

le voyageur ottoman, Eviya Chelebi, évoqué plus haut, décrit ainsi sa prière dans la grotte de Jacob à Safed en 1648, en pleine période qabbalistique:

Grâce à Dieu je visitai ce sanctuaire et y accomplis la prière du matin suivie de la lecture intégrale du Coran qui se prolongea jusque tard dans l'après-midi. Après l'avoir achevée, je dédai son mérite aux nobles âmes après avoir sollicité l'assistance de leurs *ruhânîyya*. Je ressentis alors leur proximité. Que Dieu les prenne en amour.⁸⁷

En conclusion, comme nous l'avons vu, les traditions musulmanes concernant les saints enterrés dans les environs de Safed étaient de nature à susciter des croyances similaires chez leurs voisins juifs. Il est fort possible que les Qabbalistes de Safed aient observé en milieu musulman les pratiques liées à la visitation des tombes, et ayant constaté leur efficacité spirituelle, l'adaptèrent à leur propre culte. Comme nombre d'autres rites mystiques, ces pratiques palestiniennes furent ensuite transmises aux communautés de la diaspora et en particulier aux communautés hasidiques, à l'affût d'innovations d'ordre mystique.

R. B. Fenton & R. Goetschel, *Expérience,
Écriture mystiques dans les religions du
Lieu, Leiden, Boston, Köln 2000.*

CONTRASTING OPINIONS AMONG THE FOUNDERS OF R. ISRAEL SARUQ'S SCHOOL

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The School of Saruq

R. Israel Saruq¹ had a considerable number of disciples in the northern regions of Italy. His writings, as well as theirs, can be considered as the written corpus of a distinctive branch of the broader Lurianic school. This assumption has not been questioned by scholars. However, the investigation of numerous manuscripts containing treatises from the school of Saruq led me to the conclusion that R. Israel Saruq had associates in the original elaboration of his teachings. Even the writings of the first generation of those shaping this new body of teaching can already be subsumed under the term "school". The vicissitudes of history have consigned the names of these associates to oblivion and have left us to consider all their writings as those of Saruq.

The principal arena of the activities of this circle of Qabbalists was Palestine. Its members seem to have started out in Safed even before the arrival there of R. Isaac Luria. Their major concern was with the magic powers of letters and words, as well as with the formulation of comprehensive theories about the status of magic. R. Joseph Ibn Tabul was a member of this pre-Lurianic circle. Later on he rejected magic and became a disciple of Luria and a follower of his theurgic method, but at that early stage he wrote a treatise on the Torah, in which he regards magic as the highest possible form of knowledge and the most exalted type of activity.² Saruq, too,

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¹ Regarding the spelling of Saruq's name: we now have his signature in his own hand—Oxford, Bodl. Ms. Neubauer 1624 (Opp. Add. Fol. 35)—showing that he spelt his name with a *qof* at the end, which is followed here.

² G. Scholem was the first to note this treatise and its magical tendency (G. Scholem, *Prigot yeshod ha-qabbalah u-semaleha*, Jerusalem, 1977, p. 74). It has also been briefly discussed in my article—"An Anonymous Commentary on Idra Raba By a Member of Saruq's School; Or: How does the Saruq School Relate to Ergas, Spinoza and

⁸⁷ Chelebi, *op. cit.*, p. 27. Ce passage ajoute foi à l'hypothèse que le phénomène qabbalistique de la *hitva'ehut* fut influencé par des pratiques soufies.

Vital. But Aškenazi Qabbalists from the 18th century onwards, as well as modern scholars, consider it the work of Saruq. We have, however, the testimony of R. Ezra of Fano to the effect that he received this treatise from Damascus but thought of it as an anonymous work. In other words, this principal disciple of Saruq's, who so assiduously copied all the latter's writings did not recognize the new treatise as the work of his master. Already Prof. Tishbi felt uneasy with the assertion that *Ber'ah* was written by Saruq.⁶ But he did not acknowledge that, by the above testimony alone, it was clear that at least one more Qabbalist had contributed to the corpus of the school. Arguing similarly, one might conclude that a number of other treatises usually ascribed to Saruq were not written by him either. This would apply particularly to the treatise I have named '*asilat-neqidot*'. This, too, is included in *Sefer limmudey ha-'asilat*. It is notable for asserting that the letters of the *malbūs* (divine garment) were not created directly by the divine pleasure (*šā'asā'a*) of '*eyn sof*', but rather from a cluster of *neqidot* of the *rešimā* (punctiform residue), left behind by the '*eyn sof*' after its *šimšim* (contraction).⁷ This leads us to the conclusion that there were two branches in Saruq's school, both growing from the same stem. Their common root had come into being in Luria's lifetime. One branch was that of Saruq himself who later settled in Italy; the other, the Eastern branch, continued growing in the areas adjacent to the Eastern Mediterranean.

Major Development in the School's Ideas

The writings of the school allow us to identify three pivotal stages: in the early stage, of which the treatise *Haḥalal ha-hōkmāh* is representative⁸ we do not find the concept of *malbūs* (garment) at all.

The middle stage is represented by numerous writings, such as '*asilat*', printed at the beginning of *Sefer limmudey ha-'asilat*, or *Qabbalat Barūk ben Barūk*,⁹ and others. In this stage we first find the concept of *malbūs*—an entity to be found between '*eyn sof*' and the world

⁶ Y. Tishbi, 'ha-šimūt beyn qabbalat ha-'Afi le-qabbalat ha-Ramaq', *Hiqrey qabbalāh u-šilatāhā*, Jerusalem, 1982, pp. 220–225.

⁷ *Limmudey 'asilat*, fols. 11–21.

⁸ For example, Jerusalem, JNU, ms. 8417.

⁹ Found in manuscripts only, e.g., Oxford, Bodleian (Opp. 411, olim Opp. 931), fols. 103a–117b.

belonged to this circle in Safed, and he, as well as others from among the group, studied personally under Luria.³ Saruq gladly adopted many of Luria's innovations, and worked them into his own teachings. After a while, however—at a time when Luria was still alive—Saruq left Safed. There is a gap of several years in his life story, and we do not know where he spent these years—whether in Poland, in Salonika, or perhaps in Palestine; all we know is that at the turn of the 16th and 17th century, we find him in northern Italy.⁴ There he engaged in magic and taught his brand of Qabbalah to many students: R. Menahem Azaryah of Fano, R. Ezra of Fano, R. Abraham Cohen Herrera, R. Aharon Berekhia of Modena, R. Natan Ottolenghi, R. Samuel David Ottolenghi, R. Issachar Ber Eilenburg, R. Barūk ben Barūk, R. Simon Kōhen, R. Judah ben David ha-Kōhen (author of *Tiqqūn le-šabbat*), R. Solomon Oheb (Oef) of Ragusa—to name some of them.

After Saruq left Safed, his associates remained in Palestine and continued their activities, first in Safed and later perhaps in Jerusalem as well. Some might have moved on to Damascus. They sent their treatises (in which they summarized their doctrines), to Saruq and his disciples in Italy. We possess, for instance, a treatise called *Ber'ah* which describes the *heykalot* (chambers) of the created world. It is included in *Sefer limmudey ha-'asilat*⁵ where it is ascribed to R. Hayyim

Others', Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought (Rivah Schatz Uffenheimer Memorial Vol.), (1996) (Heb.) (hereafter: 'Meroz, Idra Rabe).

³ True, Scholem rejected Saruq's claim to be a personal disciple of Luria (G. Scholem, 'R. Israel Saruq-Luria's Disciple?', *Zion* 5 (1940), pp. 214–243 (in Heb.) (hereafter: Scholem, Saruq). Later, Scholem softened his criticism. See his *Abraham Herrera, the author of Šar Ḥašagim*, Jerusalem, 1978. As for us, we may reconsider the facts, and remember, for example, that Saruq's major disciple in Italy was R. Menahem Azariah of Fano. This shrewd leader of the Italian Jewry kept extensive contacts with the community in Palestine. He collected donations; he printed books of the Safadian Qabbalists; many of the emissaries from Palestine stayed at his house repeatedly. Could we imagine that R. Menahem would innocently accept Saruq's claims to be Luria's disciple without checking this information with one of these emissaries, or with his relative, R. Moses Foa, who visited the Holy Land for the sake of studying Lurianic Qabbalah?

⁴ He is mentioned for the first time in the year 1587 in R. Menahem Azariah of Fano's book—'*Šarāh me'amarot*'. He is also mentioned in ms. Montefiori 464, fol. 32a as residing in Venice at the end of the year 1600, and again—by his disciple R. Natan Ottolenghi—in the year 1603 (ms New York, JTS 8725, fol. 22a). Scholem, on the other hand, thought that Saruq left Italy by 1600 (Scholem, Saruq, p. 222). For more details concerning Saruq's whereabouts see my forthcoming article—'The Saruq School of Thought—a New History', *Shalem* (2001) (hereafter—'Meroz, "History").

⁵ *Sefer limmudey 'asilat*, ed. J. A. Epstein, Munkacs, 1897.

of *'asîlât*. It is identical with the Torah and is woven from all the letters of the alphabet. It is during this stage that the school of Saruq divides into two branches—the Italian and the eastern.

During the third stage, we encounter the motif already mentioned: the creation of the *malbûš* from *neqûdôt*. It is under the marked influence of the writings of the third stage which Saruq received from the east that he developed, at the beginning of the XVIIth century, some new aspects in his teachings. We can find them in treatises like the commentary on *Sifra de-šeni'ûta* which R. Issachar Eilenburg¹⁰ took down during Saruq's lectures, or the book *Milû'îm*, similarly taken down by R. Ezra of Fano.¹¹ It is in this manner that the influence of the third stage of eastern thinking became noticeable in Italy as well.

It is worth noting two dates of major importance for the history of this circle: the above-mentioned *'asîlât-Neqûdôt* has come down to us in a manuscript testifying that its source was another manuscript copied in Jerusalem in the year 1592.¹² The commentary on *Sifra de-šeni'ûta*, on the other hand, mentions a collection of *derušîm* called *Limmûdîm* which was put together in Italy between the years 1600 and 1602.¹³ This chronology makes it plain that *'asîlât-neqûdôt*, as well as all the earlier works of the school, were composed before 1592 and that it was *'asîlât-neqûdôt* which influenced the doctrines set forth in *Sifra de-šeni'ûta*, and not the other way round.

Contrasting Opinions

I will now consider some of the differences marking off the teachings of the eastern from those of the Italian branch of Saruq's school:

a) *šimšûm* (Contraction)

The early texts of the school—those belonging to the first stage and some of those attributable to the second stage—describe the first

¹⁰ Printed in *Limmûdey 'asîlât*, fols. 34a–35d.

¹¹ Ms. Kaufman 201, pp. 8–15.

¹² Oxford, Bodleian 1602 (ms. Mich. 416, olim Mich. 20).

¹³ Here I rely on Y. Aviv, "*Kathey ha-ʿArî be-ḥalipyah 'ad šenat 1620'*", *Alai Sefer* 11 (1984), pp. 110–111. See also Meroz, "History", chapter 1.

šimšûm of *'eyn sôf* in a manner greatly similar to the early descriptions of it by R. Hayim Vital and of R. Joseph Ibn Tabul, the principal disciples of Luria.¹⁴ They refer to the upward contraction of the *šekhîmâh*, lifting it and thereby creating a space, in which the whole is going to be created. They say that the this space was empty although the *resûmâ*, or residue of light, is left behind.

The difference between Saruq's school and Vital's early descriptions lies in the use of the words: "as it were". In general, these words appear very frequently in the writings of the school, almost in every one of them, and they usually do so in a very specific context, i.e. the descriptions of the *šimšûm* or of the "death of the kings", but there is no explanation of the reservation intended. Is it to tell us that the description is to be taken symbolically, as is the case in the Qabbalah, generally speaking, and in the Qabbalah of Luria in particular? Or is it meant to convey that these descriptions are to be understood metaphorically?

As against this, the treatise *Prathey pratyût me-'ôlâm ha-'eyn sôf*, from among the writings of the Eastern branch,¹⁵ does elaborate on the reservation with respect to the process of *šimšûm*:

And you should know that the said part of the infinity which contracts in the said *šimšûm* is by way of a preparation so that the things would be able to become somewhat concrete and it is not, God forbid, a real *šimšûm* which would create a place empty of it [i.e. of infinity], but rather to prepare the place to receive, as it were, a concretization, as it is said: "the king is held captive by its tresses" (Cant. 7, 6), and this is the "all-encompassed infinity" (*'eyn sôf ha-mûqaf*).¹⁶

The *šimšûm* is thus not the evacuation of a certain space, as Vital and Tabul assume, but rather a preliminary stage in preparation for the creation of the world in a certain place. The character of this preparation is made clear by the use of the term "all-encompassed

¹⁴ These early descriptions are to be found for example in the *deruš* which R. Hayim Vital passed on to Sagish (published by D. Tountou in *Liqqûṭim hadâšîm*, Jerusalem 1985) and the beginning of the *deruš* called *Kerem hayâh li-šelômôt* by R. Joseph Ibn Tabul (Columbia, ms. X 893 M6862, fols. 52a–54a). Prior to that, Lurianic writers used this term to denote only the contraction of infinity into the *sefirôt*, but not the contraction of infinity from a certain space. In later descriptions, though, infinity contracts itself equally from all directions of that space. For a further discussion of this point, see: Meroz, *Redemption in the Lurianic teaching*, PhD Heb. Univ., Jerusalem, 1988, chapter two, 4.1.2.

¹⁵ Printed in *Limmûdey 'asîlât*, fols. 21d–23d.

¹⁶ *Limmûdey 'asîlât*, fol. 22b.

infinity". Its meaning is brought out by the following passage from *Derūs ha-malbūš*:

As soon as God, blessed be He, willed to create the worlds <...> He made, as it were, like an engraving in his *Šekīnāh*. And although you cannot call it a real engraving, but only its thought, that is, when He willed to create the worlds, and they indeed appeared in His thought, by this very act He carved a limit in His *Šekīnāh*. And the engraving we have spoken of is the secret of the *nequdāt* (point) which is round and almost negligible. And you should know that within this *nequdāt*, His essence, blessed be He, is ever present. That is that *ʿēyn sōf*, blessed be He, is all-encompassed as well as all-encompassing. And you should understand that until now we were not able to describe Him even by the name of *ʿēyn sōf* because His essence and His substance were one and totally unknowable <...>. But as soon as He, blessed be He, began to will the creation of the worlds <...> it became possible to describe him by the attribute of *ʿēyn sōf*: Thus we learn that what is inside the *nequdāt*, that is surrounded by is the engraving can now be called *ʿēyn sōf*, whereas what is surrounding it cannot be described other than as *tehirū*, that means: the light of His substance. And you should know that this *nequdāt* is the appropriate place for creating the worlds.¹⁷

God's first action was therefore not His contraction into himself, nor a withdrawal or the evacuation of a space for the worlds to be created in, but a positive act—the thought and the will to create worlds. This thought is so refined that it can be spoken of as a mere "point" (*nequdāt*) which is, so to say, insignificant; in retrospect, it becomes clear that this refined and tiny spot is the cosmic sphere which contains all the worlds within it.¹⁸ This first thought differs from His infinite essence in that it has limits, and that is why it can be termed an act of "engraving". The very existence of such a limit makes it possible for us to discuss, and describe, infinity (*ʿēyn sōf*). Before that, it transcended every description and every attribute and was not, as far as man was concerned, conceivable. Only after this process had taken place it became possible, for the first time, to describe it, and therefore the *ʿēyn sōf* after the first creative thought is the *ʿēyn sōf* which is being surrounded by the engraving; at the same time, the other aspects of the *ʿēyn sōf* were also given limits, so that they, too, could now be described by a term, namely, *tehirū*, or polished light of His substance.

¹⁷ This *derūs* is marked, most probably by the copyist rather than the author, "first edition"—London, BL Ms. Or. 10106, (*olim* Gaster collection 1430), fol. 56a.

¹⁸ If so, the author uses *nequdāt* with two different connotations: as an insignificant entity; and as a spherical one.

The *tehirū* referred to in the above quotation is thus the light of *ʿēyn sōf* that remains beyond the world-space and is called in the remainder of the text *tehirū ʿilāʿa*, or higher *tehirū*, to distinguish it from the term *tehirū* used without any additional attribute, which describes the cosmic sphere encompassing the *sefirōt*.

After the writings of the Eastern school came to the knowledge of Saruq and his disciples, the latter accepted the opinion of the Eastern authors. This can be clearly seen in Saruq's commentary on *Sifra de-šne ʿūta* which—unlike other, earlier writings of the Italian branch—sets forth ideas on the *šimšūm* resembling those of the Eastern branch.¹⁹

We therefore see that already in the first generation of Luria's disciples there were those who had reservations concerning the literal understanding of Luria's ideas about *šimšūm*. These were disciples of Luria who joined the school of Saruq. This is particularly true of the members of the Eastern branch which seem, for all we know—to have had some predilection for arguing philosophical points, although it cannot be argued that they presented their Qabbalah philosophically, as Scholem thought.²⁰

The early writings of the school, and the treatises of the Italian branch, show a measure of uneasiness with the term *šimšūm* and the concept it represents, but do not fully articulate this uneasiness. Opposite the members of the Eastern branch are ranged the firmly faithful disciples of Luria of the same generation, Vital and Tabul, with their literal interpretation of *šimšūm* as a real act by which God emptied a space for the world. In any case, it appears that R. Abraham Herrera had a point when he argued that the process of *šimšūm* must not be understood literally, even though his detailed comments on this matter are not altogether in line with the view of the first generation of the founders of Saruq's school.²¹

To sum up, we can say that the writings of the Eastern branch put forward a new understanding of the concept of *šimšūm* which invalidates its literal interpretation: *šimšūm* is now understood as God's

¹⁹ For more details see Meroz, *Ibra Rabba*, chapter on the *šimšūm*.

²⁰ Scholem, *Saruq*, pp. 220, 231–232.

²¹ For some articles describing the long debate, spread over many generations, whether the *šimšūm* should be interpreted literally or metaphorically, see for example: G. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, Jerusalem, 1974, pp. 129–135; R. Goetschel, «La notion de Šimšum dans le "Sommer Emunim" de Joseph Ergasz», in: G. Nahon et Touati (eds.), *Homage à Georges Vajda*, Louvain, 1980, pp. 385–396; N. Yosha, *Mitōš ʿu-mešāfōrah, ha-paršanūt ha-philōsōfit šel R. Avraham Herrera*, Jerusalem, 1994, pp. 188–209, 351–357.

first thought, His will to create worlds. This very thought was, simultaneously, the space for the world. This change is characteristic of the thinking of the Eastern branch in general: its members tend to continue using terms coined by Luria to describe basic aspects of his teachings—such as *šimšūm* and also, as we shall see, the “breaking of the vessels”—but change their meaning to the point of invalidating them.

At times, the reason for doing so stems from philosophical reflection (as is the case with regard to *šimšūm*), at other times (e.g. concerning the “breaking of the vessels”) from the magical worldview they adhere to. One way or another, their faithfulness to Luria’s coinage, despite the changes they introduce in its contents, is evidence of Luria’s spiritual standing among the Qabbalists of his generation for whom he remained the model that must be followed.

b) *malbūš* and *neqūdōt*

In the preceding section I spoke of new ideas that emerged among the members of the Eastern branch and were eventually, at the beginning of the 17th century, adopted by the Italian one as well; we now turn, by contrast, to a real clash of opinions within the Eastern branch.

We have already referred to the treatise called *’asīlāt-neqūdōt*. Earlier writings of the school state that the letters making up the Divine *malbūš* are created by the “pleasure and delight” within the *’eyn sōf*, but *’asīlāt-neqūdōt* argues that each letter was created from the *neqūdōt* of the *rešimu*. Another member of the eastern branch, however, turns against the author of this view, writing in a *derūs* on the *malbūš*:

And if you say: *’alef*—what comes before it?, you should know that before *’alef* there is *neqūdāh* (פִּי) and from it sprang the letter *’alef*. You should know that, as the *’alef* sprang from *neqūdāh* which precedes it and that is “the depth of beginning” so the *’alef* is “the depth of beginning” for the *beyt*, and [the *beyt*] is formed by it [the *’alef*], and that is why the numerical value of the *beyt* [second letter of the alphabet] is two [because of] the two beginnings which preceded it, whence it sprang. And what follows it, which is the *gimel*, is formed from the *’alef* and the *beyt*, and therefore it is the third.²²

²² *Derūs ha-malbūš*, entitled (probably by the copyist) “second edition”—London Ms. Or. 10106, fols. 62b–63a.

In other words, according to the writer of this *derūs*, the first letter was indeed created from a *neqūdāh*, but each of the following letters was created from the one preceding it. The writer sets out briefly the views of those opposing him, i.e. that each letter springs from a *neqūdāh*, as set forth in *’asīlāt-neqūdōt*. He sums up his discussion of the topic by saying:

As for us, all we know is what the rabbi, our master, Isaac Luria the Askenazi, of blessed memory, has expounded [on this matter] and this is the foundation for every thing.

The argument here seems to revolve around a marginal and highly technical point; but a closer acquaintance with the Qabbalah of Saruq’s school will show us that it implies a very substantive line of reasoning. We have already spoken of the magical tendencies of the school; the author of *’asīlāt-neqūdōt* carries this attitude forward to its ultimate conclusion. He holds, as we have seen, that the letters were created from the *neqūdōt*, but, he goes on to say, the *neqūdōt* continue to be in them and animate them like souls.²³ And since they continue to reside inside them, “these letters are like seals, that is [they are] the alphabet the angels use”. What is hinted at here is the special type of writing popular in magical use, for instance, in writing amulets. The letters are written as combinations of small circles and short lines. This is known by the name “writing of the eyes” or “pens of the angels”.

This passage reveals the hidden motif underlying the teaching of the author of *’asīlāt-neqūdōt*. The deepest and most substantial feature of the letters of the *malbūš* is the magical one. The *neqūdōt* are the origins and the souls of the letters, and activate them according to the laws of magic. It was by means of the *malbūš*, which is the Torah made up of these letters—that God created the world; in other words: God acts like a magician and, through the collection of words found in the *malbūš*, He “works miracles”.²⁴ The aspiration of a Qabbalist such as the author of *’asīlāt-neqūdōt* is, on the one hand, to perceive, in a mystical vision, this aspect of the *malbūš* (something that he deems possible for the chosen few); and on the other hand, to make himself resemble God by means of his magic powers, and to become a “miracle-worker” himself. The difference of opinion between the

²³ *Pirtey praiyūt me-’ōlām ha-’eyn sōf*, in *Limmādey ’asīlāt*, fol. 22a–c.

²⁴ *Limmādey ’asīlāt*, fol. 11a.

two members of the eastern branch is thus not merely technical, but rather revolves around the question how broadly the principle of magic is to be applied—whether or not the action of the highest entity (though not of *'eyn sof* itself) can be described in terms of magic.

The treatise *'asīlūt-neqūdāt* does, it is true, belong to the Eastern branch but was sent to members of the school in Italy, as were other, similar, compositions. We thus find traces of these specific magical concepts in writings produced there at the beginning of the 17th century, most particularly in the commentary on the above-mentioned *Sifra de-šeni'ūta*.

c) *The Concept of Evil*

The most significant contrast between the Eastern and the Italian branch comes to the fore in their respective attitudes towards the nature of evil. The Eastern branch does not very frequently occupy itself with the problem. When it does, however, we find that it dissociates itself thoroughly from one of the main pillars of Luria's teaching on the "status" of evil: the breaking of the vessels. The treatise entitled *'asīlūt*, the first of the tracts appearing in *Limmūdey 'asīlūt*, clearly preserves Luria's voice, yet gives it new contents:

Each vessel makes²⁵ [i.e. is broken into] 60,000 shards, and each shard has a name of its own, capable of doing marvelous miracles . . . and several hosts of angels go forth from it [from each name], and then—stars and signs of the Zodiac and comets in which there are many stars.²⁶

In actual fact, the tract *'asīlūt* sets forth an alternative interpretation of the concept of the breaking of the vessels. The shards are no longer the result of a crisis or breakdown within the godhead that must be restored. There is no longer any need to redeem the divine sparks from their captivity among the forces of evil. Instead, they can be "used", i.e. used through magic, by means of the special names of each of them. More than that: the very same shards form part of the proper ordering of this world (which is why angels and

stars issue forth from them). They are far from being an unclean matter polluting the worlds.²⁷

New magic contents have thus been given to basic concepts of Luria's Qabbalah—the death of the kings or the breaking of the vessels—and these new contents replace the dualist leanings emerging in the old understanding.

By contrast, the early writings of the school, and those later composed by the Italian branch, deal copiously with various aspects of the forces of evil. Two ideas in particular are worth mentioning, because they place their authors among those Qabbalists whose dualist inclinations cannot be mistaken.

In the book *Tā'ālāmōt hōkēmāh* we find a tract entitled *Qabbalah of Israel Saruq*, originating in what R. Judah ben David ha-Kôhen heard, and which quite possibly renders Saruq's own words. It describes, as is usual in Saruq's school, the Divine *malbūs* as woven from the letters of the words *pânân* and *'alîôr* (i.e. in combinations in which the order of the letters conforms to their place in the alphabet, as well as in combinations where this is not the case). But, unlike other writings of the school, this tract states that precisely because of this structure of the *malbūs*, it is possible to describe it as "a place where darkness and light intermingle, and in order to distinguish between the light and the darkness it [the *malbūs*] needs to be folded".²⁸ We can sense an echo here of the words of Tabul who, at the beginning of his *Derūs hefšūbāh*, speaks of the nature of *'eyn sof* as being made up of darkness and light, of judgment and mercy; as well as of his description of *šimšūm* as the beginning of the process by which judgment becomes separate from *'eyn sof*. True, instead of speaking of *'eyn sof* itself, Saruq refers to *malbūs*, a lower-ranking entity, but that entity, too, stands in need of a process mitigating the forces of evil in it. This process is here called *qippāl* (folding) and it is worth noting that this term also appears as an alternative expression for *šimšūm* in some of the Lurianic sources.

In another passage in Saruq's writings, he describes two events of the breaking of the vessels.²⁹ In the first instance, he makes use of a symbol which I have not found in any of the "classical" Lurianic

²⁷ The same point, though in different language, is made in the treatise *'asīlūt-neqūdāt*, *Limmūdey 'asīlūt*, fols. 18d–19a.

²⁸ R. Joseph del Medigo, *Tā'ālāmōt hōkēmāh*, Basel (Hanau), 1629, fol. 78a.

²⁹ Thus at the beginning of R. Moses Yona, *Kanfey yōnāt* (Ms. Sasson 993) and similar writings.

²⁵ The choice of an active verb is not incidental!

²⁶ *Limmūdey 'asīlūt*, fol. 5b, corrected according to Columbia, Ms. X893H533, fol. 88b.

writings: the "seven generations" from Cain to Lemekh and his sons. These seven kings were "wiped out" completely and incapable of revival "because of an increment of judgment which has overcome them". But of the kings connected with the second event, described in detail in all Lurianic writings, Saruq had this to say:

They did not continue to exist, neither were they destroyed altogether, but rather broken, and a hint to this is found in the [Torah] portion *way-yišlah* (Gen. 36, 31), [where] their breaking is their repair, and it is written of them: "*and these*"; thereby adding to the first ones.³⁰

Therefore, while the writings of the Eastern branch attest to an attempt to moderate Lurianic attitudes towards evil and bend them in the direction of monism, Saruq's own words augment the dualistic trend; the power of justice in the higher realms of the creation is described as greater than Luria would have thought possible. Saruq goes to the length of positing that before the breaking of the vessels, of which Luria spoke so often, there occurred another, more extreme event: the lower kings, though broken, did have some hope and vitality, for their breaking was their correction. The higher kings, by contrast, had no hope; they were wiped out altogether.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the common roots of the two branches—roots embedded in mythical qabbalistic thinking on the one hand, and in magical thought on the other. After the original split, the two branches lived separate lives for a while and developed in contrasting directions. The Eastern branch stressed monism, magic and some philosophical argument; the Italian branch tended towards dualism. Early in the 17th century, when Saruq and his disciples became aware of the teachings of their Eastern colleagues, they adopted some of the latter's innovations—such as the creation of the *malbiš* from the magical *nequdāt* and also their notion of the process of *šimšum*—and integrated them into their own teaching.

³⁰ *Takan liqqūtim*, Jerusalem JNUL, Ms. 8°941, para. 332, fols. 82b–83b, attributed to Saruq himself. Printed anonymously in *Kanfe yonáh* by R. Menahem Azaryah of Fano, Lemberg, 1884, chap. 36, fol. 72a–b. The inclusion of the words *and these* in the biblical verse is understood to be a proof for the existence of two groups of kings.