

surprisingly little literature at the intersection of Jewish history and the history of urbanism. This volume offers a valuable point of departure for further inquiry.

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Paweł Maciejko, ed. *Sabbatian Heresy: Writings on Mysticism, Messianism & the Origins of Jewish Modernity*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2017. 206 pp.
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It is safe to say that most college courses on modern Jewish thought, history, or culture do not begin with the mystical messiah Sabbatai Zvi. And it is even safer to say that most courses on modern religion in Europe do not include Sabbatai Zvi and the movement that arose in his wake. Some reasons are obvious: for example, the scant but growing material available in English. But other reasons are a bit more perplexing, especially if we consider the tremendous impact the movement had on the development of modern Judaism and beyond. Most work on Zvi is done by scholars of Kabbalah and/or Jewish heresiology, and much of it is still done in Israel. Paweł Maciejko's *Sabbatian Heresy* seeks to change all that. Published in a Brandeis University Press series that makes classical Jewish texts available in English for the first time, *Sabbatian Heresy* functions in some ways as an anthology that will enable students to more easily access Sabbatianism from its primary texts. But Maciejko's book is no anthology, or not only that; it is also a serious intervention into the study of the Sabbatian movement and a bold attempt to redirect its trajectory away from the works of Gershom Scholem and many of his students, who have dominated the field for the past seventy years.

While other scholars of note wrote about Zvi before Scholem, Scholem's magisterial biography *Sabbatai Zevi: The Mystical Messiah* (first published in two Hebrew volumes in 1957 and then in English in 1973) and his many Hebrew studies on various Sabbatian figures set the stage for the next three generations of scholarship. Yaacob Dweck's excellent new introduction to the 2016 reprinting of Scholem's study exhibits how the book itself, even beyond its author, has become a historical document worthy of investigation. Scholem's basic thesis is that Zvi was likely a mentally unstable, moderately educated figure who experienced visions and messianic fantasies, which were largely ignored by his contemporaries until he came across a talented young kabbalist, Nathan Benjamin Ashkenazi, also known as Nathan of Gaza, who deemed Zvi the messiah and began constructing an entire metaphysical edifice drawn from Zoharic and Lurianic kabbalistic sources to prove it. This all took on new meaning after Zvi converted to Islam to save his own skin, an act that on the one hand exacerbated the messianic fervor through Nathan's mystical lens, and on the other led many to give up hope or return to the normative Jewish fold

while still quietly holding a belief in *Zvi*'s messianic status. Some of the former converted to Islam with *Zvi*, and many of the latter produced important works that influenced everything from Hasidism to, as Scholem speculated somewhat erroneously, modern Jewish reform. Scholem went even further to suggest, although never quite make the case, that this event had an important impact on modernity more generally. This was all part of Scholem's larger grand narrative that Jewish heresy stands at the center of Western civilization.

This is all well known to those who have read Scholem. Maciejko's critical intervention comes in three parts. First, he argues that Scholem distorted the complexity of the movement because he was wed to viewing it as part of a grand Jewish narrative through the metaphysical perspective of Nathan of Gaza. In line with Zionist historiography, Scholem viewed the Sabbatian movement as the great expression of authentic Jewish spiritual anarchism that flowed beneath the surface of Jewish history. Second, and related, Maciejko argues that Scholem acknowledged but deflected the influences of Islam and, more importantly, Christianity from the movement, and claimed that the religious syncretism that existed in the movement was "not an organic development of Sabbatianism" (xxii) but the product of simple encounters with other religions. And third, while Scholem gestured toward the more expansive influence of Sabbatianism beyond the boundaries of Judaism, he never developed the theme in any way in part because he chose to view Sabbatianism as an inward-looking movement, one that he, among other contemporaries, believed participated in giving birth to Jewish nationalism.

Maciejko seeks to redress the narrowness of this vision by exposing Scholem's agenda and showing us that Scholem himself at times undermined his own premonitions and held back from developing them in part because they did not cohere with his grand narrative. Maciejko notes that Yehuda Liebes's extensive and groundbreaking work on *Zvi* does some of the work for him by arguing for a "transconfessional" aspect of Sabbatianism, turning us away from Scholem's view that it was Nathan's kabbalistic metaphysics that really mattered. Liebes had us focus on *Zvi* himself. But Liebes never really pursued that path at length. Additionally, Maciejko argues that we need to see Sabbatianism as much more than a Jewish movement. Maciejko calls it "the transreligious facet of Sabbatianism" (xxi), arguing that the syncretism was not merely Jewish adaptations but an integral part of the movement itself, in some sense creating a new religion. Maciejko notes that *Zvi*'s "God could not be bound to any religion, including Judaism" (xxviii). Finally, only by freeing Sabbatianism from Judaism can we really see its broader influence on European society. Here Maciejko concludes that when we focus on *Zvi* rather than Nathan what results is a much darker post-Sabbatian phenomenon, a rebellion not only against Judaism or *Zvi*, but "in some cases ... against the God of Israel Himself" (xxxii).

The selection of texts is masterful and the translations by various scholars are lucid and clear, covering the major categories from *Zvi* himself to the aftermath of the movement in Europe and the Levant, including most of the major controversies. There are only two short texts by Nathan, yet five by or related to Jacob Frank, which shows how Maciejko, as opposed to others, views Frankism

as an integral part of Sabbatianism, even if Frank tried to distance himself from the movement. Extending Sabbatian influence deep into Jewish modernity, the volume includes texts by Isaac Bashevis Singer and S. Y. Agnon. Given Maciejko's thesis, one wonders why he did not include texts outside Judaism.

There has already been excellent work in English on Sabbatianism from David Halperin, Elisheva Carlebach, Matt Goldish, Ada Rapoport-Albert, Bezalel Naor, and others. This volume offers readers not only important primary texts in translation for the first time but, when read through the compelling revisionist lens Maciejko presents in the introduction, it offers us a new theory of Sabbatianism that will take the study of this crucial phenomenon beyond Scholem's work while still remaining indebted to its groundbreaking scholarship.

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David I. Shyovitz. *A Remembrance of His Wonders: Nature and the Supernatural in Medieval Ashkenaz*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. 325 pp.

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Historical scholarship of the past few decades has sought to liberate the image of medieval Ashkenazic Jewry from the grip of *Wissenschaft* thinking, which portrayed it as xenophobic and ignorant. David Shyovitz's *A Remembrance of His Wonders* takes this scholarly movement in a new direction. Shyovitz argues that far from shunning the natural order, the German Pietists reflected deeply on natural phenomena that inspire marvel because they appear to defy explanation. The Pietists, chiefly Judah the Pious, collected these wonders in texts that often begin with "a remembrance of His wonders" (Psalm 111:4), in order to derive theological conclusions from seemingly aberrant forces of nature.

The theological import derived from remembrances revolves around God's existence and omnipotence, and typically is learned *a minore ad maius*, from the physical order to the recondite divine realm. Shyovitz interprets these lessons propounded by the Pietists as implying a powerful current of skepticism among the rank and file of medieval Ashkenaz, which also challenges the traditional historiographical image. Indeed, Jeremy Cohen and Avraham Grossman have put forward similar arguments in different contexts, and yet I can imagine the Pietists propagating material of this sort for the edification and spiritual well-being of their audience without conjuring an atmosphere involving a crisis of faith.

The interrogation of nature through its wonders is a familiar trope from the travel writing of Gerald of Wales and others, which treats home-bound readers to descriptions of bizarre creatures encountered at the geographical limits of the world, liminal phenomena in liminal locales. Thinking about events and behaviors that lie at the edge of the natural realm offered a way to conceptualize the natural