

**“THINGS THAT ARE BETTER CONCEALED THAN
REVEALED”: AN HISTORICAL-BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY
OF S. Y. AGNON’S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SABBATEAN
MOVEMENT AND THE TRADITIONAL JEWISH WORLD**

by

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The literary works of many Israeli novelists and poets¹—among them Haim Hazaz, Nathan Bistriski, Uri Zvi Greenberg, Amir Gilboa, Theodor Herzl, Abraham Samuel Stein, Zalman Shazar, Benyamin Shvili, and Yehoram Ben Meir²—reference and develop the themes of Sabbatai Zvi and the Sabbatean movement; and scholars have explored the use of messianism in general and

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1. On this subject, see Shmuel Werses “Shabtay Zvi ve-ha-shabta’ut be-‘olama shel ha-sifrut ha-ivrit ha-ḥadasha,” *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 18 (2001): 105–36. Werses does not specifically mention Agnon but rather emphasizes the conceptual differences between the attitude toward Sabbateanism in modern Hebrew and Haskalah literature. On the latter, see Shmuel Werses, *Haskalah ve-shabta’ut* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1988).

2. On the attitude of these writers toward the Sabbatean movement and Sabbatai Zvi see Haim Hazaz, *The End of Days*, trans. Dalya Bilu (Tel Aviv: Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 1982); Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Kol kitvey*, ed. Dan Miron (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1991), 1:73–74; idem, “Melekh Shabtay Zvi” in his: *Gezamlte verk*, ed. Hune Shmeruk (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), 2:499–507; Amir Gilboa, “Me-shirey ha-yiḥud ’asher le-Meliselda: ha-ḥazon, ha-dam, ha-kez” in *Amir Gilboa: Kol ktavav* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuḥad, 1994), 1:138–40; Theodor Herzl, *Old-New Land*, trans. Paula Arnold (Haifa: Haifa Publishing, 1960), 74; Abraham Samuel Stein, *’Esh meriva* (Tel Aviv: A. Neumann, 1955); idem, *Ve-ha’esh heshe’ira ’efer: roman history ’al frank ve-’adato* (Tel Aviv: Aleph, 1956); Zalman Shazar, *’Al tillei beit Frank* (Berlin: W. Derugolin, 1923). On later Hebrew poets who referred to Sabbatean issues, see Benyamin Shvili’s book of poems: idem, *Yeled me’if ’afifun ba-me’ah ha-yod-zayin* (Jerusalem: Eikhot 1988); Yehoram Ben Meir, “Nafshi nafshi le-Shabtay Zvi” in his *Ve-nahar ha-yarkon yoze me-’eden* (Tel Aviv: Keshev, 2009), 112. We should also mention Isaac Bashevis Singer’s Yiddish novel: Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Satan in Goray*, trans. Jacob Sloan (New York: Noonday Press, 1955).

Sabbateanism in particular in Israeli literature.³ Yet no one has comprehensively examined the role that the Sabbatean movement plays in the oeuvre of S. Y. Agnon, the most important Hebrew writer of the twentieth century, despite numerous references to it in his work.⁴

Agnon's interest in this topic is evidenced by the vast and comprehensive collection of Sabbatean studies and literature that he amassed throughout his life and that still resides in his library in his Jerusalem home.⁵ Moreover, Agnon referred to Sabbatean issues in various contexts in his work: in stories whose heroes take on Sabbatean characteristics,⁶ in excerpts related to the Sabbatean movement,⁷ in

3. On messianic motifs in modern Hebrew literature see, e.g., Werses "Shabtay Zvi ve-hashabta'ut be-'olama shel ha-sifrut ha-'ivrit ha-'hadasha"; Hannan Hever, *Be-shevi ha-utopia: masa 'al meshihuyut u-politika ba-shira ha-'ivrit bein shtey milhamot ha-'olam* (Beersheba: Ben-Gurion University Press, 1995); Israel Levin, *Tanim ve-kinor: ħurban, galut, nakam u-ge'ula ba-shira ha-'ivrit ha-le'umit* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 1998), 328–88; Tamar Wolf-Monzon, "'Main meshiĥer Bruder Shlomo': le-zikato hanafshit shel Uri Zvi Greenberg le-R. Shlomo Molkho," *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 18 (2001): 235–71.

4. To date, scholars and critics have not extensively examined Agnon's attitude toward the Sabbatean movement; it has only been mentioned briefly in a few previous studies. Joseph Dan dedicated a three-page essay to references on Sabbatean matters in *The Bridal Canopy* in the early 1980s: Joseph Dan, "Zikhrey shabta'ut be-haknasat kala," *Ha-universita* 25 (1981): 19–21. Previous studies have discussed a different issue—the special connection of Agnon to the Mussar treatise *Ĥemdat yamim*, which was suspected of having been written under Sabbatean influence. On this matter, see, e.g., Ĥaim Stern, "Me-ĥemdat yamim le-yamim nora'im," *Criticism and Interpretation: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies on Literature and Culture* 35–36 (2002): 245–74; Elĥanan Shilo, *Mishka'ey kabalah ve-derekh 'ibuda ha-sifrut be-yezirato shel S.Y. Agnon* (PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, 2005), 263–371. Nevertheless it should be stressed that Agnon's attraction to *Ĥemdat yamim* should not be considered as a Sabbatean influence on his work, since he was already familiar with the book from his early years before he heard anything about the book's possible connection to any Sabbatean tendencies. See, e.g., S.Y. Agnon 'ir u-melo'a, (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken Books 1973), 82. On the scholarly debate concerning the Sabbatean character of *Ĥemdat yamim* see: Isaiah Tishby, *Netivey emuna u-minut: massot u-mehkarim be-kabbalah ve-shabta'ut* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982), 108–42; 143–68; Avraham Ya'ari, *Ta'alumat sefer* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1954); Gershon Scholem, "Ve-ha-ta'aluma be-'eyna 'omedet," in *Mehkarei shabta'ut* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1991), 250–87; Moshe Fogel, "Shabta'ut shel sefer ĥemdat yamim: hitbonenut meĥudshet," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 17 (2001): 365–422.

5. See the catalogue of Agnon's library, (catalogue numbers 2275–2831), as well as a good portion of Gershon Scholem's articles about Sabbateanism, including very interesting dedications by Scholem to Agnon (collected under catalogue number 2438).

6. S. Y. Agnon, "Knots upon Knots," trans. Ann Golomb Hoffman, *Conservative Judaism* 37, no. 3 (1984): 38–41. The story is also published in Alan Mintz and Ann Golomb Hoffman, eds., *A Book That Was Lost and Other Stories* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 123–27. In *The Bridal Canopy* one can find a few Sabbatean issues: S. Y. Agnon, *The Bridal Canopy*, trans. I. M. Lask (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 257, 283. The short story "Komer l'Ishmaelim," which was published in S. Y. Agnon, 'ir u-melo'a, 155–60, is a tale about *Ĥemdat yamim's* Sabbatean connection. A comparison between the Sabbatean and Hasidic movements can be found in Agnon's story "Ha-nidah" in 'elu ve-'elu (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken Books, 1947), 45:51, and in Agnon, *The Bridal Canopy*, 155–60.

7. On this see, e.g., S. Y. Agnon, *Sefer sofer ve-sipur* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken Books, 1978), 323; idem, *Sipurei ha-ba'al shem tov* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken Books, 1987), 47.

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tales that he collected and edited into anthologies, and even in his semi-historical essays on this topic.⁸ Although the following discussion is based on a variety of Agnon texts of different literary genres that pertain to the subject of Sabbateanism, Agnon’s oeuvre will be treated as a connected and even interwoven chain of genres rather than as a collection of separate genres. This approach is in line with Agnon—who himself did not fully distinguish between his fictional works, historical anthologies, and anthologies of classical Jewish sources⁹—and is dictated by the insight to be gained from such a historical-biographical study.

The present study will demonstrate that during a writing career that spanned more than sixty years Agnon expressed multiple and contradictory attitudes about the Sabbatean movement and its status as part of the larger Jewish community. Particularly relevant to Agnon’s varying treatment of the Sabbatean movement’s role within the Jewish world of Eastern Europe is an important theme in Agnon research: the dialectical tension between the so-called “traditional world” in which he grew up and the “modern world.”¹⁰ In his oeuvre Agnon uses his

8. Agnon described the Sabbateans in a short chapter titled “Devarim she-kisuyam yafe me-gilyumam” in *‘ir u-melo’a*, 213–15. In this chapter Agnon insists that Jacob Frank was born in Buczacz and returned there after his sojourn in Turkey. Agnon described the character of Jacob Frank at length in a special chapter in his collection on the Jews in Poland: S. Y. Agnon, “Ein Wort über Jakob Frank,” in *Das Buch von den Polnischen Juden*, ed. Agnon and Aharon Eliasberg (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1916), 51–57. (I thank Paweł Maciejko from the Hebrew University for drawing my attention to this volume).

9. The problem of defining the precise genre of S. Y. Agnon’s work has been discussed by scholars with respect to different Agnon texts: *Only Yesterday* was discussed at length in Boaz Arpaly, *Rav roman: ‘hamisha ma’amarim ‘al Temol shilshom le-S. Y. Agnon* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1998), 7–9; Dan Miron, “Me-mashal le-sipur tolati: peti‘ha le-diyun be-Temol shilshom” in *Kovez Agnon: An Agnon Miscellany* (2000): 2:87–89. From a different angle, Avraham Holtz has described *Only Yesterday* and other Agnon novels as “documentary fiction.” See, e.g., Avraham Holtz, “Reb Nahman Krochmal in Jaffa,” in *History and Literature: New Readings of Jewish Texts in Honor of Arnold J. Band*, ed. William Cutter and David J. Jacobson (Providence: Brown University, 2002), 138–39. The difficulties in defining the genre of *The Bridal Canopy* were discussed by Dan Miron, *Histaklut be-ravneker: ‘al hakhnasat kalah le-S.Y. Agnon u-sviveah* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1996), 25–43. In his correspondence regarding *Only Yesterday* with Baruch Kurzweil, Agnon himself wrote: “I see all my stories as one piece, as is said: ‘they are stung in this location while more expansive in another place’” (L. Dabby-Goury, ed., *Hilufe ‘igrot: Kurzweil, Agnon, Greenberg* [Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1987], 20). It can be difficult to define the exact genre of Agnon’s anthologies of classical Jewish sources because Agnon sometimes fabricates sources from whole cloth. On this point, see, e.g., Zvi Harkavi, “Pseudo-mekorot be-yamim nora ‘im le-S.Y. Agnon,” *Ha-sifrut* 27 (1978): 137.

10. For a bibliographical survey of the scholarly debate on the tension between the traditional and modern worlds in Agnon’s oeuvre, see David Aberbach, “Agnon and the Need for Tradition,” *Jewish Book Annual* 46 (1988–1989): 93–107; Gershon Shaked, *Shmuel Yosef Agnon: A Revolutionary Traditionalist*, trans. Jeffrey M. Green (New York: New York University Press, 1989); Dalia Hoshen, *Agnon- Sipur hu (lo) sugia ba-gmara* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 2006), 17–32; Dan Miron, *Histaklut be-ravneker: ‘al hakhnasat kalah le-S.Y. Agnon u-sviveah* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1996), 109–18; Tzahi Weiss, *Mot ha-shekhina be-yezirat S.Y. Agnon: keriah be-arba’a sipurim u-mekoroteihem* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2009), 21–26.

hometown, Buczacz, as well as the surrounding region of Podolia to symbolize a mythic microcosm of the so-called “traditional Jewish world.” Within this setting Agnon offers varied depictions of the place and role of the Sabbatean movement in Jewish life: sometimes he attempts to detach the Sabbateans from this mythic region and at other times he includes this messianic movement as an integral part the Jewish world. An examination of this variability in Agnon’s treatment of the Sabbatean movement reveals a vacillating attitude toward this movement and also exposes a multifaceted and perhaps inconsistent conception of the traditional Jewish world. This paper will examine the interplay between the various and contradictory images and ideas that Agnon held concerning Jewish society and Sabbateanism as they are reflected in his oeuvre.

THE EMDEN-EYBESCHÜTZ POLEMIC AND AGNON’S RELATIONSHIP
WITH GERSHOM SCHOLEM

An apt introduction to our subject is the manner in which Agnon addresses the Emden-Eybeschütz polemic and his relationship with Gershom Scholem as these themes unfold in his short story “Knots upon Knots.” In the late thirties, Gershom Scholem published his well known article “Redemption through Sin,” in which he mentions in a famous footnote that he is convinced that Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschütz was a Sabbatean.¹¹ As a result of this footnote and in conjunction with Scholem’s publication of various other articles on this topic,¹² a resonant debate arose between scholars of the Orthodox camp, such as Reuven Margaliot and Yitzhak Werfel (Raphael), and Gershom Scholem¹³ and several of his colleagues and students, such as Yeruham Fishel Lachower, Moses Aryeh Perlmutter, and Isaiah Tishby. In this controversy, Agnon acted as an intermediary while members of both camps put their claims before him to gain his support for their positions. A reading of the short story “Knots upon Knots” (*Kishrei*

11. The article was published in Hebrew in 1937 in the anthology *Knesset* and translated into English in 1971 as part of Scholem’s collection of essays *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971). In that famous footnote Scholem wrote: “... I cannot conceal the fact, however, that after thoroughly examining both Eybeschütz’ own Kabbalistic writings and all the polemical works that they engendered I have been forced to conclude that he was indeed a Sabbatean, as both Jacob Emden and, in a later age, Heinrich Graetz insisted.” (Gershom Scholem, “Redemption through Sin,” trans. Hillel Halkin, in Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 100 n. 11.)

12. Gershom Scholem, “Le-she’elat yahaso shel R. Yonatan Eybeschütz la- shabta’ut,” *Zion* 6, no. 1 (1941): 96–100; idem, “Bikoret ‘al: Jacob Emden: A Man of Controversy, by Mortimer J. Cohen,” *Kiryat Sefer* 16, no. 3 (1939): 320–38; idem, “‘Al kame’a ehad shel R. Yonatan Eybeschütz u-pirusho ‘alav” *Tarbiz* 13, no. 4 (1942): 226–44.

13. See, e.g., Reuven Margolies, *a. Sibat hitnagduto shel rabenu Ya’akov Emden le-rabenu Yonatan Eybeschütz b. le-ha-kategoria shenithadsha* (Tel Aviv: Independent, 1941); Yitzhak Raphael (under the pseudonym of A. Hashiloni), *La-pulmus ha-mehudash ‘al shabta’uto shel R. Yonatan Eybeschütz* (Jerusalem: Association of Religious Writers, 1942); Yeruham Fishel Lachower, “Le-hemshekho shel riv histori” *Moznaim* 13 (1941): 177–86; Moshe Aryeh Perlmutter, *Ha-sefer “Ya’avo hayom ‘el ha-‘ayin,” shayekhuto le-R. Yonatan Eybeschütz ve-‘erko le-havanat ha-mahloket bein ha-rav Yonatan Eybeschütz ve-harav Ya’akov Emden* (Jerusalem: Schocken Books, 1942).

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kesharim),¹⁴ written by Agnon right after the War of Independence while sitting in the house and library of Gershom Scholem,¹⁵ will demonstrate from an historical and contextual perspective that Agnon did not side with either position but took an independent stance on this issue. For instance, while Agnon did not reject Scholem’s assertion that Jonathan Eybeschütz was a Sabbatean, he did criticize Scholem for making explicit, public statements about things that were better left unsaid. It seems that he understood that an explicit declaration on this matter would damage Eybeschütz’s reputation and tarnish his status as one of the important rabbis of the eighteenth century.

To better understand Agnon’s response to Eybeschütz’s alleged Sabbateanism and to Scholem’s assertions on this matter, we should recall the strong bond of friendship between Agnon and Scholem, evidenced in the many conversations between the two men on the subject of Sabbateanism. A brief comment in a letter from Scholem to Agnon might shed some light on the content of their private conversations on this subject. At the time the letter was written, Scholem and his wife Fania were in the United States for academic pursuits and Agnon and his wife Esther were subletting the Scholems’ apartment because their own house had been severely damaged during the War of Independence and was undergoing renovations.¹⁶ A few weeks after Scholem left Israel, he wrote to Agnon to instruct him about the care and use of his library. Among other things, Scholem notes: “I have cleared for you the section of Sabbatean heresy for your own books (if you possess such), and if you place them on these shelves, there is no danger of mixing borders and areas.”¹⁷ Scholem’s comment, despite its obviously humorous character, indicates a tension between the two regarding the Sabbatean issue.

At the center of Agnon’s “Knots upon Knots,” is a narrator who is attending a “conference of craftsmen,” described similarly to an academic conference, where the “novelties of the generation” are to be addressed. In the assembly hall the narrator meets Joseph Eybeschütz, and outside of it he sees Samuel Emden and his peers. Through the voice of the narrator Agnon describes his arrival at the conference with a pile of books that he wishes to hand out to friends he expects to meet at the conference. He has not, however, brought along a satchel to hold his books and other belongings. He gives the following explanation for its absence:

It would have been good had I put my belongings in a satchel, except that a satchel is useful only as it carries your belongings. Once empty it is simply a load to be carried.¹⁸

14. S. Y. Agnon, “Knots upon Knots.” On this story, see also Ann Golomb Hoffman’s afterword to the translation in *Conservative Judaism* 37, no. 3 (1984): 41–42; Arnold Band, “‘Kishrei ksharim’ u-ksharav: mi-mekoroteha shel shirah” *Molad: The New Series* 4 (1971): 97–101.

15. On that period, see also Dan Laor *S.Y. Agnon: biografiya* (Tel Aviv: Schocken Books, 1998), 417–24.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Agnon Archive, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, 5:429.

18. Laor, *biografiya*, 38.

This explanation, which appears at the beginning of the story, opens a series of descriptions that depict the narrator's inability to gather together his personal belongings, which is symbolic of his inability to amalgamate the various aspects of his life. Upon his arrival at the conference, the narrator deposits his belongings at the bookbinder's house, a location that represents his aspiration to unite his detached objects. Nevertheless, he again finds himself at a dead end as it becomes clear that the house is about to be renovated and painted, and as a result he is forced to collect his belongings as well as other objects that, to the reader's surprise, he had left there in the past. Finding no other option, the narrator decides to bind his belongings using an old, threadbare rope he had found, but the rope turns out to be too weak to hold them together. The rope frays and the objects separate and scatter in all directions:

In the meantime I heard a dull noise and saw that my things were falling. The rope I had worked so hard to assemble had been weak from the start, and when I began to move, the package on my shoulders shook, the rope tore, and the articles scattered. I bent down to the ground and began to collect my things. I would lift one thing and its mate would fall from my shoulders. I would lift it, and it would fall again. I had nothing left but the rope with which I had tied my package. To add to this, drops of rain began to fall.¹⁹

The description of the narrator's discombobulation contrasts to the sense of connection that Agnon, the author, has with his characters, which he represents in two ways: first, Agnon, whose two given names are Samuel and Joseph, seems to be suggesting that these characters represent two parts of himself—one related to Samuel Emden and the other to Joseph Eybeschütz. Second, by bonding together Samuel Emden and Joseph Eybeschütz in one package the story implying an association between these two opposing figures. The sense that this unification is a mirror image of the atmosphere of disarray in the background story is illustrated at the end of the story when the main character stands with his scattered belongings wet from the rain. He sees Samuel Emden and Joseph Eybeschütz "hurrying and running," perhaps like the celestial angels of Ezekiel's vision, an image that creates an atmosphere of a revelation and contributes to the metarealistic character of the story, as the narrator, in a sort of disoriented state of consciousness, finds it impossible to distinguish between the two men:

The rains that had pattered softly at first began to descend heavily. And in the midst of the rain, as in a vision, two men ran in great haste. I am not saying that they were Joseph Eybeschütz and Samuel Emden. But if I were to say that one of them was one or the other, it would not be far from the truth.²⁰

By creating an atmosphere of disintegration as a backdrop to the story of the conference to which the narrator was invited, Agnon is telling us about the

19. Agnon, "Knots upon Knots," 41.

20. *Ibid.*

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relations between the personalities of Emden and Eybeschütz and the state of academic affairs. The conference, although its name suggests a gathering, succeeds in embracing neither the narrator nor the other two heroes of our story. Samuel Emden and his peers are not present at the conference—they sit in separate booths:

And within that booth sat a group of men, among them Samuel Emden, who was striking out at the adherents of the known craft. It was easy to understand his coming to the craftsmen’s convention but difficult to understand why he was here and not there.²¹

The narrator himself is unable to stay at the conference and is described as being inadvertently ejected from the lecture hall: “Others came and pushed their way between us, and I was pushed from my spot. And as I had been pushed, I left.”²²

Unlike the narrator and Emden, Joseph Eybeschütz does remain at the lecture but he is barely able to hear the innovations of his generation. When he enters the conference hall, the narrator describes how, through the blur of the packed lecture hall, he is suddenly able to see the figure of Joseph Eybeschütz struggling to listen to the novelties offered by the lecturer:

When my eyes had become clear of the stuffiness in the air, I saw Joseph Eybeschütz standing before me. And since he is smaller than I in height, it seemed to me that I was sheltering him. His ears were red out of the strain of his effort to listen closely. But don’t be surprised, for at that moment the elder of the craftsmen was lecturing about all that had been introduced in his generation, and here Eybeschütz wanted to grasp the essence of the era’s innovations.²³

Joseph Eybeschütz is characterized as a short man with red ears, which jibes with descriptions of the historical figure Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschütz. Nevertheless it seems that the novelties of that generation are none other than Scholem’s claim that Jonathan Eybeschütz was a Sabbatean: Agnon creates a sort of caricature in which the character of Joseph Eybeschütz, a literary representation of Jonathan Eybeschütz, is ironically portrayed as one who makes a great effort to listen to statements that seem to accuse him of Sabbateanism. In contrast, Samuel Emden—the literary representation of Jacob Emden—is presented as one who was striking out at the adherents of the known craft²⁴ and was supposed to have a great interest in the lecturer’s address, yet he was not even present in the convention hall.

In this manner, Agnon criticizes the scholarly debate about Jonathan Eybeschütz’s alleged Sabbateanism by portraying it literally as a debate that leads to disintegration rather than to a socially integrated atmosphere at the very

21. *Ibid.*, 39.

22. *Ibid.*, 38.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*, 39.

time of the historical controversy between Emden and Eybeschütz. In the scholars' conference described in our story, Eybeschütz does not understand what is going on, and Emden is not interested in listening to the lecturers who are presenting his own arguments. Clearly the story is criticizing the atmosphere surrounding the lectures and not the claim that Jonathan Eybeschütz is a Sabbatean.

In contrast to Agnon's criticism of the scholarly attitude toward the Emden-Eybeschütz polemic whose literary portrayal we see in this story, we hear from Scholem himself—based on a conversation he had with Agnon—that not only was Agnon not taken aback by Scholem's conclusions but he even supported Scholem during the scholarly debate about Jonathan Eybeschütz's Sabbateanism:

He [Agnon] stood by me when the rabbis came to him and said: But he is such a monster, that Scholem. He is a complete ignoramus in religious lore. He knows nothing of talmudic literature, and he says terrible things about the Sabbateans, etc. Of course, as long as I was writing about the Zohar, no one cared. But when I mentioned in a single line, once I became convinced of it, that Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschütz was a Sabbatean—God forbid!²⁵

In my opinion, the disparity between the grotesque story that Agnon wrote about the scholarly debate concerning Eybeschütz's Sabbateanism and Scholem's own testimony is not all that surprising. As we will see later on,²⁶ Agnon was indeed not intimidated when he learned that Jonathan Eybeschütz was a Sabbatean, and in order to reconstruct the Sabbatean history of Buczacz, he used testimonies that clearly accuse Jonathan Eybeschütz of Sabbateanism. Moreover, he even borrowed some information about Buczacz from Scholem's own *Studies in Sabbateanism*. However, my assertion is that Agnon's criticism of Scholem is not directed against his actual finding that Eybeschütz was a Sabbatean, but rather has to do with the significance that such an explicit public assertion might have.

Agnon's criticism of Scholem's scholarly attitude toward Jonathan Eybeschütz's Sabbateanism does not, however, fully capture his attitude toward this movement. To follow the vicissitudes in Agnon's perspective on Sabbateanism, the following discussion will be presented chronologically.

THE EXCLUSION OF SABBATEANISM

In 1916 Agnon and Aharon Eliasberg edited an anthology on the heritage of Polish Jews that included literary, historical, and philosophical selections by various authors as well as several stories by Agnon himself.²⁷ Among the chapters that Agnon contributed was one on Jacob Frank, which is primarily a collection of

25. "Dan Miron Interviews Gershom Scholem on S. Y. Agnon," in Avraham Shapira ed., *Rezifut u-mered: Gershom Scholem be-'omer u-v-siah* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1995), 78.

26. Below, in the section "Things That Are Better Concealed Than Revealed."

27. These stories were edited later in a Hebrew version under the title *Polin: sipurei 'agadot*, in the volume *'Elu ve-'elu*, 375–78.

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literary and historical sources on the Frankist movement. Agnon concludes the chapter with a critical description of the Ba'al Shem Tov's reaction to the conversion of some Frankists to Christianity, as depicted in *Praises of the Besht*: The Besht cried in agony upon hearing that Frank and his congregation had converted to Christianity after the 1759 polemic in Lvov. Claiming that prior to their Christianizing and despite their iniquities, the Frankists had been an organ of the Shekhinah's body (איבר מהשכינה), the Besht saw their conversion as a deep, irreparable amputation from the Jewish corpus.²⁸ Agnon criticizes this well-known assertion, claiming instead that because the Frankists had never been a part of the Shekhinah, one should actually be happy that Frank and his congregation had converted; their conversion, he suggests, should be viewed allegorically as a recovery from leprosy:

As the story goes, after finding this out, the Ba'al Shem Tov burst into tears and said: As long as a limb clings to the body, it lives, and even if it [the limb] were so ill, the hope of its recovery remains. Yet, amputate it, and you have cut off any hope of recovery. We are but dust at the feet of this saint, yet we dare to hold a different view. Frank and his congregation were no limb of the body of Israel, rather a leprosy. Praise and gratitude are due to the doctor, who has destroyed the leprosy in the nick of time, before it has spread in the body. Our doctors are our teachers and rabbis, the apple of our eyes; they are righteous, and their deeds are just. Frank and his congregation were certainly the descendants of that alien mob that appended itself to Israel at the Exodus and was on their [Israel's] heels. In the desert, in the land of Israel, and later in exile, this mélange has vitiated Israel's purity and profaned their [Israel's] holiness. Thank God that they have left us. So may all your enemies, O God, be destroyed, and may you soon send us our true Messiah. Amen.²⁹

The title of Agnon's chapter on Jacob Frank, “A Word on Jacob Frank according to Some Polemical Writings of His Time,” would suggest that its aim is to present the figure of Jacob Frank through the eyes of known historical sources. It is therefore quite remarkable that Agnon uses the chapter to dispute the Besht. Agnon, who opposes the Besht's attitude toward the Frankists, did not consider them to be a part of Eastern European Jewry. In fact, he describes the Frankists as a malignant limb endangering all of Jewish life and concludes, therefore, that it is necessary to “cut them off.”

Certainly the unique manner in which Agnon maintains a dialogue with what is common knowledge and generally accepted tradition can be both startling and subtle. For instance, on closer scrutiny one finds that Agnon has omitted identification of Frank's birthplace and his place of residence upon his return from Turkey to Podolia, despite the tradition, widespread in Buczacz, that Frank was born in that small town and returned to reside there in the

28. See *Sefer shivhei ha-Besht*, ed. S. A. Horodetski (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1947), 108.

29. *Das Buch von den Polnischen Juden*, 56–57.

mid-eighteenth century.³⁰ The absence of specific biographical details from Agnon's chapter on Frank cannot be considered an oversight. Rather, since Podolia in general and Buczacz specifically represent in Agnon's oeuvre a mythical microcosm that reflects an essence of the Jewish way of life, I propose that Agnon's silence about Frank's birthplace was a deliberate measure he took to "purify" a mythical expanse symbolized by Buczacz.

The exclusion of Sabbateanism from the area of Buczacz is also implied in the story *Ha-nidah*, published in the same period, around 1919. This story, which Agnon worked on for almost a decade,³¹ tells of the tension between the Hasidim and the Mitnagdim in the small town Szibucz, Agnon's literary name for Buczacz. Here again we witness how Agnon uses extranarrative means to direct our reading. Although he makes no direct allusion to the existence of Sabbateans in Buczacz, he ties the Mitnagdim's apprehension about and mistrust of Hasidim to points of similarity between Hasidism and Sabbateanism. An example of this is Agnon's description of Gershom, the hero of the story and the grandson of the community's leader, Rabbi Avigdor. As the story unfolds, Agnon describes how Gershom is drawn to Rabbi Uriel the Hasid on an emotional level, despite his grandfather's strong objections. Gershom is caught in a deep spiritual conflict, on the one hand drawn to the Hasidim, while on the other, having difficulty refuting the tradition he has absorbed as the devoted "son" of his grandfather, a resolute Mitnaged. This conflict comes to a head toward the end of the story in the description of Gershom's illness shortly before his death. On his deathbed, Gershom reads the book *Kizur zizat novel zvi*,³² which tells the tales of the Sabbateans in the early days of Sabbateanism. As a result of reading this material, Gershom senses the imminent danger of Hasidism:

During his illness he read books of wars and chronicles and *Zizat novel zvi*, in which the tale of Sabbatai Zvi and his congregation is written. The writings caused Gershom to reminisce about the Hasidic sect, and he remembered going to that Uriel, and his eyes darkened from shame. He thought in his heart, "Were it not for my illness attacking me on my way, I would have erred and gone astray."³³

The specific inclusion of the treatise *Kizur zizat novel zvi* in the construction of the historical narrative of *Ha-nidah* seems quite calculated. Agnon expressly

30. On this tradition, see Gershom Scholem, "Ha-tenu'a ha-shabta'it be-folin" in *Mehkarim u-te'udot le-toldot ha-shabta'ut ve-gilguleha* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1982), 119 n. 137.

31. See Laor, *Biografia*, 132–34.

32. The complete version of *Zizat novel zvi* was first published by Isaiah Tishby in 1954 (Jacob Sasportas, *Sefer zizat novel zvi*, ed. Isaiah Tishby (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1954). This edition was based on the sole manuscript of the treatise, which was lost in Europe during the Holocaust. The only version that was known before 1954 is the shorter one that was edited in 1737 by Avraham Meldola and published in 1757 by Jacob Emden. This means that Agnon in *Ha-nidah* (*'Elu ve-'elu*, 51) refers to *Kizur zizat novel zvi*. On the historical metamorphosis of this treatise, see: Tishby, *Sefer zizat novel*, xxxix–xliii.

33. Agnon, *Ha-nidah*, 51.

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chooses to refer to an essay remote in time, using evidence from the edition of Jacob Sasportas’s book that described the history of the Sabbatean movement in central Europe during the first decade of its existence. Gershom, the hero of *Ha-nidah*, learns about the Sabbatean movement from an historical book that describes Sabbateanism as a movement that existed in a different region of Europe, a century prior to the story’s narrative. The story, therefore, seems to be deliberately presenting the Sabbateans as a marginal yet treacherous Jewish community that was active in a geographical area far from the location of the tale and much earlier than the events it narrates rather than constructing a narrative much closer to the historical reality of the early days of Hasidism, which were the last days of the Sabbateans and Frankists in Podolia. Hence, reminiscent of his approach in the chapter on Jacob Frank published the previous year, Agnon attempts to distance the Sabbatean movement from the area of eastern Galicia where he was born. Instead of describing the Mitnagdim’s fears of the Hasidim as stemming from personal acquaintance with the influences of Sabbateanism on Jewry at the time, the story refers to another time period and a different geographical area. Thus, Agnon distances Sabbateanism from the mythical space that Buzcazc represented for him.

SABBATEANISM IN *THE BRIDAL CANOPY*

An alternative approach to Sabbateanism and its role in Eastern European Jewry is apparent in the later version of the novel *The Bridal Canopy*, published in 1931, which mentions Sabbatean and Frankist heroes several times.³⁴ At the center of this picaresque novel stands Reb Yudil Hasid, the founder of an important Agnonic dynasty that appeared for the first time in the *The Bridal Canopy*, which is set in Eastern Europe, and culminates with Yudil’s descendant, Isaac Kumer, the hero of *Only Yesterday*, which takes place during the Second Aliyah. In light of our prior discussion, it is perhaps surprising that in this case Agnon specifically chooses to integrate a Sabbatean sect into such a significant and central family, whose history reflects the transitions experienced by the Jewish people from the early days of Hasidism through the Second Aliyah.

In *The Bridal Canopy* Reb Yudil Hasid is looking for an appropriate match for his daughter. Following numerous events in a complex plot, Reb Yudil finally finds the bridegroom he seeks for his daughter in the small town of Rohatín, in the character of Reb Vovi’s son. But Reb Vovi became anxious following this marriage settlement, fearing that it might expose his Sabbatean ancestry:

All the time that Reb Yudil remained in Rohatín, Reb Vovi feared that unsuitable reports might reach his ears regarding his, Reb Vovi’s, forefathers, who were said to have been followers of the sect of Sabbetai Zvi, may his name be blotted out. It was told of Reb Vovi’s grandsire that on Tisha b’Av, he used to descend to the cellar and eat half a cherry. For he used to say, If Sabbetai Zvi really was Messiah, I satisfy his requirement of feasting thereby; while if he isn’t Messiah it’s as good as not eating anything.³⁵

34. See n. 6.

In this passage, Agnon shapes the character of Rab Vovi's grandfather as a Sabbatean who was both moderate and flexible. He is described in a manner similar to and suggestive of the well-known story of a rabbi with Sabbatean tendencies who resolutely observed the commandments yet also secretly ate two red currants every year on the fast of Tisha b'Av.³⁶

This tale about a mellow and irresolute Sabbateanism may in fact kindle empathy in the reader for individuals struggling to survive without falling victim to the great ideologies of their time. Despite Agnon's symbolic exclusion of Sabbateans from the Podolia region in his 1916 chapter about Jacob Frank, and in contrast to the negative attitude toward Sabbateanism that emerges in *Ha-nidah*, in *The Bridal Canopy* Agnon is not deterred from introducing into his narrative moderate Sabbatean Jews in the area of Buczacz and describing them as part of the Jewish community—even though this detail is not intrinsic to the unfolding of the story. However, the composition of this innocuous narrative is another Agnon strategy, allowing him to deal in his covert style with a multifaceted historical complexity. A precise examination of the passage's details and their correlation with historical documents reveals that the passage in *The Bridal Canopy* actually alludes to radical Sabbatean and Frankist personalities who were indeed historical characters and not, as we are led to believe, fictional characters loosely connected to Sabbateanism. In close proximity to the above-mentioned passage from *The Bridal Canopy*, the text relates that Rab Vovi is from the Schorr family, whose hometown was the village Rohatín.³⁷ Lo and behold, the Schorr family from Rohatín was not a moderate Sabbatean family as it seems to be in this passage from *The Bridal Canopy*, but rather a historical family famous for its radical Sabbatean and Frankist activities. Members of this family, headed by the father, Rabbi Elisha Schorr, were Sabbatean leaders in their community and turned Frankist in the mid-eighteenth century. Elisha Schorr's son, Shlomo Schorr, was even one of the leaders in the polemic between the Frankists and the rabbis in Lvov in 1759.

The stories about the Schorr family from Rohatín were well known from historical documents of the period.³⁸ To demonstrate the nature of the descriptions of this family, I will quote one of the many testimonies written about the Schorrs; this testimony was documented by the courthouse of the Satanow community and quoted in Rabbi Jacob Emden's *Sefer shimush*:

35. Agnon, *The Bridal Canopy*, 259 (with a few changes of mine).

36. It seems most likely that Agnon was familiar with the tale from Abraham Jakob Brawer's article on Dov-Ber Birkental's treatise *Divre binah*, which describes a story about a person named R. Salomon from Podhajce who became a Sabbatean and then repented. Nevertheless, and although he kept fasting on Tisha b'Av, he continued eating two red currants during the fast; see Abraham Jakob Brawer, "Makor 'ivry ḥadash le-toldot Frank ve-si'ato" *Ha-shilo'ah* 33 (1903): 332. Scholem, "Ha-tenu'a ha-shabta'it be-folin," 114.

37. Agnon, *Bridal Canopy*, 244.

38. On the Schorr family from Rohatín, see, e.g., Paweł Maciejko, *The Development of the Frankist Movement in Poland, the Czech Lands and Germany (1755–1816)* (PhD diss., Oxford University, 2003), 35–45; Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1895), 5:275–80.

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And he [the witness bearer] also said that Leybush prided himself in front of him that while being in the Holy Community of Rohatín with his brother-in-law Rabbi Hirsch, they all were prostituting with the wife of Rabbi Shlomo Ben Elisha.... We asked him whether Elisha himself did the same as well. And he responded, until then Elisha had not done that himself. But after Frenck's [פֿרענק] arrival he too fulfilled the commandment with his aforementioned bride.³⁹

From this example of written testimonies about the Frankist habits of the Schorr family, it appears that in their home it was customary for guests to sleep with the wife of the son, Shlomo Schorr, in order to “perform the prohibition” against sleeping with a man’s wife. The author of the testimony also states that the head of the family, the *maggid* Elisha Schorr, himself performed the above-mentioned ritual after Jacob Emden returned to Podolia, and he himself slept with his daughter-in-law. I do not propose to judge the authenticity of Emden’s testimony on the customs of incest in the Schorr family of Rohatín, but rather to emphasize the drastic discrepancy between this common image of the Schorr family and the “transformation” that Agnon formulated in his attempt to depict them as semi-Sabbatean Jews whose mere sin was that of eating a cherry on the fast of Tisha b’Av due to their uncertainties.

To conclude our discussion of the passage from *The Bridal Canopy*, we will now consider two matters relating to the construction of the Sabbatean personality of an ancestor of Rab Vovi, both of which are significant to our understanding of Agnon’s perception of Sabbateanism as a trend within Eastern European Judaism. First and foremost, and in a distinctly different manner than in the texts described earlier in this article, where Agnon apparently excluded Sabbateans and Frankists from the Jewish realm of Podolia, in that passage from *The Bridal Canopy* Agnon chooses to insert a Sabbatean-Frankist branch into one of the important dynasties described in his work, one that represents an historical microcosm of the Jewish people. In so doing, he more than suggests that the Sabbateans and Frankists were indeed part of the web of Eastern European Jewish life. Secondly, Agnon tones down the fanaticism of a well-known Sabbatean-Frankist family, the majority of whom converted to Christianity following the polemic in Lvov, and chooses to include this family among those counted in the Jewish community.

“THINGS THAT ARE BETTER CONCEALED THAN REVEALED”

I will now examine the latest, and probably the most complex, example of Agnon’s attitude toward the Sabbatean movement, namely, a chapter titled “Things That Are Better Concealed Than Revealed.” Two very different versions of this text bear the same title: the first was published in Agnon’s lifetime, in 1960, in the first volume of the periodical *Me’usef*, and the second in 1973, posthumously, in *A City in Its Fullness*, an anthology of stories and essays on

39. Jacob Emden, *Sifrei pulmus*, vol. 2: *Sefer shimush* (Ashdod: The Institute for Heritage of the Holy People of Poland, 1998), 7a.

Buczacz. I would like to stress that this very difference between the content of a text that was published in his lifetime and one found in his estate after his death bearing the same name is in itself of interest and relevance to our study and understanding of Agnon's complex approach to Sabbateanism. Therefore, although we will focus more on the later version, we will linger first on the earlier one in *Me'asef*. Similar to his approach in the story *Ha-nidah*, in *Me'asef* Agnon describes the attitude of the Mitnagdim toward the Hasidim in Buczacz in a critical manner:

However most of [the people of] Buczacz were quarrelsome. And even our rabbi, the light of Israel Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, they didn't restrain themselves from vilifying ... and if you would like to know the extent to which the Mitnagdim hated [him], there was an old *dayan* in our town who was one of our Rabbi Meshulam Igra's disciples; some say he was from his court. One day an important tzaddik happened to arrive in Buczacz, traveling in a carriage harnessed to four brave horses, like a nobleman. As the *dayan* saw him, he took a lump of dust and threw it at the carriage. It is told that on that day he became silent, and his speech was taken from him.⁴⁰

Here, Agnon vehemently condemns the residents of Buczacz as sinning in their hatred of the Hasidim. By portraying his beloved city with a stained past, Agnon endows his description with credibility. Nevertheless, this act of inclusion is revealed as an artistic strategy whereby that which is exposed conceals that which is eventually to be repressed; and in fact what is absent in the first version does appear in the later one, where Agnon includes a vivid description of the habits of an extremist Sabbatean community active in Buczacz. This difference between the two texts discloses and confirms Agnon's conflict regarding the Sabbatean issue and his misgivings about excluding Sabbateanism from the picture of Jewish life in Eastern Europe that he creates in his work. Agnon could not decide whether to refrain from writing about the Sabbatean community living in Buczacz, as he did in the materials published in *Me'asef*, or to include them. In this excerpt from *A City in Its Fullness* he even makes a direct remark about this conflict:

Blessed is Buczacz, which name rises in Torah and which raised children who worshiped God with sense and with thought for the Torah. But I won't conceal that people of sin and confusion arose in it, who deviated from the path of truth....

This citation from *A City in Its Fullness* continues with a description of those Buczacz Sabbateans, mentioning two of their customs:

... and who were engaged in alien meditations while praying and during the blowing of the shofar, just as they have learned from the evil Hayim Mal'akh,

40. S. Y. Agnon, "'Devarim she-kisuyam yafe me-giluyam' in chapters from 'ir u-melo'a,'" *Me'asef* 1 (1960): 39-40.

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the wanderer ... amongst those who believed in Shabbatai Zvi's belief were complete criminals and evildoers against Israel, both with their body and with their soul. Two of them went to another town, whose name I'd rather not mention for the honor of two *zaddikim* who came from it. And there, that is to say in that town, the two evildoers swapped their wives with each other. This one has taken that one's wife and that one has taken this one's, by engagement of adultery, as has been said: There is no adultery but with another man's wife.⁴¹

In this passage Agnon first refers to the heretical custom taught by a known Sabbatean emissary, Hayim Mal'akh, and practiced in Buczacz: making use of alien meditations (*kavvanot zarot*) during prayers and during the blowing of the shofar. The second tradition describes two Sabbateans from Buczacz who went to a different city and, in an act of adultery, swapped wives. I wish to expand briefly on these two customs of the Buczacz Sabbateans mentioned by Agnon in order to draw out the significance of these descriptions with regard to our subject matter.

While the Sabbatean preoccupation with prayer meditations was widespread, those focused particularly on the blowing of the shofar were more unusual, thereby allowing us to locate the source from which Agnon in all likelihood learned of this practice: from testimony quoted in the works of Rabbi Jacob Emden that describes a collection of Sabbatean meditations when blowing the shofar—revealed by a Buczacz Sabbatean when he repented. To the best of my knowledge, this is the only testimony in Emden's work that refers to Sabbatean habits in Buczacz:

This is the copy of the testimony taken from the wise men, the rabbis of the great *Metivta* of the Holy Community of Brody, may God protect them ... he has also testified before us ... how one man from the Holy Community of Buczacz came here and showed me too the aforementioned meditations for the shofar [blowing]. And the man's name was Mordechai Ben-Moshe, and I showed him with my finger, so that he could learn and understand the words of heresy explained there. And he accepted what I had to say and repented and confessed his sin that he has committed—that he has believed in the aforementioned heresy until this day. And he said in these very words: I have learned these matters from Rabbi Issachar ben R. Natan of Buczacz. And these writings were sent to him [R. Issachar] from Rabbi Jonathan of Prague...⁴²

The fact that Jacob Emden's book is the source for Agnon's work is highly significant. First and foremost, Agnon relies on Emden's descriptions whose passion and fervor in accusing rabbis of Sabbateanism caused many people in the Orthodox community to doubt the authenticity of his accounts. More

41. Agnon, *'ir u-melo'a*, 213.

42. Jacob Emden, *Sifrei pulmus*, vol. 1, *Petaḥ 'einaym* (Ashdod: Institute for the Heritage of the Holy People of Poland, 1998), 15b.

interesting is that Agnon's description of Buczacz as a town where Sabbateans lived is based on a testimony that explicitly accuses Jonathan Eybeschütz of Sabbateanism. It is not farfetched to assume that Agnon chose to relate the import of these writings to a known Sabbatean figure, Ḥayim Mal'akh, rather than citing the end of the above statement, which attributes the source of the writings to Rabbi Jonathan (Eybeschütz) of Prague. An explicit accusation that Eybeschütz was a Sabbatean would have affirmed his affiliation with Gershom Scholem, and his own students would consequently have ostracized him from the Orthodox community. And so it seems that Agnon's ambivalence regarding Jonathan Eybeschütz's Sabbateanism, explored in the tension between his story "Knots upon Knots" and Scholem's testimony according to which Agnon accepted his opinion about Eybeschütz's Sabbateanism, is apparent in this case as well. On the one hand, Agnon does not shy away from relying on evidence that accuses Jonathan Eybeschütz of Sabbateanism, yet, on the other hand, he is not willing to state this accusation as an overt fact.

An examination of the second tradition, cited above, regarding the two Sabbateans from Buczacz who traveled to a different city and committed adultery there, also yields interesting findings. The book of anti-Sabbatean testimonies, *Sefer gehalei 'esh*, edited by Joseph Prager, mentions a testimony nearly identical to the one in the story: "And two from the group of the conspiracy of traitors who were in Buczacz went to Nadvorna and swapped their wives with each other."⁴³ Theoretically, one might presume that in this case, as in the testimony about the alien meditations when blowing the shofar, Agnon found these details in Prager's book and adapted them in his essay in *A City in Its Fullness*. However, I believe this is not the case. First of all, in *Sefer gehalei 'esh*, this testimony is part of a long sequence of interesting testimonies about Buczacz Sabbateans, which begs the following question: why did Agnon not "borrow" any of the other testimonies for his book. An equally troubling issue is how Agnon could have had access to *Sefer gehalei 'esh* when the only extant copy was in a manuscript in the Bodleian Library in Oxford! I believe the answer to both of these questions is one and the same. Agnon did not read *Sefer gehalei 'esh*; rather, he carefully read Gershom Scholem's article: "Barukhiah, the Sabbatian Heresiarch in Salonica," which was published in the periodical *Zion* in 1941.⁴⁴ Indeed, in the second half of the article, Scholem quotes from the Oxford manuscript of *Sefer gehalei 'esh*, relying solely on the testimony regarding the two Buczacz Sabbateans swapping wives, without mentioning any others.

It seems, therefore, that Agnon has integrated in *A City in its Fullness* explicit and overt traditions about Buczacz Sabbateans that he learned from an article by Gershom Scholem and from a testimony that accuses Jonathan Eybeschütz of Sabbateanism. From this we can conclude, first of all, that Agnon was not afraid to use the information Scholem presents in his studies on Sabbateanism despite the criticism he had expressed toward them, as we have seen earlier when discussing

43. *Sefer gehalei 'esh*, MS Oxford Bodleian Library Mich. 106–108 (=Neubauer 2189), fol. 69r.

44. Gershom Scholem, "Barukhiah, rosh ha-shabta'im be-saloniki," *Zion* 6, no. 4 (1941): 193.

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the story “Knots upon Knots.” Moreover, Agnon included this information in his work despite the public opposition to Scholem’s conclusions in Orthodox circles and the specific criticisms of Scholem’s friend and a major scholar of his work, Baruch Kurzweil.⁴⁵ Secondly, and of greater importance, Agnon’s unwillingness to abstain from using a testimony based on the assertion that Jonathan Eybeschütz was a Sabbatean suggests the inference that in *A City in Its Fullness* Agnon was adopting an unorthodox approach regarding the question of Jonathan Eybeschütz’s Sabbateanism. In other words, although he could have ignored the testimonies cited by Emden and Scholem, under the pretext that they accuse Jonathan Eybeschütz of Sabbateanism and therefore are not authentic, he nevertheless chose to present this information from the aforementioned sources in his literary work as a part of the history of Buczacz.

In conclusion, *A City in Its Fullness* is essentially a monument Agnon erected to the memory of his hometown, Buczacz, which functions in his literary oeuvre as a symbol for all of Eastern European Jewry. In the earlier version of this story Agnon chose to suppress Buczacz’s Sabbatean past, and consequently used the passage “Things That Are Better Concealed Than Revealed” to describe the struggle between the Hasidim and the Mitnagdim. The later version of this passage, however, includes information regarding Sabbateans in Buczacz; Agnon, therefore, has included Buczacz’s Sabbateans in a memorial monument that is significant both on personal-historical and symbolic-Judaic levels and reflects an essential shift in Agnon’s attitude not so much toward Sabbateanism per se as toward the problem of what should be included as part of the image of Eastern European Jewry. It is, moreover, noteworthy that the information presented by Agnon was based on sources that were not considered reliable in an Orthodox context. We must conclude, therefore, that Agnon did not hold a definitive conception of traditional Jewish society, even in the later stages of his life, and that the question of the boundaries and the composition of the eighteenth-century Jewish community in Podolia was an unresolved issue for Agnon, perhaps until his death.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The multiple and contradictory depictions of the Sabbatean movement in Agnon’s oeuvre demonstrate that his attitude about its role within the so-called “traditional Jewish world” had not crystallized. Moreover, this examination of the relationship between Sabbateanism and the traditional Jewish world suggests that Agnon’s image of that world was not clear cut, as previous studies have assumed.

As I have demonstrated, Agnon did not shy away from accepting Jonathan Eybeschütz as a Sabbatean. His criticism was directed rather at the “conference”—the public presentation—as a crass act expressed in the story “Knots upon Knots”

45. An extensive study of the scholarly and personal debate between Scholem and Kurzweil regarding research about the Sabbatean movement can be found in Noam Zadoff, “Be-‘arugat ha-nihilizem: ha-pulmum bein Baruch Kurzweil ve-Gershon Scholem ‘al ḥeker ha-shabta’ut” *Kabbalah* 16 (2007): 299–360.

by the refusal of the literary character Samuel Emden to participate and his preference to instead remain with his friends in a booth outside the conference hall.

In a different manner during the second decade of the twentieth century, Agnon distanced the Sabbatean movement from the general Jewish community in Eastern Galicia both explicitly in his writings about Jacob Frank and through his use of literary techniques in the story *Ha-nidah*. He does so by claiming that followers of Sabbateanism did not constitute an organ of the Shekhinah and by describing the rise of the Sabbatean movement as an historical event distant both in time and place—occurring in Turkey in the last third of the seventeenth century. In contrast to this approach, in *The Bridal Canopy* Agnon not only describes the Sabbateans and Frankists as living in Podolia, but also insists on including a Sabbatean branch in the “holy family” of his work, that of Yudil Ḥasid and his descendant Isaac Kumer. Because the marriage between Yudil’s family and the offspring of the Schorr family from Rohatîn is not essential to the story’s plot, it is therefore all the more conspicuous. The depiction of the Schorr family from Rohatîn as an integral part of Yudil’s family suggests that Agnon considered Sabbateanism as one Jewish trend in modern Eastern Europe, a historical period reflected in the time spanning from *The Bridal Canopy* to *Only Yesterday*.

An analysis of the different versions of the passage “Things That Are Better Concealed Than Revealed” from *A City in Its Fullness* offers further corroboration of the different ways in which Agnon grappled with the status of the Sabbatean movement as an indication of his attitude toward “traditional” Jewish life as embodied in the literary depiction of Buczacz. In both versions written in the sixties, Agnon chooses to describe Buczacz as a place that is neither wholesome nor harmonious. In the first version, published during his lifetime, this denigration of Buczacz is expressed in a literary description of the tensions between the Hasidim and the Mitnagdim, while the version found posthumously in his estate focuses on the calumnious character of Sabbateans, whom he locates within Buczacz itself. Moreover Agnon’s deliberate use of sources that could be considered of dubious nature, given his criticism of them, testifies to his adamant determination to give recognition to the actual existence of a Sabbatean community in Buczacz, which is certainly in sharp contrast to the various attitudes discussed above.

I believe that to construct a linear succession of Agnon’s different attitudes regarding Sabbateanism in his hometown is a misguided effort. Such a project would deter us from perceiving that Agnon’s multiple understandings of the traditional world are reflected in his relation to the Sabbatean question. The crux of this study indicates a sincere inner quest that reflects Agnon’s struggle to understand the complexity of the past, and to re-present it in different ways in his work.

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