

Asking a Rabbi About His Fear: Shared Intention in an Early Modern Jewish-Christian Interaction

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Abstract:

This paper explores the intentionality of a captivating Jewish-Christian encounter in Amsterdam during the spring of 1657. It features Rabbi Nathan Shapira ha-Yerushalmi and a group of millenarian Christians led by the mystical chiliast Peter Serrarius. Rabbi Shapira, a renowned Kabbalist from the circle of Jacob ben Hayyim Tsemah, was on a mission to raise funds for the beleaguered Ashkenazi Jewish community of Jerusalem. He was convinced that their collective woes were the dramatic overture to the Messiah's grand debut. Meanwhile, the Collegiants – a radical Protestant Christian group – were eagerly awaiting apocalyptic events around 1656. Richard Henry Popkin famously described this meeting as a “touching moment” in Jewish-Christian relations, particularly noting the Rabbi’s surprisingly “philo-Christian” presentation of rabbinic texts. This study examines the source text by contextualisation and redaction. It shows that there was a shared intention, even if different agents participated for different reasons based on their own distinct religious tradition.

Keywords: shared intention, early modern Jewish-Christian interaction, Rabbi Nathan Shapira ha-Yerushalmi, Peter Serrarius, Collegiant, mystical chiliast, *Messiah-directedness*, *Tuv ha-Aretz*

Introduction

This paper examines the *intentionality* of a special Jewish-Christian interaction during the early modern period, occurred in Amsterdam in the spring of 1657, between an Ashkenazi rabbi from Jerusalem and millenarian Christian residents of the city.

The Rabbi, Nathan Shapira ha-Yerushalmi (c. 1600, Cracow – 1666, Reggio Emilia) was a renowned kabbalist of the Lurianic school, sent as a rabbinical emissary by the Ashkenazi congregation of Jerusalem for fundraising among Jews of Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands to relieve their misery and financial stresses (Yaari 1951, 1:277-281). He had a strong belief that all the present afflictions, calamities, miseries, persecutions, and horrific massacres, which his people were enduring, were the *birth pangs of the Messiah*. The salvation of Israel is coming from 1648 and on (*Midrash ha-Neelam* in *Zohar* 1:139b; Silver 1978, 92, 184-185).

The Amsterdam millenarians were Collegiants, which means Christians from a radical branch

of the Reformation without written articles of faith, without ecclesial hierarchy, even without church buildings, but with a firm faith in the Biblical prophecies about the End of Days, the apocalyptic time (Israel 2023, 261-288). They expected these events about the year of 1656 (Crome 2014, 195-196).

Richard Henry Popkin who wrote a groundbreaking article about the topic (Popkin 1984), called this as “the most touching moment in the history of Jewish-Christian relation” when the Rabbi told a consequently “philo-Christian” interpretation of the rabbinic sources (Popkin 1988, 23). Prior research has examined the Rabbi’s mission in the context of rabbinic emissaries (Yaari 1951; Katz 1988) and Jewish transregional philanthropic networks (Lehmann 2014, 147, 178; Teller 2020a, 160-179), as well as its connection to the pseudo-messianic movement of Sabbatai Zevi (Teller 2020b, 377-402; Scholem 2016, 73-74, 101), and its implications for early modern Jewish messianism and Christian millenarianism (Popkin 1984; Katz 1986; Wall 1988, 80-85). In this paper, I will examine this interaction at the “horizons of phenomenology” (Yoshimi 2023).

Phenomenology explores the structural dimensions of direct experience and its representation in human consciousness, with particular emphasis on *intentionality* – the directedness of consciousness towards objects. In classical Husserlian approaches to religion, this intentionality, such as the God-directedness of religious experience in Abrahamic faiths, constitutes an epistemic standing of religious belief, characterised by verticality (Smith 2023; Smith 2018; Wynn 2022; Steinbock 2007; Steinbock 2012). However, to map interreligious interaction, which involves planning and practical organisation, it is essential to examine shared intentions. Michael E. Bratman regards these intentions as a fundamental aspect of our shared understanding of ourselves as intelligent agents. In this context, a *shared intention* can be described as “an interpersonal structure of related intentions that serves to coordinate action and planning, as well as to structure bargaining between participants” (Bratman 1999, 109–129). The related intentions that constitute this interpersonal structure are “individual practical commitments with a social content” (Bratman 2022, 10). It is precisely because of this social content and practicality that a very important feature emerges in the interpersonal structure.

And there can be such shared intentions even if different agents participate for different reasons: I might participate in our shared intention to paint the house because I dislike the color, whereas you participate because you dislike the mildew. Indeed, on the overall view in this book, such divergence of background reasons, and resulting partiality of convergence, is a common feature of our human sociality, both small-scale and institutional. (Bratman 2022, 10)

Discussing the interaction between the Rabbi and the Collegiants, I argue that their shared intention worked in this common way. My research demonstrates this through contextualisation, and a historical-philosophical analysis of a narrative about the sequence of those human experiences, which together built their interaction.

Sources

Peter Serrarius (1600, London-1669, Amsterdam), a respected leader of the Amsterdam Collegiants,

wrote a letter in April 1657 to his friend John Dury, detailing the Rabbi Shapira's sayings, behaviour, and attitude, that convinced them of the Kabbalist's sincerity and his understanding of "the sacred mysteries concerning the Messiah". An extract of this letter survives in a nineteen-page printed pamphlet, titled *An information, concerning the present state of the Jewish nation in Europe and Judea*, published anonymously in London, in 1658 but attributed to Serrarius' English Judeophile millenarian friends, John Dury (1596–1680) and Henry Jessey (1603–1663). (Katz 1989, 126; Popkin 1984, 189; Lehmann 2014, 147; Wall 1990, 169) The pamphlet's aim was to support a new collection of donations to the poor Jews in Jerusalem. It detailed the critical situation of the Jews in the Holy Land and the earlier collection in 1656, and quoted Serrarius' letter without omission, for five and a half pages, as a reliable account (*An information* 1658, 11-16). Only two sidenotes indicate private opinions of the editors of the pamphlet.

There are two contemporary summaries based on the pamphlet: a fourteen-page long by Jessey's biographer, Edward Whiston; and one, long of six sentences by Nathaniel Homes, written in 1665. (Whiston 1671, 69-83; Holmes 1759, 104) The later was erroneously identified by some researcher as an independent narrative of Shapira statements. Holmes (or Homes, 1599–1678), also a Judeophile millenarian friend of Serrarius, explained in this paper how the millenarian expectation of the beginning of the messianic age was shifted from 1650 to 1666. Holmes probably did not intend to reproduce it in print, and it was not published until several decades later (along with a hostile description of the failure of millenarian and Jewish messianic hopes). The document, written on 26 December 1665, five days before the *annus mirabilis* began, does not give the names of the extracted letter's author or addressee, and refers to it by a different date. This suggests that he summarised from memory what he had read in the pamphlet several years earlier. This is readily comprehensible when one considers that 1655 was the year of the great London plague, a period during which people and books were constantly on the move under the tremendous pressure of the plague, as detailed by Daniel Defoe in his *A Journal of the Plague Year* (Defoe 1722). The significance of this version is given by the often quoted three sentences in what Richard Popkin called the theory of "multiple messiah" or "the messiah continually appearing in different forms." (Popkin 1992, 166. Popkin 2001, 91. Popkin 1984, 194) No other accounts of the interaction have surfaced, either from Christian or Jewish sources.

Shared emotion

Serrarius addresses this point later, after narrating the other elements of their interaction with Rabbi Shapira. However, the question of fear must be discussed first, as the core of religious experience lies here. The divine is revealed or inferred through states of feeling. In the presence of an overpowering, absolute might, the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* is experienced in awe. This is simultaneously attractive and inspiring, but also evokes a sense of fear or dread. The other feelings are dependency, creaturehood, and a sense of inadequacy. These can only arise from a self-giveness and positive supremacy of the deity. The shared emotion of the individual experience of myself as dependent or even insignificant involves into a collective realm of the created finitude. (Steinbock 2007, 21-22) It can open the door to empathy, solidarity and even friendship, as can be observed in Serrarius' narrative.

I could relate many other things of this kind, which shew a truly devout and humble mind: one thing I shall yet add; When it was askt of him, Whether he was not afraid of his life, chiefly he being a Jew, a people above all other Nations hated of all, through which he was to go? he did answer, If I look upon my self, I see my self altogether unworthy of any mercy at Gods hands, or that he should admit of my prayers; but that which gives me some Confidence of life, are the calamities and extream Straits of the poor at Jerusalem, and the merits of the Fore-fathers, and their Faith in God. I believe that their prayers will be of weight towards the Father of the needy. (*An information* 1658, 15-16)

We must acknowledge that it was a remarkable encounter where a Christian could pose this question to a Jewish interlocutor without appearing threatening: “Are you not afraid for your life, Jew?” Do not forget, we are in the age of the *gezeirot tab-tat* – the cruellest massacres of the so-called Khmelnytsky Uprising (1648-1657) –, the Russo-Polish War (1654–1667) and the Second Northern War (1655–1660), which destructed Poland the safe-haven of the German Jewry under the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Travelling for a Jew, as we can know from contemporary official documents or ego-documents, such as *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln*, was very risky business in the 17th century Europe (not to mention the Levante), even in places far away from armed conflicts.

The answer is of a God-fearing Jew who does not trust in his own merit, but of the Forefathers (that is the *zakhut avot*, discussed in the rabbinic literature, for example in *b Shabbat* 55a). Rabbi Shapira's hope is based on the merits of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as well as God's mercy on their descendants, especially the needy. For their shake, God will protect Rabbi Shapira to fulfil his mission.

R. Shapira's answer remained within the boundaries of rabbinical Judaism, as a Christian comment stressed “he speaks here like a legal Jew” (*An information* 1658,16. referring to Paul's Letter to the Romans, 10:2-3). However, Serrarius was unequivocal in recognising this attitude as the greatest asset of his own religion. He described it as a “humble and self-denying Spirit” and added, that “for my own part, I confess I think I see Christ in his Spirit; and I cannot but love him, and those that are like him, of which he saith many are at Jerusalem: for I esteem them the true brethren of him, that is, our Christ, and their Joseph.” (*An information* 1658, 16)

Background reasons of the rabbi

We cannot overlook the fact that Serrarius and Shapira shared a religious experience. It was this that allowed Serrarius to recognise Shapira as a kindred spirit. Furthermore, we must acknowledge the Calvary and extreme destitution of the poor people of Jerusalem who required the special intervention of the Father of the needy.

The Ashkenazi community of Jerusalem had its own synagogue, rabbinate, and *beth-din* since the end of the 16th century (when the city had only five hundred Jewish inhabitants), and its members lived in a secure, closed building complex, financially and organisationally separated from the Sephardic community. Due to the scarcity of income and the Turkish tax burden on the community, its survival depended on external sources, mainly on the regular and substantial contributions of Eastern European Jews (Rozen 1985, 1-20, 99-108; Katz 1988, 245-247; Teller 2020a, 381; Wilke 2022, 272).

During the so-called Golden Age of the Polish Jewry, the donations from the Four Lands (Greater Poland, Little Poland, Galicia-Podolia, and Volhynia) were about thirty thousand *Reichsthaler* (that is about six and a half thousand pounds sterling), yearly. (*An information* 1658, 4) But from the Khmelnytsky Uprising, and especially from the *Swedish Deluge* in 1655 on (when the military of Charles X Gustav (1622–1660) invaded and take over almost all Poland), the donations from the Four Lands were drastically cut off. The “German Jews of Jerusalem” as they were called, “have been in great extremity of want..., and the taxes laid upon them by the Turks, being rigorously exacted, they were hauled into prison, their Synagogues were shut up, their Rabbi’s and Elders beaten and cruelly used.” (*An information* 1658, 5) “And of the 700 widows and poor Jews there” (Jessey 1656, 3-4) “in the year one thousand six hundred fifty five, ... four hundred ... dyed by famine” (*An information* 1658, 8).

We have no concrete data on Shapira's years in Cracow, and his person appears almost exclusively in Levantine and for the last decade of his life, Italian Sephardic sources. According to the contemporary David Conforte (c. 1618 - c. 1685), Shapira belonged to the *Beth midrash* of Jacob ben Ḥayyim Tsemah (1584?-1667). Conforte also studied the Zohar there, noting that Moses Cordovero's (1522-1570) magnum opus, *Or Yaḳar* used as companion along with the Zohar. Conforte mentions him as “Rabbi Nathan Shapira Askenazi, who wrote some books on the wisdom of the Kabbalah” (*Ḳore ha-Dorot*, 49a). In David Cassel's classic 1846 Berlin edition, the entry refers to the period after 1630 but before 1650. As Tsemah arrived in Jerusalem in 1640 and Conforte first stayed there in 1644, the information is *terminus post quem* to the latter date.

In 1654, Shapira, the chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazi community of Jerusalem, was sent as a rabbinic emissary to Italy and Germany with another rabbi (*An information* 1658, 5). The name of his companion is not known. In the same year, Shapira met the Volhynian refugee R. Nathan Nata Hanover (d. 1683) in Livorno, Italy. R. Nathan Hanover was a Lurianic kabbalist and compatriot from Cracow. He proudly recounted their encounter in the introduction of his widely-read Lurianic collection's second edition (*Sha'arei Zion* Amstredam, 1671, 2b). He introduced him to Rabbi Moses Zacuto (c. 1610-1697), who became his friend and in the next year organised the publication of Shapira's *Tuv ha-Aretz* in Venice and edited the book (Teller 2020b, 389-390).

The *Tuv ha-Aretz* (“The Bounty of the Land”) is a short collection from the Ḥayyim Vital's version of Lurianic kabbalah, mainly according to the redaction of Jacob Tsemah with an explicitly messianistic message. Its title refers to a Biblical promise in *Isaiah* 1:19, and unequivocally calls for the imminent coming of the Messiah to be prepared for by confessing, praying, fasting and studying the Lurianic teaching. As Bracha Sack has demonstrated, the opening section of the book contains the “mystical Zionist” teachings of *Or Yaḳar* on the unique character of the Holy Land. These teachings are drawn from R. Abraham Azulai's anthology *Ḥesed le-Avraham*, which organises them thematically. Shapira added his own reflections to the Cordoverian texts he copied from the *Ḥesed le-Avraham* of Azulai, derived originally from other Zohar commentaries, *Or Yaḳar* and *Or ha-Ḥamah* (Sack 1987, 372-379; Israel 2014, 171; Wall 1987, 171-172). The second part contains the *segulot* (formulaic remedies). The third part is the first printed publication of the Lurianic version of

the midnight rite (Tiqqun ḥatsot laylah), namely midnight prayers recited in memory of the destruction of the Temple, the special *tikkunim* for the night of Shavu'ot, and for Hoshana Rabbah, as well as a *kinah* (lamentation) on the exile of the Shekhinah. The *tikkunim* later appeared also in R. Nathan Hannover *Sha'arei Zion*. (Horowitz 1994, 97; Goldish 2013, 174; Necker 2020, 93)

In the summer of 1655 Shapira travelled from Venice to Amsterdam, probably on a Dutch ship. He did not stay long, but we know from Henry Jessey's account of the Whitehall Conference that Menasseh ben Israel showed Cromwell some letters from Jerusalem in December, which were given to him by Rabbi Shapira (Jessey 1656, 4). From Amsterdam he went to Germany. In November-December he was in Hamburg, where the Sephardic community decided to give one hundred *Reichsthaler*. (Cassuto 1909, 160; Teller 2020b, 392)

Shapira returned to Amsterdam a year later and turned to the wealthy Sephardic *Kahal Kadosh Talmud Torah* of Amsterdam. They refused to support the Jerusalemite Ashkenazim, however, without a specific request from the Amsterdam Collegiants, who had met “accidentally”, they held a voluntary collection and presented him with a substantial sum (6000 *rijksdaalder*, that is 395 Venetian ducats) to help the impoverished and hopelessly indebted community, and what is more, they persuaded their English counterparts to donate an additional 212 pounds (about 500 ducats). The size of the donation from the Dutch Collegiants is well illustrated by the fact that the total donation from Dutch Jews was the same amount. (*An information 1658*, 4-5; Whiston 1671, 69-71; Yaari 1951, 277-280. Teller 2020a, 160-179; Popkin 1984, 191-192; Katz 1988, 245-266)

Shapira returned to Jerusalem in the spring of 1657, where he signed the credentials of the new rabbinic emissaries, R. Nahum b. Meir Jafo and R. Yoseph b. Mordekhai on the day of Lag baOmer (1 May 1657 / 5417). Serrarius, in a letter to Jessey dated 22 March 1668, reported the arrival of two new emissaries from Jerusalem, who had brought with them a receipt for the 1656 collection, a detailed letter from Shapira, and a letter from a Frater Mariano de Malco, which confirmed Shapira's stories of the plight of the Jews. (Yaari 1951, 280; Wall 1987, 178)

Acceptance of Christian donations led to a halachic dispute in Jerusalem, which was noted by the Christian donors, but the matter was finally settled by a rabbinical decision of Jacob Hagiz (1620-1674), who confirmed the permissibility of accepting donations under specific circumstances. The response, of an unknown date published in Hagiz, *Halakhot Katanot* (Venice, 1704), was based on the argument that since the Christian donation had been transferred, accepted and forwarded to Muslim creditors, “there is no cause for concern.” (Yaari 1951, 280; Katz, 1988, 254-255; Goldish 2008, 109-111; *An information 1658*, 6)

In late 1657 Shapira travelled again as an emissary, with the famous Baruch Gad document about the Ten Lost Tribes, however not to Amsterdam, but to Italy, where he settled permanently. (Yaari 1951, 280; Scholem 2016, 337-338) While the *Wagenseil codex* (Malkiel 2004, 141) does seem to indicate that he allegedly died on Sh'vat 21, 5422 (31 January 1662), according to Shapira's own autograph collection of sermons (The Jewish Theological Seminary – University of Jewish Studies, Budapest, Hungary Ms. K 34, vol 16v), he was still an active rabbi in Reggio Emilia in December of

1663. This information leads me to believe that the traditional date of death, Iyyar 1, 5426 (April 26, 1666), may be accurate.

Background reasons of the millenarian

Peter Serrarius, the mystical chiliast as his modern biographer Evangeline van der Wall typified him (Wall 1987), was an ardent Philo-Judaist, lexical Hebraist, Christian Kabbalist whose millenarian belief accounts due his keen interest in everything regarding the Jews and their “restoration” (sic!) from their “dry bones” (Ezekiel 37:4; Scholem 2016, 334).

Amsterdam, where Serrarius lived from 1630 for the rest of his life, had a unique atmosphere of religious tolerance and freedom with an impressive economic, social, and cultural presence of Sephardim, most of them with *converso* background (Bodian 1999) and a growing number of Ashkenazi Jews as well. Being a Walloon Calvinist theologian turned to a nonconformist Collegiant, Serrarius became a respected scholar and author of twenty-eight volumes, and acted as a one-person cross-religious hub for Jewish Messianism and Christian millenarism who worked in an influential international scientific network, which was justly called the *Republic of Letters* (republique des lettres). (Wall 1987, 7, 776-783; Goldish)

Many of the educated elite of the republique des lettres, especially the Judeophile millenarian Christians of the Hartlib circle, including Serrarius, whose library contained many books in Hebrew, had access to relevant rabbinic literature and a sufficiently secure knowledge of Hebrew to be able to interpret such texts (Burnett 2012; Kaplan 2006, 186-215; Scholem 2016, 524). They wanted to know the revelations that God had given to Judaism concerning events related to Israel that were considered to be eschatologically crucial (Crome 2014, 105-107). Jonathan I. Israel aptly describes millenarians as “fringe Christians” (Israel 2023, 17).

The Latin *millennium*, and Greek χίλια ἔτη are equivalents of the term “thousand years”. That’s why millenarism and chiliasm are used synonymously. Nineteenth-century theology discusses this belief as “premillennialism”, which places the millennial kingdom between the second advent of Christ, the *parousia* (*Revelation* 19:11-21) and the *Last judgment* before the white throne of God (*Revelation* 20:11-15). In early Christianity – until the Council of Ephesus in 431, which declared it heresy – Chiliasm was dominant, as it was simply an organic continuation of Jewish apocalyptic ideas of the Second Temple period. (Wall 2001, 44; Scholem 2016, 98, 333) Serrarius and his millenarian friends regarded anti-millenarianism as a prejudice, a partial blindness, and a grave sin of Christianity that was tantamount to rejecting Jesus as Messiah on the side of Judaism. Serrarius was convinced that Judaism and Christianity should complement each other, since both possessed a part of the truth. Christians know that the Messiah had to suffer on earth, and Jews know that he will one day reign as a glorious king in the same place, on Earth. (Serrarius 1657, 35; Wall 2001, 40; Serrarius 1665b; Wall 1987, 617)

Through his genuine concern Serrarius managed to create good relationship with a series of prominent Jewish scholar apart from Shapira, e.g., R. Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657), Baruch

Spinoza (1632–1677), and Isaac de Rocamora (1601–1684) that is why he was referred to as “*the good Christian friend, who lives here in Amsterdam in friendship with the rabbis*” (Scholem 2016, 335).

With his Philo-Judaist Christian friends, Hartlib, Jessey, Dury, and Comenius, Serrarius helped R. Menasseh’s efforts for the readmission of Jews in England. He effectively helped Spinoza after the rabbinate excommunicated him and connected the young philosopher to the Royal Society and the scientific elite of England and whole Europe. His cross-religious activity is most conspicuous in his letters and pamphlets published in English between 1658-1666 about rumours and news of events (re-appearance of the Ten Lost Tribes, the emergence of Sabbatai Zevi and his prophet, Nathan of Gaza and their deeds, signs, omens, and portents, and repentance [*teshuva*] of the Jews) circulating in Judaism that aroused great interest among Christian contemporaries because of their interpretation in a millenarian context. (Wall 1988. 73-94; Popkin 2001. 91-106)

A sequence of human experiments

Serrarius gives a clear and detailed account about Rabbi Shapira’s interaction with the Amsterdam Collegiants. One can reduct four distinct situations and four corresponding agendas. All were of great importance both to the Jewish Jerusalemite Kabbalist circle of Tzemaḥ – who was also from converso background – and to the millenarian Anglo-Dutch Hartlib circle.

I. Dispute about the Messiah: here classical Judeo-Christian polemical themes (the story of Joseph, *Genesis* 37-45 ; the suffering servant of God, *Isa* 53:4, 5) are presented.

Shapira arguments about the Messiah’s spirit based on *b Sanhedrin* 98b, and *Zohar*, *Vayakhel*, 2:212a. The Biblical passage about the suffering servant is quoted in *Zohar* 2: 212a, where it is said that the Messiah will bear all the trials, pains and sufferings of Israel (כָּל מַרְעִין וְכָל פְּאֻבִין, כָּל יְסוּרֵיהוֹן) (דְּיִשְׁרָאֵל), and he will be taken upon himself “in the hall of the afflicted” (הַיְכָלָא דְבְּנֵי מַרְעִין), which is in the heavenly Garden of Eden. If he did not do so, “there would be no one to bear Israel’s suffering in the punishment for neglecting the Torah”. As long as the Temple stood, Israel averted all the trials and suffering of the world by its service and presentation of sacrifices. “But now it is the Messiah who will turn them away from the inhabitants of the world.” (הַשְׁמָא מְשִׁיחַ מְסַלֵּק לִוְן מִבְּנֵי עַלְמָא) The *Zohar* emphasizes that this “diversion” is a temporary, worldly relief that does not apply to avoiding the sufferings of Gehinnom. Serrarius’s reaction to the Messiah-centeredness of Kabbalistic teaching was a kind of reverence that led to an acceptance of spiritual communion.

When I heard these things – wrote Serrarius – my bowels were inwardly stirred within me, and it seemed to me, that I did not hear a Jew, but a Christian, and a Christian of no mean understanding, who did relish the things of the Spirit, and was admitted to the inward mysteries of our Religion. (*An information* 1658, 13)

II. *Religious meeting of the Collegiants*: various aspects of the Messianic kingdom are encountered (high ethical standard: Sermon on the Mount: *Matthew* 5-7; supplication, intercession for his coming; and the Messianic Sanctuary, *Malachi* 3:1).

R. Shapira participated on a Collegiant meeting, probably held in the house of Serrarius in Prinzengracht, where he studied the Sermon on the Mount with them. The Collegiants have read the Dutch *Statenvertaling* (1637), and Shapira has read Sebastian Münster's (1488-1552) Hebrew translation, the *Torat ha-Mashiah* (1537). He recognised in the teachings of Jesus ('Law of Jesus') rabbinical doctrines, in which 'the foundation and source of all wisdom is contained'. Because of the old, difficult to understand language of the text, Serrarius and his Judeophile millenarian friends (Dury, Hartlib) later asked Shapira to produce a Hebrew translation that would be more accessible to Jewish readers, but this was not done. (Popkin 1984, 197; Popkin 1988, 14) The Sermon on the Mount was an excellent choice, because Jesus in *Matthew* 5:17-19 clearly declare that he not came to abolish the *Torah* or the *Neviim*, but to complete. Not one yod, not one tag (ornamental flourish), will pass from the *Torah* until everything is accomplished. Cf. R. Jacob Emden's commentary on *Seder Olam Rabbah veZutta*, (Hamburg, 1757), Appendix, 32b-34b. (Brill 2010, 74-75) The question of the Messianic Sanctuary is discussed next, together with the messianic fulfilment of the promise to Abraham, as it could be seen as an introduction to that topic. It seemed beneficial to examine the prayer in the context of the other similar experiment for comparison, and so a separate chapter has been dedicated to this.

III. *Discussion of the messianic fulfilment of the promise to Abraham*: the eschatology of the Holy Land (*Gen* 15:18-21).

At the end of the collegiant worship, Shapira affirmed in response to a question from Serrarius about the scriptural passage on the restoration of the Temple (*Mal* 3:1) that the Messianic Temple, which is coming down from heaven and being built by God day by day, is not exclusively for the Jews, but also for those from other nations "who ever shall fear God in sincerity" (*An information* 1658, 14). Shapira's words were quoted anonymously by Serrarius in his *Assertion du règne de mille ans* (*Testimony of the Millennial Kingdom*, 1657), when he described the Temple descending from heaven, "whose outer court is on the ground, but the Holy Sanctuary, into which no one but the anointed of the Eternal can enter, rises above the earth", not touching the ground. (Serrarius 1657, 37; Wall 2001, 43; Wall 1987, 6, 185-199)

Shapira has given in his *Tuv ha-Aretz* a detailed Kabbalistic explanation of the messianic fulfilment of the promise for the inheritance of the Holy Land (*Genesis* 15:18-21) in the context of the covenant between Abram and God. From this, the sefirotic correspondence of the ten Canaanite nations and the interpretation of the three nations yet to be conquered (the three kof: *Kenites*, *Kenesites*, and *Kedmonites*) as a pattern of the "Kabbalistic triplex" were also incorporated into Serrarius' millenarian ideas. It can even be traced in his *Apologetica responsio* (1663) and *De Judaeorum* (1665), texts were written in the context of the theological debate between him and the

Groningen theology professor Samuel Maresius (Des Marets; 1599–1673). (*Tuv ha-Aretz*, 11a; Serrarius 1663, 15; Serrarius 1665a, 67 – see end note)¹

IV. *Dinner*: the right way to pray (*Exodus* 17:8-12). Shapira's teaching on gestures of prayer (*An information* 1658, 15) based halachic and kabbalistic explanations: *Ramban on Ex.* 17:12. *Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim* 95. (Idel 1987, 138. Fine 2021, 210-214) Prayer, however, as a religious experience through which the shared intention already observed in relation to emotions can be established, deserves special attention.

Shared intention by prayer

Prayer can be described as a profound decentering experience in which the self loses its preoccupation with itself and focuses instead on God (Benson and Wirzba 2005, 11-31). Being present at a prayer as an observer, separate from the religious community, is a particular experience, the structural description of whose impact, or transfer can be described by the conceptual framework of anthropological phenomenology. Such an experience was reported by Serrarius to have been experienced by R. Shapira on at least two occasions.

A. *Supplication, intercession for the coming of the Messiah during the religious meeting of the Collegians*. For Shapira, according to Serrarius, the prayers of Collegiants after the Bible reading proved to be key.

... when at that meeting we had, not without Tears, and much devour Contrition of mind, made prayers for the Jews as well as for our selves, that God would blot out our sins and theirs, and remember his Mercy, and restore the holy Spirit which they had lost, &c. These things seemed very much to move him, and he made no doubt to affirm openly, that if there were but ten men at Jerusalem, who should thus with our heart pray for the coming of the Messiah, that without all doubt he would suddenly come. (*An information* 1658, 14)

Shapira was a great expert on prayer, he wrote specifically about the *kavvanat ha-tefila* (proper intention of prayer) in his unpublished three-volume Kabbalistic treatise, *Me'orot Natan*, considered his *magnum opus*. Meir ben Judah Leib Poppers (c. 1624-1662) specifically mentions – in the preface to Hayyim Vital's *Peri Ets Hayyim* (Korets, 1782), edited by him – that the substantial introduction to the section on the mystical meaning of the prayer was written by Shapira (*Peri Ezt Hayyim*, 3b). In Italy, Shapira and his friend Moses Zacuto were the main promoters of the Lurianic Kabbalistic prayer in the second half of the 17th century. As Moshe Idel has pointed out, weeping and repentance, together with the mystical “intention” (*kavvana*), are a particularly important element of the Lurianic prayer, both in the midnight rite mourning of the destruction of the Holy Temple and in the practice of the Kabbalistic prayer groups that were formed to promote the Messiah's

imminent coming and to protect the Jewish people from the terrible events that preceded it (Idel, *Kabbalah*, 75-88, 197-199, sp. 75-76). I venture to suggest that Shapira's reaction may be seen as an expression of his realisation that the Collegiants' prayers for Judaism and for themselves with intent, tears and repentance are somehow equivalent to the Kabbalistic prayer groups praying near the *Gvilon*, the heavenly portal to the Heavenly Throne, directly above the place of the Sanctuary, as mentioned in the Zohar 2:209b and cited in *Tuv ha-Aretz*, 1a by him.

The structure of this experience can be described as an ethnographical event.

...we can see a pattern of the anthropologist's affection by events: the emergence of a theme for thinking that at once challenges the ethnographer's assumptions – on display, for instance, in what retroactively appears as an equivocal question – and draws around itself a host of prior experiences which the ethnographer may now see in a different light. (Stephan and Throop 2023, 349)

B. Kabbalistic teaching on the proper gesture of prayer during a dinner. The second encounter with the praying Collegiants was shaped by the first. The handshaking was done, from this point Shapira, and his Collegiants friends felt that they understood each other. This offers an insight into why, during the table prayer at dinner, Shapira behaved not as an outside observer but as a teaching rabbi.

During the dinner at the Collegians', we came to understand that Shapira had indeed posed a question to his hosts, rather than the other way around. The Collegians prayed with their hands clasped and raised to the sky. (Sterrett 2018, 50-64.) When the rabbi enquired about the reason for this gesture, he was told "that it was of old the custom so to pray, derived from Moses, who in the mount prayed against Amaleck with his hands lifted up unto heaven" (An information 1658, 15; *Exodus* 17:8-12). The kabbalist employed a similar approach to that used with the question about the suffering servant. He used a kabbalistic interpretation of the biblical verse in question (*Exodus* 17:12) to distinguish between the two gestures that had been conflated. in the Collegiants.

According to the Way of Righteousness [the Kabbalah tradition], Moses lifted his ten fingers to the heavens [Prov 25:3] to refer to the ten emanations and to hold fast to the One who fights for Israel [Deut 3:22]. This is the explanation and secret of the lifting of the hands [also] in the priestly blessing. (Ramban on Ex. 17:12)

Prayer with raised hands and prayer with folded hands are explained, with reference to the internal and external conditions required for the former and, beyond the halachic description of the latter gesture (*Shulchan Arukh*, Orach Chayim 95), its kabbalistic meaning (Hesed restrains the Din) is also referred. The mystical reason of the gesture used in Jewish prayer is considered to be central to the Lurianic Kabbalah (Idel 1987, 138. Fine 2021, 210-214).

Perhaps the questions of credibility that some researchers have raised could be addressed by considering the participants' behaviour during and after the interactions. To what extent can the

statements made by the Rabbi be considered sincere? Could it have been a pragmatic, interest-driven scenario, whereby Shapira “received the money under false pretences” (Katz 1988, 252-253), or could it have been an earnest declaration of his personal belief? It would appear that Shapira has consistently remained aligned with the tenets of Lurianic Kabbalah, as he had previously articulated. He did not improvise; it seems likely that all his statements could have been made in the presence of his colleagues and other members of the Kabbalistic fraternity in Jerusalem around Jacob ben Ḥayyim Tsemah. It could be argued that his Kabbalistic teachings about the purpose of prayer gestures were a tangible expression of his profound sincerity and friendship. In the remaining twelve years of his life (during which he wrote most of his works), Serrarius frequently made reference to what Shapira had said. It seems fair to assume that he never considered the possibility that the rabbi had misled him.

Conclusion

Shapira's ideas communicated in Amsterdam to the Collegiants did not differ from those he wrote in his book *Tuv ha-Aretz* (“The Bounty of the Land”), published in Venice in 1655, before the interaction. These Lurianic teachings of Shapira left traces in Serrarius' published books from 1657. This is evidenced by my contextualisation and historical-philosophical analysis of Serrarius' narrative.

At the beginning of the discussion, Serrarius referred to the fact that the brothers of the biblical Joseph thought their brother was dead, although he was alive. Shapira's Jewish colleague from Amsterdam took this as a provocation and was about to engage with the mystical millenarian in a debate about whether Jesus was alive. Shapira warned his companion that, according to Jewish belief, the Messiah had not yet come, and *his identity was unknown*. The Collegiants were convinced that, on the one hand, the accepting of Jesus as Messiah was only possible *by personal divine revelation* [Matthew 16:17; Galatians 1:15-16; John 6:69], and on the other hand, the calling of the Jews was explicitly within the Messianic jurisdiction, and so they also ceased the quarrel, which Shapira and his Jewish companion accepted. This mutual self-limitation created *a discursive space between the parties* in which the Jerusalemite Kabbalist could speak of the Messiah within the framework of Jewish tradition. At the same time, for Serrarius and his associates, the Messiah was identified with Jesus Christ, who would restore Israel (and by that he meant Judaism), establish the Millennial Kingdom [Revelation 20:1-6], judge the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat according to what they had done to Judaism [Joel 4:2, 12-14], and redeem all mankind. All parties were sincere. There was a more exciting and acute question for all of them: the Rule of the Messiah on the Earth.

The Bratmanian insight of shared intention, mentioned in the Introduction, is the key to understanding this dispute of faith, which was followed by a sequence of friendly human experiences concluding in shared religious emotions. It reveals a fundamental principle: when the parties exclude the key issue from their actual dispute, there can still be shared intention, even if different agents participate for different reasons based on their own distinct religious tradition. Matt Goldish described it in 2018 without grasping the concept and content of this shared intention. He wrote, “Jewish messianists and Christian millenarians were looking at each other as fellow-participants in a

joint project of preparation for an imminent redemption.” (Goldish 2018, 135) Yet they have a shared intention: *a Messiah-directedness*. This is a recurrent human experiment. There is no doubt that millennial Christian Zionists and religious Zionist Jews are still able to work together today for messianic plans by the same shared intention.

Endnotes:

1. *Tuv ha-Aretz*, 11a: “The general rule that can be deduced from the above is that the first three nations, the Kenites, the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites [*Genesis* 15:19], were not inherited by the Jews. It is only in the future that the Jews will earn them. This is indicated by the fact that the numerical value [170+167+204] of Kenites, Kenizzites, and Kadmonites, is the same as the numerical value [541] of Israel. Thus the name *Arets Israel* means that in the future it will include these top three. Today, the word Israel indicates *Lo yarash* [not inherited], that is, that the upper three have not yet been attained, but in the future Israel will refer to *Li rosh* [to me as head], indicating that those three will then be the heads of the lower seven. Hence it is that the first letters of the names of these three nations are ק ק and ק, which stand for קדוש קדוש קדוש, indicating the triple sanctification of the Chochmah and Binah of the Keter of holiness.”

An information 1658, 14: „He observed that God promised to cast out ten Nations out of the land of *Canaan* for his sake, and would give their possessions to his Posterity, but that since the days of *Joshua*, no more but seven Nations have been cast out, viz. The *Hittites*, the *Perizzites*, the *Rephaims*, the *Amorites*, the *Canaanites*, the *Gergasites* and the *Jebusites*: the three first, viz. The *Kenites*, the *Kenesites* and the *Kedmonites* are reserved for the times of the Messiah; which he would have to answer the ten *Sephiroth*, whereof the seven last are called by the Cabalists simply [הַיְקָלוֹת] הכלת that is, Palaces; but the three first taken together as one are called היכל קדש קדש קדש that is, the Temple of the Holy of Holies.”

Apologetica responsio, 15: „Since these things are reserved for the last times, when the people shall be truly sanctified by the blood and spirit of Christ the Messiah: which is confirmed by the Kabbalistic triplex (ק) - with which the names of the Kenizzites, Kenizzites, and Kadmoneans begin - which is the Is. 6. קדוש קדוש קדוש i.e. Holy, Holy, Holy; and signifies that the people will be truly holy when this promise to Abraham is fulfilled in them.”

De Judaeorum, 67: „those Jews, to whom I have referred enigmatically, from the mystery of the Kabbalah, through the triplex (ק) *Genesis* xv, as being in every way and in all ways wholly sanctified...”

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