Three Charms for Killing Adolf Hitler
*Practical Kabbalah in ww2**

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Abstract

This article deals with mystical-magical activities carried out in Jerusalem by kabbalists and rabbis during the years of the Third Reich as part of their struggle against the Nazi threat. It focuses on a page written for Eliyahu Mizrahi Dehuki, a relatively unknown Jerusalem expert in practical Kabbalah, containing three magic recipes for killing Adolf Hitler. The article opens with a discussion of the tradition of practical Kabbalah and the role of aggressive magic within it. It then proceeds to describe the two-pronged (defensive and aggressive) struggle that Jerusalem kabbalists and rabbis conducted against the Nazi foe during ww2. The discussion then turns to Eliyahu Mizrahi and to the page that was sent to him. The concluding section meticulously examines these magic recipes and the ritual acts they offer in the context of other *insider* sources, attesting to the nature and the symbolic language of Jewish aggressive magic.

Keywords

In that dreadful time, when a storm of evil and hatred was raging through Europe and murdering its Jews, frightening reports kept reaching Eretz Israel. Those were hard years for the people in the *Yishuv*, as the Zionist Jewish community then emerging in Palestine was known. Added to their struggle against the hostile local Arab inhabitants and the British rulers were deep concerns about the fate of their families, friends, and all their Jewish brethren who remained in Europe. In the summer of 1940, the sense of impending danger grew more ominous. General Eugène Mittelhauser, commander of the French army in Syria and Lebanon, declared his loyalty to the Vichy government, the Italian Air Force bombed Haifa and Tel Aviv, and the Desert Campaign opened up in Western Egypt—all indications that war was at the gates. Reports about the advance of the German army in North Africa and the pro-Nazi rebellion in Iraq fanned fears in the *Yishuv*. The information that Rommel and his forces had reached El Alamein turned concern into real anxiety.

Various concrete responses were attempted. The Zionist leadership (unsuccessfully) endorsed political means in an attempt to restrain German policies, and activists in Zionist movements attempted to save Jews and bring them to Palestine, where preparations began for the expected struggle against the Axis armies. Members of the "old *Yishuv*," the name by which early twentieth-century Zionist immigrants referred to the various Orthodox Jewish communities living in Eretz Israel (mainly in Jerusalem, Tiberias, and Safed), were also involved in rescue and resistance actions of their own. Individuals and communities resorted to the ritual tactics whose power had been known to the Jewish people for generations—prayer, repentance, fasts, and acts of "practical Kabbalah."

In this paper, I consider testimonies of the latter kind of activity. At the focus of the article is a page written for Eliyahu Abraham Mizrahi Dehuki, a relatively unknown Jerusalem expert of practical Kabbalah, apparently in the years of the war, including three magic recipes for killing Adolf Hitler. The article opens with a concise discussion of the tradition of practical Kabbalah and the role of aggressive magic within it. It then proceeds to describe the struggle of Jerusalem kabbalists against the Nazi foe and then turns to Eliyahu Mizrahi, one of the practical kabbalists in this community. At its conclusion is a meticulous examination of the aggressive charms (*segulot*) written for him for the purpose of killing Hitler.

1 Practical Kabbalah and Magic Aggression

"Kabbalah" is the name that has been used since the Middle Ages to describe Jewish esoteric knowledge. According to the Jewish approach, this knowledge splits into theoretical and practical realms—the former's concern is speculative and its method is study and thought, while the latter's concern is performative and its purpose is to act in the world. But whereas theoretical Kabbalah did propose a conceptual turnabout and true innovation in Jewish thought about God and the world, practical Kabbalah remained fundamentally unchanged and continued the pre-kabbalistic tradition of Jewish magic.[1]

The existence of magic beliefs and acts in the Jewish people is well documented in Scripture and in the Second Temple literature. Yet, actual evidence of the (oral or written) ritual performance of adjurations using holy names for the purpose of achieving some defined change in reality has been known to us mainly since the third-fourth centuries CE. From this period, and even more so from the fifth century onward, *insider* evidence of this activity gradually expands and includes texts reflecting practical interest in the ritual performance of adjurations (magic manuals) as well as artifacts (such as amulets, curse writs, magic jewelry and incantation bowls) pointing to the actual performance of such acts. The rabbinic literature from the first half of the first millennium CE points to great interest in magic, together with strong opposition to it as well as to its agents. Holy names and angels' adjurations are so prominent in early mystical writings (the *Hekhalot* and *Merkavah* literature dating to the second half of the first millennium CE) that it can hardly be described without them. At the turn of the first and second millennium, the leading Babylonian sage R. Hai Gaon discussed various magic issues in a lengthy responsum to the sages of Kairouan (today's Tunisia). The Cairo *Genizah*—that vast trove of books, documents, letters, and other frayed texts dating back mainly to the eleventh-thirteenth centuries that Fostat Jews avoided destroying and stored in a back room of the Ezra synagogue, where they survived due to the dry hot climate—contains thousands of magic fragments. This evidence, which includes amulets for protection, success, healing, and love, writs with evil spells, recipes, and fragments from magic treatises, points to a practical interest in magic technology in the early centuries of the second millennium. This is the magic culture fostering the writing of holy names and adjurations

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1 On "practical Kabbalah," see Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 182–189; Harari, 'Jewish Magic: An Annotated Overview', 50–60.

that Maimonides, who lived at the time and place of the *Genizah*, viewed as "madness" and vigorously opposed.[2]

This activity was further expanded and developed in Europe during the Middle Ages and the early modern period since the fifteenth century, and came to be known by its updated name—"practical Kabbalah." No performative artifacts have survived from this period, but the extensive magic knowledge accumulated in dozens of manuscripts—including both practical instructions and theoretical studies (touching mainly on the linguistic components of magical technology)—as well as the presence of magic thought and action in *outsider* (that is, non-magic) sources, leave no doubt in this regard.[3] Two main directions of development can be identified at this time: (1) Kabbalah of the holy names (*Kabbalat ha-shemot*). This branch of Kabbalah centers on the holy names—their source, combinations, meanings, and uses. In its practical context, the Kabbalah of the holy names focuses on the linguistic element of magic action and marginalizes the ritual-material aspect related to the implementation of the names and incantations. (2) The ritual-material trend, which focuses on the ritual and expands on all that concerns its details. The distinction between these two channels is not clear-cut given that, as the magic recipes literature indicates, any performative implementation of holy names is always part of a (thick or thin) ritual context, while ritual-material performative practices include, almost invariably, the use of holy names. The difference between these two trends, then, as manifest in the magic literature, is mainly a matter of proportions between the linguistic and the ritual-material components, which are always woven together.[4] Both these trends are present in the Jewish culture of

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2 For extensive research and a detailed bibliography on these matters, see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*; Harari, *Jewish Magic*.

3 For a detailed review and an extensive bibliography, see Harari, 'Jewish Magic: An Annotated Overview', 43–60. Following are several examples of research on magic elements in Ashkenazi Hasidism, among the tosafists (medieval commentators on talmudic halakha), in the circle of R. Nehemia b. Shlomo "the Prophet" of Erfurt, and among kabbalists: Bar Levav, 'Death and the (Blurred) Boundaries of Magic'; Huss, 'Demonology and Magic'; Idel, 'Shlomo Molkho'; idem, 'Jewish Magic'; idem, 'Magic and Kabbalah'; idem, *Nocturnal Kabbalists*; idem, 'Incantations'; idem, 'R. Nehemia Ben Shlomo'; Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices*, 131–188; Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, 47–73; Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*; Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale*, 351–370. The extensive literature on magic manuscripts still awaits serious research. One such complete manuscript has so far appeared in print in full. See Bohak, *A Fifteenth-Century Manuscript of Jewish Magic*. For a thematic study of these manuscripts, see, for example, Harari, 'Divination through the Dead'.

4 These trends come forth in (non-magic) kabbalistic literature as well. See Idel, 'Defining Kabbalah'.

the last few centuries (and even today) in Europe and in Muslim areas under a variety of names—*segulot* (properties), *qeme'ot* (amulets), *refu'ot* (remedies), *pe'ulot* (actions), *hashba'ot* (adjurations) and practical Kabbalah. Despite the widespread emic use of the term "practical Kabbalah," it is hard to pinpoint the extensive influence of Kabbalah (as a set of ideas, rituals, terms, symbols, and visual patterns) on Jewish magic as it is reflected in magic texts. This term, then, which often served to denote a prohibited activity, seems to be merely a new name for a longstanding tradition of Jewish magic that began in antiquity and has survived until today.

The magic recipes literature is a pragmatic literature concerned with the day-to-day life of individuals. Its purpose is to heal humans—their bodies, their souls, their lives. The magic action focuses mostly on the person for whom it is performed in an attempt to fulfill a defined wish: healing, protection, an easy birth, business success, a marriage partner, secret knowledge, and so forth. But benefit to one may at times mean harm to another. Magic then seeks to harm and destroy, even to kill. The kinds of harm mentioned in magic Jewish sources are no different from those in the Greco-Roman or Christian sources and they include physical torture, sowing nightmares into sleep, destroying social status and contacts, harming family members, inflicting illness, injury, and even death. The purpose of the injury may be to subdue the victim by forcing him or her to fulfill the adjurer's wish or simply to cause the actual injury prescribed in the adjuration.[5]

Jewish magic books of recipes, from the oldest known to us, include recipes meant to harm others.[6] Contrary to the magic instructional literature, however, in the sources documenting actual applications of magic knowledge such actions are rare. This is not surprising given that, in an aggressive context, magic functions in a distinctly anti-social mode and subverts law and order. Hence, insofar as it is found beyond the legitimate junctions of control, meaning beyond the control of the hegemony that imposes this order (and, through it, preserves its power), it is better for its users to conceal their actions. Although

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5 See Bellusci, 'Oneiric Aggressive Magic'; Harari, 'If You Wish to Kill a Person'; Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*; Saar, 'The Motif of Fire'. On magic aggression in non-Jewish sources, see for example, in antiquity, Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*; Gager, *Curse Tablets*; Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 147–225; Ritner, *The Mechanics*; and in the early modern period, Lidaka, '*The Book of Angels*'; Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 69–95.

6 Generally, these recipes are spread throughout the treatise but, at times, they are together in a special section. An early example of a collection of recipes of this kind is the Magical Rotuli from the *Genizah* (Oxford Ms. Bodleian Library Heb. 3.31a), which includes seventeen aggressive recipes. See Bohak, 'The Magical Rotuli'.

such sources as the Talmud, hagiographic writings, and Jewish folk literature openly preserve traditions showing rabbis defeating their (anonymous) rivals from other cultures through magic means, evidence on the actual use of witchcraft to harm a specific opponent is extremely limited.[7]

Recipes for killing Adolf Hitler, "ruler of the Germans" (*nesi' ha-germanim*) are also part of this evidence. They unquestionably originate in copies from the magic instructional literature—some manuscript of charms and adjurations. Jerusalem kabbalists possessed texts including recipes "for hatred," "for defeating an enemy," or "for killing." Some of these texts definitely reached this community from the outside, as part of the cultural capital of sages who immigrated to Eretz Israel from Muslim areas and from Europe. Others were written in the city or in its surroundings. Eliyahu Abraham Mizrahi Dehuki was extremely interested in "practical Kabbalah" and invested a great deal in the collection and dissemination of this knowledge. When the vital need to apply it arose, one of his acquaintances wrote to him on this matter and urged him to act.

2   The Kabbalists' Campaign: Prayers, Supplications, and Protection Rituals

The nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth were a prosperous era for the Torah world in Jerusalem. Over one hundred *yeshivot* (houses of study) were founded at this time, fostering spiritual and religious creativity,[8] and Kabbalah had a place in it as well. Despite several descriptions by recent arrivals reporting on the decline of Kabbalah in Jerusalem, today we know that, at the time, the city was the scene of a continuous and significant kabbalistic activity. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this activity was evident mainly among Mizrahi (that is, those originating in Arab lands) Jews and focused on the more prominent kabbalists' yeshivot—Beit El, Reḥovot ha-Nahar, Oz ve-Hadar, Sha'ar ha-Shamayim, and Gan ha-Levanon. Many Jerusa-

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7   On the magical power of rabbis in Jewish sources, see Chajes, 'Rabbis and Their (In)Famous Magic'. Several curse bowls from late antiquity and a few harmful incantation texts in the Cairo *Genizah* are (relatively rare) examples of magic activity directed against specific victims. See Bohak and Saar, '*Genizah* Magical Texts', records 16, 42, 90, 124; Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*. See also the ready-made curse text with the victim's name to be added in the future—Mann, *Texts and Studies*, vol. 2, 94.

8   See Bartal, 'On the Multiethnic Profile'; Ben-Naeh, 'The Yeshivot'. On religious life in this period, see, Ben-Naeh, 'Religious Life'; Lunz, 'Religious and Social Practices'.

lem sages, however, studied mystic texts outside these institutions as well, as individuals or in groups. This was the kabbalistic scene that the young Gershom Scholem (1897–1982) encountered upon his arrival to Jerusalem, a setting that he excluded from his research as uninteresting and immaterial.[9]

These kabbalists split their activity between theory and practice. Usually, they focused on the study of Lurianic Kabbalah (from the influential school of the sixteenth-century Safed kabbalist R. Yitzhak Luria, known as Ha-Ari), and on its application according to R. Shalom Sharabi's mid-eighteenth-century method of *kavanot* in Torah study and prayer.[10] But at a time of distress, also those kabbalists, like other leaders of the religious public, expanded their involvement. Some of their actions were routine—prayers, supplications, fasts —and some relied on more powerful ritual symbols. Some were performed in public and some were discrete. Some were targeted at the world (to stop a plague or a drought, for example),[11] and some at human actions. The appalling fate of the Jewish communities in Europe, the danger of war at the gates, and certainly the "two-hundred days of dread"—as the period of deep anxiety in the *Yishuv* (the community of Jewish residents in Palestine) following the advance of Rommel's army toward the Suez Canal and Palestine came to be known— were among the times most in need of such action.

The collective narrative that emerges from contemporary and later testimonies—mainly in the hagiographic literature and in light of these interventions' success (given that Rommel was ultimately defeated in El Alamein and his forces never reached Palestine)—points to the extensive involvement, both overt and concealed, of rabbis and kabbalists from all communities in the struggle against the Germans.[12] Obviously, the chapters dealing with anti-Nazi activity in books devoted to contemporary rabbis and kabbalists are not historical reports free from suspicion of exaggeration. Generally, they convey the collective memory (contemporary or slightly later) of the Jerusalem community and,

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9   On kabbalistic activity in this period, see Meir, *Reḥovot ha-Nahar*. On Scholem's attitude toward contemporary kabbalists, see ibid., 7–11; Huss, 'Ask No Questions'; idem, 'Authorized Guardians', 85–87.

10   *Kavanot, tikkunim*, and *yiḥudim* (described below) are kinds of meditative kabbalistic rituals that aim to affect the godhead and, as a result, the earthly world as well. On Lurianic Kabbalah, see Fine, *Physician of the Soul*; Necker, *Einführung in die lurianische Kabbala*; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 244–286; Weinstein, *Kabbalah and Jewish Modernity*. On R. Shalom Shar'abi's way as a Lurianic kabbalist, see Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi*.

11   See, for example, Lunz, *On the Paths of Zion and Jerusalem*, 224, on contending with the severe drought of 1870.

12   Cf. the concise discussion in Meir, *Reḥovot ha-Nahar*, 164–166.

according to the genre to which they belong, they often tend to hyperbole and should be approached with caution. Nonetheless, I hold that, beyond imprecisions in specific details, these stories do attest to actual events. Together with personal testimonies and incontrovertible documents, they enable us to offer a broad and reliable picture of the ritual activity carried out in Jerusalem by *Admorim* (that is, leaders of Hasidic communities) and kabbalists in the context of the struggle against the Nazis.

This was a multifaceted activity. Some arranged prayers and supplications, fasts, calls to repentance, taking Torah scrolls out of the ark, and blowing *shofarot*—all in an attempt to fix the flaw due to which, so they believed, God had punished the people so terribly and persuade him to revoke it. Others went to prostrate themselves on the tombs of the ancestors or *tsaddikim* (righteous men) to ask them to intercede in the people's favor. Some adopted a defensive strategy and asked for heavenly mercy. Others opted for an aggressive course and wanted to attack, to ban, and to curse. Some acted in the individual domain, others in public.[13] R. Yehuda Fetaya (1859–1942), then known in Jerusalem as a "great kabbalist, an expert in the nature of [God's] names and the incantations, who would write amulets and heal the sick and had several *yeshivot* for teaching the wisdom of truth and amended several souls and expelled several spirits,"[14] played a central role in this affair and worked on it in various ways. In 1940, he wrote and printed out a special prayer ceremony and arranged its simultaneous performance in various places in Jerusalem to protect the city: "He gathered the public for a special prayer, split them into four groups, and sent them to the four corners of Jerusalem to stand there and

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13   See, for example, the story told about the Admor of Zwehil: "In 1942, almost at the end of his life, our rabbi fought the enemy. This was the time of the great tribulations and he would shed rivers of tears at midnight, with terrifying, inhuman *devekut* (devotion). At times he would lean his head against the wall for hours on end with enormous *devekut*, and at times he would sit with his head between his knees, hour after hour." Werner, *Tsaddik Yesod Olam*, 242. On public activity, see, for example, the 1940 manifesto issued by the kabbalist R. Yaakov Yosef Monsa, calling the public to repent and gather together for a forgiveness and supplication prayer "to remove the measure of strict judgment from the world and awaken compassion and mercy for the people of Israel who are grieving." Yaakov Yosef Monsa, *"Lekhu ve-nelkha ve-nashuva el Adonai* [Come, let us return to God]." Manifesto, Israel National Library L1447.

14   Moshe, *Sefer Kets ha-Yamin*, 48. On Fetaya's life and the hagiographic writings on him, see Devir, *Ish mi-Beth Leḥem Yehuda*. The stories about him expelling spirits are an important link in the tradition known as the *dybbuk*. On this phenomenon, see Chajes, *Between Worlds*; Goldish, *Spirit Possession in Judaism*.

pray according to the order he had … prescribed."[15] Another source reports that he performed ascetic rituals and fasts at the Western Wall and joined *tikkunim* and prayers set by his fellow kabbalists.[16] For this purpose, he even led a group made up of members of his family and his community on a trip to Rachel's Tomb (near Beth Lehem). The tomb's guard at the time, R. Shlomo Eliyahu Freiman, writes that as this group (about sixty people) reached the tomb "they wore sacks with ashes on their heads and began to pray, from that morning until the next. At night, they blew dozens of *shofarot* crying with tears and screaming to the Holy One, blessed be He, to show compassion to his people, the people of Israel." In the morning, when Fetaya heard a conversation with one of the local Arabs who stated the prayers would not help and Eretz Israel would soon be overtaken,

> he immediately ordered all the petitioners to go inside, and each one took an empty cup and circled the place seven times. Each time, all said in unison: "the adversary and the enemy would not enter the gates of Jerusalem.[17] The gates of tears are not locked."[18] And he told them that they should shed their tears into the cups in their hands … At the end all said seven times in unison: "He will not come."[19] … After the prayer, which went on for twenty-four hours, they conducted a *se'udat mitsvah* [a commanded celebratory meal] and they sang and danced and thanked the Lord asking for their prayer to be accepted.[20]

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15   Shabtai, *Sefer Toledot Menachem*, 48. On the pamphlet, see Fetaya, *Maḥberet Asirei ha-Tikvah*. Printed on the cover is a picture of Rachel's Tomb, a key location in the activity discussed here (below).

16   Moshe, *Sefer Kets ha-Yemin*, 50: "And we were then in terrible danger. He went to the Western Wall, fasted and afflicted his body and, in his great sorrow, spoke great words and pushed back the armies of Hitler, may his name be blotted out, and they were lost."

17   According to Lamentations 4:12, reversing the text: "The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy would enter the gates of Jerusalem."

18   Cf. BT *Bava Metzia* 59a: "R. Eleazar said: Since the destruction of the Temple, the gates of prayer are locked, for it is written, 'Also when I cry out, he shuts out my prayer' [Lamentations 3:8]. Yet though the gates of prayer are locked, the gates of tears are not."

19   The formula "he will not come" is a recurrent motif in the stories about the rabbis' actions in Jerusalem. It is also mentioned in the description of the gathering on the grave of R. Hayyim b. Atar (mentioned below) as the concluding words of the prayer and the *tahanun* (supplication) of the Admor of Husiatyn at the site. Gruzman, *Imru Tsaddik*, 204–205.

20   Freiman, *Poteaḥ She'arim*, 135–136. The tears motif is further developed in the account

Rachel's Tomb was a favored location for prayers and supplications. The kabbalist R. Salman Mutzafi who, following his arrival in Eretz Israel from Bagdad (in 1934), established the "Benei Zion" *yeshiva* (study house) there, "gathered the public and summoned them to Rachel's Tomb, where all attentively engage in Torah study, devoting half the night to study and the other half to prayer and calls for peace for our Jewish brethren."[21] We are told that he also engaged in *yiḥudim* and *kavannot*—that is, in ritual attempts to affect the divinity and its emanation to the world through meditation and prayer—over many hours, but desisted from it after he was warned in a dream against provoking a terrible serpent that was revealed to him and threatened to swallow him up (below). The Makhpelah cave (Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron) was also a place of pilgrimage for supplications and prayers,[22] as were also the tombs of various *tsaddikim*.

According to the testimony of Meir Zvi Gruzman, on the fifteenth day of the month of Tamuz 5602 (June 30, 1942), a continued day and night recitation of psalms began at the Yeshu'ot Ya'akov synagogue in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Meah She'arim. Thousands also gathered on that same day, the anniversary of his death, at the tomb of R. Hayyim ben Atar (1696–1743) in the Mount of Olives and at the site that tradition says are the tombs of two ancient revered figures—R. Shimon ha-Tsaddik (in Jerusalem) and R. Shimon bar Yohai, the author of the Zohar according to Jewish tradition (at Mount Meron in the Galilee). This was an attempt to strengthen the power of rituals and prayers through their synchronized performance on the tombs of several *tsaddikim*, intending to enlist them for concerted action before God.[23] Beside this organized mass action, kabbalists also acted on their own, each one separately. It is told that the Admor of Lelov (the chief leader of the Lelov Hasidic dynasty,

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of Ilana Devir, Fetaya's granddaughter. Her story reflects the later family memory of the event and, as usual in hagiographic literature, miraculous motifs are pervasive. According to her, at two o'clock in the afternoon, after Fetaya had filled the cup with tears, he drank it. Suddenly, he spread his hands to the sides and fainted. When they woke him up, he said he had seen Rachel coming out of her grave saying that she "now raises to heaven to bring the messiah ... In the evening, all heard that at two o'clock that afternoon the Germans headed by Rommel had retreated from their plan, and that was a miracle!" Devir, *Ish mi-Beth Leḥem Yehuda*, 235–236.

21   Mutzafi, *Olamo shel Tsaddik*, 88–89.

22   ibid., 89–90.

23   Gruzman, *Imru Tsaddik*, 203. Gruzman also tells there that, at the time, regular study at the yeshivot was interrupted and all moved instead to study the laws on *kiddush ha-Shem* (martyrology). Cf. Leibowitz, *Sefer Kol Yehuda*, vol. 2, 178–179. On the idea of multi-focal prayer, see Meir, 'The Eclectic Kabbalah'.

Moshe Mordechai Biderman), for example, secluded himself for forty continuous days in the cave containing the tomb of R. Meir Baal ha-Nes (in Tiberias), and moved from there to a long retreat at the tomb of R. Shimon Bar Yohai. R. Yitzhak Alfiah went as far as Damanhur in Egypt to prostrate himself at the tomb of R. Yaakov Abuhatsera to ask for help and mercy.[24] Others engaged in stormier actions.

The most surprising tradition in this context concerns a kabbalists' flight over Palestine. Versions of this event vary. Bezalel Friedman cites a concise report by R. Yaakov Meir Schechter (a Bratslav Hasid, from the Sha'ar ha-Shamayim yeshiva):

> At the time of the horrific war, during the awful *Shoah*, some "practical kabbalists" in Jerusalem decided to take action to inflict a crushing defeat on the enemy. They inquired and searched for the name of the enemy and the name of his mother: Hitler, may his name be blotted out, son of Klara, and decided to go up on a plane above the Makhpelah cave to slaughter a hen there and, when doing so, engage in special *kavanot* and [the invocation of holy] names, thereby uprooting the evil enemy. Among the great rabbis there were several who did not support this action.[25]

Two motifs typical of the stories of that time come together in this version: the slaughter in heaven and the inquiry concerning Hitler's mother's name (a matter that, as will be shown, had some foundation in reality). This plan of the kabbalists, which may indeed have awakened reservations even at this time of great distress, was tied to the name of R. Shimon Zvi Horowitz (Lieder), among the founders of the kabbalists' yeshiva Sha'ar ha-Shamayim. Both this source as well as another one—a 1989 letter from Yosef Leib Zusman who was also a member of this yeshiva—describe an attack against Horowitz at the synagogue accusing him of witchcraft and idolatry. In both of them we are told that he denied any involvement in this action. Zusman's version of the actual event, which is not first-hand either, differs slightly from the one cited. The flight idea is presented as an actual event and the sacrifice on high is

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24   Hennig, *Moshe Ish ha-Elokim*, 147–150; Yehudioff, *Or Ḥadash*, 42–45. R. Israel Abuhatsera, who died and was buried in Egypt, is one of the most important holy figures among Moroccan Jews. The stories about Alfiah's trip to Egypt are full of miracles and wonders, as is common in hagiographies, but there is seemingly no reason to doubt that the trip actually occurred.

25   Friedman, *Sefer Leket Amarim*, vol. 1, 58–59.

endowed with another meaning: "They say that, during the Second World War, several kabbalists traveled on a plane to spray the blood of cocks around Eretz Israel."[26]

The idea whereby the slaughter flight would delineate the borders of Eretz Israel with blood and thus protect it is described in graphic language in another version of this event. This version also addresses the actual feasibility of this act, and solves it in an original way. According to the narrator (Nahum Roz), "British officers inquired whether the Jerusalem kabbalists could work for the victory of the Allies." The two that were sent on this mission (R. Shimon Zvi Horowitz and Hakham Tsaddok Yihiyah Cohen) boarded a military airplane with four cocks "white as snow," and the plane circled over the borders of Eretz Israel— north, south, east, and west. They read special prayers according to R. Shalom Sharabi's method, slaughtered one cock at each direction, and sprayed its blood from the air over the land.[27] Obviously, one can hardly imagine that British officers turned to Jerusalem kabbalists requesting help. But even if this was not the order of events, can one assume the very feasibility of such an event? Could the British Air Force have cooperated with Jerusalem kabbalists to spray the blood of cocks from heaven over the borders of the land? Another, surprising source, outside the Jerusalem community and the *Yishuv* generally, holds that this is indeed what happened.

On August 14, 1981, the personal testimony of the pilot (engineer and film producer) Wim Van Leer was published in *The Jerusalem Post*, centering on the kabbalists' flight. According to Van Leer, on June 20, 1948, during a flight from Europe to Israel in the service of the Haganah (the major Jewish defense organization at the time of the British Mandate in Palestine), he spent the night at the control tower of a small airport in Al-Adam, Cyrenaica (close to Tobruk, on Libya's eastern border). An Irish pilot he met there, with whom he talked through the night, told him that he had been on an air mission in Palestine in 1942, when Rommel had stood at the gates of Alexandria. In his account (as narrated by Van Leer many years later), a delegation of rabbis approached the Air Force commander in Palestine and offered to draw a circle around the land to protect it from the German forces. For that purpose, they needed a plane. Their request was passed on and "somebody approved it." When the pilot telling the story landed his Dakota at the Atarot airport in northern Jerusalem, waiting for him beside a military truck was a large group of "holy men" accompanied by some army person who was in charge and instructed the plane crew. Three old

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26   Zusman, *Mi-Beḥirei Tsaddikia*, 168.
27   Ben-Ami, *Stories*, 195.

rabbis boarded the plane, on which their friends loaded many cages with white hens. The planned circular route included a flight along the coast of Israel and Egypt up to Alexandria, southward along the Suez Canal, landing for refueling, onward to Aqaba, and northward to the Dead Sea along the Jordan River up to Jerusalem. Since the blood of the hens was meant to be sprayed along the route, the door of one of the plane's loading docks was removed, a net was set in place to prevent falls, and the flight departed. The rabbis, who were covered in the fowls' blood because of the air sucked into the plane through the opening, recited psalms and prayers all the time, slaughtered more and more hens and squeezed their blood through the opening. According to the pilot, a great deal of blood spread on the body and the tail of the plane, and the place was a mess of cages, blood, and fowls' carcasses. At the end of the flight, the rabbis gave the crew some money "for beer," and that was the end.

We obviously cannot know exactly what the kabbalists said and did on the plane besides slaughtering the fowl and spraying the blood outside. It is also hard to believe every detail of the story retold here about thirty-five years after hearing it. But if Van Leer's story is not a complete invention (and I have no reason to assume so), this is an actual testimony to the slaughter in the sky. If this plan of the kabbalists was indeed implemented (with British assistance), this is unquestionably the most dramatic action that Jerusalem kabbalists engaged in as part of their defense rituals against the Nazi army, whose impending arrival and the catastrophe that would befall the local Jewish community in its wake were extremely clear.

3   The Kabbalists' Campaign: *Kavanot*, Bans, and Curses

Not all, as noted, confined themselves to ritual actions meant for protection. A power humans could exert—the power of holy names, adjurations, and curses was available to rabbis and kabbalists, concealed in oral traditions and in texts of Kabbalah and magic. Some decided to use it against the leaders of the Nazi regime, and even against the source in whose service, so they believed, the Germans were acting. The approach whereby this struggle meant a confrontation with the cosmic root of evil in the world, the *siṭra' 'aḥra'*— that is, the other, satanic, side of the godhead[28]—is not widely documented in the sources dealing with this period. It does, however, emerge clearly from the

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28   On the evil dimension of cosmic powers, the "other side" of the godhead, see Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, 56–87. Cf. Dan, 'Samael'; Tishby, *The Doctrine of Evil.*

statement of the Admor of Lelov when coming out from his long seclusion in, so we are told, a dark room in one of the abandoned courtyards in Jerusalem's Old City. "At first," he said, "when we went there, we went in with great force, but the enemy [*ba'al ha-davar*, meaning Satan] also acted resolutely and did not let us act."[29] This approach is also graphically reflected in the story about the serpent revealed to R. Salman Mutzafi in his dream:

> He [R. Salman Mutzafi] once related a terrible event with great anxiety: in the year 5602 (1942), we were at Rachel's Tomb, about one hundred and fifty people praying for the annulment of the decree against the Jewish people. A scholar then came in and wanted to perform a "*kol-bo* ban" against the Nazi leaders, may their names be blotted out. Somehow, I felt uneasy and withdrew to sit in a corner, took a nap and saw a terrible vision. A three-headed serpent stood at this place and opened its mouth to swallow me. Iron jaws were in its mouth and its eyes spat venom. One standing close to it said to me: "You should know that no tool or device in the world can struggle with this serpent, so beware and do not provoke it." From that day on, I continued my prayers and supplications but I refrained from naming the foe and from *kavanot* and *yiḥudim* against it.[30]

Before this dream, then, Mutzafi had not only prayed for the Jewish people but had also used holy names and performed *kavanot* and *yiḥudim*—that is, he had tried to ritually influence the heavenly realm aiming to harm Hitler and his followers. In his heart, however, Mutzafi seems to have feared this provocation against the element of cosmic evil raging unbound in the world through its emissaries, and that scholar's attempt to make this provocation public through the "*kol-bo* ban" evoked a fierce panic in his dream and dissuaded him from engaging in any similar attempts.[31]

Kabbalistic *kavanot* of the kind mentioned by Mutzafi become concrete in a later document, whose source is in practical Kabbalah itself.[32] In one of his notebooks, R. Yitzhak Kaduri (1898–2006) copied magic recipes from a manuscript by Abraham Barazani, who was a disciple of R. Yehuda Fetaya in

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29   Hennig, *Moshe Ish ha-Elokim*, 145.

30   Mutzafi, *Olamo shel Tsaddik*, 89.

31   A "*kol-bo* ban" is a spell that appears in *Sefer Kol-Bo*, a medieval anthology of laws and practices of anonymous authorship. See Abraham, *Sefer Kol-Bo*, vol. 8, cols. 37–54 (§139).

32   Beside the recipe below, see also the one by R. Hayyim Vital (1542–1620), R. Yitzhak Luria's foremost disciple, showing how to "kill an enemy" by means of *kavanot* with holy names. Vital, *Sefer ha-Pe'ulot*, 268 (§29).

Jerusalem.[33] At the top of the list, Kaduri copied a recipe ascribed to R. Yehuda Fetaya titled "to kill a rival."[34] Fetaya, as noted, played a prominent role in the struggle of Jerusalem kabbalists against the Nazis. If he himself is the one responsible for the technique suggested in the recipe using Hitler's name and the (mistaken) name Gertrude for his mother, then he also seemingly engaged, at least theoretically, in an aggressive ritual activity focusing on Adolf Hitler.[35] This is the wording of the recipe (with elisions and accompanied by several explanations):

> From R. Yehuda Fetaya—To kill a rival
> "Right would you be, O Lord ... pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter" (Jeremiah 12:1–3). First recite these three verses and then include the name of the rival and the name of his mother with the three words *htqm kṣ'n lṭbḥh* [pull them out like sheep for the slaughter]. Then repeat and include the name of the rival and the name of his mother with the three words *whqydšm lyom hrgh* [and prepare them for the day of slaughter] thus [that is, as shown below] and recite the verses with the cantillation notes[36] and with the verse "the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth" (Isaiah 24:21).
> [The six words from Jeremiah are given here, with the letters of the name *'dwlp bn gtrwd'* combined in them. And the writer explains:] together with Adolf son of Gertrude—he is Hitler, may the evildoer's name rot.[37]

33 See Ades, *Kedushat Yitzhak*, vol. 3, 181. R. Yitzhak Kaduri, who became known during the last decades of his life as the "eldest kabbalist" in Israel, was also the most famous one. Many approached him seeking a blessing, an amulet, or ritual instructions for success, protection, and healing. The knowledge that Kaduri accumulated—an enormous collection of charms recipes copied in his own handwriting in many notebooks—was published in a censored edition by Yaakov Ades that, beside photocopies of Kaduri's manuscript, offers theosophical explanation of the recipes' components.

34 The word "to kill" is written back to front in order to hide its meaning. This practice of concealment, which Kaduri endorses in other places as well, was already common in magic literature during the first millennium. See, for example, the recipes from the *Genizah* edited in Bohak, 'The Magical Rotuli'.

35 In a note to the left of the recipe's title, Kaduri wrote an additional *kavanah* for killing, which is based on an acronym of the initials of the Aramaic words "shall perish from the earth, and from under" (Jeremiah 10:11)—*yamut* (he shall die).

36 That is, according to the way they are ritually read in the synagogue.

37 Hitler's mother was named Klara, as was indeed known to Jerusalem kabbalists (see below). Apparently, then, Fetaya had mistaken information when he wrote this recipe.

[The writer now presents some relevant numerological calculations (*gimatriyot*) and concludes]: And in my humble opinion, it appears that if a person will say this three times [the combination including the verses and the name of the rival] and has a *kavanah* ... when saying "pull them out like sheep for the slaughter and prepare them for the day of slaughter," the rival can then be killed. So says R. Yehuda Fetaya.

R. Salman Mutzafi was among the more distinguished disciples of R. Yehuda Fetaya and the two were in close touch in Bagdad and in Jerusalem. We have no evidence that they engaged in the study or the development of aggressive kabbalistic techniques based on *kavanot* and *yiḥudim* but it is plausible that, at a time of distress, their discussions did not ignore this matter. Mutzafi's account and the recipe from Kaduri's writings are thus complementary testimonies that, together, shed light on this aspect of the kabbalists' struggle against the Nazis.

We do not know what happened to the scholar whose actions had troubled Mutzafi and whether he did indeed perform the *kol-bo* ban at Rachel's Tomb or at any other site. In any event, in a letter that R. Moshe Yair Weinstock, who was also a Jerusalem kabbalist at the time, wrote to a rabbi friend in 1967, he explicitly mentioned participating in such a ritual, which had been led by the above mentioned R. Shimon Zvi Horowitz (Lieder). He writes as follows:

> I think I've already told you how we banned them. The leader was the kabbalist R. Shimon Lieder ... and R. Moshe Yemini ... and I the young one with them, so [it was] a kind of tribunal, and we banned Hitler and Goebels and his assistants. And until today I wonder how R. Shimon knew the names of the mothers of those Nazis, may their names be blotted out.[38]

Magic activity in general, and aggressive activity in particular, requires the identification of its beneficiary or its victim as precisely as possible. The usual way to do so is to denote the name of the person and that of his or her mother.[39] For a Jerusalem kabbalist in the early 1940s to attain this kind of information (which so impressed Weinstock), was apparently not a trivial matter. A brief item published several years before in the *Do'ar ha-Yom* daily titled "Bratslav Hasidim in Jerusalem Decided to Ban Hitler" attests to this: "A reliable source

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38   Leibowitz, *Sefer Kol Yehuda*, vol. 2, 178–179.
39   See Yuval Harari, *Jewish Magic*, 219 and n. 29.

indicates that Bratslav Hasidim in Jerusalem wanted to ban Hitler by lighting candles and blowing a *shofar* at the Western Wall. But they retracted from it because they did not know the name of Hitler's mother."[40] This required information that, as noted, was also mentioned in one version of the flight story, appears in another testimony to the banning ritual performed against Hitler and his associates, which could be the very one mentioned by Weinstock in his letter.

In 2009, the "Kedem Auction House" offered for sale in a public auction a page they called "Boycott and Curse on Hitler." A picture of it was published in the sales catalogue.[41] The picture and the accompanying information show this to be a page 23×20.5 cm. The text is typewritten and contains handwritten additions. The paper was folded and laminated after it was reopened (making reading along the folds slightly more difficult). At the top is the title: "Abridged version of a ban on one guilty by law," and below it are notes concerning the performance: "Say Amen after every word of the cantor. Open the holy ark and take out the Torah scrolls, and say." These instructions denote that the ritual for which this text was written was performed (or meant to be performed) at the synagogue, facing the Torah scrolls, with the participation of a cantor and a congregation. The ban, written against Hitler (whose name is always written in capitals) and his accomplices, is an abridged and adapted ad hoc version of the *kol-bo* ban. The instructions state that, after its performance, the ritual should be completed with the liturgical blessing *Mi she-Berekh* (He Who Blessed), meant for blessing, salvation, and success, for the deliverance of the congregation and of Jewish communities and to hasten redemption.

The added handwritten notes touch on several subjects. Prominent is the addition "son of Klara" always placed close to Hitler's name, above the line. When the ban was typed up the writer had obviously lacked this information, which was later added in order to make the ritual more effective. The writer had originally used the "ruler of the Germans" title, intending the specific Adolf Hitler that the kabbalists wanted to punish. The "son of Klara" is an addition rather than a replacement. The instruction "and if [it is implemented] regarding many, they should speak in plural" is also noteworthy, attesting to the writer's sense of responsibility and to his involvement in the ritual's performance. Notice also the emphasis in the handwritten addition "all Arab mur-

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40   *Do'ar ha-Yom*, May 9, 1933, p. 4 (Hebrew).

41   Kedem Auction House Ltd., Catalogue 4 (Jerusalem 2009), item 518, 299. A picture of this page can also be viewed in this company's website, www.kedem-auctions.com. Another item in this catalogue is the mentioned letter of Weinstock (item 426, 244).

derers with all the wicked who help them" at the opening, which is included in the typewritten version as well. This document is undated and it is hard to estimate when exactly it was written. Following is the text (the handwritten additions are italicized):

God Willing

Abridged version of a ban on one guilty by law. (Say amen after every word of the cantor) open the holy ark, take out the Torah scrolls, and say:

We deliver to Heaven the judgment on all Arab murderers with all the wicked who help them, and on the famous villain Adolf Hitler the foe, son of Klara and his entire nation, may their name be blotted out.

Thus we say: As decreed by the angels and by the saying of holy ones, we boycott, ban, excommunicate, execrate, and curse, with the agreement of God, may He be blessed, and of this holy congregation, the evil Gentile Adolf *Hitler* son of *Klara* ruler of the Germans *??? the foes Goebbels and Göring* with all their associates, enemies of Israel, may their names and memory be blotted out, with all the Arab nation, may its name and memory be blotted out, with divine consent and with the consent of this congregation, with this holy Torah scroll and the 613 commandments written in it. And with the ban that Joshua banned Jericho and with the curse that Elisha cursed the youths and with the curse he cursed his servant Gehazi. And with the spell of spells that Rav Yehuda ben Rav Yehezkel threw on a certain man,[42] and with all the bans and curses and execrations and boycotts and excommunications performed since the days of Moses, may he rest in peace, and until today. All will befall the evil Gentile ruler of the Germans Adolf Hitler *son of Klara* with all his evil associates enemies of Israel[43] *mentioned above*, may their name and memory be blotted out. *And if* [*it is implemented*] *regarding many, they should speak in plural.*[44] May he be cursed on the day. May he be cursed at night. May he be cursed when lying down. May he be cursed when rising up. May he be cursed when going out and when coming in.[45] May he be cursed wherever he turns to. In dread will his soul leave. [God] will

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42   On Joshua's curse, see Joshua 6:26. On the curse on the youths—II Kings 2:23–24. On Gehazi's curse—II Kings 5:26–27. On the ban on "a certain man"—BT Kiddushin 70a.

43   The words "with all his evil associates enemies of Israel" are very blurred and their reading is unsure.

44   This instruction, relating to what follows, is written above the line.

45   According to Deuteronomy 28:19.

not spare him. Then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man and all the curses that are written in this book of the Torah will lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord will mark him off for evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the Torah [Deuteronomy 29:19–20]. And you that did cleave to the Torah of your God are alive every one of you this day [Deuteronomy 4:4].

And then say:

He who blessed our ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and Aaron David and Solomon and the prophets of Israel and the righteous of the world, He will bless all this holy congregation with all the holy congregations. Except for the evil ruler of the Germans Adolf Hitler son of *Klara* with all his evil associates *mentioned above* who spill Jewish blood, may they be lost. But our Jewish brethren, God in his mercy will protect them and keep them, and save them from all sorrow and distress, and lengthen their days and their years and bless all their deeds with success and soon redeem them forever together with the whole of Israel amen may it be His will and we say amen.

This, then, is an actual testimony of the preparation of a public banning ritual for "Hitler the son of Klara the ruler of the Germans," and with him Goebbels and Göring and their assistants. The chain of banning verbs, the cursing words, and the ritual structure of saying amen in unison after every word of the cantor (without doubt loudly and with great fervor) facing the representation of God embodied in the Torah scrolls taken out from the ark are all meant to create a performative event capable of effecting loss and destruction. Only one further step separates this kind of ritual event from the actual implementation of harmful witchcraft for the purpose of eliminating Hitler.

In an interview that the journalist Yoram Harpaz conducted with Fania Scholem, Gershom Scholem's widow, she reported:

During the Second World War, several kabbalists came here [meaning to their home] and asked him to teach them to activate powers that would eliminate Hitler. Scholem told them it is forbidden to awaken such powers. They nevertheless tried, and after Rudolf Hess fell in England he said they had almost succeeded.[46]

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46   Harpaz, 'Casts a Giant Shadow'.

Fania Scholem told this story as evidence supporting her claim that her husband's relationship with Kabbalah had not been confined, as he had declared, to philological-historical research and that his involvement in it had resembled, even if slightly, that of the kabbalists. It is hard to say whether what he told his wife and the kabbalists asking for his advice was meant in earnest, as she thought, or in jest, but this is irrelevant for my current purpose. What matters is her testimony about the very occurrence of this encounter and Scholem's knowledge that the kabbalists did ultimately perform some act of the kind they had discussed with him.

We have no information about the group that sought Scholem's advice and whether it also included Eliyahu Abraham Mizrahi (Dehuki). Scholem was by then already known to the Jerusalem kabbalists as a scholar well versed in Kabbalah literature and in kabbalistic manuscripts, and they probably valued him greatly. He met some of them. He also considered learning from some of them (but decided against the idea).[47] Mizrahi, who was mainly interested in practical Kabbalah, is an interesting example of these relationships. On the one hand, in a list that Scholem made for himself including names of yeshivot, sages, and various issues touching on Kabbalah in Jerusalem, Scholem mentions him as "Eliyahu Dehuki from Kurdistan, who offered to teach me practical Kabbalah."[48] On the other, Mizrahi copied in his own handwriting fragments from Scholem's article about "Bilar the King of the Demons," (below). Dehuki, then, may have tried to engage Scholem in some kind of dialogue, perhaps because of his own marginal status in the local community of kabbalists and his search for an alternative authority that would lend him credence, and perhaps due to his contacts with Prof. Yosef Yoel Rivlin (1889–1971), the expert in Oriental studies. Was it then Eliyahu Mizrahi, the Kabbalah practitioner, who arranged the kabbalists' meeting with Scholem and brought them to his home? We cannot be sure. In any event, the piece of paper given to Mizrahi containing three magic recipes for killing Adolf Hitler is definitely the document closest in its spirit to the conversation that took place at Scholem's home.

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47   See note 9 above.
48   Israel National Library, 4°1599, file 234.

4   Eliyahu ben Abraham Mizrahi Dehuki

Eliyahu Abraham Mizrahi Dehuki Abu Abdallah was born in the mid-1870s in Zakhu, north-western Iraq.[49] His family came from Duhuk, a town close to Zakhu (hence his nickname Dehuki), and traded in textiles. He studied with the local rabbis in his youth, married at eighteen, and from the age of twenty-one he combined commercial and study journeys in the area between Zakhu and Bagdad. In his early thirties, he immigrated to Palestine and settled in Jerusalem. Due to economic difficulties, he left and wandered between Egypt and Greece and finally, about ten years after his first arrival, he returned to Jerusalem and settled in the *Sha'arei Raḥamim* neighborhood. He claimed never to have abandoned his studies, but Rivlin attests that he was not "a great scholar" and his elder sons were analphabets.

In 1928, when he was fifty-three, he began to write for Yoel Rivlin (who was then a professor of Arabic and Islam at the Hebrew University) a version of the Scriptures in the dialect of Zakhu Jews. This project took many months and, in the course of it, the two became acquainted. According to Rivlin, Mizrahi "was not considered a 'sage' (*ḥakham*), although he engaged extensively in practical Kabbalah and was in touch with kabbalists in Jerusalem. People from his own ethnic community held he was versed in mystical knowledge, could tell the future, and had incantations for all illnesses and ailments." On his personality, Rivlin writes that "he was not only gifted with incredible imagination, since he engaged in Kabbalah, but also with a quick grasp, a sharp eye, and an understanding heart." The two were in contact over many years and, in the course of them, Mizrahi wrote another eight works for Rivlin, all devoted to the folklore of Jews in Kurdistan and their history. In the late 1950s, by the time Rivlin came to write his book on Kurdish Jews, Dehuki had already passed away.[50]

Some more information about Dehuki's activities in Jerusalem can be retrieved from his manuscripts and from the books he published. Available in the National Library of Israel and in the Library's Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts are four manuscripts where Mizrahi identified himself in

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49   The information on Eliyahu Mizrahi relies on the colophon at the end of the Aramaic version of the Torah scroll he wrote at the request of Yoel Yosef Rivlin (manuscript Jerusalem, Israel National Library Heb 8°712, Notebook 11, end of Deuteronomy) and also on Rivlin's comments on him in Rivlin, *Shirat ha-Targum*, 73–78. I determined his birthdate by his own statement on the back cover of the *Sefer Refu'ah ve-Ḥayim mi-Yerushalayim* that he published in 1931, where he noted his age as fifty-six.

50   Rivlin, *The Targum Poetry*, 73–78. The quotes are from pp. 73, 76.

the colophon and two more that were his work. Two of the former are from Rivlin's estate: the translation of the Scriptures into Kurdish Aramean and a book of proverbs and stories of Kurdish Jews.[51] The two other manuscripts where he identified himself are devoted to practical Kabbalah. Mizrahi gathered in them magic recipes and divination texts beside magical and demonological treatises. One, which he called *Ḥarba de-Moshe* (The Sword of Moses), is basically a copy of Moshe Gaster's printed edition of this work, defined by Mizrahi as "practical Kabbalah."[52] Mizrahi copied *Ḥarba de-Moshe* two more times in two separate notebooks. In both, he had high praise for the work he had copied and noted its value ("one hundred *gerush*," or one British pound), but did not identify himself as the copyist. These copies, as well as the books he printed, were apparently driven by financial considerations.[53] The sixth manuscript (where Mizrahi identified himself as the author) also relied mainly on printed publications. Mizrahi collected in it magic recipes and notes on fortune telling but, fundamentally, it is an orderly copy of Gershom Scholem's article "Bilar the King of the Demons," and of Herman Gollancz's facsimile edition of *Mafteaḥ Shlomo* (The Key of Solomon), which he claimed he had found in the University Library in Jerusalem. The writing of this notebook ended before 1939 since, by the end of that year, Mizrahi made at the end of the notebook a list of his books and their value.[54]

Another treatise by Mizrahi, an extensive manuscript including hundreds of magic recipes and various issues of demonology and divination, reached

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51   Manuscript Jerusalem, INL Heb. 8°712, Heb. 4°6952.

52   Manuscript Jerusalem, INL Heb. 8°3675. Mizrahi copied the treatise from Gaster, 'The Sword of Moses'. On *The Sword of Moses*, see also Harari, *The Sword of Moses*; idem, 'The Sword of Moses: A New Translation'; idem, 'Genizah Fragments'. According to the colophon, Mizrahi copied the treatise from the printed version he had borrowed from R. Meir Yitzhak Hammerman in 1936. Beside it, he wrote additional magic recipes in the notebook without any evident order. He estimated its value to be 100 *gerush* (1 British pound), but noted it was not for sale.

53   Manuscripts Jerusalem, INL Heb. 8°2330, Heb. 8°3674.

54   This manuscript belongs to Michael Krupp and its number is 4353 (F 76237 in the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts). At the top of the manuscript are the names of several individuals and the names of their mothers and numerological calculations involving the names, attesting to the application of some type of divination practice in their regard. In this manuscript, Mizrahi copied from Scholem, 'Bilar', and from Gollancz, *Sepher Mafteah Shelomo*. He estimated this notebook's value at 200 *gerush* (beside the praises he wrote on its content). The list of Mizrahi's books, which he prepared at the end of this notebook, includes about 75 items, and he estimated their value to be about 4000 *gerush* (or 40 British pounds).

the kabbalist R. Yitzhak Kaduri mentioned above, who copied fragments from it. Kaduri was not happy with the material that Mizrahi had collected, which he viewed as touching partly on impure matters alien to Judaism, and he used wide discretion in selecting from it. R. Yaakov Ades, who handled the printing of Kaduri's writings in practical Kabbalah, censored it too so that the book by Mizrahi that has reached us is a lacking, expurgated version.[55] As far as we know, this is the largest volume that Mizrahi wrote. He included in it recipes from all the known areas in magic literature, which he ordered alphabetically according to their aims (obviously influenced by the writings of R. Abraham Hamuy [1836–1886], which he knew at least partly).[56] Traces of Dehuki's involvement are evident on the sidelines of many recipes in this book. For example, when he notes: "and I, Eliyahu Abraham Mizrahi, copied it [the charm] so that Israel should not be missing anything, and I tested it, and it is tested and efficient."[57]

In 1931, Mizrahi published two books in the "Yehuda and Yerushalayim" printing house. One is a reprint of *Sefer Refu'ah ve-Ḥayim mi-Yerushalayim* (The Book of Healing and Life from Jerusalem), dealing with "remedies charms fortune [and] amulets" (which Yitzhak ben-Eliezer had first published in 1892), published together in one volume with *Sefer Shimush Tehillim* (The Book of the Use of Psalms). In the preface to the book, he printed a "poem from the publisher" that forms an acronym of his name—Eliyahu ben Abraham Mizrahi—devoted mainly to promoting the sale of his books. He urges his readers to acquire the book *Shoshan Sodot* (Lily of Mysteries), which he had then recently published (and I have been unable to find), and announces his intention to publish another book titled *Kenesset Eliyahu* (Eliyahu's Compilation). This book, where he collected four brief essays on Midrash, ethics, magic and divination, was indeed published in that same year.[58]

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55   Ades, *Kedushat Yitzhak*, vol. 4, 126–370. Particularly lamentable from my perspective in the present context is that Ades deleted from his edition all the recipes for harming the other. He did the same when copying Kaduri's version of *Ḥarba de-Moshe* (which was also copied from Mizrahi).

56   On R. Abraham Hamuy, see Hamawy, *Rabbi Abraham Hamuy*. Several of Hamuy's printed treatises on charms (*segulot*) are mentioned in the list of Mizrahi's books mentioned above (note 54).

57   Ades, *Kedushat Yitzhak*, vol. 4, 166, 192, 198. R. Yitzhak Kaduri added comments to the recipes concerning Dehuki's copies, his mistakes, and at times his sources as well.

58   See Ben-Eliezer, *Sefer Refu'ah ve-Ḥayim*; Mizrahi, *Sefer Kenesset Eliyahu*. On the use of Psalms literature, see Rebiger, *Sefer Shimush Tehillim*; Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte*, vol. 3, 2–17; Harari, *Jewish Magic*, 265–266.

Mizrahi's manuscripts and books include a vast number of magic recipes, including many for "hatred" and for "killing." Those found on the piece of paper written for him, however, are not among them. The basis of this manuscript was probably a conversation between Mizrahi and one of his practical Kabbalah colleagues, but I do not know who this was. In the hagiographic literature about contemporary kabbalists and Admorim, Mizrahi is never mentioned and Rivlin appears to have been right when he claimed that they did not view him as a real partner. Be that as it may, at the very time the horrors of the Third Reich descended upon Europe's Jews and its army stood at the gates of Palestine, one of Mizrahi's acquaintances thought that he might be able to do something to improve the situation and wrote out for him instructions for killing Adolf Hitler, "ruler of the Germans."

5   Three Charms for Killing Adolf Hitler

The manuscript Jerusalem, INL Heb. 24°7204.4, is a piece of paper of 22×11 cms. that was folded into four (along its length and width), tore widthwise when folded and is now made up of three pieces glued together. The document is written with ink in Oriental script (a script typical of Hebrew manuscripts from the Muslim world). It bears no date and the only identifying sign that could perhaps point to its writer is the name "Abraham" written in pencil on the bottom right quarter of the reverse side. Its content is as follows (I added a few punctuation marks):

Recto
1   To my dear friend, the god-fearing reliable honest and wise R. Eliyahu Abraham Mizrahi, may God sustain him and keep him.
2   The first of the 613 commandments is the commandment to blot out the memory of Amalek, may its name and memory be blotted out.[59]
3   Hence my friend I send out to him three proven charms [*segulot*] to kill the fool dog
4   who wishes to exterminate the people of Israel and to observe [the commandment] if a man comes to kill you
5   rise early and kill him first.[60] And these are the charms, (1) He should take[61] a white cock that was chosen

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59   See Deuteronomy 25:17–19.
60   For this principle, see TB Berakhot 58a (and parallel versions).
61   In the original—take. All the instructions in this recipe are in future tense and it should

6   by the name [named after] of the evildoer Adolf Hitler and raise it at
        home for three weeks

7   that is twenty-one days and then will slaughter it on a waterway and say

8   seven times, as I slaughter this cock so will Adolf Hitler the ruler of the
        Germans be slaughtered by

9   Samael, amen may it be His will.

10   (2) Another [one]. Write on a burnt piece of limestone

11   these names ʿNYʾL, LHBYʾL, ZRWʿYʾL, ʾBHYʾL, YHWʾL, MṢYʾL

12   TʾWMYʾL, WHHYʾL, ʾWRYʾL, ʾDWNYʾL, SRFYʾL[62] seraphs

13   stand above Him,[63] that they should destroy the evildoer Adolf Hitler,
        ruler of the Germans, may his name be blotted out

14   *lemaher shalal ḥash baz* (the spoil speeds, the prey hastens),[64] and bury
        it in an old grave. Proven.

15   (3) Another [one]. To buy a cock, for nine days

16   he should keep it in the house and should call him by the name of the
        evildoer as noted above and he should bury him

17   with the pot in the dust and say, as I buried this cock so

18   did I bury the evildoer Adolf Hitler may his name be blotted out, ruler of
        the Germans.

Verso
Abraham

5.1   *Explanation and Notes*
5.1.1   First Charm

The suggested action is based on the sympathetic law of similarity, which
comes forth here in the equation between signifier and signified and in the
performative proclamation that they share the same fate. Its culmination is a
sacrifice, that is, a violent ritual act for taking a life. The combination of these
two components is meant to create a reality where the violence inflicted on its
signifier is imposed on the signified.

Parallel versions of this recipe are found in other manuscripts. In one, Manu-
script New York JTSL 8114 (second part, 12a–b), the slaughtering on the water-

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        be so here as well. Using the future tense and the imperative mode interchangeably in the
        same recipe is widespread in magic recipes.

62   A possible pronunciation of these angels' names is: ʿAniel, Lehaviel, Zeroʿiel, ʾAbahiel,
        Yehoel, Meṣiel, Teʾomiel, Vehahiel, ʾOriel, ʾAdoniel, Sarafiel.

63   Isaiah 6:2.

64   Isaiah 8:3.

way is combined with additional ritual actions, but the wording of the spell "as
… so …" is missing:

> To kill the enemy take a chosen cock and name the cock after the enemy
> and raise it in your house twenty-one days and after that slaughter it, refer-
> ring to its name on the waterway and bury it by the river while intending
> to the enemy. And write this verse on a citron or on an apple, "those men
> that brought up the evil report upon the land died" [Numbers 14:37] and
> so forth and cook it in vinegar and take it out from there and write on
> a deer parchment, so will the heart of N son of N fly away and die by the
> name of Zaʿafiel, and tie it around the citron and bury everything with the
> cock on the riverside and when the water rises[65] it will cover the grave and
> he will die.

Another parallel version is found in a manuscript from Kurdistan that Reginald
Campbell Thompson bought in Mossoul at the end of the nineteenth century.
There too, the slaughter is accompanied by additional ritual acts:

> Take a black cock and buy it at whatever price they shall ask from you,
> and put it in the fowl-run by itself, and feed it and call it by the name of
> the man you seek, and you should say to it, eat you N son of N. Do so for
> nine consecutive days, and on the tenth bring it to the river and slaughter
> it there, and say, I am slaughtering N son of N, so that N son of N may die.
> As this cock was slaughtered and died so may N son of N die. And take
> two needles and thrust them in its heart, one lengthwise and the other
> breadthwise, and bury it on the brink of the river, and the enemy will not
> complete his year, by God's help.[66]

5–6 | take a white cock that was chosen by the name [named after] of the
evildoer Adolf Hitler

A white cock may serve many aims in Jewish magic practice (regardless of
whether it is slaughtered). For example, *Sefer ha-Razim* recommends slaugh-
tering a white cock to arouse passion; a Babylonian incantation bowl hints at
the sacrifice of a white cock for oppressing and controlling others; an ancient

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65   The original is mistaken and I have corrected as it should be.
66   Thompson, 'The Folklore of Mossoul,' 101. Another version of the recipe is found in
      manuscript Montserrat Or. 54, 34b (F 10023 in the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manu-
      scripts). On this late eighteenth century manuscript, see Verman, 'Signor Tranquillo's
      Magic Notebook', 234.

Genizah recipe commands the killing and burying of a white cock to attain sexual control over a woman; another *Genizah* recipe suggests giving a white cock mature wine in order to find a treasure; a book of recipes from Europe (Italian script, 17th century) suggests using a white cock for finding a thief; and *Sefer Raziel ha-Malakh* suggests slaughtering a white cock as part of a ritual for bringing down rain.[67] In any event, none of the parallel versions of this recipe that were noted above mentions a white cock. Two actually mention "a black cock," while the third refers to a "chosen cock." The graphic similarity in Hebrew between the words black (*šḥwr*) and chosen (*bḥwr*) stands out, but it is hard to point to its development in this context. The hardest version of all is the "chosen cock" that, in the Hitler recipe, assumed actual meaning— "chosen by the name …," that is, named after. The version "black cock" (*tarnegol shaḥor*) seems more natural and may have been corrupted into "chosen cock" (*tarnegol baḥur*), a corruption that, in turn led to the addition of "by the name of" and possibly (lacking an indication of the cock's color), even to making it white.

Taking (or choosing, or buying) something "by the name" of someone means creating *ab initio*, ritually and deliberately, a concrete signifier-signified connection between the thing and the person by whose name it was taken. In this case, between the cock and Hitler. This is an instance of the law of similarity pointed out by James Frazer as one of the sympathetic principles underlying magic thought and action.[68] An explicit expression of this principle is found in the wording of the formula accompanying the slaughter: "As I slaughter this cock, so will Adolf Hitler be slaughtered."

6 | and raise it at home for three weeks

This act is intended to deepen the identification of the cock with Hitler, strengthening it beyond the initial connection founded on the choice of the cock "by his name," toward its final revelation in the wording that accompanies the slaughter. In the course of these three weeks, the person will recurrently point out the signifier-signified link so as to tighten the bond between them.

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67   These are merely a handful of examples. See (respectively) Margalioth, *Sepher Ha-Razim*, 75–76 (=Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim*, 36–37); Rebiger and Schäfer, *Sefer ha-Razim*, vol. 1, §§ 91–94; Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls*, 122; Bohak, 'The Magical Rotuli', 335; Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte*, vol. 3, 56; Manuscript Budapest, The Hungarian Academy of Science, Kaufmann A247, 13a; Margolies-Abulafia, *Sefer Raziel ha-Mal'akh*, 11. On the central role of white cocks in sacrifice rituals in the Greek Magical Papyri see Smith, 'Trading Places', 23–24.

68   Frazer, *Lectures*, 37–40; idem, *The Golden Bough*, 11–12.

We can easily imagine his attitude toward "Hitler" the cock in his possession and the reversal of the feelings and the relationship between them—from fear and humiliation to mastery and control. This reversal will assume its ultimate and absolute meaning in the act of taking "Hitler's" life and will be realized in the world through the death of Hitler "ruler of the Germans."

7 | will slaughter it on a waterway

Sacrifices—meaning the ritual act of taking a life—are widespread in magic activity, particularly of the aggressive type, and are already documented in the earliest Jewish magic treatises.[69] *The Book of Mysteries* (*Sefer ha-Razim*), for example, suggests slaughtering a lion cub, slaughtering a grouse, and using the head of a black dog, while *The Sword of Moses* (*Ḥarba de-Moshe*) commands slaughtering a cock.[70] A cock is an available animal, and relatively easy to slaughter (or kill in other ways).[71] It is probably for this reason that it also serves in the only sacrifice ritual practiced in Judaism—the custom of *kapparot* (expiation) on the eve of the Day of Atonement.[72] To the best of my knowledge, fowl were killed in the context of magic activities mainly in order to use their blood, whereas other animals were killed in order to use their limbs. Killing animals (usually small and available) as part of the magic ritual is documented in many recipe books from the early modern period. One good example is, for instance, manuscript Budapest, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Kaufmann

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69   Anthropologists as well as scholars of religion disagree on whether the violent act of killing is the gist and the culmination of the sacrifice ritual, or perhaps only a component in a ritual whose logic does not actually require the taking of a life. It is clearly not the gist of the ritual in Jewish magic activity, since the basis of this activity is the execution of an adjuration. The sacrifice accompanies it as part of a ritual array and charges it with a performative potential of violence. On sacrifice in the Jewish magic ritual, see Swartz, 'Sacrificial Themes'. The research literature on sacrifice is extensive. Concerning the violence latent in it, see, for example, Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, 17–61; Burkert, *Homo Necans*; Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*; Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*.

70   Margalioth, *Sefer ha-Razim*, 73, 75, 84 (=Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim*, 33, 36–37, 49; Rebiger and Schäfer, *Sefer ha-Razim*, vol. 1, §§ 65, 91–94, 137–139); Yuval Harari, 'The Sword of Moses: A New Translation', 89 (§ 70). A recipe to that in *The Sword of Moses* requires tearing a cock apart. See Bohak, 'The Magical Rotuli', 335.

71   See, for example, the recipe in *Rav Pe'alim* (a nineteenth century recipe book from Morocco): "When someone falls, take a black fowl, male for a male and female for a female, and smash the fowl's head on the threshold of the house where the person fell, and tear the fowl from its back and take the heart and squeeze its blood into a spoon and put the blood in the mouth of the sick person …" Barel, '*Rav Pe'alim*', 223.

72   See Aptowitzer, 'Nusha'ot Shonot'; Lauterbach, 'Tashlik', esp. 262 ff.; Shahor, 'Kapparot'.

A 245 (Italian script, 16th–17th centuries), which includes many recipes com-
manding the killing and use of limbs from a frog, a bat, a rat, a cock, a cat, and
more.[73]

Water serves in many magic rituals in Judaism, as such and in the context
of its source in nature (sea, river, spring, and so forth). Contrary to other
recipes, where water serves to gather the blood in order to use it,[74] here water
receives and bears the blood. Clearly, then, it is not the blood as such that
is at the center but the slaughter on the water. The most important example
of a ritual on the water in Jewish culture is the *Tashlikh* practice on the first
day of Rosh ha-Shanah. Jacob Lauterbach, who tied this practice to that of the
kapparot, viewed both as upshots of an ancient practice that developed after
the destruction of the Temple and the abolition of the ritual of sending the
goat into the wilderness (Leviticus 16), whose essence was to bring a ritual gift
to Satan and to the demonic entities that dwell in bodies of water.[75] Echoing
in this recipe may also be the notion of a sacrifice to Satan (*siṭra' 'aḥra'*),
whose concrete expression is the gift of the blood in the water. This option is
particularly plausible in light of the fact that Samael (meaning Satan) is the one
who was sent to slaughter Hitler.[76]

8 | as I slaughter this cock so will Adolf Hitler … be slaughtered

This performative formula, which is meant to act in the world and create
a reality within it is, as noted, the linguistic expression of the sympathetic
principle underlying the entire act: as soon as the cock was tied to Hitler and
became one with him, slaughtering them both is also one action. Many harmful
acts in Jewish magic literature are based on this principle—they are founded
on acts of violence that often (but not always) are imposed on a living victim

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73 Even R. Moses Zacuto, the leading rabbi and kabbalist in seventeenth-century Italy, did
not recoil from copying such a recipe in his *Book of Secrets* (*Sefer ha-Sodot*): "Take a black
cat and take a new knife to slaughter it and say, I am slaughtering you so that you may
fulfill my will to see everyone and they will not see me … and I also adjure you in the name
of the God of Israel … and after that slaughter it and cut off its head and put two seeds in
its eyes and the same in its nostrils and the same in its two ears and one in its mouth and
bury it in the ground … and put on it human blood for forty-three days, both from a male
and from a female …" (manuscript Moscow, Russian State Library, Guenzburg 1448, 4b).

74 See, for example, Margalioth, *Sefer ha-Razim*, 75–76 (=Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim*, 36–37;
Rebiger and Schäfer, *Sefer ha-Razim*, vol. 1, §§ 90–94).

75 Lauterbach, 'Tashlik'; idem, 'Kapparot Ceremony'. On the *tashlikh* ceremony, see also
Munk, *The World of Prayer*, vol. 2, 289–295.

76 Had the spell said "by you Samael" (rather than "by Samael") and turned to him directly,
this option would have appeared even more plausible.

and end with the taking of its life. Following are three examples. The oldest is taken from *Sefer ha-Razim* (and does not require a sacrifice):

> These are the angels who are full of anger and wrath … and are prepared to torment and torture a man to death … And if you wish to send them against your enemy … Take water from seven springs on the seventh day of the month, in the seventh hour of the day, in seven pottery vessels that have not seen light … take a glass vial, (and say over it) the name of your adversary, and pour the water [from the seven vessels] into it, then break the pottery vessels and throw [the pieces] to the east, north, west, and south, and say thus to the four directions … accept from my hand at this time that which I throw to you, to affect N son of N, to break his bones, to crush all his limbs, and to shatter his conceited power, as these pottery vessels are broken …[77]

Another, extremely cruel example is taken from the book of (magic and other) recipes of the famous Safedian Kabbalist, R. Hayyim Vital (early 17th century):

> To kill an enemy, take a frog—a male for a male and a female for a female—and sew up its mouth and its eyes and all its orifices and say: as I tie and sew this up, so may the mouth and all the orifices of N be sewn up and plugged up. And his name need not be known. And throw the frog under the bed, and as this frog swells up so will that person swell up until death.[78]

A third and relatively late example (Mossoul, end of the 19th century):

> For an adversary. Take a heart of a lamb and thrust[79] needles (in it), and also write with the heart's blood and put [what was written] into the hole of the heart, and hide this heart in a place of evil[?], that it may rot, and that enemy may also rot and come to an end. And this is what you should write: HŠDY'L HHQY'L HMY'L ḤRS'L HMM'L HLW'L[80]

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[77] Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim*, 25–27, with slight changes (=Margalioth, *Sefer ha-Razim*, 69–70).

[78] Vital, *Sefer ha-Pe'ulot*, 209 (§ 220).

[79] Thompson seems to have erred when copying the Hebrew text (his version is meaningless) and it should be as corrected here.

[80] A possible pronunciation of these angels' names is: Hashdiel, Hahaqiel, Hamiel, Ḥarasel, Hamamel, Haloel.

Israel El blessing blessing blessing, sickness sickness sickness come come come upon my adversary N son of N. *Amen neṣaḥ selah va'ed* (everlasting).[81]

8 | The ruler of the Germans

The title "ruler of the Germans" was meant to denote the one specific Adolf Hitler, the object and victim of the act. Generally, rather than an alternative to the mother's name used in adjurations, this notation is an accompaniment. The writer of the manuscript probably did not know the name of Hitler's mother and therefore made do with the specifying title "ruler of the Germans." The title also appears in the ban writ cited above and, since this is not the usual appellation for Hitler in Hebrew, it is clear that both these texts were formulated within the same circle (or even by the same person) who acted to curse Hitler and destroy him. In the ban text, as noted, the mother's name "Klara" was added in handwriting.

8–9 | by Samael

Contrary to the sources discussed above as conveying the struggle against Satan, whose emissary is Hitler, this recipe is meant to enlist Samael (Satan) in action against Hitler. Jewish magic does not often turn to demonic powers and the use of Samael and his name is not widespread in magic sources. It is not exceptional, however, and appears from the end of antiquity onward.[82]

5.1.2   Second Charm

This recipe does not require the taking of a life but death is still present in it. The ritual's components are simple and amount to the hiding of eleven holy names written on limestone in an old grave. The setting of the writing and the burial is not precisely defined. The gist of the act, in this version, is thus a joining of death and the power of the names by activating them for the purpose of killing Hitler. This purpose is explicitly communicated to the holy names that are required to act.

Something, however, may have gone amiss in this version. Two versions close to it explicitly require that the holy names be burnt on the stone before their burial and this was possibly the intention of the current version as well. In these two versions, the writing's setting is scripted far more precisely. In manuscript

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81   Thompson, 'The Folklore of Mossoul', 99.
82   See, for example, Gaster, 'The Wisdom of the Chaldeans', 350; Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 57, 216; Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte*, vol. 1, 137–138.

Geneva, Bibliothèque de Genève, Comites Latentes 145 (p. 327), someone wrote in one of the empty pages in Oriental script:

> To destroy an enemy. He should write these names on limestone on the first hour of the first day and burn these names ʿNYʿL LHBYʿL ZRWʿYʿL ʾBYHʿL YQRYʿL ʿLYʿL TʾWMYʿL WHHYʿL ʾWRYʿL ʾDWNYʿL SRPYʿL seraphs stand above Him to destroy N son of N *lemaher shalal ḥash baz* and bury it in an old grave.[83]

A very close version appears in one of the manuscripts that Thompson acquired in Mossoul. This recipe is slightly corrupted and reads as follows:

> To destroy an enemy. He should write on the first day at the third hour of the day on limestone, these names; and then let him burn the stone with these written[84] [names] NMʾL LHBYʾL ZRWʿYʾL ʾHBYʾL YHRYʾL MRYʾL ʾMYʾL WHBYʾL ʾWRYʾL SRPYʾL Seraphs stand above Him, that you may destroy the enemy, N son of N *lemaher shalal ḥash baz*, or bury these names in an old grave. And this is tested and efficient. End.[85]

The names in the recipes are not identical, as indeed expected in the transmission of lists of this kind. Regarding the ritual, besides the differences in the timing of the writing, the recipes differ concerning the burning or the burial of the names. The version "or bury (*ʾo qevor*) these names" appears to be corrupted and should be "and bury (*u-qevor*) these names" (after burning them) as in the first recipe. In any event, if this corruption is not Thompson's responsibility, then the actual text suggests alternatives instead of a sequence of actions: burning or burial.

10 | Write on a burnt piece of limestone these names

The literal meaning, "write these names on a burnt piece of limestone," appears plausible. Possibly, however, the word *šrwp* should not be read as an adjective (*saruf*, burnt) that qualifies the limestone but as an imperative (*serof*, burn), from which the required conjunction has been deleted (*u-serof*, and burn). In this reading, the formulation that appears in the two parallel versions

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83   This manuscript, the largest treatise of Jewish magic recipes known today, was written in Turkey or in the Balkans at the beginning of the sixteenth century. See Benayahu, '*Sefer Shoshan Yesod Haolam*'.

84   Literally—that you should write.

85   Thompson, 'The Folklore of Mossoul', 105.

of this recipe obtains: "write on a piece of limestone and burn these names." The burning motif is mentioned in the recipe in the names of two angels—Lahaviel (angel of flame) and Saraphiel (angel of fire)—and also in the verse cited from Isaiah (seraphs), and is obviously vital to the act suggested. Omitting the burning of the angels' names greatly softens the character of the act and subverts the aggression implicit in the other versions.

According to the magic approach that identifies the name and the essence it is tied to, the holy names are not representations of heavenly entities but they are actually the entities-powers themselves. The burning of holy names, and particularly those where God is present (in the *el* suffix) is an aggressive act and a provocation of heaven. The purpose of this act is probably to enrage the heavenly dwellers going up in flames and incite their revenge. This heavenly aggression, which the torcher-adjurer evokes through his acts, is what he seeks to channel to "death" through burial in an old grave in the direction of Adolf Hitler. In this recipe, then, the letter representing the Hebrew conjunction was omitted and so is the element of violence toward heaven, which I hold to be the very essence of the entire act.[86]

11–12 | 'NY'L ... SRPY'L

These eleven angels are mentioned separately and in various combinations in both esoteric and magic Jewish literature, though I have not seen this specific combination in other sources. Two of them, Saraphiel and Lahaviel, essentially represent fire and burning that, as noted, are the core of the suggested action.

12–13 | seraphs stand above Him

The verse from Isaiah 6:2 is cited here after the name of the angel Saraphiel. It again emphasizes the element of burning while also hinting at God, who is at the focus of the prophet's vision, and involves him in the magic procedure.[87]

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86   The fire motif is widespread in Jewish magic, mainly in the context of attaining love and sex. In magic recipes and objects for this purpose, many burning acts are mentioned, including ones where names of angels are set on fire. For an extensive discussion of this issue, see Saar, 'The Motif of Fire'.

87   Quotes from biblical verses and references to Scripture are widespread in Jewish magic literature. See, for example, the comprehensive study of Salzer, *Die Magie der Anspielung*. See also the discussion of quotations in Christian (and other) magic literature in late antiquity in Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*.

14 | *lemaher shalal ḥash baz*

In Isaiah 8:1, God instructs Isaiah to write on a great roll "with a common pen, *lemaher shalal ḥash baz* (The spoil speeds; the prey hastens)." When a son is born to the prophet, he is commanded to name him *Maher-shalal-ḥash-baz*, "For before the child shall know how to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria" (8:4). The child's name, then, bears the prophecy of impending destruction, which was fulfilled, and this potential is the basis for using it in the wording of the incantation. Furthermore, it includes and highlights two explicit expressions of urgency—speed (*maher*) ... hasten (*ḥash*). Phrases urging haste and swift action ("immediately," "at that moment," "hasten," "speedily," "do not delay" and so forth) are common in adjurations. Here they appear twice in a request for immediate execution of the death imposed on Hitler.

14 | and will bury him in an old grave

The use of graves and of the dead is not widespread in the Jewish magic of late antiquity and the early Muslim period. From the Middle Ages and the early modern period it is found more often, particularly in two contexts: speaking with the dead and harming others.[88] In the current instance, the intention is not to awaken the dead to action, as the choice of "old grave" makes clear. According to the talmudic view, "for a full twelve [months] the body [of the deceased] is in existence and his soul ascends and descends. After twelve months, the body ceases to exist and the soul ascends but no longer descends."[89] An "old grave," then, is one that preserves the presence of death but not that of any active dead buried in it. Hiding the names in the grave is thus part of structuring the aggressive meaning (and consequence!) of the act, which begins with the burning of the holy names through the ritual-performative representation of its purpose—the destruction of the enemy.

Examples of the use of a grave for harmful purposes appear in many sources. Some of them follow:

> To kill your enemy write this adjuration on a deer parchment and bury it in a new grave and return [from the graveyard] in a different way. I adjure

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88   On necromantic practices of divination, see Harari, 'Divination Through the Dead'. For the use of graves in harmful magic, see the examples below. For further uses of graves, see, for example, manuscripts Budapest HAS Kaufmann A425, 17a, (for love), 35a (for stopping menstrual blood) and Moscow, SL Guenzburg 1448, 48a (for preserving religious values).

89   BT Shabbat 152b–153a. And see Lieberman, 'Aspects of After Life' (especially 506–513 and n. 4).

you Anger, Wrath, Indignation, Ire, Fury and Destroyer,[90] you the angels appointed to destroy all flesh, destroy the bones and the body of N son of N at this time and do not delay ruining him and killing him from these days and forever … [God] who created Adam from dust and killed him and returned him to dust will allow you to destroy the body of N son of N at this hour and at this time and at any time. *Amen amen selah*.[91]

To kill an enemy write on a day-old egg and bury it in a new grave: for his soul draws near to the pit and his wife to the destroyers [Job 33:22], and on this day it shall come to pass that the glory of N son of N shall be made thin and the fatness of his flesh shall become lean[92] [magic signs— *charactêres*]. End.[93]

If you have an enemy and [you] wish that he would be brought to an end, take a little wax and make the likeness of your enemy and write the following, and put it in the wax [and thrust in it] ten needles and bury this figure in a grave of Israel. Tested and efficient. And this is what you should write, ʿQL GʾL BRN NN PLʾL MRG ʾPRS.[94]

5.1.3 Third Charm

In its character and performative principle, this recipe resembles the first one and indeed refers to it explicitly. Here too the act rests on a ritual violence that culminates in the taking of a life but the slaughter is replaced by another act of killing and the linguistic-performative formula changes accordingly. Attached to the first appearance of the word "pot" [*kederah*] in the recipe (in line 17) is a definite article, attesting to something missing. The performer was probably supposed to have done something with the cock and the pot before the burial

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90   In the original: *ʾAf, Ḥemah, Mashber, Keṣef, Ḥaron, Mashḥit*.

91   Manuscript Budapest, HAS Kaufmann A245, 33b. The Aramaic language of the recipe attests to its antiquity. And indeed, an almost identical parallel version appears in an eleventh-century Arabic translation found in the Cairo *Genizah*. See Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte*, vol. 1, 32–33. Note also the ready-made curse writ from the *Genizah*, where the name of the victim is to be filled in ad hoc, which also relies on this version—Mann, *Texts and Studies*, vol. 2, 94 (with Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 144–146).

92   Based on Isaiah 17:4. The verse reads: "And on that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin and the fatness of his flesh shall become lean." The replacement of "that day" with "this day" in the recipe is not accidental and is meant to prevent the postponement of the killing to some "that day" and determine its performance on the same day.

93   Manuscript Geneva, BG Comites Latentes 145, p. 199 (§ 249).

94   Thompson, 'The Folklore of Mossoul', 103.

and that matter is omitted here. The linguistic formula suggests that the cock is put in a pot and buried within it while still alive.

15–16 | To buy a cock … by the name of the evildoer as noted above

The writer endorses a concise formulation here and directs to the move equating the cock and Hitler detailed in the first recipe, as discussed above.

16–17 | and will bury him with the pot in the dust

Hiding incantation writs and various objects in the dust (not necessarily in a grave) as part of their activation is pervasive in Jewish magic and serves a variety of aims. The hiding here does assume the meaning of a burial, and death clings to it. The accompanying incantation attests that the burial of the cock "Hitler" represents the culmination of the entire act and embodies the element of ritual violence due to which violence (and burial) will also enter the life of Hitler the man. The hiding in the dust is thus the actual killing of the cock, accompanied in this ritual by prolonged distress and pain.

Burying live animals is not a common practice in the Jewish recipes literature, though several examples can be found. Two of them—the burial of a frog and the burial of a small dog whose mouths are sealed with wax—are mentioned in *The Book of the Chaldeans*. In this astral-magic treatise, violence is tied to Tuesday, Samael's day, whose servants work is "to destroy, to annihilate, to kill and to perform all manner of evil." It is therefore performed within the confines of the one responsible for it and assumes the form of a particularly cruel ritual, in order to activate violence in the world.[95] At times, another symbolic element is added to the act of sacrifice and "dictates" the character of the killing, such as a recipe for love calling for the burning of a living bat in a burning pot.[96] In other cases, the ritual logic underlying the imposition of such terrible suffering when taking the victim's life remains unclear.[97]

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95   Gaster, 'The Wisdom of the Chaldeans', 350.

96   Manuscript Budapest, HAS Kaufmann A245, p. 31b: "For love, take a bat and take a new pot
       and collect many twigs and set fire to them under the pot until it turns red, and then put
       in the bat until it is completely burnt and then grind it well and give it to drink or to eat
       or throw it at the man or woman who you wish them to love you and they will love you."

97   See, for example, the recipe in manuscript Budapest, HAS Kaufmann A247, 31a (§ 31), which
       has no explicit purpose and opens with the following instruction: "Take sparrow birds, four
       from one nest, and put them in a new pot and they should stay there three days without
       food or drink and die of hunger."

17–18 | as I buried this cock so did I bury the evildoer Adolf Hitler

This formulation, as its parallel in the first charm, is meant to concretize the connection between the cock and Hitler created in the nine days preceding the burial. The past tense shows that this sentence is meant to be uttered after the burial and not in its course, as in the slaughtering. The sympathetic element of the act is explicitly clarified in the accompanying linguistic formula. This is the height of the ritual and, given that what the performer has in mind is Hitler's death rather than his burial, we may assume that the cock's burial is the actual violent act of its killing. The first and third charms, then, offer alternative options for taking the life of "Hitler" the cock in order to kill Adolf Hitler "ruler of the Germans."

6   Conclusion

Practical Kabbalah gave Jews a broad array of ritual para-canonic practices, which were generally perceived by most of the people as extremely powerful. The question about the legitimacy of using such means was indeed constantly on the agenda, but should not be mixed up with the question about their efficiency. The knowledge concealed in practical Kabbalah was perceived in Jewish tradition as the performative facet of the holy and ancient body of Jewish esoteric knowledge—Kabbalah. From an etic perspective, this aspect of Kabbalah is mainly a continuation of the pre-kabbalistic magic tradition. From an emic perspective, however, perceiving it as "practical Kabbalah" endowed this tradition, among broad sections of the people, with an aura of holiness and splendor. This knowledge did not necessarily grow from kabbalistic speculative studies nor did it require any knowledge of them. The literature of practical Kabbalah is pragmatic and its purpose, rather than theoretical (ontological or ethical), is to act in the world. This is a practical literature of ritual technology. At times, its agents were also prominent scholars, thinkers, and people creative in other areas, but this is not imperative. Above all, they should be examined as professionals serving their public. If ethical considerations regarding this service were at times applied (and are traceable in the writings), they touched on the implementation of their action but not on the action as such. Jewish literature of magic and practical Kabbalah in general focuses on ends and means for their attainment and is almost entirely indifferent to its actions' moral implications. It offers its potential users tools to help and to harm and hardly pays any attention to the considerations, halakhic, or ethical, involved in their implementation.

Recipes of aggressive magic by the hundreds appear in Jewish magic literature and they join rabbinic-canonic formula for bans and curses. The way to

curse, ruin, destroy, and kill was thus paved, and its existence was no secret. Those entering its gates usually did so in hiding and for personal motives, but some saw themselves as emissaries in a broader struggle and their acts, actual or imagined, acquired public resonance. The struggle of Jerusalem kabbalists against Adolf Hitler and their attempt to destroy him through ritual tactics of ban and witchcraft are a prominent instance of it. Yet, this is neither the first nor the last link in a chain of actions and stories about such actions. The Story on R. Yosef della Reina (fifteenth century?) who tried to defeat the *siṭra' 'aḥra'* and thus hasten redemption is relatively early and well known.[98] In the stories about the visits to Rome of the kabbalist R. Shlomo Molkho (1500–1532) and of Nathan of Gaza (Sabbetai Zevi's prophet, 1643–1680) are echoes of possibly similar acts aimed against the pope.[99] These kabbalists anticipated those in the Old *Yishuv* by several centuries. The Rebbe of Lubavitch (Menachem Mendel Schneerson, 1902–1994) and his Hasidim who, according to a popular Habad tradition, "eliminated" Joseph Stalin in the course of a Hasidic gathering during the 1953 Purim holiday,[100] and those who cursed Gamal Abdel Nasser after the Six-Day War[101] engaged in similar acts when operating in the United States and in Israel against foreign despots-enemies. Not much time would pass until others would seek to harm Israeli Prime Ministers with a widely publicized *Pulsa' de-Nura'* (fire-stroke) ritual.[102]

In between, Eliyahu Mizrahi and his friends also tried to act and save their people from the impending catastrophe. Armies and weapons of the kind operated by the Allies in the battlefield were not available to them. But they had, so they believed, another power, a holy force hidden in ancient manuscripts in

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98   See Harari, 'Yosef della Reina' (with further bibliography).

99   See Idel, 'Shlomo Molkho', 194; Tishbi, *Paths of Faith and Apostasy*, 59–60.

100   See, for example, Wolf, *Diaduskha*, 605–606, and the extensive discussion on this affair (March 19, 2008) in the Habad website http://old2.ih.chabad.info/#!g=1&url=article&id= 36749 (last retrieved May 15, 2017). In all the versions of this event, the Rebbe's action amounts to crying out three times "Ho-ra, ho-ra, ho-ra" (which in Hebrew could also be understood as "He is evil"). In some versions, the Hasidim join him. None of these traditions explicitly holds that it was the Rebbe's actions that defeated Stalin (who died several days later, on March 5, 1953), but all openly hint at it.

101   Shaul David-Hai Mu'alem, who participated in the ceremony, provides first-hand testimony of this curse. See Mu'alem, *Sefer Lehem Abirim*, 10. For the recipe from R. Hayyim Vital on which, according to Mu'alem's testimony, this act relied, see Vital, *Sefer ha-Pe'ulot*, 209 (§ 221).

102   *Pulsa de-Nura* rituals were performed for Yitzhak Rabin, Ariel Sharon, and Ehud Olmert. On the ritual and its sources, see Dayan, *Pulsa de-Nura*; Zohar, 'Pulsa de-Nura'. Cf. Britt, 'Curses Left and Right', 647–653.

the shape of charms and incantations, rituals and holy names. They therefore fought the enemy in their way and, resorting to the power of practical Kabbalah, tried to kill Adolf, son of Klara, Hitler, "ruler of the Germans."

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