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KAV HA-YASHAR,

A PIETISTIC WORK OF THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

by

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THESIS

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Chapter numbers of references to the text of
Kav Ha-yashar are given in Roman numerals; verse numbers
are given in Arabic numerals.

The initials, K.H., will in every case signify
the text.

INTRODUCTION I

Whenever a people suffers national calamity, and must pass through war or persecution, famine and pestilence until the cup of their bitterness flows utterly over, then that people from sheer spiritual necessity is prone to take refuge in the idealities of mystical speculation. Such has been the frequent experience of Israel. One may trace the rise of a mystical movement subsequent to the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth in 586 B.C.E.; the visionary images of Ezekiel are an indication of it. No less are the apocalyptic dreams in the literature of the Apocrypha, Pseudo-Epigrapha, and the New Testament, a considerable portion of which was written by Jews who smarted under the humiliations of an alien soldiery. The Crusades produced their crop of mystics. And the Inquisition and Expulsion from Spain, if not immediately productive of new mystical movement, gave impetus to the long-established schools that had already captured the imagination of a great section of the Jewish people.

It is no mere accident that the book which forms the subject of our present study, a book showing obvious mystical traits, was composed only a half-century after the dreadful Chmielnicki massacres. According to conservative estimate, these massacres blotted out a quarter of a million lives, and so crippled the great Polish-Jewish

community that it was never able to recover the power and affluence which formerly it had possessed. It is to be expected that such a gross mishap would leave its scars upon the soul of the beravaged people. The Kav Ha-yashar is but one of many testimonies which it has bequeathed to a posterity, anxiously studious of its beravagement and the intellectual sorrows and hopes begot therefrom.

Assuredly there were hopes. The presence of them must serve to elucidate the nature of national mysticism, and show that not from despair emerges any dynamic of love and enthusiasm but rather from fortitude rooted in faith, though that faith be tried by the most rigorous tests. And thence, also, a people draws forth the ingenuity and wit, requisite to cope with the dangers that beset its survival.

The author of the book Kav Ha-yashar, Zevi Hirsch Kaidanover was destined not only to live in an unhappy time but also to experience many personal sorrows. When the barbarous soldiers of Chmielnicki (having already victimized the southern provinces of Poland, 1648-49) now aided by their Russian allies, reached the city of Wilna in 1655 in consequence of the failure of the Poles to come to a satisfactory arrangement with them, they acted as they had previously in similar

1. V. Dubnow, History of the Jews in Russia and Poland, p. 153f.

circumstances: they sacked the Jewish quarter of the town and murdered whatever Jews they came upon. The father of Zevi Hirsch, the venerable Talmudist, Aaron Samuel ben Israel (1614-78?) was rabbi in Wilna; but his eminent position in the Jewish community could bring his household no immunity from the importunate hands of the Cossacks. They slaughtered his two small daughters and destroyed his precious library. After the carnage came an edict compelling the remaining Jews to leave the city. Rabbi Aaron Samuel became an exile, as later he designated himself in the preface of his book, Birkat Ha-Zevah, " the exile from the city of Wilna." (2)

By a different concatenation of events, Zevi Hirsch also became an exile from Wilna, his native city (3) Upon the basis of a false charge trumped up against him, he and his family were thrown into prison where they languished for years. At length he was pardoned and given his freedom. It is evident, however, that the authorities were not completely satisfied with his innocence, for they still retained his son incarcerated in a dungeon at Slutsk. Fearing the resuscitation of the charge against him, he took up his baggage and fled

2. Cf. JEnc., vol. 12, p. 528

3. Six years after the above-mentioned invasion, Wilna was restored to the Poles. Again, it became a haven for the Jews, though no more a prosperous one. V. *ibid.*

to the city of Frankfort-am-Main where his father was functioning as rabbi (4), 1667-77 (5), and where his father-in-law, Isaac Haas lived.

In accordance with the spirit of the times and of the prevailing theology, Zevi Hirsch believed that his misfortunes were not a little due to his personal failings. He had not applied himself to the study of Torah as zealously as he might. He had neglected to edit his father's Talmudical studies. (6) To this task, he now turned his attention, hoping at once to satisfy his misgivings and to extract some consolation therefrom. In 1682, he produced his father's ḥinukh ḥayim (derashot on the Pentateuch); in 1683, ḥinukh ḥayim (commentary on the laws of Eben-ha-Ezer); and in 1696, ḥinukh ḥayim (Talmudical studies). But the work which won the dutiful son of the learned father enduring fame was his Kav Ha-yashar or the Just Measure, which since its first publication in Frankfort-am-Main, 1705, has run through scores of editions, the last one dating 1927, Wilna. (7) This work, it must be admitted, was not altogether original in design. It so happened that its author had obtained, prior to publication, a copy of Yesod Joseph by the Kabbalist, Joseph Dubno; and his own work represents

4. V. Winter und Wuensche, Die Juedische Litteratur, vol.3, p.643

5. Cf. Horowitz, Frankfurter Rabbinen, vol.2, p.99

6. V. Zevi Kaidanover's hakdamah to ḥinukh ḥayim.

7. V. Appendix I for a brief account of the history of its publication.

no more than an amplification and improvement of the latter.(8)
 Yet it made so powerful and permanent an impression upon
 the Jewish masses for whom primarily it was intended that
 we may consider the author justly entitled to whatever
 measure of glory accrues to him from his Kav Ha-yashar.

The work belongs to a particular category of Jewish
 literature, namely, to musar or moralistic literature,
 distinct from the scholastic exercises of the rabbis
 which only the learned could appreciate. Musar was read
 by men and women who, while not equipped with Talmudical
 training, were eager to imbibe words which would inspire
 them to noble thought and kindly action. Naturally, such
 literature had to be presented to them in the vernacular
 which alone they understood. The vernacular spoken by
 the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe at this time was
 Judeo-German, essentially a German dialect, similar to
 the High German spoken in the region of the Middle Rhine
 and the city of Frankfurt-am-Main, the great center of
 Jewish learning and culture throughout the Middle Ages. (9)
 In order to fulfil the true purpose of his book (10),
 Zevi Hirsch set about translating the Hebrew text into
 Judeo-German; and together, the Judeo-German subjoining
 the Hebrew text, they were published in Frankfurt-am-Main,
 1705.

8. V. Dubnow, op.cit., p.202.

9. The Judeo-German in Kav Ha-yashar betrays little or no
 Slavic influence. The Hebrew, though there is a goodly
 quantity, is largely confined to religious or technical
 (note continued on following page.)

The book was entitled Kav Ha-yashar. The first word of the title (קב) is a play on the number of chapters which the book contains; it also corresponds numerically to the Hebrew name of the author, Zevi (זבי). The second word of the title (ישר) has both numerical and anagrammatical correspondence with the second name of the author, Hirsch (הירש), the Germanic equivalent of Zevi. Thus, the title serves as a memorial of the author's identity. It serves also as an example of that persistent idiosyncrasy in the whole school of Kabbalists which drove them ever in quest of correspondences, numerical, anagrammatical, symbolical, allegorical, as a key to divine mysteries.

The author of Bibliotheca Judaica, Fuerst briefly describes Kav Ha-yashar as " a comprehensive work on morals and asceticism." (11) The spirit of the work is hardly disclosed by this description. The work exhales an atmosphere of profound sadness and gloom. The whole world is imagined to be overrun by unholy spirits whose sole aim is to defile and destroy the human race. " O man, wert thou to know how many demons thirst for thy blood, thou wouldst abandon thyself heart and soul to Almighty God." (12) Often the demons are successful

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9. expressions. The syntax is, of course, basically Germanic.
 10. Cf. Hakdamah to K.H.
 11. Vol.2, p.200.
 12. K.H. I:17.

and enter into the body of mortal man, in which case there can be no peace for him until he has rid himself of them. How to remain permanently immune from these aerial foes; or, how to cure oneself, having been invaded by them, forms a most conspicuous problem of this demonic psychology. The book is replete with tales of possession, exorcism, metempsychosis. Most of these are taken bodily from the Zohar, the central book of the Kabbalah; many are derived from the writings of the Safed mystical school, the head of which was Isaac Luria, familiarly known as the Ari. (13)

The Kabbalah has two major aspects: the theoretical and the practical. It was the latter aspect which was given prominence in the system of Isaac Luria. Because of the geographical proximity between the Turkish Empire (in which Palestine, the scene of Luria's activities, was included) and the Kingdom of Poland in which the bulk of Jewry lived; and because also the religious soil of Polish Jewry was receptive, practical Kabbalah or Kabbalah Ma'asith made great headway among them. A writer in the early part of the eighteenth century is quoted by Dubnow to the effect that ' there is no country where the Jews are so much given to mystical fancies, devil-hunting, talismans, and exorcism of evil-spirits as they are in Poland.' (14)

13. The oral teachings of Luria (1534-72) were committed to writing by his famous disciple, Hayyim Vital (1534-1620). Afterwards, the separate manuscripts were gathered under the title of Sepher Ez-Na-Hayyim.

14. Dubnow, op.cit., vol.1, p.203.

It might be supposed that the universal disillusionment which set in after the Sabbatian debacle would precipitate a reaction to mystical tendencies. Such is not the case. On the contrary, the despair evoked by the collapse of the Sabbatian movement deepened in proportion with the steady deterioration of the social and economic condition of the Jews; and they were rendered all the more eager to follow the will-o'-the-wisp of practical Kabbalah, all the more susceptible to the fatal attraction of amulets, talismans, and incantations.

The religion of the Polish Jews was not without pure values. There were no more pious people, as the historian Graetz would concede (15); and if their piety was often tinged with the sophisms of the Talmudical court, it was more frequently inspired with a noble simplicity and a rare intensity. Good and bad were intermingled in the alembic of their religion; and there is no doubt that the bad persisted and could persist only because there was so much good in it.

In consequence of the Chmielnicki revolt, many thousands of Jews were forced to flee for their lives. Some took refuge in German-Jewish communities to the West where, in many instances, their Talmudical erudition

15. Graetz, History of the Jews, vol.5, p.5.

was rewarded with rabbinical posts. The father of Zevi Hirsch was one of these. It is charged by Graetz, not without a little malice, that while Western Europe was abandoning the superstitions of the ages and absorbing the juvenescent influence of the Renaissance, German Jewry was being "Polonized" -- was taking on the spiritual shackles of their Eastern brethren, and forestalling in the process their cultural efflorescence by a century. (16) In the view of Zunz, even the speech of German Jews was not to escape the corrupting influence. (17)

16. Graetz, op. cit., vol.5, p.17. "In the century of Descartes and Spinoza, when three Christian nations, the French, English, and Dutch, gave the death-blow to the Middle Ages, Jewish-Polish emigrants, baited by Chmielnicki's bands, brought a new Middle Age over European Judaism, which maintained itself in full vigor for more than a century, to some extent lasting to our time."
17. Cf. Wiener, Yiddish Literature in the Nineteenth Century, p.16, where the author refers to the opinions of Zunz: "These books (in Judeo-German) printed in Slavic countries were received with open hands also in Germany and their preponderance over similar books at home was so great that the foreign corruption affected the spoken language of the German Jews, and they accepted also a number of Slavic words together with Semitic infection. This was still further aided by many Polish teachers who in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were almost the only instructors of Hebrew in Germany."

Whether the influence of the Polish Jews upon the German Jews was a salutary one is largely a matter of taste. The influence refers mainly to the excessive regard for Rabbinism and the Talmud which with the coming of the Polish Jews was injected into the social and religious atmosphere of the German Jews. At a later date, liberal German Jews had reason to protest against the obdurate conservatism which they felt was bound up with Polish Judaism. On the other hand, it is easy to exaggerate the deterrent effect of Polish Judaism upon the forces of enlightenment and emancipation. As a matter of historic fact, it was Christian medievalism rather than Jewish medievalism which retarded the coming of enlightenment and emancipation; and when, finally, in the latter part of the eighteenth and in the nineteenth century, they came to the German Jews, they were essentially the product of the liberating ideas and tendencies of the Renaissance, over which the Jews had no control, and in the direction and application of which they had a very slight share. In other words, freedom came to the Jews only when the Gentile populations, in whose midst they dwelt, were inclined to grant it to them; and European culture was shared by the Jews only when Europe was willing to allow them to share it. When that happened, it must be added, European culture had shed its parochial cast, and had assumed a universalistic intent.

The willingness of Europe to extend cultural hospitality to the Jewish people was, however, not to manifest itself until after the French Revolution. In the meantime, they were subject to the same economic restrictions and social humiliations that had characterized their life in previous centuries. Whither could they in the frequent hour of affliction turn for consolation and hope, but to the writings of their sages, to the cultural heritage of their own poignant past, the Talmud, Aggadah, and Kabbalah ? Here they found balm for the world's ills, and here also they found promise of Messianic bliss, without which promise, they could scarcely continue the unhappy existence that fate had allotted to them.

II

Although Israel put its hope in the future, it did not ignore the present. Indeed, the present was for it a vehicle to the future, and its arrival in the future was dependent upon the moral efficiency of that vehicle. Hence, the extraordinary stress upon the Law, for only by vigilant application of the Law could the desiderated moral efficiency be secured. Jewish ethics, in the proper sense, helped to diffuse the spirit of the Law. It was recognized certainly that the Taryag Mitzvoth could not comprehend every possible

thought and action of man; comprehension, however, was possible and must be effected through the vague and spiritualized tentacles of the Law.

Naturally, the ethical life found its most complete expression in the Synagogue. But not less so than in the school-house. Prayer has an indigenous ethical meaning; for the Jew, study was vain without one. If at times study was put on a higher plane than devotion or deed, it was only because it was felt that study would purify devotion and authorize deed. (18)

The various institutions of Judaism suggested themselves as texts for homily. In a popular work such as *Kav Ha-yashar*, the author utilizes prayers, ceremonials, festivals, and fast-days as his texts, and around them he weaves the fabric of precept and illustration.

Kav Ha-yashar is, as we have noted before, divided into 102 chapters. In the main, each chapter deals with a single topic. However, there is scarcely one topic in the book which does not entail the discussion of several other topics. The author has no hesitation to digress from his point; and often his digressions are long and rambling. This gives his book a sense of leisurely progression, as if by its style it would counsel us to walk composedly to the Heavenly City, and not in haste.

18. V. T.B. Kiddushin 40b. and Rambam, Talmud Torah, III:3.

For the purpose of this study, we shall treat of only a limited number of subjects, such as seem to enjoy the prominent attention of the author; and, in the course of discussion, we shall attempt to indicate the scope of the entire work.

2. WISDOM AND THE SOUL

Appropriately, Kav Ha-yashar commences with an investigation into the nature of wisdom, taking as a point of departure the verse, " With wisdom has the Lord founded the earth, and with understanding established the heavens." (Prov.3:19) This wisdom is not to be identified as an abstract principle, or even as the exercise of disinterested speculation; it is wisdom which leads directly to the accomplishment of good works, and in so doing adorns the soul which has come to mortal man from beneath the Seat of Glory. The wisdom which does not lead to good conduct, but which on the contrary leads to what is false and wicked or frivolous and vain, is to be shunned at all costs and with every effort of soul -- for the soul itself is at stake. In effect, wisdom is a means to an end, a means whereby one may avoid a deplorable fate and acquire a felicitous one, the former consisting in torturous transmigration of soul and torment in Gehenna, the latter in admission into the Heavenly Palace, into the precincts of the angels and the aureoled righteous.

Intense and often morbid preoccupation with the fate of the soul is alike characteristic of Christian theology; but, in that theology, men are not wholly responsible for whatever evil action they commit. Satan has a large share in their guilt. He it is who leads them on; he it is who tempts them. The war of the soul is carried on, in a greater or lesser degree, externally, as against an objective daimon.⁽¹⁹⁾ In Jewish theology, the war is fought on a basis, comparatively more subjective. It is man alone who sins; and though, of course, as in Christian theology, there are evil spirits to be avoided and the devil to be combatted, yet these are, generally speaking, conditions accompanying sin, and they play the role of penalizers rather than instigators of the sin committed. In the realm of Jewish thinking and action, the guilt for sin falls squarely upon the sinner, and there is no opportunity whatever for sophistical evasion.

In Kav Ha-yashar, the vicissitudes of the soul in its earthly course are variously and often, as in true Zoharist fashion, rapturously described. In XLII:2, we find a charming dialogue between God and the soul, oppressed because of the sins of the body in which it is lodged. The soul addresses a complaint to God; and He, in the accents of touched humanity, replies:

" My darling daughter, thou hast grown up in the light which emanates from beneath My Seat of Glory, and I have

19. Cf. Taylor, *The Medieval Mind*, vol. 1, p. 502f.

degraded thee into the body of man in order that thou mightest elevate thyself higher and higher through his good deeds. But now that he has sinned, thou art even lower descended, and hast fallen as from an high station to a profound pit."

In the language of the mystic, the soul is called gerushah (divorced) and is comparable to a divorced woman who has been driven from her rightful place. There is nothing left for God to do but to take the soul from man and purify it by subjecting it to punishment and suffering. Having at length purified it, the soul is ready to partake of joy and bliss in Heaven.

The simple believer may often have pondered on the worthwhileness of life, seeing that his days were full of sorrow and toil. There was the temptation to stand before the world in the pessimistic attitude of Hamlet. To such a temptation, however, the pious Jew of the seventeenth century would not submit. " God had not created man for the sake of the body which ultimately perishes and disintegrates but for the sake of the soul which was first taken from beneath the Seat of Glory to be beautified by man's deeds, and thereby hasten the day of redemption." (20)

Although the superiority of the soul is frequently stressed, we must not imagine that it was exalted at the

20. K.H. XLV:4. The day of redemption is, of course, identical with the coming of the Messiah, who, it was believed, would arrive when all souls had accomplished their purification. Thus, the purification of even one soul would have the effect of hastening the day of redemption.

expense of the body. There is dualism in Jewish ethics as in the Christian: there is soul and body, good and evil. But the correlation is not a rigid one. Soul is not necessarily good because it is soul, nor the body evil because it is body. It was the Jewish conviction that through ethical discipline of the soul, the body too would be benefited,—purified and lifted almost to a metaphysical transcendence. What was demanded was not the mere chastening of the flesh because it was flesh, but the disregard of its illegitimate desires by diverting and sublimating them through spiritual exercise and endeavor. (21) At the same time, it was admitted that suffering might aid in the refining of the soul. A saying from the Zohar has it that the soul of man is like the light of a candle: if it does not burn briskly, it needs to be shaken a little, and then it burns very well. In the case of a bad candle that is made of impure tallow, the light, with a little shaking, is likely to become much worse and be altogether extinguished. (22) Suffering has a salutary effect upon the soul; if it has not, it is proof of the inferiority of the soul.

According to the Kabbalah, the soul of man is a trinity, consisting of the neshamah, the rational element;

21. We shall have occasion to discuss flagellation and other ascetic practises mentioned in this book. But then, it will be observed that the body is punished not because it is deemed corrupted by an inherent germ of evil, but out of the curious belief that the body may have committed transgressions and out of the desire to anticipate, and thereby nullify, divine retribution.

22. K.H. LI:5

the ruah which governs the moral qualities; and the nefesh, the coarser spirit, which governs the life of the senses and has intimate connection with the physical part of man. The ruah imposes its ethical law upon the nefesh; and the neshamah, in turn, directs its refined intellectualistic influence upon the ruah. (23) While drawing upon certain aspects of this tripartite theory of the soul, Kav Ha-yashar abstains from the subtleties that are necessary for a full exposition of it. The theory, through correspondences which it suggests, is used for the practical purpose of showing the ceremonial importance of phylacteries and zizith. The neshamah has its seat in the brain and lies opposite the phylactery of the head; the ruah has its seat in the heart, opposite the phylactery of the hand; and the nefesh, in the liver, lies opposite the fringes pendant from the prayer-shawl. (24)

In another place, we are told that prayer, specifically the morning prayer, has a peculiar efficacy in relation to the neshamah: e.g., when a man sleeps at night, the neshamah or rational element wanders from the body, leaving the nefesh or vital element; the demons, who have dominion at night, now spread themselves over his body; and even should the man rise during the night for the sanctifying purpose of studying Torah, his neshamah would remain away until he had said his morning prayers. (25)

23. Cf. Franck, The Kabbalah (English trans.) p. 192f.
and Ginsburg, The Kabbalah, p. 114.

24. K.H. LXXVIII:1

25. K.H. LXI:1f.

The popular conception of the neshamah, ruah, and nefesh is further exemplified by an account of their activity after the death of the body. In relation to the Yahrzeit, the writer advises the individual suffering personal ills to visit a cemetery, and unburden himself to the neshamoth that hover there. Forthwith, these will go and inform the ruchoth of Lower Eden who will, in turn, inform the neshamoth of Upper Eden. The latter will awaken the patriarchs who sleep in the Holy Land; and they (the patriarchs) will petition God in his behalf. The neshamah that is unworthy of entering into Lower Eden, must wander abroad, whilst it beholds its body being consumed by worms. If the body be holy, its flesh will disintegrate speedily; and it will suffer no pain. That is the reward of a holy body. The reward of a holy neshamah is the immediate admission (on the death of the body) into Upper Eden; the holy ruah enters Lower Eden. On the Sabbath and New Moon, the ruah ascends to Upper Eden in order to unite with the neshamah; on the conclusion of the Sabbath and New Moon (also Festivals), the ruah descends purified and transfigured. At this time, the nefesh mounts upward to receive a portion of the light and radiance which the ruah had taken from the neshamah. Having contacted with the ruah, the nefesh descends to the grave, and reinvests the form (26) which the body had while it was yet alive. Together they arise from the grave and utter

26. Here we have an allusion to the Kabbalistic theory which assumes the existence of the form of the body prior to creation. The form contains the distinguishing traits of the body; by modern Kabbalists, it is called vechidah or individual principle. Cf. Franck, op.cit. p.193.

a paean of praise to the Almighty. (27)

3. METEMPSYCHOSIS

The purpose of the spirit lodged in the body of man is to attain a consciousness of itself and of its origin, whereafter it will return to the essence of divinity from which it first emerged. If, however, the individual violates the laws of God, then that desired consciousness is frustrated, and the soul must pass into a second body to await there the accomplishment of what had been neglected in the first; and if necessary it will pass from the second body into a third.

Kav Ha-yashar gives considerable attention to Kabbalistic metempsychosis, especially to metempsychosis in its Lurianic form. In chapter XL, there is a homily on the text: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a steadfast spirit within me." (Ps. 51:10)
(28)
The comment of the Alshech follows, according to which David here pleads that his soul might not have to suffer transmigration, i.e., might not commit the transgressions which would necessitate the passage of his soul into another body.

27. K.H. LXXI:1f.

28. A member of the Safed school of Kabbalists.

In the same chapter, the doctrine of " Ibbur " or Impregnation is discussed. (29) According to this doctrine, there are two types of metempsychosis. The one type does not involve the death of the body: the soul merely leaves the body to unite with the soul of another body. The state of the first soul is compared to that of an infant resting in its mother's womb; and, through union, it is aided in attaining its own perfection, whereafter it is considered worthy of taking its proper place in heaven. The second type of metempsychosis causes great pain. It applies in the case of a man who has grievously sinned: his soul does not leave the body until after death; and, then, it enters into the body of a child where it must abide without hope of redemption until the child grows up. Frequently instead of redeeming itself, the soul corrupts itself even more.

The doctrine of transmigration must have had a decidedly policeman effect upon the mind, for popular belief had it that not all souls would transmigrate into the bodies of the saints: the soul of the slanderer, for instance, was doomed to imprisonment in a stone where it would lie in pitch darkness; or the souls of those who ate meat not ritually prepared would be entombed in the leaves of trees, and when the leaves were blown by the wind, the souls within would suffer indescribable pain; or again the parnas, who conducted himself haughtily with his congregation, would be transported into the body of an insect, and there he would

29. The source of this theory is Sepher Ha-Gilgulim, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1684.

suffer more punishment than they suffer in Gehenna,
being confined to such a small place. (30)

The discussion of this exotic doctrine is interspersed with many tales which illustrate the fascination exercised by it upon the popular imagination. Typical is the story concerning the wife of R. Abraham, a contemporary of the Ari. She had enticed a wealthy merchant who lived in the neighborhood to commit adultery with her; and when the merchant died, his soul passed into the frame of a black dog. One morning, this dog succeeded in entering the house of the rabbi. Passing from room to room, it did not pause until it came to the bed-chamber where it sighted the woman asleep on her bed, pounced upon her in a rage, and severely bruised her. Later, the incident was brought to the attention of the Ari, who instantly divined the reason for the dog's malignancy. (31)

The doctrine of Ibbur was often blended with the concept of saintly intercession. Thus, it was believed that the disembodied spirits of sinners, wandering aimlessly over the earth, would never reach their place of heavenly rest unless they attached themselves either to the souls of saints or to the upward-ascending prayers of the righteous. R. Gedalia, a disciple of the Ari, tells how his master once stood upon a cliff overlooking the

30. It is impossible to ascertain what degree of credence was given to such vagaries; but there is no doubt that they influenced the ethical conduct of the masses.

cemetery outside the city of Safed, and observed the souls of sinners mingling with the souls of the righteous and together ascending to heaven. (32)

Another story of the Ari relates that once, walking in a field, he encountered numberless hosts of souls which lay upon the trees, the grass, and the surface of the waters. Interrogating them as to the reason for their assemblage, they plaintively replied that they had been driven from the holy regions because of their failure to expiate their sins; and that shortly before his coming they had heard a bath-kol which announced that there was but one saint (the Ari) who could intercede for them. And therefore they were gathered in the field -- in order that they might implore him to use his good offices in their behalf. (33)

4. PRAYER

We have seen that it is only by a passionate concern for virtue and piety that the soul can reach that state preparatory to its union with the Divine. Nevertheless, it is possible for the soul while on earth to reach an approximation of union. This may be achieved through contemplation and prayer. The reader of Kav Ha-yashar is frequently counseled to set apart a certain period each day when, by meditating in solitude, he may

32. K.H. V:9

33. K.H. V:3f.

find communion with God.

Prayer is useless without a total absorption of self, without kavanah. The writer comments on the interpretation of two Amoraim regarding the rule that the worshipper must stand with his feet straight while reciting the "Eighteen Benedictions," the one maintaining that he must do so in order to correspond with the description of the angels in Ez.1:7, "And their feet were straight;" and the other arguing that he must do so in order to correspond with the practise of the priest, who, while performing the sacrifice, had to concentrate upon his work and allow no strange thought to enter his mind. The writer would accept both views, asserting that the worshipper should imitate both angel and priest neither of whom allowed strange thoughts to disturb them at their devotions. (34)

The vanity of any prayer but that which is permeated with kavanah is illustrated by a Zoharistic idea. The heavenly officer, Tahariel, who stands by the door of the Hall of Prayers, permits the entrance only of prayers that have been recited with kavanah. These are readily transformed into crowns for the Godhead. On the other hand, prayers which contain an admixture of strange thought and fancy are thrust aside, doomed to hover aimlessly abroad until they come to the officer, Sahadiel, who keeps them

until such a time as they are redeemed by the repentance and sincerity of their authors. (35)

An insincere prayer is like a body without a soul. But those prayers are most esteemed which are accompanied with tears; God Himself opens the gates for their admission. (36) Indeed, let a man worship with tears in order that he may not be ashamed hereafter when he comes into the Divine Presence (37) The prayers of the poor have precedence over all other prayers; and therefore they enfold the prayers of all Israel, and together they ascend to Heaven. (38) Since the prayers of the poor are so favored by God, the worshipper is advised to put himself in the mood of the poor and humble himself so that his prayers may find ready access to God. (39)

5. ASCETICISM

Prayer was one means of purifying the soul; suffering was another. But only that suffering was efficacious which was accepted with love, which tore away the "husks" and quickened the light of the soul. It is in this sense that we must interpret the verse: "The Lord hath chastened me sore; but he hath not given me over to death." (Ps. 118:18) i.e. David imploring God to deliver him from Maves, from Gehenna, since he has already been cleansed from sin by his suffering. (40)

35. K.H. VIII:3

36. K.H. VIII:9

37. K.H. XII:1

38. K.H. XXVIII:2

39. K.H. XXVII:12

40. K.H. XXXI:28

In the sixteenth century, Jewish mystics were oppressed with an abnormal consciousness of sin. The air about them was dark and filled with fabulous hosts of demons and devils. Desperately they strove to wrest their souls from the clutch of earthliness through fervid prayer and prolonged fasting. The famous disciple of the Ari, Hayyim Vital, tells how he took counsel with his soul as to the means whereby he might attain to salvation, and how his soul advised him to fast forty days with sack-cloth and ashes, and thereafter to fast every Monday and Thursday for a period of two and a half years. (41)

Flagellation was also popular. It was felt that by confessing his sins, the sinner had anticipated the prosecutor of the heavenly court and deprived him of incriminating evidence. (42) Analogously, whoever accepted stripes (malkos) in this world was bound to avoid them in the world to come. (43) The customary thirty-nine stripes were regarded as being very salutary in that they nullified the thirty-nine curses of the Serpent. Indeed, if one accepted the stripes, the corresponding curses were converted for him into blessings. (*) The idea of flagellation very curiously insinuated itself into Zoharistic biblical criticism: When Abraham pleaded with God in behalf of the

41. K.H. XII:4. Two and a half years -- to compensate for a similar period during his youth when he had neglected Torah and good works.

42. K.H. XLVII:12

43. K.H. XXXIII:5

(*) *ibid.*

Sodomites and said: " Perhaps there be forty;" (44)
 according to the Zohar, Abraham really meant to say that
 perhaps there were in Sodom men who accepted the forty
 penitential stripes. (45)

The most notable instance of ascetic practise is that
 related of a certain R. Abraham who, in preparation for
 Atonement Day, subjected himself to four distinct types of
 punishment modelled after the four Talmudic modes of
 capital punishment. First, he entered into a sack and had
 himself dragged the whole length and breadth of the
 synagogue. In this way, he conquered his Evil Inclination.
 Then he requested the by-standers to throw upon him a stone
 of a liter and a half in weight. This act symbolized
 execution by stoning (אֶבֶן).

R. Abraham emerged from his sack and repaired to the
 court of the synagogue, where he reposed himself on a
 specially prepared bed of thorns. He had removed his
 clothes; and now he exposed his naked body to the thorns,
 turning to and fro until it was torn and bruised all over.
 This act symbolized execution by burning (בִּשְׂרָף). Next,
 he accepted the thirty-nine stripes -- this punishment
 symbolizing execution by decapitation with the sword (בִּדְבַר)
 Finally, he bathed himself in a ritual bath (בִּמְצוּחַ);
 this symbolized execution by strangulation (בְּחָסֶה).

44. Gen. 18:29.

45. K.H. XXXIII:5

Having completed his askesis, R. Abraham recommended it to the worshippers in the synagogue, and assured them that if they followed his example, they would be saved from all the toils of Gehenna. (46)

6. PRACTICAL MYSTICISM

A. Charms and Amulets:

The popularity of the practise of charms and amulets among the heathens of antiquity is notorious. The basis of the practise was the belief that the essence of the deity lay in his name; and that, therefore, if one possessed the name of the deity, one had a means of protection against evil spirits.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Among the Jews, the practise of charms and amulets persisted from the days of antiquity down to modern times. The names of angels, and especially the ineffable name of God, were held to be endowed with magical potency. These names were used in conjurations and exorcisms. Certain Pentateuchal passages containing sacred names were inscribed on pieces of parchment and carried about on the person. (Sometimes the parchment was placed in containers, as in the case of phylacteries and mezuzoth.) Sacred names were also engraved on suitable metallic objects, such as tablets, discs, rings, etc. Besides the use of sacred names and Pentateuchal verses, specific psalms were used as charms against diseases. Kav Ha-yashar is replete with examples of the use of Jewish charms and amulets, some of which we shall

46. K.H. XLVIII:5

47. Hastings Enc. vol.3, p.452.

reproduce for the purpose of illustration.

a) Among Scriptural verses, Ps.78:38, ('H /H 22' P/H/KH') was deemed to have an especial magical importance. The sages had ordained that this verse be recited thrice in the course of the daily ritual. The magical quality of the verse is reenforced by the coincidence that it contains thirteen words, which when multiplied by three makes thirty-nine, corresponding to the number of stripes that one would be worthy of if he surrendered to the Evil Inclination. Thus, the recitation of the verse is supposed to serve as a kind of prophylaxis against temptation. (48)

b.) The sin of keri (seminal emission) is one against which the devotee is constantly warned. If he would avoid this sin, let him conjure in his imagination the image of his father; or, better still, let him have made a ring of pure silver and engrave upon it these sacred words:

'JH KH' P/H'2 P'0202 P'02 2222 '2C (49)
then, let him bathe the ring in a ritual bath, and it will serve as an immunity. (50)

c.) Concerning the mezuzah: A mischievous demon stands by the door of every house, threatening to injure whoever wishes to enter. When, however, it perceives the name Shaddai on the mezuzah, it is rendered powerless. One must be careful

48. K.H. XXXIII:1

49. These recondite letter-combinations doubtlessly represent liturgical phrases and names of guardian-angels.

50. K.H. LXX:7

not to throw unclean water in the vicinity of the mezuzah. For two reasons: first, in order not to dishonor the holy names contained in the mezuzah; and secondly, because the unclean water enables the demon to accomplish his malign purpose. Who demonstrates his love for the mezuzah by kissing it every time that he passes by will win the blessing of the demons themselves which must perforce quote Scripture and say: ' This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter into it.' (Ps.118:20) (51)

d.) During the four equinoctial periods, the demonic hosts are particularly active. One must beware of the " red drop " (דִּקְדִּיק) which appears in food or liquids and is a sign that judgment is being roused against the world. However, there is an anodyne against the " red drop." Let one place a piece of iron over the liquid or food, and that will keep it safe. In support of this practise is the scriptural phrase: " Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron." בַּרְזֵל (Ps.2:9) i.e. God will destroy the devil's domain with an iron rod. There is an added virtue in the use of iron inasmuch as it recalls the merit of the twelve tribes of Israel which were born of the four matriarchs, Bilhah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Leah. It is to be noted that the first letters of these names compose the word בַּרְזֵל, iron.

The " red drop " is believed to be the work of Lilith, Queen of the demons; and the only way to oppose her influence is to invoke the aid of the pure females, i.e. the four mothers of Israel. (52)

e.) Circumcision: Kav Ha-yashar cites the opinion of the early scholars to the effect that anyone who was bitten by a scorpion would have his wound healed if he applied to it the circumcised organ of a preadolescent, גן אדן ילד. (53)
The writer himself suggests, in the case of a new-born infant, the application of the organ of a pre-adolescent to the mouth of the infant as an immunity against demonic possession. (54)

f.) Various religious occasions and acts, connected with them, were invested with magical significance. It was believed, for instance, that the pains which one took in preparation for the Passover had an adverse effect upon the demons. (55)
On the Seder nights of Passover, the night-prayers (ליל) were omitted in the faith that these being " nights of vigilance," God would keep the demons at a distance. (56)

The name of Satan (שטן), whose numerical value equals 364, indicates that of the whole year there is one day on which he has no power, i.e. the Day of Atonement. (57)

52. K.H. XLVII:2,3.

53. K.H. LI:4. The scorpion of the Zodiac was deemed to be under the governance of אֵל נִינְאִי

54. ibid.

55. K.H. XC:5

56. K.H. XC:10

57.) K.H. ZCV:2.

Even as it was supposed that on certain occasions one was comparatively free from the baneful influence of demons, it was believed that on certain other occasions he was particularly open to their attack. The following are the dangerous days: the 17th of Heshvan; the 8th of Shevat; the 20th of Adar; the 25th of Nisin; the 29th of Iyyer; the 16th and the 26th of Sivin; the 24th and 26th of Tammuz; the 20th, 26th, 27th of Ab; the 12th of Elul. On these days, it is not safe to let blood. Nor is it safe for a child to walk alone in unfrequented places; The Evil Eye may seize him. If an adult accompany the child, let him shield the child with the wing of his outer coat, even as God shielded Israel with the wings of the Shechinah from the baleful eyes of Balaam. (58)

B. Demonological Characters:

In the literature of the Zohar, one will find mention of numerous hierarchies of angels and demons, reflecting an almost architectonic development in this kind of speculation. In the consciousness of the masses, however, the demonic world was all rather vague. Only here and there, an isolated figure loomed out of the enveloping mist. Such a one is Lilith, who, originally an Assyrian demon, evolved in the Jewish psyche as a night-witch. Lilith haunts the ruins and waste-places, and is particularly ominous in respect of small children whom she steals, and infants begotten in sin whom she devours. It is possible that in her relation to

small children, she personifies the difficulties that beset women in child-birth. (59) She is generally conceived as the genius of sexual impurity, having dominion over 480 demon bands who spread their polluting influence over the earth. (60)

Sometimes identified with Lilith is Mahalath, also a demoness of sexual impurity. She often appears to man in the shape of a beautiful woman, and her desire is to seduce him. She may appear in broad-daylight (61), in which respect she differs from Lilith who is, formally speaking, a night-witch. Mahalath may co-habit with and have children by mortal man; but, in any case, she seeks the undoing of her victims.

Other personifications of Evil are Satan, Samael, and the Original Serpent, all identical with one another as the source of evil and defilement. They are all variously the consorts of Lilith; and together they breed the innumerable hosts of demons which ceaselessly plague the human race.

C. Intercourse with Demons:

There are many stories in Kav Ha-yashar which illustrate the popular conception of the role which the demons play in human affairs. The following, occurring in Chapter XXV of Kav Ha-yashar has its original source in the Talmud. (62)

59. V. Hastings Enc. vol.4, p.614.

60. K.H. LXX:4

61. K.H. LIX:1

62. T.B. Hullin, 105b.

Once, porters were engaged in carrying a vat of wine. After traversing a certain distance, they became tired, and set their vat on the ground while they rested for a moment. On touching the ground, the vat unfortunately broke, and the wine leaked away. The porters, greatly vexed, suspected that a demon was responsible for the mischief; and they brought their complaint to Mar, son of Rav Ashi, who blew a note on his shofar and summoned the miscreant demon for cross-examination. The demon presented itself, docilely confessed its guilt in the matter, but pleaded in self-extenuation that there had been no other recourse since the porters had been so indiscreet as to rest the vat upon its ears. In the view of the rabbi, however, the demon had forfeited all consideration by appearing where it had no right to appear, i.e., in a place frequented by human beings; and he imposed a fine calculated to compensate the porters for their loss. The demon accepted the verdict, and asked for a reprieve during which it might collect the money necessary to pay the fine. A reprieve was granted. Notwithstanding, the demon overstepped the limit of time allowed to it, and was tardy in coming with the money. Curious to know the reason for the delay, the rabbi questioned the demon and received the reply that the devil's domain had no power over that which was bound or sealed, measured or counted, and that it was not until the present that it had managed to obtain a quantity of money wherewith to pay the fine. (63)

Among the numerous tales of the same order occurring in Kav Ha-yashar, there is one which strikes us particularly by reason of the fact that the events related, taking place in the middle of the seventeenth century, have almost a flavor of contemporaneity with the life of the author. The scene of the story is a house on the great square of the city of Posen -- a house haunted by evil spirits, as was adduced by the fact that a youth who had ventured down into the cellar met there with a fatal accident. Fearing some further mishap, the people dwelling in the house barred the entrance to the cellar to prevent others from going down and putting their lives at hazard.

Two years after the accident, the demons ascended into the house proper; invaded the pantry-room; smashed the china; befouled the cooking; and, in short, made life unbearable for the inhabitants. These incidents caused a sensation in the city of Posen, and the authorities were called upon to do what they could to ameliorate the situation. (64) But all efforts to dislodge the demons were fruitless until at last the Wonder-Rabbi, Joel Baal-Shem of Zamosc came on the scene. This rabbi summoned the mischievous spirits to appear before a tribunal of sages, and subjected them to a cross-examination out of which certain interesting facts came to light.

It was learned that some few years previously, there had lived in this selfsame house a goldsmith who had carried on

64. Cf. Dubnow, op.cit., p.203. Even the Jesuits of the city were invited.

an affair with a female devil. On one Passover night in particular (a Seder night), the goldsmith left his place at the table round which his wife and children were gathered, and retired to the privy outside. As he was a long time out, the wife became anxious, and went after to see what it was that delayed him. When she came to the privy, she peeped through a chink in the wall. Lo and behold ! Inside was no privy at all but a sumptuous apartment, beautifully appointed; and upon a bed lay her husband in the embrace of his demon-mistress. Seeing what she saw, the wife, needless to say, became exceedingly vexed; she was resolved, however, not to interrupt the dalliances of her husband, but to go back to the Passover board and await his return. In a little while, the husband returned, and the family resumed the festive meal. The woman, on her side, made no allusion to what she had seen and kept her peace all that night. On the following morning, she visited the distinguished Rabbi Sheftel (65) and revealed to him all that had happened the night before. In due time, the rabbi sent for the husband; and, in the course of an interview, forced him to confess the illicit relationship. Thereupon, the rabbi wrote out an amulet (שְׁמֵי שְׁמֵי) whose sacred names vanquished the goldsmith's infatuation for the demoness and effected a severance between them.

A few years passed, and now the goldsmith lay upon his death-bed. His long-neglected paramour appeared before him, and with tears in her eyes, reproached him for

65. Sheftel ben Isaiah Horowitz, Rabbi in Posen, 1641-58.

having cast her aside. Then, by wiles and smiling countenance, she induced him to leave a portion of his estate to her and the demon-children which she had begot him. In response to her entreaties, he bequeathed to her and the children the cellar of his house.

During the wars (1648-58), all the mortal heirs of the goldsmith perished, and only the demon-children survived. These, arguing before the rabbis, declared that the estate fell justly to them inasmuch as they were the only living heirs. The present inhabitants, on the other hand, refused to admit the cogency of this argument. They said that they had paid for the house with money; and as for the claims of the demons, they submitted that since the demons were not mortal their claims could not be regarded as valid.

At length, the rabbis delivered a verdict which vindicated the stand of the inhabitants, and denied to the demons any right to the house. The demons' proper habitation was the desolate field and the wilderness, and they ordered the demons to leave forthwith from the house. As they would not do this willingly, Rabbi Joel exerted exorcistic pressure upon them and forcibly ejected them.

The writer does not fail to draw the reader's attention to the moral of the story which is, apparently, that any man who attaches himself to Lilith or Mahalath does by that act doom himself and his family to destruction. (66)

D. Exorcism:

The practise of exorcism was a natural consequence of the belief in the existence of demons and their power to enter into the bodies of human beings. It is not surprising, therefore, to find instances of this practise in the pages of Kav Ha-yashar. One curious story is recounted in Chpater LXXVII. It tells of an ailing woman who appealed to the Ari for help. Upon examination of the woman, he determined that there was nothing physically wrong with her, but that she was the victim of demonic possession. Toward evening, he sent his disciple, Hayyim Vital, to the house of the sick woman with instructions to exorcise the demon. Vital applied his talents, but with no palpable result; the demon would not budge despite all the sacred nomenclature hurled at it. Vital was forced to return to his master and admit defeat. To the Ari, however, his disciple's failure was not unaccountable. It had been a mistake to attempt exorcism at night when the demons were at the peak of their strength. He advised his disciple to return on the following morning and renew his efforts. This Vital did. The second attempt was successful: he was not only able to impose his will upon the ghost but forced it out of the woman's body through the small ^{toe} ~~finger~~ of the left foot. Issuing forth, it appeared before many witnesses like a thread of fire.

Although having been ejected by the exorcist from his former home, the ghost seemingly entertained no bad feelings and was not averse to answer his questions.

To the query as to its business in the woman's body, the ghost replied that in its corporeal existence, it had been a blasphemer, liar, and talesbearer, and that it would never have had any power over the woman in question had she not on one occasion, while preparing for the Sabbath, permitted herself to sing a frivolous song. Then, and only then, was it allowed to enter her body, where it remained for a period of three years.

E. Magic:

Although there are in Kav Ha-yashar frequent references to and some elaborate discussion of the practise of magic, there is little that gives us any insight into the contemporary modus operandi. The writer has an extremely simple explanation of magic. Men are often drawn to it, he says, when they have suffered financial losses. Then, instead of regarding their losses as expiatory sacrifices for their sins, they are prone to complain against God, and seek to recover what they have lost through magic rather than prayer or petition. (67)

Belief in magic is often linked with idolatry, and the association is more than a superficial one. It was alive in the popular consciousness that magic was, in essence, only an invocation to heathen gods; (68) and the very idea of invoking heathen or alien gods, let alone the acceptance of what was gained thereby, was

67. K.H. XXVIII:1

68. Cf. Hastings Enc. vol.3, p.301.

bound to arouse the abhorrence of true believers.

It is not necessary for the purpose of our thesis to concern ourselves at great length with the distinction between "black magic" and the magic which was acceptable to true believers. It is sufficient to recognize that the magic which they feared (Be) involved the worship of an alien deity. Their own magical practises, their amulets, talismans, and incantations, they did not regard as Be, but as legitimate accoutrements of their faith.

The reader of Kav Ha-yashar is warned against repeating, he is admonished to keep out of hearing distance of any magical incantation. (69) He must eschew all medicines, concocted with the help of magic. (70) Those who defied the public conscience and resorted to magic were to be expelled from the community. Especially reprehensible was the attempt to cast spells upon children. (71) As an anodyne against magical spells, the believer is, on one occasion, advised to recite the Fifteen Songs of Degrees (Ps. 120-34 inclusive). (72)

The Jewish conception of magic is reflected in the Zohar whence Kav Ha-yashar draws very freely. Here Balaam is represented as the arch-magician who attempts to accomplish

- 69. K.H. XXIX:12
- 70. K.H. XXVIII:18
- 71. K.H. XXIX:9
- 72. K.H. XXIX:12

the down-fall of Israel through magic. His failure is proof that the operations of magic are at once foolish and vain.

According to the Zohar, the fountain-heads of magic were Aza and Azael who at one time had been angels in heaven. They had urged God not to create man; and in anger God cast them down to earth. Here they became touched with the pollution of the Serpent; they looked upon the daughters of the earth and seduced them to fornication. When God perceived that these angels were leading man astray, He shackled them with iron chains and put them beneath the dark mountains. Thither came Balaam every day to learn the names of magic and defilement. (73)

But in Israel there were men who were more than a match for Balaam. In the midst of combat with Midian, Phinehas descried the magician Balaam flying through the air. Immediately, he enquired if there was anyone in his army capable of flying in pursuit. Zalia, of the tribe of Dan, volunteered. Zalia knew how to subdue the powers of defilement, and with sacred names he followed in hot pursuit after Balaam. When the latter saw his pursuer, he created a cloud of darkness, and entered into the darkness in the hope of eluding his enemy. Following him, Zalia became enveloped by the darkness and was rendered powerless by it. At this point, Phinehas raised his voice at the darkness, and with a shout dispersed it so that both Balaam and Zalia stood revealed. Then Zalia conquered the magician and

compelled him to stand before Phinehas. But how could Zalia gain mastery over him? The answer is that Zalia had dominion over male and female demons and called them in on his side, whereas Balaam had dominion only over the male demons.

Having denounced the wicked magician, Phinehas commanded Zalia to destroy him -- not by a holy name, but by a sword. Zalia plunged his sword many times into the body of Balaam without finishing him. Zalia drew another sword on either side of which was engraved the likeness of a serpent (74), and with this sword he succeeded in disposing of the magician. Then said Phinehas, addressing the corpse: In that defilement with which you busied yourself, you perish. At these words, Balaam's bones rotted away, and his flesh turned into snakes and maggots.(75)

7. HOSPITALITY AND BENEVOLENCE

Hospitality and benevolence are, as we may expect, ever-recurrent themes in a work of popular ethics. There is, of course, nothing to marvel at in the direct, and sometimes crude admonitions to kindness. And yet, in the constant reiteration, something shows through of the luminous piety which once motivated the inarticulate masses of simple faith; and even a modern reader may catch a little warmth from it.

74. The serpent was the insignia of the tribe of Dan. Cf. Gen. 48:17

75. Cf. Zohar III, 193, 194; K.H. XXIX.

The ethical temper of the book is more directly intimated by such words as those in Chapter X:¹, addressed to the parent who prepares a feast and cautioning him to invite the poor lest he arouse against himself the contentious/spirit of Lilith or Samael. Following on these words is a midrash which relates that God became angry with Abraham and commanded him to offer up his son as a sacrifice because he had failed to invite the poor to a banquet which he had given in honor of the great men of his generation.

The saying of the sages is quoted to the effect that he who gives food and money to the poor is blessed with six blessings, whereas he who adds kind words is blessed with eleven blessings. Indeed, the receiving of strangers with a cheerful countenance is more than the receiving of the Divine Presence itself. (76)

But not only is man obliged to love his human neighbors, he has also certain responsibilities to animals and plants. He must refrain from doing unnecessary harm to animals; hunting, as a sport, is expressly prohibited. Nor may he wantonly destroy any plant, tree, or beneficent growth of nature; for all things have been created by God, and nought has been created in vain. (77) A story is told of the Ari that once he advised a man who was worried over the sterility of his wife that if he would have her cured,

76. K.H. IX:14

77. K.H. LXXXIII:1,3.

he should bid her restore the ladder by which her chickens were wont to ascend to the reach of water. For it was the complaint of the thirsty chickens which caused a decree to go out from heaven against her. (78)

8. CONGREGATIONAL FUNCTIONARIES

In Kav Ha-yashar, there is no systematic treatment of congregational functionaries. There are, however, scattered references to the parnas, the hazan, and the maggid, (concerning the beadle little or nothing is said) which reflect certain grievances held by the masses. The parnas' administration of the synagogue was very frequently not to the pleasure of the people, nor to that of the scholar either. If the parnas was oppressive to the poor, he was prone to be arrogant to the scholar. He or his deputies were responsible for the distribution of the public charities; and it may be assumed that this duty was not always carried out in accordance with strict ethical propriety. The parnas also had a hand in the apportioning of the burden and in the collecting of the taxes. This business has been a traditional temptation to the corrupt. The author of Kav Ha-yashar has written a strong indictment against the type of leader who shifts the burden of taxation upon the poorer element of the population, allowing himself and his wealthy associates to get off lightly. He denounces those who appropriate communal moneys for their personal use and expend them on " dowries and gifts to bride

and bridegroom." When such a leader reaches the Heavenly Court, asserts the writer, he will be preceded by a herald who will announce him as one who has devoured the flesh and blood of Israel. (79)

The transgressions of the hazan are, of course, of another order. He is censured for rendering the prayers in an unintelligible manner, for enunciating falsely, or misplacing the emphasis, or pausing at the wrong place; or especially if he prays mechanically, without warmth or fervor. (80)

The maggid, on the other hand, is cautioned to express himself in a lucid manner. If he falls into a passion, then he must be careful not to utter indiscriminate denunciation lest the judgment of heaven fall equally upon the wicked and the righteous. Nor is it commendable in a maggid to shame transgressors; his object should be to teach rather than humiliate. If he assumes an arrogant tone, his words are bound to have an ill effect: the congregation will be moved to shut their ears; and his unjust rebukes may rebound with punishment upon himself. The author cites approvingly the practise of many preachers who, conscious of the temptations of their profession, recite privately a brief prayer that no pride nor haughtiness may seize them while they address their congregation. (81)

79. K.H. IX

80. K.H. XLI:7,8.

81. K.H. XLIII.

9. THE ETHIC OF PEDAGOGY

It has already been noted (in the Introduction) that the peculiar eminence of Polish Jewry lay in the realm of scholarship. It was by virtue of scholarship that Polish Jews attained rank and status among their brethren in Western Europe, and thereby they were also enabled to put the stamp of their individuality upon the whole cast of European Judaism. Their academic excellence was not fortuitous. An unbroken tradition of learning coupled with native talents predisposed them to it; and there was the indefatigable discipline to which they gave themselves wholeheartedly, a discipline which did not disdain to apply the rod to wayward youth or inflict petty humiliations, whenever necessary, upon slack scholars.

It is beyond our province to enquire into the shortcomings of the Polish system of pedagogy. No doubt, there were many of them, which to us are no less unsavory because they are antique. However, we may find it easier to pardon them when we have made due allowances for the general ignorance, prevailing in that age and for a long time afterward, of more enlightened methods. One rather serious objection which has frequently been raised against their scholarship, and one to which we have already alluded, was its excessive limitation of interest. The Polish scholars spent nearly all of their time on halacha. They scorned philosophy, the sciences, the arts. Even their knowledge of the Bible,

the greatest monument of their heritage, came not from any independent attention; they became associated with it through the numerous fragments occurring in the liturgy and in the Talmud which they studied with indisputable avidity.

It is clear, nevertheless, that the limitations of their scholarship could not diminish their enthusiasm for learning. On the contrary, it is quite probable that they increased it. We may obtain a glimpse of their enthusiasm from certain revelatory passages in Kav Ha-yashar which picture in warm colors the ritual of inducting the child into the mysteries of the heder.

When a child has reached the age for school, says the moralist, the father personally should bring him to school and introduce him to the teacher. The conventionalities of introduction once over, there is produced a tablet on which are indited the letters of the alphabet. The teacher coaches the child to repeat after him the various letters, forward and backward in their regular order. Then they repeat the verse, א ל ו כ מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר ש ת, and the first verse of the book of Leviticus. At the conclusion of this first lesson, some honey is poured out on the letters of the tablet, and the child is bidden to lick it off.

When the father accompanies his child home, he must cover him with the wing of his coat lest the child see any

polluting object. It is well that the parents should fast that day and pray that their child be granted fortune in his studies and many fruitful years. At even, they should have a feast, and invite the poor to it. They should also give charity according to their means. Having done these things, they may be sure that the fear of God will rest upon their child.

Their reward is exceedingly great who, having no children of their own, adopt an orphan and rear him as their own. They also are blessed who invite indigent scholars to dwell with them in their homes, and support them while they study.(82)

It is impossible to mistake the profound pietism which surcharged the intellectual temperament of Polish Jewry; and if that pietism has had to make many a retreat before the march of a modern eclecticism, still we ought to remember that through many centuries it was one of the great moulding forces of the soul of Israel, illuminating the rocky crevices of their speculation, and preserving the gift of enthusiasm and imagination as a legacy to future generations.

APPENDIX I.

Since the original printing in 1705, *Kav Ha-yashar* has gone through numerous editions. The bibliographical lexicon, Beth Eked Sepharim by B. Friedberg traces the publication of this work down to the year 1876, in all thirty-six editions, including two Ladino or Judeo-Spanish translations. The Hebrew Union College Library possesses thirteen distinct editions, including the two oldest Frankfurt editions of which the first was published in 1705 by J. Wust, and the second in 1709-10 by M. Andreae. These two oldest editions are also cited by Steinschneider in his "Catalogus Librorum Hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana" (vol.2, p.2755).

There are no available records of all the successive editions that have been printed. But this is not lamentable since of the editions which are extant (a sufficient number to certify beyond all shadow of doubt the popularity of the work) the Hebrew varies but slightly if at all. The same cannot be said for the Judeo-German text which is often more elaborate than the Hebrew. The Judeo-German changes in response to the normal fluctuations of vital speech and literature; the changes are in three respects: orthography, script (from Rashi to square-type), and phrasing.

In addition to those editions listed in Beth Eked Sepharim, there are at the Hebrew Union College Library the following editions containing the Hebrew and Judeo-German: 1) Vilna, 1875; 2) Vilna, 1886; 3) Vilna, 1911; 4) Lublin, 1912; and the following edition containing only the Hebrew: Warsaw, 1879.

APPENDIX II.

The Kav Ha-yashar is not provided with chapter-headings. These are here given in the hope that they may serve as a guide to the various discussions in the book.

- I. Of the Uses of Wisdom and Understanding.
- II. Of the Avoidance of Objects Defiling.
- III. That One Should Keep Company with Good Men and Refrain from the Company of Evil Men.
- IV. Of the Duty to Interpret the Law Honestly.
- V. Of Brotherly Love and Mutual Responsibility.
- VI. That God Helps to Purify those who Seek Purity.
- VII. Of the Folly of Pride.
- VIII. Of the Efficacy of Prayer.
- IX. Of the Qualities of a Good Leader.
- X. Of Hospitality and Kindness to the Poor.
- XI. Of Cleanliness Which is Holiness.
- XII. Of Works which Lead to Inner Cleanliness.
- XIII. Of Ablutions as a Means to Ward Off Unclean Spirits.
- XIV. Of the Merit Which Accrues to one Hereafter through Good Works.
- XV. That One should Respect his Fellowman and Especially his Teacher.
- XVI. Of Punishment for Sin and Excommunication.
- XVII. Of Conjugal Fidelity.
- XVIII. Of Divine Purpose in the World and the Appropriateness of our Thanksgiving.
- XIX. That One should Fulfil all the Commandments and the Reward for so Doing.
- XX. Of the Merit of the Fathers.

- XXI. Of the Study of Torah and its Reward.
- XXII. Of Punishment Incurred through the Sin of Keri.
- XXIII. Of Repentance
- XXIV. Of the Avoidance of Evil Spirits.
- XXV. Of God's Blessing and His Protection from Evil Spirits.
- XXVI. Of Avarice and its Curse.
- XXVII. Of the True Study of Torah and its Reward; Of the Proper attitude for Worship.
- XXVIII. Of Magic Resorted to in consequence of a Lack of Faith in God.
- XXIX. Of Magic and its Defilement.
- XXX. Of Charity and its Reward.
- XXXI. That Suffering Must be Received with Love.
- XXXII. Of Days On which One is Especially Susceptible to the Influence of Evil Spirits.
- XXXIII. Of Flagellation and its Virtue.
- XXXIV. Of Adultery and Punishment Therefor.
- XXXV. Of Yahrzeit.
- XXXVI. Of Poverty
- XXXVII. Of Bewailing Israel's Past Calamities.
- XXXVIII. Of Earnestness in Prayer.
- XXXIX. Of Punishment Visited Upon the Soul for its Sins and the Means of Expiation.
- XXXX. Of Transmigration of the Soul.
- XXXXI. Of Meditation and Communion with God.
- XXXXII. Of the Soul Suffering because of Sin.
- XXXXIII. Of the Things which Defer Repentance.
- XXXXIV. That Man should not Exploit his Neighbor.
- XXXXV. Of the Sublime Purpose of Man.
- XXXXVI. Of Cleanliness in Dress, Especially on the Sabbath.
- XXXXVII. That Repentance Preceded the Creation of the World; of the Red Drop and the Anodyne Against it.

XXXVIII. Of the Day of Atonement.

XLIX. Of Fasting which Leads to Atonement.

L. That the prayers of the Poor are Attended Prior to the Prayers of Others.

LI. Of the Prophylactic Power of Earnest Prayer; of the Prophylactic Power of Circumcision.

LII. That Excess of Piety is dangerous; Of Fraudulent Piety and its Fatal Consequences.

LIII. Of Study and how it Serves to Remove the Klipot.

LIV. Of Books and the Proper Care of Them.

LV. Of the Examination of One's Deeds and the Means of Reconciliation with God and Man.

LVI. Of the Danger of False Oaths.

LVII. Of False Oaths and the Evil Works of Lilith.

LVIII. That Chastity is Desirable.

LIX. That Over-indulgence in Pleasure is Dangerous.

LX. Of the Punishment Inflicted upon the Soul for its Transgressions.

LXI. That one should Examine His Daily Deeds before Retiring to Sleep; Of the Power of Demons during Sleep.

LXII. That One Must Reprove his Neighbor when He does Ill.

LXIII. Of the Efficacy of Prayer; Of Honesty in Business.

LXIV. Of the Importance of Hospitality.

LXV. Of the Doctrine that the World is Judged with Grace Yet Everything is According to the Amount of Work.

LXVI. Of God whose Primary Attribute is Meekness.

LXVII. Of the Duty to Instruct the Young.

LXVIII. Of the Soul

LXIX. Of Mahalath, the Demoness, and her Evil Power.

LXX. Of Lilith, Queen of the Demons, and her 480 Bands of Demons.

LXXI. Of the Merit of the Fathers; Of Resurrection and Retribution.

LXXII. Of the Merit which Accrues to the World by Virtue of the Children that Study Torah.

- LXXIIII. That Night is the Proper Time to study.
- LXXIV. Of Guardian Angels and Their Function.
- LXXV. Of the Importance of Keeping the Sabbath.
- LXXVI. Of the Future Joy of Souls that have Persevered
in Good Works and have Avoided Sin and Frivolity.
- LXXVII. Against Frivolity.
- LXXVIII. Against False Interpreting of the Biblical Text
on the Part of Preachers.
- LXXIX. Of the Reception of the Righteous in Heaven.
- LXXX. That the Souls of the Dead are Delivered from Suffering
by Virtue of the Kaddish of their Living Children.
- LXXXI. Of the Rearing of Children.
- LXXXII. Of the Four Reasons for the Redemption of Israel
from Egyptian Bondage.
- LXXXIII. Of Kindness to Animals.
- LXXXIV. Against the Pride of the Wealthy and the Learned.
- LXXXV. Of God's Mercy.
- LXXXVI. Although Israel Rejoices on the Festivals, He does not
cease to Pray for Redemption; of the Duty to Recite
the Piutim which Contain Hidden Meanings.
- LXXXVII. Of the Efficacy that Charity has upon the Dead that
are not yet Redeemed; That they who celebrate
should Give Alms to the Poor.
- LXXXVIII. Of Nis^ain which is the chief Month of the Year
And the Duty to Seek Atonement in that Month.
- LXXXIX. Of Matzah and its Virtue.
- XC. Of the Preparation and Observance of Passover.
- XCI. That the Poor Must be Helped to Celebrate the Passover.
- XCII. Of the Forty-Nine Days Intervening Between Passover
and Shevuoth.
- XCIII. Of the Messiah and His Coming.
- XCIV. Of God's Participation in the Sorrows of Israel.
- XCV. Of Succoth
- XCVI. Of Channukah.
- XCVII. Of Purim.

XCVIII. Of the Fast of Esther.

XCIX. Of the Reading of the Esther SCroll in which there are Hidden Meanings.

C. Of Guilelessness.

CI. Of the Merit Accruing to Mankind as a Result of the Malkot to which One Man Submits; Of the Merit Accruing to him who Administers the Malkot.

CII. Of the Redemption of Israel and the Rebuilding of the Temple.

APPENDIX III.

Sources of Kav Ha-yashar

The following are the sources mentioned at least once in the text:

- Aaron ben Jacob Ha-Cohen, Orchos Hayyim, Florence, 1752.^{?)}
- Aaron Halevi of Barcelona, Ha-Hinnuk, Venice, 1523.
- Abraham ben Isaac Hayyot, Holach Tamim, Cracow, 1634.
- Alshech, Moses, -- work not specified.
- Azcari, Elazar, Haredim, Venice, 1601.
- Baraita of R. Ishmael
- Bible
- Caro, Joseph, Shulchan Arukh.
- David ben Samuel Halevi, Ture Zahab, Dyhernfurth, 1692.
- Dubno, Joseph, Yesod Joseph, Posen 1679.
- Horowitz, Isaiah, Shene Lurah Ha-Brit, Amsterdam, 1649.
- Jacob ben Asher, Turim, 1475.
- Joel Baal Shem of Zamoscz-- work not specified
- Joseph ben Isaac Halevi, Givat Ha-Moreh, Prague, 1612.
- Kaidanover, Aaron Samuel, Birkat Ha-Zevach, Amsterdam, 1669.
- Birkat Shmuel, Frankfurt am Main, 1682.
- Luria, Isaac, -- writings of, mentioned collectively.
- Luria, Solomon, Yam Shel Shlomo, Lublin, 1636.
- Menassah ben Israel, Nishmat Hayyim, Amsterdam, 1652.
- Midrash Rabbah
- Midrash Tanhuma
- Nehemiah Hyys Hyun, Shalheves Yah, Amsterdam, 1714.^(?)
- Otiot de R. Akiba.

Recanati, Menachem ben Benjamin, Ta'ame Ha-Mitzvoth,
Constantinople, 1544.

Raziel Ha-Malach, Amsterdam, 1701.

Samuel ben Abraham, Kli Hemdah, Venice, 1584.

Schor, Abraham Hayyim ben Zevi Hirsch, Torat Hayyim, Lublin, 1624.

Talmud

Vital, Hayyim, --- writings mentioned collectively

Yehudah Hassid, Sefer Hasidim, Bologna, 1538.

Zedekiah ben Abraham, Shivle Ha Leket, Venice, 1546.

Zohar

Zohar Hadesh

APPENDIX IV.

Yesod Joseph

The book Yesod Joseph by Joseph Dubno should be particularly noted in any consideration of the genesis of Kav Ha-yashar. It may be regarded as the most important source of Kav Ha-yashar. It was published in Posen in 1679, and again published in 1739 with an addition quite as large and paralleling to a great extent the original text. Consisting of only twenty-three pages, the original text appears rather minute in contrast with the sizeable bulk of K.H. It is also much more limited in interest. It purports to be a repository of ethical suggestions toward the correction of masturbation, which phenomenon is here regarded from a purely religious or theological point of view.

The book is divided into three parts: the first dealing with the causes of the transgression (for it is a transgression, a positive ethical misdemeanor, and not merely an hygienic malpractice or a physical delinquency); the second, dealing with punishments to be visited upon the transgressor; and the third, dealing with the tikkunim, the means of correction or improvement.

What makes א'לף ר"ב א'ב'ל serious from the point of view of the ba'ale musar is the consciousness that the seed if properly conducted might reach fruition in the creation of human beings. Wanting such a happy consummation,

the conscience of the moralists is disturbed by what can only be a wanton misuse of the generative power and identifies such misuse with deliberate murder. (Cf. K.H. XXII:1)

Among the various causes of שגגות וזבל are listed: indulgence in frivolous conversation; false utterance; unfulfilment of vows; immoderate eating and drinking; prurient interest in animals copulating, in woman's clothes; etc.

The punishments involve the prolongation of the Exile; forfeiture of merit to behold the Presence of the Shechinah; forfeiture of resurrection; the death of the transgressor's children; transmigration of his soul into the body of a woman; multiple transmigration of his soul; death and plague; forfeiture of merit to share in the revelation of the secrets of the Torah; the growing-up of the transgressor's children into men wicked, impudent, and heretical.

Many tikkunim are presented. Among them are suggested: the giving of alms to the poor; the strict observance of the Sabbath; the study of Mishna and Agada before retiring; giving honor and esteem to the learned; praying earnestly with tears and lamentation; the practise of humility; careful observance of mitzvot tphilin and zizith; study at midnight; the pursuit of peace in personal relations; etc.

It will be seen that K.H. follows the Yesod Joseph neither in method nor in emphasis. The method of K.H. is determined by a wide purpose: not merely to touch upon one but to touch upon all the numerous transgressions and misdemeanors which delay individual salvation and remove the Shechinah from the body of Israel.

APPENDIX V. The Ethical Import Of Charm and Exemplum

Whatever material motive underlies the use of charms and amulets and the practise of devotion, the spiritual motive is always predominant. In K.H., prayers frequently follow the prescription of charms as well as the discussion concerning ritual appurtenances, and these are not crude announcements of desire such as typify the magical incantations of the ancient pagans and modern primitives but stirring sentiments designed to elevate the mind of the worshipper no less than influence the deity to action in his favor. Often the petition regards not only the individual but the whole body of Israel. One can select illustrations almost at random. In Chapter XXXII, after a liturgical charm, the writer suggests the following prayer:

Master of the World, deliver Thy people Israel from all manner of magic and from all manifestations of the Evil Eye; and even as thou didst cover with Thy wings our fathers when they were in the desert and didst protect them from the baleful eyes of the wicked Balaam, so cover us with Thy wings and protect us by Thy loving-kindness and guide us by Thy sacred names that the Evil Eye may not have dominion over us. Amen.

At morning, in attiring for the day, the time the pious puts on his talis katan is appropriate for a prayer of delivery from the transgressions of envy, hate, and passion; and after making the benediction of the zizith, he places his hand upon the mezuzah, and then over his eyes and says:

Master of the World; remove all wicked thoughts from me and may I be delivered today and everyday from sin by virtue of the three commandments:mezuzah, tphilin, zizith; and may I be delivered from the Evil Eye and all manner of magic. (K.H.LXXX:3)

On leaving his house, he recites a brief prayer as a safeguard against the Evil Inclination:

Master of the World, in Thy Compassion, rescue me from the Evil Inclination and all its hosts. (K.H.I:23)

The tendency of musar is always toward the preservation and fortification of the religious instinct. In Chapter III, the writer, appropriating an idea from the Zohar, declares that there is a special demon that watches for expressions of levity and slander that fall from the mouths of the devout and that when thereafter they utter a sacred word, that word by virtue of the former profanations is defiled and captured by the demon and serves to increase the demon's strength. The righteous are counseled, therefore, to restrict themselves to sacred expressions and especially to cultivate the Hebrew tongue which is supposed to have a wonderful effect upon the soul.

It is to be noted that the prohibition against frivolous conversation has an ulterior purpose, i.e., to prevent a habit of levity which would ultimately vitiate all religious striving and endeavor.

As there are suggestions which operate negatively toward religious intensification, so there are suggestions which operate positively. In Chapter II, the pious are advised

as a safeguard against sin to picture before them the letters נ' / ו', the Kabbalistic anagram of the Ineffable Name, as if they were written in black ink upon parchment.

The same, it is adduced, is what David meant when he said:

" Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord (נ' / ו'), for He will pluck my feet out of the net." (Ps.XXV:15)

The stories of K.H. -- many of them have been reproduced in the course of this thesis -- have similarly an exemplary motive. Some of them set forth the eschatological dangers consequent upon the lax observance of ritual laws and festivals. Some deal with the personal problems of moral procedure. Some have a distinctly social motivation. Consider, as a final instance, the story of a saint in Sefer Hasidim who was wont to cover up the issue of expectoration such as he would encounter on the street lest the sight of it should nauseate some other passer-by who might not feel inclined to pardon the guilty one. (*) Contrast this with the account of Madame Guyon, the 17th century French mystic, who felt herself obliged as an act of Christian asceticism to pick up a gob of phlegm from the street and deposit it in her mouth.

Whatever the immediate object of the stories and legends, there is no discrepancy as to their ultimate aim which is to deepen the religious insight of the individual and to lift him to a higher plane of social living and ethical experience.

*) Cf. K.H. VII:23.