

Judaic Studies

Shnayer Z. Leiman

**THE BAAL TESHUVAH
AND THE
EMDEN-EIBESCHUETZ
CONTROVERSY**

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I. Introduction

Some 50 years ago, in honor of Chief Rabbi Abraham Isaac ha-Kohen Kook's 70th birthday, a disciple of Rav Kook published a 14 page pamphlet in Hebrew.¹ It told an astonishing tale which, presented here in summary form, is being made available for the first time in English translation. In a prefatory remark, the disciple noted:

"I heard this historical story from the lips of my revered teacher, the Chief Rabbi, who heard it from his father-in-law, R. Eliyahu David Rabbinowitz-Teomim. Rav Kook told the story at a gathering of rabbinic scholars in Jerusalem: it left an indelible impression on all who heard it."

II. Rav Kook's Tale²

In 1840, or thereabouts, in London, a Jewish apostate to Christianity published a scurrilous tract entitled *נתיבות עולם: The Old Paths*. The work was a vicious attack against rabbinic

¹ S.B. Shulman, *ספור מפליא הנוגע לכבוד התורה*, Jerusalem, 1934. The essay also appeared in *ההד* 9(1934), n. 12, pp. 28-30; and was reissued posthumously in S.B. Shulman, *הראי"ה קוק וצוק"ל*, Jerusalem, 1976, pp. 5-9.

² Two versions of Rav Kook's tale have been preserved (see notes 1 and 8). What follows is a free rendering which attempts to capture the essence of both versions without deviating in any significant way from either. The versions differ mostly in matters of minor detail.

Judaism, designed specifically to highlight the alleged discontinuities between the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic Judaism, while underscoring the alleged continuities between the Hebrew Bible and Christian teaching. Published in Hebrew and English versions, its impact was devastating, and the Jewish leadership of England convened in order to respond to this attack. It was decided that Sir Moses Montefiore (d. 1885), who in any event was preparing for a visit to Russia and the Near East,³ would seek in Russia an appropriate Jewish scholar who would write a refutation of נתיבות עולם. Through Montefiore's efforts, Isaac Baer Levinsohn (d. 1860), one of the founders of the Russian Haskalah movement, was commissioned for the task, which resulted in his classic, posthumous work entitled זרובבל (Odessa, 1863).

The scene of our story now shifts to Grodno, today in Russia, but then considered one of the three principal communities of Poland and Lithuania. Rabbi Binyamin Diskin, Chief Rabbi of Grodno (and father of the renowned Brisker Rav and leader of the Jerusalem rabbinic—Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin), was sitting in his study surrounded by books. Outside his study sat the members of the rabbinic court (בית דין) of Grodno. Ordinarily, no mortal could gain entry into Rabbi Diskin's study without first conversing with the members of the rabbinic court. One day, a coach stopped at the door of the rabbi's house. A woman alighted from the coach, and confronted the members of the rabbinic court, saying that she must see the Chief Rabbi at once

³ Montefiore was the most prominent member of a delegation attempting to resolve the notorious blood libel known as the Damascus Affair. For a brief account of this blood libel, see the entry "Damascus Affair" in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, 1971, vol. 5, columns 1249-1252.

about an urgent and private matter. While they hesitated, she entered the rabbi's study and was granted a private audience *de facto*. She explained that she was an observant Jewish woman who lived in Prussia. Indeed, she was the daughter of the Jewish apostate who had authored נתיבות עולם. Her father had been a *melammed* in Lithuania where, in the best of times, he barely eked out a living. Worse came when rumors spread that he had been negligent in the observance of some *mitzvot*. Parents ceased to entrust him with their children, with the result that he and his family were reduced to a life of abject poverty. One day he disappeared, only to surface many years later in London as the apostate author of נתיבות עולם. The apostate's abandoned wife, a pious Jewess all her life, remained in Eastern-Europe, where she raised their daughter—the woman who now stood before Rabbi Diskin—and married her off to an observant Jew. The young couple eventually settled in Prussia, and the daughter did all she could to eradicate the memory and stigma of her father, the apostate. Years passed, and one day she was shocked when she received what turned out to be a letter from her father. Expressing deep regret, the father admitted that he had sinned grievously and that he was guilty of treason against God and His nation—the Jewish people. Nonetheless, the Jewish spark within his soul had rekindled his Jewishness. Because of his regained Jewishness, his Christian friends in London abandoned him. Now an old, lonely, and sick man, broken in spirit, and remorseful, he wished to return to his family. He begged his daughter to take him into her home, so that he could live out his remaining days in seclusion and comfort.

After much discussion and deliberation, the couple decided to take him into their home, with the proviso that he resume his Jewishness openly by growing beard and ear-

locks (פיאות), and by donning traditional Jewish, rather than Christian, garb. The penitent apostate accepted the offer, and spent his remaining days with his daughter and son-in-law, mostly bedridden, and mostly in a continuous state of depression due to the heavy burden of guilt for the sins of his past. When the end was approaching, he called in his daughter and son-in-law and said: "I am about to die, and beseech you to pray for my soul after I depart. Moreover, I beg you to seek out a great rabbi who will do the same. Perhaps through his merit my troubled soul will find the peace and tranquility it sought in vain until now. So that the rabbi will be predisposed to pray on my behalf, I will now reveal to you something about our family history that I have never mentioned to a living soul."

And in a soft, barely audible tone, the penitent apostate told his daughter that his parents—her grandparents—hailed from Altona, a city which then belonged to the Kingdom of Denmark, and bordered on its sister city, Hamburg, Germany. Indeed, he himself was born in Altona, seemingly under the most auspicious of circumstances. It was during the battle of the Titans, Rabbis Jacob Emden and Jonathan Eibeschutz, that he was born. As is well known, the Emden-Eibeschutz controversy was initiated on a fateful Thursday morning, when R. Jacob Emden announced in his private synagogue in Altona that a magical amulet ascribed to the Chief Rabbi, R. Jonathan Eibeschutz, could only have been written by a heretic who believed in Sabbetai Zvi, a false messiah who had been dead and buried for 75 years!

The penitent apostate continued his story. "My father," he said, "was an ardent supporter of R. Jacob Emden, and attended services regularly at his private *minyán*. Moreover, my father was a talented writer who aided R. Jacob Emden in writing and disseminating a series of

pamphlets whose sole purpose was to malign R. Jonathan Eibeschuetz." "My father," continued the penitent apostate, "was the author of a particularly vicious anti-Eibeschuetz pamphlet called עקיצת עקרב: *The Scorpion's Sting*. R. Jacob Emden maintained a printing press in his home, and on the very day that the first copies of עקיצת עקרב came off the press, my ברית מילה—circumcision—was celebrated at R. Jacob Emden's *minyan*. It was a particularly joyous occasion for the Emden forces, with the simultaneous appearance of the new pamphlet and a new soldier in the army of the Lord. R. Jacob Emden was in an especially good mood—rare for him—and addressed my father and the assembled congregants." "Mazal tov, mazal tov," he said, "Our joy is twofold this morning. We pray to the Lord that, due to the merit of the pamphlet, this child grow up to be a source of pride to his parents and nation. We pray especially that he grow up to be the opposite in every way of the man depicted in the pamphlet, R. Jonathan Eibeschuetz."⁴ When R. Jacob Emden concluded his blessing, the entire congregation cried out in unison: Amen, amen. A festive meal followed the circumcision ceremony, at which all joined together in a spirited chant and dance, the likes of which had not been seen previously at a ברית מילה in Altona. When reports of R. Jacob Emden's blessing reached R. Jonathan Eibeschuetz, he too responded: "So be it; so be it."⁵

With a deep sigh, the penitent apostate continued, "Regarding the righteous it is said at Job 22:28 'You decree

⁴ The Hebrew original reads אוחז האיש.

⁵ R. Jonathan Eibeschuetz' approval of R. Jacob Emden's blessing is lacking in the text of Shulman's account. It appears, however, in R. Yaakov Moshe Charlop's gloss to Shulman's account, printed at the bottom of p. 2 of S.B. Shulman, ספור מפליא הנוגע לכבוד התורה (above, note 1); and also in Fishman's account (for which see below, note 8).

and it is fulfilled (וּתְגוֹר אָמַר וַיִּקָּם לְךָ).⁵ What Rabbis Jacob Emden and Jonathan Eibeschutz decreed was fulfilled. I became the opposite of R. Jonathan Eibeschutz; I became an apostate to Christianity. I do not for a moment suggest that these tragic circumstances absolve my guilt, but I certainly trust that they will be held in my favor. At the very least, it is not too much to hope that the rabbi who hears this will be predisposed to pray on my behalf.”

“אוי לי מיום הדין אוי לי מיום התוכחה”: Woe onto me on judgment day, woe onto me on the day of chastisement” were the last words of the penitent apostate, who fell into a feverish state, then into a state of unconsciousness from which he never recovered.⁶

Rabbi Diskin sat spellbound as he listened to the story of the *baal teshuvah*'s daughter. He assured her that he would pray on behalf of her father's soul, and then bade her farewell. Aware that the members of his rabbinic court would be astounded by the lengthy private audience he had granted a woman—it was not his practice to do so—, he informed them of all that she had told him. He added: “Let this story be a lesson for all generations. Avoid conflict as you would the plague, especially where it may involve desecration of the Torah. Look at what resulted from one who acted from the best of intentions, indeed for the sake of heaven, yet wrote false accusations and mocked the rabbis! No party to such slander and mockery can escape unscathed, for as it is written at Job 31:12 ‘it is a fire that consumes to utter destruction.’ Those who fear the Lord will be spared from it; those who sin will be ensnared by it. Happy are the righteous who fear the Lord.”

⁶ Shulman, שמע ישראל, ספור מפליא הנוגע לכבוד החורה, p. 13, reports that were the last words to cross his lips, as his soul departed.

III. Commentary

This remarkable story was retold many times by those who heard it directly from Rav Kook, such as the disciple who published the first printed account in 1934, during Rav Kook's lifetime. Others who heard it directly from Rav Kook include R. Yaakov Moshe Charlop (d. 1951),⁷ generally acknowledged to be the most ardent and distinguished of Rav Kook's disciples, and R. Yehudah Leib Maimon Fishman (d. 1962),⁸ the first Minister of Religions of the State of Israel. More recently, a skewed version has appeared in print which, due to the poor memory (or, one suspects, the misplaced piety) of the storyteller, omits mention of Rav Kook's connection with the story.⁹ In common, the accounts

⁷ See above, note 5.

⁸ R. Yehudah Leib Fishman, *שרי המאה*, Jerusalem, 1955, vol. 1, pp. 180-191. Cf. his *מדי חדרש בחדשו*, Jerusalem, 1955, vol. 1, pp. 268-271. Rabbi Fishman states explicitly that he heard the story from Rav Kook at a private audience in his (Fishman's) own study. Thus, the versions of Fishman and Shulman (who heard it at a public gathering) reflect two different occasions when Rav Kook told the story.

⁹ Menaḥem Getz [Gerlitz], *ירושלים של מעלה*, Jerusalem, 1977, vol. 2, pp. 125-133 (English version: *The Heavenly City*, Jerusalem, 1982, vol. 3, pp. 20-39). Getz' version is flawed throughout. A typical paragraph in Getz reads (Hebrew edition, p. 123; English edition, p. 20):

James Finn and his converted wife stood at the center of the storm. Finn's wife was the daughter of the notorious convert, Max Kohl, author of the anti-Semitic work, *Nethivoth Olam*. He himself later returned to the Jewish fold but his daughter continued to live with her gentile husband and actively assist him in his missionary activities.

James Finn's wife was not converted—she was born a Christian, and remained a devout Christian throughout her life. She was not the daughter of a "notorious convert." Her father was born—and died—a Christian. He did not return to the Jewish fold, since he never belonged to

make no attempt to come to grips with historical truth. None succeeds in identifying the penitent apostate. What was his name? What was the name of the author of עקיצת עקרב? Did these events occur as described? The remainder of this study will address these questions. And although we have reason to suspect that the story will turn out to be more legendary than historical, what is most remarkable is that historical truth, in this instance, proves to be even more astonishing than the story itself.

As the point of departure for our investigation, we shall begin with the easiest handle to grasp from our story, namely the book נתיבות עולם. It was published in weekly installments in London, starting January 15, 1836.¹⁰ It appeared in English and sold for one penny per issue, the average issue containing 4 pages of what—at least on the surface—appeared to be devastating arguments against rabbinic Judaism, especially the Talmud. Each issue bore in large Hebrew lettering the title נתיבות עולם on the front page, which was translated in smaller print as *The Old Paths*. In 1837, the weekly installments were bound together and published in one volume entitled *The Old Paths*.¹¹ By 1840, German, French, Polish, Hebrew, and Yiddish editions of *The Old Paths* had appeared in print.¹² The volume has since been republished many times, and it is probably the most widely read critique of rabbinic Judaism authored by a

it in the first place. Finally, his name was not Max Kohl, it was [Alexander] McCaul, for which see the discussion below.

Another skewed version appeared in Berel Schwartz' "ועד ארבע ארצות" *דער איד*, December 23, 1983, p. 31. It too omits mention of Rav Kook's connection with the story.

¹⁰ *Jewish Intelligence*, February 1836, p. 35.

¹¹ *The Old Paths*, London: London Society Office, 1837.

¹² *Jewish Intelligence*, June 1840, p. 154.

modern Christian missionary.¹³ The author's name appears prominently on the title page of the English editions. It reads: Alexander McCaul. Now we know a great deal about McCaul.¹⁴ He was not an apostate from Judaism to Christianity. He was born a Christian in Dublin, Ireland—not Altona—in 1799. He was a devoted Christian missionary who also served as Professor of Hebrew and Rabbinic Literature at King's College in London. Clearly, our story cannot be referring to him. We need not look very far, however, to discover the identity of the penitent apostate of our story. In 1839, a Hebrew version of McCaul's *The Old Paths* was printed in London.¹⁵ It bore the title נתיבות עולם

¹³ The noted Protestant theologian and scholar, Gustav Dalman (1855–1941) described *The Old Paths* as “the most effective missionary testimony of our century.” See W.T. Gidney, *Mission to the Jews*, London, 1897, p. 56. If one may judge by the number of refutations of *The Old Paths* published in the 19th century, the effectiveness of McCaul's work was perceived by the Jewish community as well. Aside from his זרבבל, Levinsohn wrote אחיה שילני החחה (Leipzig, 1864) in response to McCaul. Other Jewish responses to McCaul include: J. Middleman, *Paths of Truth*, London, 1847; R. Kazin, דרך החיים, Constantinople, 1848; *idem*, לקוטי אמרים, Smyrna 1855; A. Benisch, *The Principal Charges of Dr. McCaul's Old Paths*, London 1858; Y. Chari, קול יהודה, Vienna, 1864; N.H. Bernstein, אדר, חכמים, Odessa, 1868; and E.Z. Zweifel, סניגור, Warsaw, 1885.

Two disparate sources go so far as to claim that McCaul's *The Old Paths* (specifically: its critique of rabbinic Judaism) directly influenced the founders of Reform Judaism who met at Braunschweig in 1844. See the missionary periodical *Voice of Israel* 2 (1847), pp. 177–178; and cf. R. Kazin, דרך החיים (cited above), p. 15a.

¹⁴ In general, see W.T. Gidney, *History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews*, London, 1908, especially pp. 96ff. and 330–331. Cf. the memoirs of McCaul's daughter: Elizabeth Anne Finn, *Reminiscences of Mrs. Finn*, London, 1929.

¹⁵ Lask Abrahams (see below, note 17), pp. 126–129, errs when she writes that the Hebrew translation of *The Old Paths* first appeared in 1845.

and no author's name.¹⁶ Word spread quickly, however, in missionary and in Jewish circles, that McCaul's work had been translated by Stanislav Hoga. And, indeed, Stanislav Hoga is the tragic hero of our story.¹⁷ Hoga began his life as the son of a rabbi. His Hebrew name was יחזקאל, and he was called affectionately by all "Chazkel." He was a child prodigy—an עילוי—whose talmudic prowess was respected far and wide. Alas, due to circumstances that will be alluded to below, he converted to Christianity and assumed the name Stanislav Hoga. Some time after his conversion he appeared in England. From 1834 to 1845 he worked for the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews. He helped translate the New Testament into Hebrew;¹⁸ he

¹⁶ נתיבות עולם, London: A. Macintosh, 1839.

¹⁷ For Stanislav Hoga, see A. Zederbaum, כתר כהונה, Odessa, 1866, pp. 123-124 and p. 130; I. Even, פון דער גוט-אידישער וועלט, New York, 1917, pp. 213-217; A.N. Frenk, משומדים אין פוילען אין 19-טען יאהר-הונדערט, Warsaw, 1923, vol. 1, pp. 38-110; I. Schapiro, "מומרים," 5(1925), 28 Iyyar, pp. 3-5; G. Bader, דרייסיג דורות אידען אין פוילען, New York, 1927, pp. 439-456; S.L. Zitron, משומדים (= אוועק פון פאלק, vol. 4), Warsaw, 1928, pp. 5-14 [reprinted in D. Shtokfish, ed., פנקס קוזמיר, Tel Aviv, 1970, pp. 331-338]; B. Lask Abrahams, "Stanislaus Hoga: Apostate and Penitent," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 15(1939-1945), pp. 121-149; D. Flinker, ערים ואמהות בישראל (= ווארשה, vol. 3), Jerusalem, 1948, pp. 78-81; N.M. Gelber, "שאלח היהודים בפולין בשנות 1830-1815," 14(1948-1949), pp. 106-143; A. Levinson, תולדות יהודי ורשה, Tel Aviv, 1953, pp. 113-116; J. Shatzky, געשיכטע פון יידן אין ווארשע, New York, 1947-1953, vol. 1, pp. 279-317 and vol. 3, p. 353; and S.L. Shneiderman, ווען די ווייסל האט גערעדט, Tel Aviv, 1970, pp. 44-71 (the last mentioned kindly brought to my attention by Professor Jacob I. Dienstag). Cf. the references cited below, notes 24 and 25.

¹⁸ Hoga worked on the translation together with a group of converts from 1836 to 1838, when it was published in London. See *Jewish Intelligence*, October 1838, p. 226.

wrote a Hebrew version of the Anglican Prayer Book;¹⁹ and most important, and tragic for the Jews, he translated McCaul's *The Old Paths* into Hebrew.²⁰

Sometime between 1845 and 1848, however, Hoga experienced a change of heart. He became a *baal teshuvah*, and found himself totally alienated from Jew and Christian alike. In 1847, he published an attack against the London Society, and a refutation of McCaul's *The Old Paths*.²¹ One poignant passage from this tract reads as follows:

Ought I not tell the world who and what I am? Alas, the secrets of my heart must remain in it entombed for ever. I shall never be justified in the eyes of men! I have, it is true, very grievously sinned before God; still if men could know my whole heart they would rather pity my lot than condemn it. I have sinned to God alone, and not to men; it is not for them to pronounce a sentence upon me, but for the Righteous Judge who alone knows the heart of men. I am unable to sketch any biography of my life; I can only tell my Jewish brethren, in the words of Achan to Joshua, "Indeed, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done." And I expect no other answer of them but the words of Joshua to Achan, "Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day." I have against mine own wish contributed most effectually by my writing to the foundation of falsehood, and to the widely outspreading in distant lands, of a treacherous net to seduce and ensnare many unwary among Israel, by hypocritical apostasy. I

¹⁹ סדר התפלה כפי מנהג קהלת המשיח של מדינת ענגלאנד ואירלאנד London, 1841.

²⁰ See above, note 16.

²¹ ציר נאמן: *The Faithful Missionary*, London, 1847.

therefore most ardently wish, before I go from hence, to undo what I have done, and to contribute to the happiness of the nation . . . This is the last act of my life. O, Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee only this once! I am feeble and alone.²²

The sincerity and depth of Hoga's contrition is attested to by the Reverend D.W. Marks, who served as rabbi of the West London synagogue, and knew Hoga personally. In an interview granted in 1907, Marks—then 96 years old—disclosed:

About the year 1844 there came to London one of the greatest Hebrew scholars in Europe, Stanislaus Hoga. In Russia he had been appointed by the Government censor of the Hebrew Press, and on his arrival in London he had been taken hold of by McCaul and converted to Christianity. It was he who co-operated with McCaul in writing *The Old Paths* and translating the work into English. He edited a missionary organ called *The Faithful Missionary*, and he rendered into Hebrew the English Church service and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* . . . On the day before Passover, in the year 1848, he came to me, and begged that he might be allowed to come to the *Seder*. He added, "I can bear the hypocrisy no longer, and henceforth I shall live as I was born, a Jew." "But what will you do for a living?" I asked. "I shall starve," he said, "and that shall be my atonement." Towards the end of 1849 I heard that Hoga was very ill and lodging in a miserable place at the back of the Middlesex Hospital. I went to see him. It was a bitter winter's night. He lay in a garret on a truck bed. I shivered with cold, and offered him money to purchase fuel. He refused to be warmed. Mrs. Marks sent him food and various comforts,

²² Cited by Lask Abrahams, pp. 131-132.

but they were all returned. And so the wretched man died. Let us hope he atoned for his apostasy.²³

Clearly, Hoga is the penitent apostate of Rav Kook's story.²⁴

²³ *Jewish Chronicle*, January 11, 1907 (cited by Lask Abrahams, pp. 143-144). Marks' account is flawed, largely due to the misinformation that was rife concerning almost every aspect of Hoga. Thus, e.g., Hoga had converted prior to his arrival in London; it is unlikely that he aided McCaul in writing *The Old Paths*; he was responsible for its translation into Hebrew, not English; and *The Faithful Missionary* was a privately published pamphlet in which Hoga renounced Christian missionary activity and refuted McCaul's *The Old Paths*. Interestingly, McCaul's daughter (Mrs. Elizabeth Anne Finn) responded to the Marks interview in the following issue of the *Jewish Chronicle*. She wrote (cited by Lask Abrahams, p. 144):

Sir,—The reminiscences of the venerable Professor Marks, given in your issue of the 11th, have interested me exceedingly, and you will, I feel sure, allow me to make a few remarks upon points within my personal knowledge as to my late father, the Rev. Dr. Alexander McCaul, and Mr. Stanislaus Hoga, whom I knew well. When Mr. Hoga came to England from Warsaw, he informed us that he had been baptised in the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, and he certainly had not received any religious instruction from my father. He received no salary from any Christian mission, his income being derived from a very different source. He translated Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, but neither he nor anyone else assisted my father in writing *The Old Paths*. I was almost always in the room with my father while he was at work on each weekly number, and have a vivid recollection of him with his huge Hebrew volumes around him. Mr. Hoga afterwards translated *The Old Paths* into Hebrew. . . . Mr. Hoga pursued various scientific studies, and I well remember his exhibiting his invention for signalling at night by means of coloured lenses.

Marks' personal reminiscences about his (and his wife's) contact with Hoga, may certainly be considered reliable.

²⁴ Not surprisingly, official Christian missionary accounts of Hoga make no mention of his return to Judaism after his apostasy. See, e.g., J.F.A. de le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit und die Juden*, Berlin, 1892

In the 19th and the early part of the 20th century, it was generally thought that the penitent apostate was the author of נתיבות עולם.²⁵ Rav Kook's story assumes the same. Since no author's name appeared on the title page of the Hebrew edition, it was easy to conclude that the translator was the author. In fact, Hoga was the translator of נתיבות עולם, not its author, a significant discrepancy, but one that need not concern us. More importantly, he was a genuine *baal teshuvah* who lived his last years as a recluse, disowned by Jew and Christian alike—by the Jew for his past, and by the Christian for his present.

If, however, we have correctly identified the penitent apostate, his relationship to the Emden-Eibeschuetz controversy appears to be an impossible one. This is so for 3 reasons:

1. Place
2. Time
3. Authorship of עקיצת עקרב.

[reissued: Leipzig, 1974], vol. 3, p. 71; and cf. A. Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses*. . . , London, 1909, p. 278.

²⁵ See, e.g., Y. Chari, קול יהודה, Vienna, 1864, p. 4, who reports that the author of נתיבות עולם was a Jewish apostate from Lithuania who assumed the name McCaul in London, and later left for the United States where he repented and returned to Judaism. Cf. I.B. Levinsohn, אחיה שילני החוזה (above, note 13), p. 7, who reports that the author of נתיבות עולם was a Jewish apostate who joined the Lutheran Church. See also S.L. Zitron, משומדים, Warsaw, 1923, vol. 1, pp. 161–167 [Hebrew edition: מאחרי הפרגוד, Vilna, 1923, vol. 1, pp. 214–218]. Zitron's confused account, which was published earlier as "יסורי נחום של בעל תשובה" in הדאר 2(1922), 18 Iyyar, p. 3, led to several letters to the editor which shed light on Hoga and his relationship to McCaul. See N. Sokolow, "מכתב מאח נחום סוקולוב," הדאר 2(1922), 20 Iyyar, p. 3, and 9 Sivan, p. 3; and H. Hirschensohn and J. Margoshes, "בדבר נתיבות עולם" הדאר 2(1922), 27 Iyyar, p. 3.

1. Place.

Stanislav Hoga, alias **יחזקאל ב"ר אברהם**,²⁶ was the son of the rabbi of Kazimierz [Kuzhmir] in Poland, R. Abraham Hoga, who was a disciple of R. Jacob Isaac, the Hozeh of Lublin (d. 1815). **יחזקאל** himself was a frequent visitor at the court of the Hozeh of Lublin. Indeed, he wore earlocks (**פיאות**) until he began to stray from his hasidic upbringing. Engaged at 10 and married at 13, an unhappy marriage would plague his early years. Though bride and groom eventually agreed to a divorce, both sets of parents refused to allow it to materialize. From Hoga's perspective the only salutary effects of his marriage were the contacts he made—through his father-in-law's business associates—with the broader world of European culture. He read widely, mastered many languages, and in 1817 he abandoned his family and left for Warsaw to begin life anew. It did not go unnoticed in Kazimierz that Hoga's disappearance coincided with the disappearance of a young and beautiful Jewess, Yutta, the orphaned daughter of a tailor. She had frequently been seen in his company, prior to their disappearance.

The Polish governmental authorities in Warsaw were

²⁶ So according to Frenk, *op. cit.* (above, note 17), p. 38 and Lask Abrahams, p. 134. M. Walden, **אהל הרבי**, Piotrkow, 1913 [reissued: Bnei Braq, 1965], part 3, p. 15, §43 lists Hoga's father as **מ"ה יהודא אריה ליב ז"ל**. **האבד"ק קאזמיר**. Similarly, Zitron, **אוועק פון פאלק** (above, note 17), gives his name as R. Leibush (p. 9) and R. Yehudah Leib (p. 14). See Y. Alfasi, "החזרה מלובלין ותלמידיו" סיני 59(1966), p. 257, who lists his name as R. Aryeh Leibush; and cf. N. Ben Menahem, "שבלים בשדה הספר" סיני 60(1967) 182-183. Bader, *op. cit.* (above, note 17), p. 439, erroneously lists Hoga's father's name as **יחזקאל** [while suggesting that Hoga's first name was **חנא**], apparently confusing him with R. Yehezkel of Kazimierz (d. 1856), the founder of the Taub hasidic dynasty.

quick to recognize Hoga's talents, and he was appointed assistant to the censor of Jewish publications. With a flair for making all the right moves, it was only a short while before he became well-connected in governmental circles. When Jewish community officials in Warsaw became aware that one of their own had penetrated deeply into the Polish government, they turned to him whenever influence needed to be wielded in order to avert anti-Semitic legislation or policies. Hoga served with distinction as a *shtadlan* for Polish Jewry. Thus, for example, in February of 1824, the Polish Ministry of Education and Religion issued a ban against the ḥasidic movement in Poland, and ordered that all ḥasidic *shtiebels* be closed. After vigorous protests on the part of the organized Jewish community, Polish officials agreed to convene a public debate between pro and anti ḥasidic forces. Both sides were to select representatives who would argue the case for their respective viewpoints, and the Minister of Education and Religion himself, Stanislav Staszic, would preside over the debate and decide the issue. At an emergency meeting of the ḥasidic leadership, it was decided by R. Simḥah Bunim of Pshiskhah (d. 1827), R. Meir of Apta (d. 1831), and R. Isaac of Worka (d. 1848) that Stanislav Hoga was best suited to represent the ḥasidic forces. It turned out to be a wise choice indeed. Hoga's arguments were persuasive and on August 30, 1824 the ban was rescinded.²⁷

Ultimately, his past caught up with him. Informers notified government officials that Hoga was legally married to a woman in Kazimierz. Yet in Warsaw he had listed another woman, Yutta, as his wife, and had registered their two children as having been born legitimately. Threatened with

²⁷ See N.M. Gelber (above, note 17), pp. 131-132. Shatzky (above, note 17), vol. 3, p. 353, is sceptical about the historicity of this episode.

a morals charge, and with his world about to collapse, Hoga, Yutta, and their two daughters converted to Christianity. Despite his apostasy, Hoga continued to play the role of protector of the Jewish faith. One of the many legends about Hoga tells how—after his baptism—he once chanced upon his father in Warsaw.

Stanislav Hoga was once riding in Warsaw in a handsome carriage with his second wife, a Christian woman, and their two daughters, when they chanced upon his father, the Rabbi, passing by in an old broken down droshky. Stanislav alighted from his carriage and greeted his father. The father enquired: "Chazkel, Chazkel—Where is your share in 'this world'?" Stanislav responded: "Father, just look at my carriage, and my family, and we are on our way to the theater! Father, is there a 'this worldly' pleasure that I have missed?" The Rabbi replied: "Fool! What you are enjoying now is your share in the World To Come. Again I ask: Where is your share in 'this world'?"²⁸

What is crucial for our purposes is the fact that Stanislav Hoga and his father were ḥasidic Jews, residents of Kazimierz, Poland. Stanislav Hoga was born in Kazimierz. Thus, his circumcision ceremony could hardly have taken place in Altona, near Hamburg.

2. Time.

The Emden-Eibeschuetz controversy erupted on February 4, 1751. It continued unabated until the death of R. Jonathan Eibeschuetz in 1764. After R. Jonathan's death, R. Jacob Emden continued to malign R. Jonathan in print.

²⁸ S.L. Zitron (above, note 17), pp. 12-13.

R. Jacob Emden died in 1776. The *עקיצת עקרב* was published at the height of the controversy in Altona in 1753. But Stanislaw Hoga was born in Kazimierz, Poland in 1791. Thus, Hoga was born 38 years *after* the publication of *עקיצת עקרב*. He could not have been the cause of a twofold celebration attended by R. Jacob Emden.

At the other end of our story, it must be noted that Stanislaw Hoga, the translator of *נתיבות עולם*, died in London in his 70th year on January 21, 1860.²⁹ But R. Binyamin Diskin died in 1844 at age 46.³⁰ Thus, R. Binyamin Diskin's demise *preceded* that of Hoga by 16 years. No daughter of Stanislaw Hoga could have appeared before R. Binyamin Diskin with a request that he—Rabbi Diskin—pray on behalf of the departed soul of her father. Rabbi Diskin's soul had departed before that of Stanislaw Hoga.

3. Authorship of *עקיצת עקרב*.

The title page of *עקיצת עקרב* does not mention the author's name, a phenomenon not infrequent in R. Jacob Emden's polemical tracts.³¹ The book presents itself as having been written by a disciple of R. Jacob Emden, on behalf of his master, who is always referred to in the third person.

²⁹ So Lask Abrahams, p. 146, who examined Hoga's death certificate. Hoga's death in London (also attested to by the Reverend Marks—see above, p. 15), and not in his daughter's home in Prussia, provides yet another argument against the historicity of Rav Kook's tale.

³⁰ A. Stern, *מליצי אש*, Varenov, 1938 [reissued: Jerusalem, 1975], vol. 3, Adar, p. 66. Cf. Y. Sheinberger, *עמוד אש*, Jerusalem, 1954, pp. 4-15.

³¹ It lists the place of publication as Amsterdam, but anyone familiar with R. Jacob Emden's publications will recognize immediately (by examining the paper and typeface) that *עקיצת עקרב* was printed at R. Jacob Emden's press in Altona.

Elsewhere in his published writings, R. Jacob Emden ascribes *עקיצת עקרב* to an anonymous disciple.³² Scholars have long suspected that this anonymous disciple, much like his alleged disciple David Avaz—to whom several other of the polemical tracts are ascribed³³—is imaginary, and that R. Jacob Emden himself was the author of *עקיצת עקרב*.³⁴ This has been suggested again most recently by Professor Liebes of the Hebrew University, largely on philological grounds.³⁵ *עקיצת עקרב*, it is argued, is replete with R. Jacob Emden's syntax and vocabulary. Liebes is right; and even more conclusive evidence can be offered. In an unpublished manuscript at the Bodleian Library at Oxford University,³⁶ written in R. Jacob Emden's own hand, he writes:

"I wrote with heavenly aid part 1 of the book *עקיצת עקרב*, using the name of a student speaking on my behalf."³⁷

Clearly, R. Jacob Emden wrote *עקיצת עקרב* himself. Therefore, there was no reason for him to celebrate its completion by someone else, be it Stanislav Hoga's father, or anyone else's father, for that matter.

³² ויקם עדות ביעקב, Altona, 1756, pp. 18b-19a. Cf. his *התאבקות*, Altona, 1769, pp. 30b-31a.

³³ E.g., *שבירת לוחות האון*, Altona [despite the title page, which reads: Zolkiev], 1756.

³⁴ See, e.g., D.L. Zinz, *גדולת יהונתן*, Piotrkow, 1930 [reissued: Tel Aviv, 1968], vol. 1, pp. 65 and 72.

³⁵ Y. Liebes, "משיחיתו של ר' יעקב עמדין ויחסו לשבתאות," 49(1979-1980), pp. 146-147 and notes.

³⁶ *אגרת פורים*, p. 43. For a description of the manuscript, and excerpts from it (including the passage cited here), see J.J. Schacter, "Rabbi Jacob Emden's *Iggeret Purim*," in I. Twersky, ed., *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, Cambridge, 1984, vol. 2, pp. 441-446.

³⁷ The Hebrew reads: *ספר עקיצת עקרב ח"א בשם תלמידי המדבר וחברתי בס"ד* בעדי.

על פי שני עדים או על פי שלשה עדים יקום דבר (Deut. 19:15). The testimony of three witnesses—place, time, and authorship of עקיצת עקרוב—is compelling indeed. In the light of the evidence the connection between Stanislav Hoga and the Emden-Eibeschuetz controversy is, in fact, quite impossible. Both events—the tragedy of Stanislav Hoga and the Emden-Eibeschuetz controversy—occurred, but they appear to be unrelated. In and of themselves, each of the events was even more tragic and more dramatic in historical reality than indicated by Rav Kook's tale. But even if the משל—the story—is not entirely true, the נמשל—the story's moral teaching—is weighty indeed. One doesn't get involved in rabbinic controversy without getting burned. And regarding the wrath of the Sages, the Sages said long ago:

Beware of their glowing coals, lest you be burned, for their bite is the bite of a fox, and their sting is the sting of a scorpion, and their hiss is the hiss of a serpent, and all their utterances are like coals of fire.³⁸

And regarding the power of a rabbinic pronouncement, the Sages said: "The righteous decree and the Lord fulfills."³⁹ And regarding the penitent, the Rabbis taught: "Nothing stands in the way of the penitent."⁴⁰

It is perhaps idle to speculate on how our story attained its present form.⁴¹ Who can fathom the mysterious ways of

³⁸ M. Aboth 2:10.

³⁹ M. Waxman, ed., משלי ישראל, Jerusalem, 1933, p. 243, §4940.

⁴⁰ J. Peah 1:1 (ed. Krotoschin: 16b).

⁴¹ A Mr. Ephron from Buenos Aires wrote (in הדר 10[1935], n. 4, p. 33) that he heard the story about the apostate's daughter and R. Binyamin Diskin from the elders of Amdur [see the entry "Indura" in the German *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Berlin, 1931, vol. 8, columns 414–415], a town in the

Jewish folklore? A story whose time has come will be told despite the facts. Indeed, a good story is its own best justification. Nonetheless, it is safe to assume that our author knew, in fact, that Stanislav Hoga was a genuine penitent. Our author may well have wondered how it was possible that someone who began his career as a rabbinic scholar, and closed his life in a state of contrition and utter piety, could have actively participated in the production (so he thought) and dissemination of what may be the most notorious modern tract written against rabbinic Judaism?⁴² For the author of our story **אין זה אומר אלא דרשני**, this required explanation. And what better explanation than the fact that larger than human forces were at play here, forces that served to underscore the pervasive power and authority of rabbinic Judaism. Our author knew more about the Emden-Eibeschutz controversy than most. He knew about the **עקיפת עקרב**. He may have read some of the other polemical tracts by R. Jacob Emden, and have noticed that R. Jacob Emden was fond of noting that anyone he cursed

vicinity of Grodno. He recalled that in the version he heard, the apostate was identified as the translator, rather than the author, of **נחירות עולם**. This fits well with some of the facts (i.e. Hoga was the translator of **נחירות עולם**), but falls short of accounting for the connection between the apostate and the Emden-Eibeschutz controversy. Even if we assume that our story refers to an otherwise unknown apostate who aided Hoga in the translation [see W.T. Gidney, *op. cit.* (above, note 14), pp. 534–535, who notes that an apostate from Suwalki, Ezekiel Margoliouth (b. 1815), participated in the preparation of the Hebrew translation of McCaul's *The Old Paths*], we would have to postulate that he was 86 years old in 1839 (the year the translation was completed and appeared in print) if he had been born in the year **עקיפת עקרב** was published. Moreover, afterwards he would have had to renounce his apostasy and move to Prussia. While technically possible, this would appear to be most unlikely.

⁴² See above, note 13.

during the controversy, even in passing, was struck down by divine intervention, usually at once. The power of the word is a theme writ large in R. Jacob Emden's writings, and this may not have been lost on our author.⁴³

One more point. There was something uncanny about the Emden-Eibeschutz controversy. And if our author read the literature of the controversy, he would have known that R. Jacob Emden repeatedly accused R. Jonathan Eibeschutz of being a heretic, and specifically, of being *a secret believer in Christianity*.⁴⁴ Thus, when R. Jacob Emden blessed

⁴³ Typical is the account in R. Jacob Emden's *ויקם עדות ביעקב*, Altona, 1756, p. 11b. R. Jacob Emden reports that there was a young couple in Altona whose home had become a popular meeting place for the Eibeschutz forces. The young couple had a wine cellar in their home, which also helped to attract a crowd. Sabbath afternoons the group used to convene and imbibe. On one occasion, two of R. Jacob Emden's followers joined the crowd. A drinking bout ensued, and several of R. Jonathan's enthusiasts made a *להיים* in honor of the Chief Rabbi, R. Jonathan. The two Emden enthusiasts immediately arose and made a *להיים* in honor of R. Jacob Emden. Apparently, their *להיים* concluded with a blessing to the effect that the young couple's children grow up to be like R. Jacob Emden. The wife, whose toddler was in an adjacent room, and who was pregnant at the time, immediately had the Emden enthusiasts thrown out of her house, while shouting at them: "Sooner than my son be like him [R. Jacob Emden], may he die! And if such will be its fate, may my fetus be aborted!" R. Jacob Emden concludes the account by noting that even before the Emden enthusiasts were up on their feet, the toddler was struck down and died, the funeral taking place the next morning [Sunday]. Shortly afterwards the woman suffered a miscarriage, paying dearly for her verbal attack on R. Jacob Emden's honor.

What is especially frightening is that R. Jacob Emden revealed in print the husband's identity, and published the entire episode during the lifetime of all those who participated in, witnessed, and managed to survive, the tragedy.

⁴⁴ See, e.g., *ספר שמוש*, Altona [despite the title page, which reads: Amsterdam], 1758-1762, pp. 18b, 19b, and 26a.

the child that he be the opposite of R. Jonathan, he meant: May he grow up to be a faithful Jew. When R. Jonathan answered "Amen" to R. Jacob Emden's blessing, what was being put to the test was the very essence of R. Jonathan's religious identity and character—was he a pious Jew or (as R. Jacob Emden claimed) a secret believer in Christianity who insisted on masquerading as the גדול הדור? Was he a saint or a scoundrel? For our author, Stanislav Hoga's conversion to Christianity was a vindication of R. Jonathan. For by mutual agreement of Rabbis Jacob Emden and Jonathan Eibeschutz the child was to grow up to be the opposite of R. Jonathan. If Stanislav Hoga was an apostate, R. Jonathan was not.

IV. Epilogue

Legend has it that on his deathbed, as his soul was departing, R. Jacob Emden was heard greeting his father, R. Zvi Ashkenazi, author of שו"ת חכם צבי.⁴⁵ This was immediately followed by R. Jacob Emden's last words as a mortal: "Greetings R. Jonathan." Upon his death, the burial society convened to settle on an appropriate gravesite for R. Jacob Emden's burial. In the rabbinical section of the cemetery on the Koenigstrasse in Altona, there was only one empty plot some five graves away from that of R. Jonathan Eibeschutz. The members of the burial society were not prepared to bury these two lifelong enemies in proximity to each other. Perchance, R. Ezekiel Landau of Prague (d. 1793) happened to be visiting Altona at the time, and was asked to decide the issue. He ruled that since R. Jacob Emden and R. Jonathan

⁴⁵ The חכם צבי died in 1718. The imagery here is that of the departing soul (of R. Jacob Emden) greeting the souls on high.

Eibeschuetz had finally made peace with each other—as evidenced by R. Jacob Emden's greeting R. Jonathan in his dying breath—it was appropriate that they be buried near each other.⁴⁶ Anyone who visits the Altona cemetery will be able to attest to the fact that at least the last part of the legend is true. R. Jacob Emden and R. Jonathan Eibeschuetz rest in peace some five graves apart from each other.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ The legend was recounted by R. Sholom Halberstam of Stropkov, son of R. Yehezkel of Shinova (d. 1899), and recorded by A. Michaelson, *אהל אברהם*, Piotrkow, 1911 [reissued: New York, 1964], p. 56.

⁴⁷ I am deeply grateful to Rabbi Yaakov Dov Mandelbaum and Rabbi Eliezer Katzman who generously placed at my disposal their mastery of Jewish literature. Professor David Berger's careful reading of the manuscript saved me from many an error; his sound advice (incorporated in the text and notes) is the cause that there is wisdom in others. My father, Rabbi Harold I. Leiman, located material (at a private collection in Jerusalem) that was not available to me at the main Jewish libraries in New York and Jerusalem; he also read the manuscript and provided constructive criticism. I owe him much more than can be expressed in this short note. As usual, the members of the library staff at the Mendel Gottesman Library of Yeshiva University extended courtesies even beyond the call of duty. Regarding all the aforementioned: שלי שלום.