, 145.

13. See Jacob Mann, "An Early Karaite Text," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 92 (1922): 285.

14. Maimonides, *Iggerot ha-Rambam* (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 189. See the commentary of Ibn Ezra on Song of Songs 8:7: "Solomon said in his Holy Spirit: I have adjured you that you are not to awaken until there comes the End."

15. English translation from Abraham Halkin and David Hartman, *Crisis and Leadership: Epistles of Maimonides* (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 130–31.

16. Regarding the rhetorical nature of Maimonides' *Epistle* and its goals, see Abraham Halkin's introduction to his edition of *Iggeret Teman* (New York, 1952), pp. 27–30; Aviezer Ravitzky, *Al da'at ha-makom* (Jerusalem, 1991), p. 54 n. 52; Halkin and Hartman, *Crisis and Leadership*, pp. 150–200.

17. In both these works, the Song of Songs is interpreted as a metaphysical allegory of the relationship between man and God (or the Active Intellect). See Joseph Baer Soloveitchik, "U-vikashtem mi-sham," in his *Ish ha-halakhah: Galuy venistar* (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 119–20; Joseph Kapah, *Kovetz ketavim* (Jerusalem, 1989), 2:619–20; Ravitzky, *Al da'at ha-makom*, p. 54 n. 52.

18. Elhanan Reiner, "Aliyah and Pilgrimage to the Land of Israel, 1517–1909" (in Hebrew), doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1988, pp. 39–118.

19. Ephraim Kanarfogel, "The Aliyah of 'Three Hundred Rabbis' in 1211: Tosafist Attitudes towards Settling in the Land of Israel," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 76 (1986): 191–212.

20. MS Bodlaiaen Opp. 202, fol. 106b.

21. Israel Ta-Shma, "A Note concerning the Attitude of the Early Ashkenazic Scholars to Aliyah" (in Hebrew), *Shalem* 6 (1992): 315–18.

22. Israel Ta-Shma, "Matters of the Land of Israel" (in Hebrew), *Shalem* 1 (1974): 81–82.

23. Gershom Scholem, "A New Document concerning the History of the Early Kabbalah" (in Hebrew), in *Sefer Bialik [Knesset]* (Tel Aviv, 1934), pp. 161–62; Moshe Idel, "The Land of Israel in Medieval Kabbalah," in L. A. Hoffman, ed., *The Land of Israel: Jewish Perspectives* (Bloomington, Ind., 1986), pp. 170–87.

24. Haviva Pedaya, "Land of Spirit and Land of Reality" (in Hebrew), in A. Ravitzky and M. Halamish, eds., *Eretz Yisrael ba-mahshevet ha-Yehudit be-yemei ha-beinayim* (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 244–49.

25. Isaiah Tishby, *Hikrei Kabbalah u-sheluhoteha* (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 3–10.

26. Azriel, *Perush ha-aggadot*, ed. I. Tishby (Jerusalem, 1945), pp. 29–30.

27. Ezra, *Perush shir ha-shirim* (attributed to Nahmanides), in H. D. Chavell, ed., *Kitvei ha-Ramban* (Jerusalem, 1964), 2:514.

28. Haviva Pedaya, "Land of Spirit and Land of Reality," n. 71; idem, "'Flaw' and 'Correction' in the Concept of the Godhead in the Teachings of Rabbi Isaac the Blind" (in Hebrew), *Mehkerei Yerushalayim be-Mahshevet Yisrael* 9 (1987): 212.

29. Ezra, *Perush shir ha-shirim*, p. 519.

30. Nahmanides, addenda to *Sefer ha-mitzvot* of Maimonides, Mitzvat Aseh 4 (printed with Maimonides' *Sefer ha-mitzvot* [Jerusalem, 1959], 2:42).

31. Ibid.

32. See Aviezer Ravitzky, " 'Set Yourself Markers' for Zion: The Development of an Idea" (in Hebrew), in M. Halamish and A. Ravitzky (eds.), *Eretz Yisrael behagut ha-Yehudit* (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 8–13, and the sources quoted there.

33. Nahmanides nevertheless wished to attribute the small numbers in the aliyah following Cyrus's proclamation to the fact that "they did not wish to press the End" (Chavell, *Kitvei ha-Ramban* 1:274).

34. Tishby, *Hikrei Kabbalah u-sheluhoteha*, pp. 6–7. Idel and Pedaya have already noted the opposition between Rabbi Ezra and Nahmanides concerning the question of *aliyah*.

35. According to Buber's reading of Midrash Tanhuma (above, n. 4): "that they should not press the End, and that when they ascend from exile they not come en masse."

36. Estori [Isaac ben Moses] ha-Parhi, *Kaftor va-ferah* (Jerusalem, 1897), p. 197.

37. Ibid., p. 2.

38. Isaac ben Sheset Perfet, *Teshuvot ha-Ribash* (Constantinople, 1546), sec. 101. Cf. Shaul Yisraeli, *Eretz hemdah* (Jerusalem, 1988), p. 17; Eliezer Bashan, "Does Military-Political Struggle for Redemption Suit the Jewish Tradition?" (in Hebrew), *Petahim* 32 (1975): 13–14.

39. Yisrael Stipanski suggested the reading "It is withheld from the collectivity." See his *Eretz Yisrael be-sifrut ha-yeshuvot* (Jerusalem, 1967), 1:133 n. 3.

40. Rashbash, *Teshuvot Yakhin u-Voaz* (Livorno, 1872), vol. 2, sec. 2. In another responsum, Rashbash opposed the philosophical-spiritualistic position that ignored the value of the Land of Israel (and of the earthly dimension generally) in religious life. Rashbash sought to avenge the insult to the concrete religious act.

41. Cf. the commentary of Rabbi Levi Gersonides to the Song of Songs (Königsberg, 1860). In his view, the oath requires Israel "to go toward redemption in the proper order, stage by stage."

42. See B. Z. Dinur, "The Aliyah Movement from Spain to the Land of Israel following the Pogroms of 1391" (in Hebrew), *Zion* 32 (1967): 161–74. Joseph Hacker has shown that the date of this awakening should be the second half of the century. See his paper "The Relation of Spanish Jews to the Land of Israel and Their Aliyah" (in Hebrew), *Cathedra* 36 (1985): 20–28. Cf. E. E. Urbach, "Aliyah and Abandonment of the Land in Historical Perspective" (in Hebrew), in *Al Tzionut ve-yahadut: Iyyunim u-masot* (Jerusalem, 1985), pp. 152–54.

43. Dinur, "Aliyah Movement," pp. 161–74.

44. At the end of the nineteenth century Rabbi Yeruham Perlman, "the Minsker Gadol," made unusual use of the idea of the oaths. According to him, the edict was specifically intended to restrain the yearning of many individuals to go up to the Land of Israel: "All of the commandments are incumbent personally and categorically . . . Each Jewish individual is obligated to perform them without any conditions or limitation. The commandment of dwelling in the Land of Israel, however,

is incumbent only upon the people as a whole. The rabbis anticipated in their holy spirit that if this commandment would be imposed upon each individual, the people would break through any bounds, and would flow to the land by the thousands from the four corners of the earth . . . Therefore our rabbis informed us that the Holy One adjured Israel that they not ascend the wall and not rebel against the nations . . . The power of the commandment is thus weakened . . . because of the need of the hour" (see *Sinai* 6 [1940]: 210–21).

45. Isaac de Leon, *Megillat Esther* on Maimonides' *Sefer ha-mitzvot, Mitzvat Aseh* 4 (Jerusalem, 1959), pt. 2, p. 42.

46. Samuel Yaffe, *Yefeh kol* (Izmir, 1739), fol. 71a. The primeval myth of the children of Ephraim, who went up from Egypt prematurely, served Yaffe as an archetype for the dangers of forcing the End: "They thought to go out by force . . . they did not trust God, but their own sword and arm . . . they did not fear the oath not to arouse until God wishes it; thus they violated [the prohibition not to go before] the End."

47. Galante's interpretation is printed in *Bet Avot* (Belgraye, 1911), i, x, p. 91.

48. Compare the demand of the anonymous fifteenth-century Kabbalist to refrain from any mystical or magical activity to hasten the redemption (*Perush le-shir ha-shirim*, MS Schocken, Kabbalah 10, fol. 42a). Moshe Idel observed that this Kabbalist rejected the activist-messianic approach of Kabbalists from the circle of *Sefer ha-Meshiv*, who attempted to overcome the powers of evil by magical means. See Idel's introduction to A. Z. Escoly, *Ha-tenu'ah ha-meshihit be-Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1987), p. 19.

49. See Rivka Schatz, "Existence and Eschatology in the Teachings of the Maharal," *Immanuel* 14 (1982): 86–97; 15 (1982/83): 62–72; Benjamin Gross, *Netzah Yisrael* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1974), pp. 128–69; Shalom Rosenberg, "Exile and Redemption in Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century: Contending Conceptions," in B. D. Cooperman, ed., *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), pp. 399–430; André Neher, *Le puits de l'exile* (Paris, 1966); B. L. Sherwin, *Mystical Theology and Social Dissent* (London and Toronto, 1982).

50. Judah Löw ben Bezalel of Prague, *Netzah Yisra'el* (Jerusalem, 1971), chap. 16, p. 89.

51. Ibid., chap. 1, p. 9; chap. 24, p. 121. Cf. A. D. Kulka, "The Historical Background of the National Doctrine of the Maharal of Prague" (in Hebrew), *Zion* 50 (1985): 281–82.

52. See Rashi on BT Ketubbot 111a. The prohibition against forcing the End by means of prayer was strongly emphasized in Hasidic literature. See also the remarks of Rabbi Moshe Sofer (the Hatam Sofer) in *Eleh divrei ha-berit* (Altona, 1819), p. 42.

53. Judah Löw, *Netzah Yisra'el*, chap. 24, pp. 122–34.

54. Ibid., p. 124.

55. Kasher, *Ha-tekufah ha-gedolah*, pp. 272–81.

56. Judah Löw ben Bezalel, *Be'er ha-Golah* (Jerusalem, 1971), sec. 7, p. 147.

57. Yo'el Teitelbaum, *Va-Yo'el Moshe* (Jerusalem, 1978), Ma'amar Shalosh Shevu'ot, secs. 20, 32, 76, 83, 86.

58. Judah Löw, *Netzah Yisrael*, chap. 24, p. 124.

59. Isaiah Horowitz, *Shenei luḥot ha-berit* (Warsaw, 1863; reprinted, Jerusalem, 1963), pt. 3, p. 48b.

60. Ibid., pt. 1, p. 56a; cf. p. 75b.

61. Ibid., pt. 3, p. 24a. Cf. p. 49a, where the idea was directly connected to the subject of the oaths.

62. Bahya ben Asher, *Perush al ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 1958), Va-Yishlah, Gen. 32:7.

63. See below, n. 100.

64. I. Horowitz, *Shenei luḥot ha-berit,* pt. 2, p. 73a. Cf. p. 77a.

65. See Meir Benayahu, "The 'Holy Society' of Rabbi Judah he-Hasid" (in Hebrew), in *Sefer yovel le-Shneur Zalman Shazar* (Jerusalem, 1960), pp. 133–82; Yaakov Barnai, *Yehudei Eretz-Yisrael ba-meah ha-YH* (Jerusalem, 1982), p. 28, and bibliography there.

66. See above, n. 4.

67. Jacob Emden, *Torat ha-kena'ot* (Amsterdam, 1752; reprinted, Jerusalem, 1971), p. 48. See B. Z. Dinur, *Be-mifneh ha-dorot* (Jerusalem, 1972), p. 29.

68. Jacob Emden, *Siddur bet Ya'akov* (Warsaw, 1882), p. 80b.

69. Emden, *Torat ha-kena'ot,* p. 2. See Yehudah Liebes, "The Messianism of Rabbi Jacob Emden and His Relation to Sabbateanism" (in Hebrew), *Tarbitz* 49 (1980): 125.

70. Emden, *Torat ha-kena'ot,* p. 132. In this spirit one should understand the emphasis placed by Emden upon the Talmudic aphorism that makes the removal of one's mind from messianic concerns a precondition for the coming of the Messiah (BT Sanhedrin 97b). See Jacob Emden, *Ḥiddushim ve-Hagahot on the Talmud* (printed in standard editions of the Talmud), on Ketubbot 111a.

71. Moses Hagiz, *Shever posh'im* (Amsterdam, 1719), p. 6.

72. However, it was Emden who condemned the massive *aliyah* of the circle of Rabbi Judah he-Hasid, also blaming Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschütz for supporting this *aliyah.* See *Shevirat luḥot ha-berit* (Altona, Germany, 1756), p. 476a: "Several times he [Eybeschütz] spoke before them in praise of the suspect sect of Rabbi Judah Hasid, who had gone up to the Land of Israel."

73. See Ravitzky, "Set Yourself Markers," pp. 30–35.

74. Jonathan Eybeschütz, *Ahavat Yehonatan* (Warsaw, 1872), Va-Ethannan, fol. 74a. Samuel ha-Cohen Weingarten, *Hishba'ti etkhem,* claims, in light of parallels in Eybeschütz's writings, that the national passivity is not presented here as a norm but as a fact, that it does not reflect a divine decree but the Jewish refusal to go up to the Land of Israel. Examination of these texts does not confirm his interpretation. On the contrary, God Himself is portrayed by them as postponing the return of the people to Zion to days in which "the Evil Urge will be uprooted from the earth"—that is, to a metahistorical era.

75. Some Talmudic and midrashic sayings condemn the Babylonian exiles for not ascending "as a wall" to the Second Commonwealth (see above, n. 4). This motif appears frequently in Jewish literature; Eybeschütz's opponent, Rabbi Jacob Emden, likewise used it. Cf. above, n. 33; and chapter 1, n. 58.

76. Eybeschütz, *Ahavat Yehonatan,* Mi-Kets, p. 19a.

77. Ibid., Ki Tetse, p. 84a.; and cf. Shofetim, p. 82a.

78. A wealth of similar sources is cited by Mendel Piakarz in *Hasidut Polin* (Je-

rusalem, 1990). Cf. Yitzhak Alfasi, *Ha-Ḥasidut ve-shivat Tzion* (Tel Aviv, 1986); Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, *Kedushat Levi* (Jerusalem, 1964), pt. 1, pp. 103, 165; Shmuel Shemaryah of Strazov, *Zikhron Shemuel* (Warsaw, 1908), p. 13a.

79. Ya'akov Yosef of Polonnoye, *Toldot Ya'akov Yosef* (Koritz, 1780), p. 165c.

80. Elimelech of Lyzhansk, *No'am Elimelekh* (Lvov, 1786), p. 54b. Cf. Gershom Scholem, "The Neutralization of the Messianic Element in Early Hasidism," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 44 (1969–70): 44, reprinted in idem, *Messianic Idea in Judaism*, pp. 176–202.

81. Yitzhak Ya'akov of Lublin, *Zikhron zot* (Warsaw, 1869), p. 65d. Cf. the remarks of his disciple, Ya'akov of Mialiscz, *Kol Ya'akov* (Jerusalem, 1989), p. 361: "'He may not treat as first-born the son of the loved one' [Deut. 21:16], that is, the congregation of Israel, which is beloved to God, 'in disregard of the son of the unloved one,' so long as the rule of the hated one continues. For our Creator has adjured us not to force the End."

82. I have not found the edict of the oaths directed against the Hasidic aliyot to the Land of Israel. See Israel Halperin, *Ha-aliyot ha-rishonot shel ha-Ḥasidim le-Eretz Yisrael* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1947); Yaakov Barnai, *Iggerot Ḥasidim mi-Eretz Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1980); Hayyah Steinman-Katz, *Reshitan shel aliyot Ḥasidim* (Jerusalem, 1987).

83. Abraham Loewenstamm, *Tzeror ha-Ḥayyim* (Amsterdam, 1820), pp. 61–62.

84. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb* (London and New York, 1962), sec. 608, p. 461, discussion of three oaths.

85. See chapter 1. Only faint traces of this view appeared among eastern Jewry. See, for example, in the words of Rabbi Hayyim Palaggi, a great Sephardic sage in Turkey: "the Holy One, blessed be He, adjured Israel that they not go up the wall . . . for God, may He be blessed, has scattered us to the four corners" (*Otzrot ha-Ḥayyim* [Jerusalem, 1872], p. 37). But cf. his *Nishmat kol ḥay* (Salonika, 1832–37), Yoreh De'ah, secs. 49, 85.; cf. Joseph Tubi, "The Roots of the Attitude of Oriental Jewry to the Zionist Movement" (in Hebrew), in *Temurot ba-historyah ha-Yehudit ha-ḥadashah* (Jerusalem, 1988), p. 182.

86. Zvi Hirsch Lehren, sources in *Iggerot ha-pekidim veha-amarkalim me-Amsterdam*, MS Jerusalem, Ben-Zvi Archives. Cf. Aryeh Morgenstern, "Messianic Anticipations Preceding the Year 5600 (1840)" (in Hebrew), in Z. Baras, ed., *Meshiḥiyut ve-eskhatologiah* (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 351–52.

87. See Aryeh Morgenstern, *Meshiḥiyut ve-Yishuv Eretz Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1985), p. 107. Cf. pp. 25, 130, 182.

88. Moshe Teitelbaum, *Yismaḥ Moshe* (New York, 1947), pt. 1, end; cf. Alfasi, *Ha-Ḥasidut ve-shivat Tzion*, p. 17.

89. Morgenstern, *Meshiḥiyut ve-Yishuv Eretz Yisrael*, pp. 104–7.

90. Israel of Shklov, *Pe'at ha-shulhan* (Jerusalem, 1959), 1.3. Cf. in a letter of his: "The proscription of the oaths does not apply to individuals" (Avraham Yaari, ed., *Iggerot Eretz Yisrael* [Tel Aviv, 1943], p. 355). Shklov also rejected the approach of Rabbi Isaac de Leon (*Megillat Esther*, pt. 2, p. 42), cited above. See *Pe'at hashulḥan*, 1.14.

91. Shmuel Idels, *Ḥiddushei halakhot va-aggadot Maharsha*, in standard editions of the Talmud, on BT Ketubbot 111a.

92. Joshua Heshel Falk of Cracow, *Penei Yehoshua,* on BT Ketubbot 111a.

93. Cf. the remarks of Rabbi Ze'ev Wolf Einhorn of Grodno, "the Maharzu," from the mid–nineteenth century, in his commentary on Cant. R. 2:7: "King Messiah will bring all of Israel out of the Exile; if they do so by themselves, however, they will miss the messianic redemption." I wish to thank Dr. Hananel Mack for bringing this source to my attention.

94. See Kasher, *Ha-tekufah ha-gedolah,* pp. 174–75. Cf. the letters in praise of settlement of the land (from 1891) gathered in A. J. Slutzki, *Shivat Tzion* (Warsaw, 1900). The struggle with the edict of the oaths repeatedly appears as a motif in these letters: see 1:9, 35, 43, 51, 74, 2:16, 53, 84.

95. A letter of Rabbi Meir Simhah ha-Kohen of Dvinsk from 1922. Cf. Shimon Federbusch, *Torah u-melukhah* (Jerusalem and New York, 1961), pp. 91–92.

96. Hayyim Vital, *Etz Ḥayyim* (Warsaw, 1931), introduction.

97. Pinhas Halevi Horowitz, *Sefer ha-Hafla'ah,* pt. 1 (Offenbach, 1787), on BT Ketubbot 111a.

98. Elijah, Gaon of Vilna, *Siddur ha-Gera* (Jerusalem, 1891), pt. 2, p. 48a. For further sources see Aviner, "Clarifications."

99. Moses Hagiz, *Sefat emet* (Vilna, 1876; reprinted, Jerusalem, 1968), p. 65.

100. Some rabbinical authorities have argued that, from the moment the nations of the world violated their oath "not to oppress Israel overly much," the people of Israel too have been free of their oath. This view was raised in light of the 1929 Arab riots (see Y. M. Toledano, *Teshuvot Yam ha-gadol* [Cairo, 1931], sec. 97, p. 183), and especially in light of the Holocaust (see Y. A. ha-Levi Herzog, "The Establishment of a State Prior to the Coming of the Messiah" [in Hebrew], in *Sefer ha-Tzionut ha-datit* [Jerusalem, 1977], vol. 1, p. 62). Some authorities have limited the prohibition of the oaths specifically to a military conquest of the land. See Shmuel Mohilever, *Shivat Tzion,* pt. 1, p. 9; Isaac Jacob Reines, *Or ḥadash al Tzion* (Vilna, 1902), 19b; Azriel Hildesheimer, *Gesammelte Aufsatze,* ed. M. Hildesheimer (Frankfurt am Main, 1923), p. 216. There are yet other rabbis who suggested a spiritualistic interpretation of the oaths, removing them entirely from the political-historical arena. See Abraham Bornstein of Sochaczew, *Avnei Nezer,* Yoreh De'ah, sec. 456, p. 3: "The oath was directed to the root of their souls up above."