Introduction: *Sefer Ḥasidim*—Book, Context, and Afterlife

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Sefer Ḥasidim is one of those texts that has continued to challenge its readers—medieval, early modern, and modern—since its inception. Consisting of thousands of distinct passages, these disparate (and not always consistent) parts come together to provide a complex and nuanced glimpse into the thoughts and mindset of its author(s) that is far richer than almost any other surviving text from medieval Ashkenaz. Attributed to three authors—R. Samuel b. Kalonymous, his son R. Judah b. Samuel, both of whom are often known as he-Ḥasid (the pious),¹ and Judah's disciple R. Eleazar b. Judah of Worms—the text that has reached us is far from uniform and eludes all attempts at easy definitions, containing an array of genres including exegesis, mystical traditions, halakhic rulings, stories, and moral advice. The existence of so many different versions² and numerous manuscripts may be due to the fact that, according to his son R. Moshe Zaltman, the work was incomplete when Judah he-Ḥasid passed away in Adar of 1217.

In 1986, the Zalman Shazar Center published a collection of essays (in Hebrew) covering several decades of scholarship on *Sefer Ḥasidim*. Edited by Ivan Marcus, the collection provided access to seminal articles on the text produced from the beginning of the twentieth century.³ The collection, which

¹ See comments below on this word, he-Ḥasid.

² For a list of these manuscripts see Ivan G. Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2018), 87–124.

³ Ivan G. Marcus, ed., *The Religious and Social Ideas of the Jewish Pietists in Medieval Germany* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1986).

included articles written by Marcus himself, as well as by Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, Israel Ta-Shma, and others, inspired new generations of scholars, leading to a burgeoning of interest in *Sefer Ḥasidim* and Ḥasidei Ashkenaz.⁴

The time is ripe to revisit the scholarship on *Sefer Ḥasidim*. Accordingly, the present volume offers a wide-ranging approach to the topic, giving voice to current perspectives on issues at the forefront of discussions of *Sefer Ḥasidim* and medieval Ashkenazic Jewry and covering a range of topics that have become prominent in the field in recent decades. These essays examine *Sefer Ḥasidim* from three main perspectives: the text, its ideas and relationship to the surrounding world, and its impact on contemporaneous and subsequent generations. We seek answers to questions such as: What was this product? Was it indeed a book as we understand the term in the modern sense? What ideas did *Sefer Ḥasidim* seek to promote, and what was the relationship between its perspectives on daily life and religious practice and the society in which *Sefer Ḥasidim* was written? Finally, what impact did *Sefer Ḥasidim* have on contemporaneous Jewish communities and subsequent generations?

Sefer Ḥasidim as Book

Our understanding of texts and their transmission has been revolutionized in several ways over the course of the past century, both generally and with regard to Hebrew texts and Jewish literature in particular. During the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century the overarching academic quest was to identify the definitive *Urtext* for the works in question, but by the 1960s scholars had begun to recognize that reconstructing a persuasive stemma was, in many cases, exceedingly problematic if not impossible.⁵ This is especially true for medieval texts. Academic focus began to shift from the idea of the author and his “original” work to the examination of each manuscript and the

⁴We do not detail all the articles written on this topic since Marcus’s collection. For an interim summary see the Jewish Quarterly Review Forum on *Sefer Ḥasidim*, Elliot Horowitz, “Introduction: A Splendid Outburst of Spirituality,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96, no. 1 (2006): v–vii, and the articles in that collection. See also the recent publication of all Haym Soloveitchik’s work on the topic in the third volume of his *Collected Essays* (Liverpool, 2020), which includes two previously unpublished essays. As this volume appeared as we were copyediting this article, the essays are referenced but not addressed at length in this introduction.

⁵For a discussion of this problem in the context of Jewish studies, see Peter Schäfer, “Research into Rabbinic Literature: An Attempt to Define the Status Quaestionis,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 37, no. 2 (1986): 139–52, and the exchange between Schäfer and Chaim Milikowsky in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vols. 37 and 39, and *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vols. 86 and 90, on how to deal with and publish rabbinic literature.

particular role it played in the transmission of a text.⁶ To explain the variance often apparent over the course of the manuscript tradition, Israel Ta-Shma introduced the concept of the “open book.” Ta-Shma posited that throughout the medieval period authors or subsequent editors revised and rewrote texts, and he noted that later edits were more common and often “aggressive” or took extended liberties in Ashkenaz.⁷ This type of editing is most visible in compiled literature, such as the European transmission of the *hekhlot* literature, Northern French Bible commentaries, piyyut commentary, and *Sefer Ḥasidim*.⁸

Scholars commonly refer to two versions of *Sefer Ḥasidim*—SHP⁹ and SHB,¹⁰ referring to the Parma manuscript from c. 1300 and to the first print edition from Bologna 1538—and have based their understanding of the structure of the text and its transmission history on these two versions. However, as Ivan Marcus pointed out in 1978, the existence of additional, sometimes highly divergent manuscripts seems to challenge the emphasis on these two manuscripts as main forms of the text and calls for a reexamination of the transmission history.¹¹ This task became easier in 2015, when the Princeton University *Sefer Ḥasidim* Database (PUSHD) (https://etc.princeton.edu/sefer_hasidim) provided online access to over seventeen different manuscript versions. In addition, in 2018 Marcus published a descriptive catalog of

⁶Kurt Ruh, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Prosaforschung: Beiträge der Würzburger Forschergruppe zur Methode und Auswertung* (Tübingen, 1985). Later the “New Philology” demanded that each and every manuscript be seen as an individual witness in the transmission history of the text; see Stephen G. Nichols, “Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture,” *Speculum* 65, no. 1 (1990): 1–10.

⁷Israel M. Ta-Shma, “The ‘Open’ Book in Medieval Hebrew Literature: The Problem of Authorized Editions,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 75, no. 3 (1993): 17–24.

⁸Sarah Japhet, “The Nature and Distribution of Medieval Compilatory Commentaries in the Light of Rabbi Joseph Kara’s Commentary on the Book of Job,” in *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought, and History*, ed. Michael A. Fishbane (Albany, 1993), 98–130; Marc Bregman, “Midrash Rabbah and the Medieval Collector Mentality,” *Prooftexts* 17 (1997): 63–76; Elisabeth Hollender, *Piyyut Commentary in Medieval Ashkenaz* (Berlin, 2008).

⁹Judah Wistinetzki, ed., *Sefer Ḥasidim: Based on the Recension in Parma Cod. de Rossi No. 1133* (Berlin, 1891).

¹⁰Reuven Margaliot, ed., *Sefer Ḥasidim* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1957).

¹¹See Ivan G. Marcus, “The Recension and Structure of *Sefer Ḥasidim*,” *PAAJR* 45 (1978): 131–53. Other attempts to deal with the structural questions that rise from the variety include Johann Maier, “Rab und Chakam im Sefer Chasidim,” in *Das aschkenasische Rabbinat: Studien über Glaube und Schicksal*, ed. Julius Carlebach (Berlin, 1995), 37–118; Haym Soloveitchik, “Piety, Pietism and German Pietism: *Sefer Ḥasidim I* and the Influence of the *Hasidei Ashkenaz*,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 92, no. 3–4 (2002): 455–93. It should be noted that the revived attention to *Sefer Ḥasidim* in the 1970s was pioneered by Haym Soloveitchik in his much-quoted article, “Three Themes in *Sefer Ḥasidim*,” *AJS Review* 1 (1976): 311–57.

the manuscripts and editions of *Sefer Ḥasidim* that lists thirty-seven distinct manuscripts (including those that contain only individual paragraphs), in addition to fifty-four early modern and seven modern printed editions.¹² Marcus, whose previous contributions to the study of *Sefer Ḥasidim* and Ḥasidei Ashkenaz have informed and influenced much of the research in this field over the past decades, further suggested that rather than a focus on transmission, most of these textual witnesses can be explained through a new understanding of the composition process. He observed the Ashkenazic penchant for combining “prefabricated” smaller units (microforms) and suggested a model according to which the author—in this case Judah he-Ḥasid—selected and combined microforms disjunctively more than once, creating not a single “work” but, rather, several independent versions that together make up what he termed the “open book.” According to this theory, no *Urtext* of *Sefer Ḥasidim* ever existed, and the various forms of the text transmitted attest to several *pari passu* “original” versions.

By focusing on textual production rather than textual transmission, this approach necessarily depends on the revival of a concept long considered a dead letter—that of the author. However, he is now assigned a new role. No longer responsible for the *Urtext*, the author cannot be cast as the embodiment of *the* text. Rather, to understand each different testimony of the “work” we must reconstruct the author’s creativity, his momentary and possibly ever-changing sense of direction in selecting and combining microforms. So while previous models that focused on transmission could offer only contingencies, researchers are free to search for meaning in the differences among versions.

Like any novel approach that opens new avenues of research, in the coming years Marcus’s invitation to turn to textual production as the source of meaning will be challenged and refined in application to sample texts. The first two articles in the current volume do just that, addressing questions pertaining to the text of *Sefer Ḥasidim* and investigating the implications of Marcus’s theory when applied in detail to specific examples. Both authors embrace the idea of the microforms as building blocks of texts and accept the equal significances of the different versions.

In her article “*Sefer Ḥasidim* in Manuscripts,” Saskia Dönitz reexamines the manuscript transmission of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, with a particular focus on the distribution of material within the manuscripts, to ascertain if it is possible to identify dependencies or relations between the structure and the content in each. She compares the longest manuscript, MS Parma 3280, to manuscripts with shorter versions of *Sefer Ḥasidim* and shows that the relationship can be explained as a product of growth—meaning that the extant textual material

¹²Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim*, 87–124.

was gathered and enlarged until it reached a stage considered final (if only because no longer manuscripts exist). The shorter manuscripts can be arranged into a sequence of collections that encompass an ever-increasing number of paragraphs, with texts rarely dropped once inserted into the compilation. This can be reconciled both with Marcus's reconstruction of the production of various versions and with Ta-Shma's concept of the "open book" as auctorial improvements of a "work," although it entails the possibility that others with access to Judah he-Ḥasid's materials might have added to the final, longest version of *Sefer Ḥasidim*.

While Dönitz's article focuses on what the manuscripts reveal about the compilation of the text, David Shyovitz's article addresses the question of authorship in a different way. This too is a long-discussed matter. For example, in a recent essay Haym Soloveitchik considers establishing authorship by identifying a common *Weltanschauung* and also elaborates the difference between authors by pointing out distinctions between Judah he-Ḥasid and Eleazar of Worms.¹³ Shyovitz presents a new path for reassessing notions of "authorship" in medieval Ashkenaz in his article "Was Judah he-Ḥasid the 'Author' of *Sefer Ḥasidim*?" On methodological and conceptual grounds, he argues that "authorship" was a problematic category in medieval Ashkenazic culture and suggests that in the case of *Sefer Ḥasidim* there are textual reasons to doubt that a single individual was responsible for "authoring" the entire text. He posits a textual intervention on a "nano-level," discussing an example in which the addition of one introductory sentence might have substantially changed the character of a story. By comparing the moral message of one story from *Sefer Ḥasidim* with what is known about Judah he-Ḥasid's teachings, he identifies an inconsistency that can be eliminated by deleting the moral teaching in the introductory sentence of the story. This example and other references to contemporary theories of medieval authorship lead him to suggest that Judah he-Ḥasid was the moving force behind *Sefer Ḥasidim* but not the sole persona contributing to it.

***Sefer Ḥasidim* in Context**

The second section of this volume moves from the text of *Sefer Ḥasidim* to the society in which it was produced. Such contextualization depends not only on understandings of the authors and the texts they produced but also on historiographical approaches to Jewish life in medieval Ashkenaz at large. For example, whereas an earlier generation of scholars viewed medieval Ashkenazic Jews as isolated from their surroundings, following Salo

¹³Soloveitchik, "Sefer Ḥasidim and the Social Sciences," in *Collected Essays III*, 224–35.

W. Baron and others, recent generations of scholars have taken account of the embeddedness of medieval Jews in their surroundings while also delineating the ways in which Jews were a distinct and clearly defined minority.¹⁴ Scholarship on Ḥasidei Ashkenaz follows suit. Thus, some scholars have persisted in seeing the audience and authors of *Sefer Ḥasidim* as a small, if not minute group and as particularly adverse to their non-Jewish (and Jewish surroundings),¹⁵ whereas others have positioned them closer to their Christian neighbors and fellow Jews. *Sefer Ḥasidim* provides ample evidence for both views, underlining the similarities among Jews, and between Jews and their neighbors, and demonstrating a deep familiarity with multifaceted medieval Christian culture while simultaneously presenting an aggressive approach to Christianity as a religion. A second emphasis in recent scholarship that stems from understanding medieval Jews as embedded in their locations is the turn to local history. In this context both the Rhineland, where Samuel and Judah's family originated and in which Eleazar of Worms lived for part of his life, and Regensburg, to which the Kalonymides emigrated, have received further attention, situating Judah and the others within their local context.¹⁶

These developments in research provide the backdrop for the second part of our volume, which presents four articles that reassess different aspects of how *Sefer Ḥasidim* can provide new perspectives on medieval Jewish social life. Some articles address the authors and their opinions and practices; others address the environment in which the authors lived. Three of the articles also seek to expand the source material available to better understand *Sefer Ḥasidim*, its authors, and the community or communities in which the book was written.

The first three articles in the section offer a variety of perspectives on the city of Regensburg and the broader landscape of the local and regional Jewish and Christian societies. Rainer Barzen's article, "West and East in Ashkenaz in the Time of Judah he-Ḥasid," situates the the Kalonymides's move from the Rhineland to Regensburg in broader geographical, political, and economic trends. Using both Hebrew and contemporary Christian

¹⁴Jonathan M. Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart: Rethinking Jewish-Christian Relations in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 2007), presents these different approaches in his introduction.

¹⁵Soloveitchik, "Piety, Pietism and German Pietism," 455–93; Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim*, 72–74. Soloveitchik addresses this question again in his new articles on the topic, "On Reading *Sefer Ḥasidim*," in *Collected Essays III*, 179–222, and "Sefer Ḥasidim and the Social Sciences," 223–49.

¹⁶Eva Haverkamp-Rott and Astrid Riedler-Pohlers, *Regensburg: Mittelalterliche Metropole der Juden* (Regensburg, 2019); Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, "Exile, Immigration and Piety: The Jewish Pietists of Medieval Germany, from the Rhineland to the Danube," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2017): 234–60; Ephraim Kanarfogel, "R. Judah he-Hasid and the Rabbinic Scholars of Regensburg: Interactions, Influences, and Implications," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96, no. 1 (2006): 17–37.

sources, Barzen describes the general movement to settle the eastern territories of the German Kingdom between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries and the ways in which the Jews were part of this larger development. Regensburg was a central city of the Bavarian Duchy and the residence of the German emperors. Located at a crucial strategic point on the trade routes to the East, the city was of major economic importance. Barzen demonstrates how the Kalonymide family's move to Regensburg and the centrality of the city emerge in medieval rabbinic documents over time, underlining its growing stature. This analysis situates Judah he-Ḥasid in one, if not the central hub of economic life in medieval Germany and explains the move to Regensburg based on considerations that go beyond the earlier theories of religious or spiritual factors. It is of course likely that both economic and religious factors were involved in the decision to relocate from the Rhineland to Regensburg. Nevertheless, the importance of Barzen's argument is that it provides a more complex landscape for understanding the move.

Adam S. Cohen's article, "Imitator of the Old Law/Advocate of Revealed Grace: Visualizing Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Regensburg," offers an additional perspective on the city of Regensburg. Cohen describes some of the other religious institutions in the city—places Judah would have encountered daily, whether casually or more intimately. Like most, if not all, of the Jews in Regensburg, Judah would have lived in a small section of the old city, a neighborhood in the shadow of the cathedral,¹⁷ a short walk from all of the city's ecclesiastical institutions.¹⁸ Cohen examines architectural evidence, such as building decorations, that reflect local Christian attitudes towards the Jews, as well as manuscript evidence from these institutions. He argues that despite the expressed goal to convert the Jews, such desires remained theoretical and were seldom translated into actions. Cohen's article situates Judah and his peers within the city and describes some of the visual phenomena they would have encountered, thus contextualizing the medieval Jewish community of Regensburg in their local environs.

The third article in this section, Ahuva Liberles's "Home and Away: The Opposition to Traveling in *Sefer Ḥasidim*," mines *Sefer Ḥasidim* as its main source and asks what Judah's attitude was towards his own locality and especially towards travel and leaving home. Did he encourage people to travel or was he wary of Jews leaving their familiar surroundings? Since medieval

¹⁷See, in general, Silvia Codreanu-Windauer and Heinrich Wanderwitz, "Das Regensburger Judenviertel: Geschichte und Archäologie," in *Geschichte der Stadt Regensburg*, ed. Peter Schmidt, 2 vols. (Regensburg, 2000), 1:607–33; Silvia Codreanu-Windauer, "Regensburg: The Archaeology of the Medieval Jewish Quarter," in *The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages (Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries): Proceedings of the International Symposium held at Speyer 20–25 October 2002*, ed. Christoph Cluse (Turnhout, 2004), 391–403.

¹⁸See Haverkamp-Rott and Riedler-Pohlers, *Regensburg*, 26–34.

Jews were constantly on the road, in pursuit of business and scholarly opportunities, this is a crucial question for understanding the directives of *Sefer Ḥasidim*. Moreover, Regensburg was home to Judah's contemporary Petahyah b. Jacob, one of the most famous medieval Jewish travelers, who documented his travels to the Middle East and across Europe.

Liberles argues that, with over one hundred passages touching on the subject, travel is a central theme in *Sefer Ḥasidim*. She also documents Judah he-Ḥasid's strong objections to travel, even to the land of Israel or to study Torah, two acts that were considered weighty religious obligations. The article concludes by noting the extent to which these admonitions diverged from the general propensity of other medieval rabbinic authorities to advocate travel.

The final article in this section turns from places to people. In her article, "Who Was a Ḥasid or Ḥasidah in Medieval Ashkenaz?: Reassessing the Social Implications of a Term," Elisheva Baumgarten explores the ways the term *ḥasid* and its female equivalent *ḥasidah* were used in medieval Ashkenazic texts. Some scholars have viewed the term *ḥasid* in texts postdating *Sefer Ḥasidim* as following in Judah he-Ḥasid's footsteps and maintain that the epithet *ḥasid* belongs to an exclusively male, Pietist circle. In contrast to previous research that has sought to define the identity of *ḥasidim* based on definitions within *Sefer Ḥasidim*,¹⁹ this article explores multiple registers of writing and interrogates the understanding of the terms in different genres from medieval Ashkenaz, demonstrating the utility of searching for glimpses of women and undertaking a comparative gendered approach. Finally, the article examines possible vernacular parallels for the term *ḥasid* and the explanations provided for these parallels, concluding that the terms *ḥasid* and *ḥasidah* did not indicate a particular group, circle, or movement. Rather they were used to describe honest, upstanding community members who were seen as fulfilling their religious and social duties.

The Afterlife of *Sefer Ḥasidim*

The third section of this volume moves beyond the local contexts of Judah he-Ḥasid and *Sefer Ḥasidim* to examine other types of literary texts and contemporary Jewish communities outside of Germany as well as the legacy of

¹⁹For a recent example see the discussion in Soloveitchik, "On Reading *Sefer Ḥasidim*" and "*Sefer Ḥasidim* and the Social Sciences." In the latter article, Soloveitchik addresses the more extreme version of this question, namely whether the *ḥasidim* were a sect. In the former, he defines the *ḥasid* using internal definitions in *Sefer Ḥasidim*.

Sefer Ḥasidim in later generations. The first topic in this section concerns medieval Jewish esoteric lore and the extensive contribution of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz (Ashkenazic Pietists) to the field of Jewish mysticism. Among scholars of Jewish esoteric writing, Judah he-Ḥasid is well known as a mystic who was immersed in esoteric knowledge.²⁰ He is remembered as an important figure who handed down the tradition of the “Secrets of Prayer” (*Sodot ha-Tefilah*).²¹

In “Suspicion and Evidence: Manuscript Sources of the Hermeneutic Gates of German Pietism,” Daniel Abrams examines *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*—among the best-known esoteric works, generally attributed to Judah’s disciple Eleazar of Worms—that lists the hermeneutic gates to higher wisdom and esoteric knowledge. Based on the manuscript evidence, Abrams questions the authorship of *Sefer ha-Hokhmah* and suggests Judah he-Ḥasid as the actual author of this work.

In later generations the esoteric teachings of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, especially those of Judah he-Ḥasid, came to be strongly associated with prayer, intentionality in prayer (*kavvanot ha-Tefilah*), and mystical prayer, as did the concept of the *gematria* (numerical value) of words uttered in prayer.²² In Avraham b. Azriel of Bohemia’s *Arugat ha-Bosem*, one of the better-known com-

²⁰Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York, 1946), 80–118; Daniel Abrams, “The Literary Emergence of Esotericism in German Pietism,” *Shofar* 12, no. 2 (1994): 67–85; idem, *Sexual Symbolism and Merkavah Speculation in Medieval Germany: A Study of the Sod ha-Egoz Texts* (Tübingen, 1997); Joseph Dan, *The “Unique Cherub” Circle: A School of Mystics and Esoterics in Medieval Germany* (Tübingen, 1999); Joseph Dan, *History of Jewish Mysticism and Esotericism: The Middle Ages*, vol. 5, *Circles of Esotericism in Medieval Germany: The Mystics of the Kalonymous Family* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2011).

²¹ In a famous chronology of the scholars of medieval Ashkenaz preserved in the responsa of Rabbi Shlomo ben Yehiel Luria of Poland (1510–1573) all three figures associated with Ashkenazi Pietism are specifically mentioned. See Shlomo ben Yehiel Luria, *Responsa of Rabbi Shlomo Luria* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1992), § 29 (the phrasing here is identical to that found in the first printed edition of the responsa from Lublin in 1573). This chronicle contains fairly detailed (though not always well organized) information regarding the literature of the medieval sages of Ashkenaz and France. Although Rabbi Shlomo Luria lived in Poland in the sixteenth century, his contemporaries and modern scholars alike agreed that he was in possession of relatively reliable and trustworthy traditions regarding the progression of the study of Torah, halakhah, and mysticism in medieval Ashkenaz in previous generations. See Avraham Grossman, *Early Sages of Ashkenaz* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1989), 361–86; and Simcha Emanuel, “Did Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg Refuse to Be Ransomed?” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (2017): 23–38. On the Ashkenazi secrets of the prayers see Joseph Dan, *Esoteric Writing of Ashkenazi Hasidim* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1968), 40–43; and Grossman, *Early Sages of Ashkenaz*, 31–35, and nn. 26, 32, and 33.

²² Avraham Grossman, “Prayer in the Teachings of the German Pietists” [in Hebrew], in *Sefer Yeshurun: On the Occasion of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Yeshurun Organization*, ed. Michael Shashar (Jerusalem, 1999), 27–56; Simcha Emanuel, “The Controversy of Ḥasidei

mentaries on prayers and liturgical poetry (piyyut) from the late thirteenth century, many esoteric exegetical statements, especially those that highlight the numeric value of words, are attributed to Judah he-Ḥasid.²³ In her article, “Composing *Arugat ha-Bosem*: How Piyyut Commentary became Associated with Ḥasidei Ashkenaz,” Elisabeth Hollender examines how the genre of piyyut commentary, which had a long and rich history prior to the advent of Judah he-Ḥasid and Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, became so strongly associated with the Ashkenazic pietistic circles and their modes of interpretations. Following Marcus’s notion of the “open book,” she also demonstrates that despite being invested with the authority of an identified author, *Arugat ha-Bosem* was not a closed work (opera) but rather an ongoing project.

In the polemics that emerge in piyyut commentary it is often possible to detect criticism by Ḥasidei Ashkenaz directed against the Jews of northern France and England, stemming from the view that these two communities failed to maintain the pietistic ideals of prayer that correspond with the numeric value of the words.²⁴ This is part of a larger issue discussed since the 1970s. Many scholars have noted a conspicuous tension between Ḥasidei Ashkenaz and the schools of northern French Tosafists. More than a critique of the precise wording of prayers, this tension also reflected differences in intentionality when studying Torah, the purposes of intellectual arguments between scholars of Talmud and halakhah, and German Pietists’ ethical criticism of perceived breaches in the morals and ethics within the tightly knit circle of mentors and disciples of Torah.²⁵ In his article, “Judah he-Ḥasid and the Tosafists of Northern France,” Ephraim Kanarfogel examines the tension between Tosafists and Ḥasidei Ashkenaz and offers new manuscript evidence to suggest a more nuanced explanation of the relationship between Judah he-Ḥasid and the northern French Tosafists, showing that they were in closer contact than previously assumed. Judah Galinsky, in his article “The Impact

Ashkenaz over the Liturgical Texts” [in Hebrew], *Mehqerei Talmud: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Ephraim E. Urbach* 3, pt. 2 (2005): 591–625.

²³See Ephraim E. Urbach, ed., *Sefer Arugat ha-Bosem Auctore R. Abraham b. R. ‘Azriel* [in Hebrew], 4 vols. (Jerusalem, 1939–1963).

²⁴Some even suggested that the word *Bosem* represents the acronym of Rabbi Judah’s patrilineal affiliation Ben Shemuel. See, for example, Urbach, *Sefer Arugat ha-Bosem*, 4:92. The language there is unequivocal: “And the people of France are accustomed to say [in their prayers] . . . and our Rabbi the Ḥasid wrote that this is a grave error . . . thus, any God-fearing person should not listen to the teachings of the Frenchmen . . . for this is a grave error and a big lie.”

²⁵Israel M. Ta-Shma, “The Mitzvah of Torah Study as a Socio-religious Problem in *Sefer Ḥasidim*: A Critical Appraisal of the Tosafist Approach in Thirteenth Century Ashkenaz,” *Sefer ha-Shana shel Universitat Bar-Ilan* 14/15 (1976): 93–113; Haym Soloveitchik, “Three Themes in *Sefer Ḥasidim*,” *AJS Review* 1 (1976): 311–57; Ivan G. Marcus, *Piety and Society: The Jewish Pietists of Medieval Germany* (Leiden, 1981), 102–5.

of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz in Northern France: The Evidence of *Sefer Ḥasidut* and *Ḥayyei ‘Olam*,” revisits the question treated earlier by Ephraim Kanarfogel and Haym Soloveitchik regarding the influence of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz in Northern France.²⁶ He questions the scholarly consensus that identifies Rabbi Jonah Girondi as the author of *Sefer ha-Yirah*, contending that this work, known in France and Germany as *Ḥayyei ‘Olam*, is actually a French work. (His argument is similar to one put forward by Benjamin Richler some years ago.²⁷) Galinsky then argues that when *Sefer ha-Yirah* is examined together with *Sefer Ḥasidut*, there is clear bibliographic evidence of a somewhat modified type of Ashkenazic piety that circulated among the learned circles in Northern France.

Finally, “Old Prophesies, Multiple Modernities: The Stormy Afterlife of a Medieval Pietist in Early Modern Ashkenaz” by Maoz Kahana, takes us beyond the life and times of the medieval Ashkenazi Pietists and examines one of the more popular texts attributed to Judah he-Ḥasid, his “ethical will,” which from the 1685 Sulzbach edition of *Sefer Ḥasidim* onwards was always printed together with the larger work. Kahana shows how this ethical will seems to have played a distinctive role in the consolidation of Jewish “modernities”—distinct strands of Jewish thought and practice that emerged in the early modern era and that use the figure of Judah he-Ḥasid as their focal point. His historical account of the reception and influence of this document, particularly in the early modern era, and the figure of Judah he-Ḥasid serve as points of departure to discuss the ways in which early modern rabbinic Jews constructed and deconstructed communal identities and cultural conceptions.

Recent years have seen a scholarly debate regarding the impact of the teaching of Judah he-Ḥasid as a social reformer and religious innovator. Some have seen the small number of printings of *Sefer Ḥasidim* from the first edition in 1538 Bologna until the rise of Eastern European Ḥasidism in the late eighteenth century as indicative of a rather limited impact.²⁸ Although this may be the case regarding the ethical teachings of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, it is safe to say that neither Judah he-Ḥasid nor *Sefer Ḥasidim* languished in obscurity during this period. Quite the opposite in fact.

²⁶Israel M. Ta-Shma, “Ḥasidei Ashkenaz in Spain: Rabbi Jonah of Gerona—The Man and His Work” [in Hebrew], in idem, *Knesset Mehqarim: Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem, 2004–2010), 2:109–48; Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Detroit, 1992), 74–79, 172–78; idem, “Peering through the Lattices”: *Mystical, Magical and Pietistic Dimensions in the Tosafist Period* (Detroit, 2000), 26–27, 59–72, 81–92; Soloveitchik, “Piety, Pietism and German Pietism,” 473–79.

²⁷Benjamin Richler, “On the Manuscripts Attributed to Rabbi Jonah Gerondi” [in Hebrew], *Alei Sefer* 8 (1981): 51–57.

²⁸Primarily Soloveitchik, “Piety, Pietism and German Pietism,” 467, see above n. 19.

Likely already during his lifetime and definitely shortly after his death, Judah he-Ḥasid became the hero of numerous folktales and popular lore.²⁹ The first tales of praise featuring Shmuel b. Kalonymous of Speyer and Judah he-Ḥasid, the leading figures of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, were transmitted orally in the Yiddish vernacular as early as the first half of the thirteenth century.³⁰ Translations into Hebrew and the committing of some of the stories to writing followed. These tales, later still translated into the Yiddish vernacular versions, eventually made their way into the famous *Ma'aseh Buch* (printed in Basel in 1602), one of the most important and influential collections of Jewish medieval and early modern tales.³¹ Typical of many collections of this type (i.e., *shevakhim*), some reflect the earlier stages of development while others seem to reflect the needs, anxieties, and influence of a later period, specifically the experiences of the Jews of Regensburg and other localities from the early sixteenth century and particularly after the 1519 expulsion of the Jews from Regensburg, as is evident from the twelve manuscripts that contain all or some of these tales in both Hebrew and Yiddish.³²

This surge in the posthumous importance of Judah he-Ḥasid was also expressed more concretely. Evidence from the later Middle Ages suggests that

²⁹Tamar Alexander, "Rabbi Judah the Pious as a Legendary Figure," in *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism: International Symposium Held in Frankfurt a.M.* 1991, eds. Karl Erich Grözinger and Joseph Dan (Berlin, 1995), 123–38.

³⁰Joseph Bamberger, "The Praise of the Ashkenazi Pietists: Outline of the Jewish Hagiography in Ashkenaz in the Middle Ages" [in Hebrew] (PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, 2005).

³¹Jakob Meitlis, *Di shebahim fun Rabi Shemu'el un Rabi Yuda ḥasid a tsusheyer tsu der Yidisher folklor-forshung* (London, 1961); idem, *Das Ma'assebuch: Seine Entstehung und Quellengeschichte* (Berlin, 1933). For the list of manuscripts see Bamberger, "Praise of the Ashkenazi Pietists," bibliography. Sara Zfatman has collected all the hagiographic tales in both Hebrew and Yiddish about the three figureheads of Ḥasidei Ashkenaz and presented a comprehensive literary analysis of these stories. See Sara Zfatman, *In Praise of Rabbi Shmuel and Rabbi Judah the Pious: The Birth of the Praise Literature in Ashkenazi Jewry* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2020).

³²In a paper presented at the 2017 conference "Sefer Ḥasidim in Context" in Jerusalem, which served as the stepping-stone for this volume, Lucia Raspe suggested that the crystallization of the hagiographic tales about Shmuel and Judah the Pious into their vernacular versions in Yiddish occurred in Regensburg during the second half of the fifteenth century. This phenomenon occurred in unison with the compilations of hagiographies in the vernacular that appeared in Europe as a whole and Germany in particular, in the spirit of the *devotio moderna*. It seems Jews did not fall short in their attempt to showcase their local "saints." At this time, the fear and the prospect of expulsion already loomed large over Regensburg Jewry, especially from 1475 until the eventual expulsion in 1519. Since the Regensburg Jewish community was expelled relatively late, it had managed to create a localized version of its history. See Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, "Rabbi Judah 'the Pious' and the Levitating Study Hall: How Regensburg Jewry Contended with the Prospect of Expulsion in the Late Fifteenth Century" [in Hebrew], *Zmanim* 144 (2021): 18–29.

his (and possibly his father's) grave in Regensburg was a site of Jewish pilgrimage until the expulsion of the Regensburg Jewry and subsequent destruction of the Jewish cemetery.³³

Not surprisingly, after the emergence of the Eastern European Ḥasidism, inspired by Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer Ba'al Shem Tov and his disciples in the second half of the eighteenth century, *Sefer Ḥasidim* (in the rather truncated Bologna version) surged in popularity and enjoyed numerous prints and reprints.³⁴ In the mid-nineteenth century, with the rise of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement and the discovery of medieval manuscripts of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, scholars began to explore more deeply the book, its teachings, and the individuals who produced it. The Viennese rabbinic scholar Moritz Güdemann, in his monumental three-volume *Geschichte des Erziehungswe-sens und der Kultur der Abendländischen Juden* (published between 1880 and 1888), discussed *Sefer Ḥasidim* and its author and made suggestions about its role and importance in medieval Ashkenazic culture. From that point on, and for the next 150 years, *Sefer Ḥasidim* and Judah he-Ḥasid have been firmly within the academic spotlight.

As this introduction and the articles to follow make clear, *Sefer Ḥasidim*, its authors, and its milieu continue to offer rich and varied avenues for study. Scholars in the field offer a wide range of divergent theories and understandings. The purpose of the current volume is not to achieve a consensus or to resolve debates but rather to promote current conversations and generate additional new directions for research in the future.

It is our honor and pleasure to dedicate this volume to Professor Ivan Marcus, who over the past fifty years has made such an outstanding contribution to scholarship on *Sefer Ḥasidim*. His impact—from his earliest work, *Piety and Society: The Jewish Pietists of Medieval Germany* (Leiden, 1981), to his most recent *Sefer Hasidim and the Ashkenazic Book in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2018)—is evident on every page of the present volume, and his insights have profoundly shaped the field and the discourse. Professor Marcus has been a teacher and mentor to us all, including many of the contributors to this volume. It is with deep gratitude that we acknowledge

³³On the pilgrimage see Eli Yassif, *Ninety-Nine Tales: The Jerusalem Manuscript Cycle of Legends in Medieval Jewish Folklore* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 2013) 263–64 (tales 94–95) and notes on p. 288. See also the account in the responsa of Maharil: Jacob ben Moshe Halevi Molin, *The Responsa of Maharil* [in Hebrew], ed. Isaac Satz (Jerusalem, 1980), 214–15, § 118 (126), as well as the account of Rabbi Menachem Ollendorf who even signed his name on the gravestone. See Israel M. Ta-Shma, “A New Chronicle from the Period of the Tosaphists from the Circle of Ri the Elder” [in Hebrew], *Shalem* 3 (1981): 319–24, and Ephraim Kanarfogel's contribution to the present volume.

³⁴For a list of the printed editions of *Sefer Ḥasidim* see Marcus, *Sefer Hasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 12–24.

his guidance and wisdom over the years. His long-standing dedication to the study of *Sefer Ḥasidim* brings to mind one of its passages: “When a person has one purpose, it is dear to his heart, and he will devote himself to it, until he fully completes it.”

We wish Professor Marcus many more years of productive scholarship dedicated to the study of medieval Jewish history in general and *Sefer Ḥasidim* in particular.

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