# THE MAIDEN of LUDMIR

A Jewish Holy Woman and Her World



### NATHANIEL DEUTSCH

Foreword by Janusz Bardach

# The Maiden of Ludmir

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# The Maiden of Ludmir

A Jewish Holy Woman and Her World

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#### Foreword

My first phone conversation with Nathaniel Deutsch took place one evening in October 1998. He introduced himself and told me he found out about me through Nechama Singer Ariel, my cousin in Brooklyn, and through my memoir, *Man Is Wolf to Man: Surviving the Gulag*, published in May 1998. The mention of Nechama's name established Nathaniel as a legitimate interlocutor, and I continued our conversation. He told me that from my memoir he figured out that I'd lived in Wlodzimierz-Wolynski, a city in prewar eastern Poland, until I was twenty-one, and he asked if I'd ever heard of the legendary Ludmirer Moid (Yiddish for the "Maiden of Ludmir"). The question stunned me. Since leaving my hometown (Wlodzimierz-Wolynski in Polish, Ludmir in Yiddish, and Vladimir Volinski in Russian), I'd never met anyone who knew about her.

"That was my great-great-grandmother!" I said to Nathaniel, with more enthusiasm than I usually display when talking to strangers over the phone. My grandparents, Motel and Chja, as well as my father and uncle, all from Wlodzimierz-Wolynski, loved to talk about this legendary woman and were proud to consider her our ancestor, even though I've never been able to trace the connection to my grandparents. My grandfather, a fur merchant, was a descendant of one of the oldest Hasidic families in town, and he built a *shtibl* (small prayer house) on Sokalska Street and dedicated it to the Ludmirer Moid. As a child I often attended services with him there. He also owned the two-story red brick house on Farna Street in which, according to my grandparents, the Ludmirer

Moid was born and raised. My grandmother took me to this apartment, then owned by Mr. Tabak, a pharmacist, to show me the room where the Ludmirer Moid had studied and prayed.

The story I remember about the Ludmirer Moid was that as an only child she learned both the Torah and Talmud, and as a young teenager she became deeply religious. When she was fourteen her mother died and was buried in the Jewish cemetery. The Ludmirer Moid often visited her mother's grave. One day while visiting she fell and hit her head on a stone. She was in a coma for several days, and when she finally recovered she knew all the scriptures and prayers by heart and started to interpret religious doctrine. She became well-known among the large Hasidic population not only in our town but also throughout Ukraine and Russia, and many learned people came to seek her advice. She conducted services in one of the *shtiblekh* (plural of *shtibl*) in town, separating herself from the audience with a sheet so that only her voice was heard.

According to my grandmother, as the Ludmirer Moid grew older, her father insisted that she marry. At first she resisted, but she finally gave in to the pressure of her father and other relatives. Upon marriage, following the Hasidic custom, the Ludmirer Moid shaved her head and wore a wig. But after shaving she lost her knowledge of the scriptures, and her religious influence waned.

I was excited to tell Nathaniel this story that had remained so vivid in my memory throughout my life. His call came soon after I visited Jerusalem and discovered that in the department of ethnography, under the tutelage of Professor Olga Goldberg, a graduate student had written a thesis on the Ludmirer Moid. Around the same time, Hanna Krall, a Polish writer famous for her short stories about the Jewish past in Poland, was so taken by my tale that she wrote a story about me and the Ludmirer Moid called "Great-Great-Grandson." It was published in the literary edition of Gazeta Wyborcza and in a collection of short stories titled There Is No River Anymore. As I rambled on about the Ludmirer Moid, Nathaniel became so excited he could hardly catch his breath. Several years later he told me that this first conversation had made him believe that the Ludmirer Moid wasn't only a character in a fable but a real person, and he decided to continue his research on her and write this book. This phone conversation not only raised our interest in each other but also brought us close. We talked frequently on the phone and exchanged materials related to my hometown and to the Ludmirer Moid. Our friendship culminated with his visit to my home in Iowa City.

When this lanky, six-foot-two-inch young man gave me a bear hug at the airport, I felt as if I were greeting my grandson.

When Nathaniel and I first made contact, I was puzzled by his interest in the Ludmirer Moid, but I came to admire his devotion to this figure from the Hasidic past of Eastern European Jewry. The days we spent together gave me a closer and clearer notion of Nathaniel as a person and a scholar. In time I found out that from an early age Nathaniel felt as if he were living in double exile, with one foot in the past and the other in the present. His father, a master storyteller of Jewish life in prewar Europe, came from a famous rabbinic family and continued to practice Orthodox Judaism. Nathaniel's mother, however, came from a largely secular, Labor Zionist background. Their unlikely marriage, they would frequently say, could only have taken place in Israel. Eventually, the family moved to the United States, where in a predominantly African American neighborhood that had once been home to a large Jewish population, Nathaniel navigated between two or even three worlds.

Growing up, Nathaniel went to a shul whose rabbi was a direct descendant of Mottel of Chernobyl, the zaddik who played such an important role in the Ludmirer Moid's story. He also spent many summers involved with the Lubavitch movement. These experiences inspired Nathaniel's interest in Hasidism and his deep appreciation of its rich traditions. After studying in Orthodox schools for most of his youth, Nathaniel decided to finish his education in secular institutions. He attended the University of Chicago, Moscow State University, and Hebrew University. Nathaniel wrote two books on Jewish mysticism and coedited a volume on African American religions and Judaism before starting the long journey of exploring the life of the Ludmirer Moid.

I admire Nathaniel's diligence and passion for his research. He spoke with everyone he could find who had ever lived in Ludmir, and he traveled to Lutsk, St. Petersberg, Moscow, Jerusalem, Warsaw, and other cities to find any historical material related to the Ludmirer Moid and the history of Ludmir. I was most impressed by the trip he made to Ludmir, now in Ukraine, to see the town for himself. Although the town, located on the border of Ukraine and Poland, bears little resemblance to the way it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Nathaniel recovered some of the long-gone atmosphere of this Jewish shtetl.

One more thing deeply impresses me about Nathaniel and makes me feel even more attached to him: for several years he has commuted to the city where his parents live to help take care of his sick father. He has spent days and months there acting as a loving son and nurse, as well as an intellectual companion to his father. I have written about the author as a wonderful human being and great scholar rather than about the book, which speaks for itself. I love the book, and I am grateful to Nathaniel for undertaking and accomplishing the difficult task of reconstructing a lost world.

Janusz Bardach

#### Preface

I first remember hearing about the Maiden of Ludmir from a young Jewish woman named Naomi who grew up in a Hasidic household in Brooklyn. My first reaction to hearing her story was a combination of curiosity and skepticism. A nineteenth-century Hasidic woman who became a rebbe in her own right? It was almost unbelievable. I wanted to learn more about her, but I didn't know where to look. As fate would have it, a few days later I found myself ducking into a Hasidic *shtibl* (small prayer house) to escape one of those sudden downpours that momentarily alleviates the humid monotony of summer in New York. In the dim light that characterizes these outposts of old-style Eastern European Jewish culture, I could see a handful of men studying and praying. There wasn't a woman in sight.

Then, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed an unlikely image peeking out from a pile of books. Incongruous among the faux-leather volumes with gold embossed Hebrew titles was the portrait of a babushkaclad Jewish woman poring over a holy book like the ones found in the *shtibl* itself. Above the image on the volume's cover were the English words *They Called Her Rebbe*, a title that, in that place, seemed as much a challenge as a statement. Within the span of a few days I had come across the Maiden of Ludmir twice, this time in the form of a children's novel that had somehow made its way into this traditional Hasidic bastion. I was hooked.

What was it about the Maiden of Ludmir that so captured my imagination that I decided to devote much of the next six years to recon-

structing her life? The best way to answer this question is to tell her story. This is no easy task, as I quickly discovered, since many different versions of the Maiden of Ludmir's life exist. Yet the basic events — some fact, some legend — are as follows.

Nearly two hundred years ago, in a backwater of the Russian Empire officially named Vladimir Volinski but called Ludmir by its mainly Jewish inhabitants, a girl was born. Her parents were pious Jews who had tried in vain for more than ten years to have a child. Finally, desperate to conceive, they sought a blessing from a rebbe, one of the charismatic leaders of the Hasidic movement, established in the eighteenth century, that had spread like wildfire throughout Eastern Europe. The rebbe, known for his amazing ability to predict the future, promised them that they would have a child within the year. Some say that he even promised the couple a boy. Instead, the mother gave birth to a beautiful girl named Hannah Rochel.

As a child, Hannah Rochel shocked her parents by insisting on studying Hebrew holy books and praying like a boy. She frightened them when she miraculously detected the presence of unkosher meat in the home. Neighbors who caught a glimpse of the red-haired girl immersed in prayer whispered that she was destined to become a holy woman. At the age of twelve, Hannah Rochel fell in love with a boy in the community with the same intensity that she had devoted to her religious rituals. Her father hoped that marriage would cure the girl of her strange behavior and agreed to the match, even though the boy was not from a prominent family.

Already suffering from lovesickness, since tradition prohibited her from seeing her fiancé before the marriage, Hannah Rochel was soon dealt an even greater blow when her beloved mother fell ill and died. This event sent the girl into a spiral of grief and mourning. Every day, for hours at a time, she cried and recited *tkhines* (women's prayers) at her mother's grave in Ludmir's ancient Jewish cemetery. During one of these visits, Hannah Rochel collapsed on one of the graves. For weeks, the comatose girl hovered between life and death, until one day she suddenly opened her eyes and declared to her father — some say in a man's voice — that she had ascended to heaven and, there, was given a "new and lofty" soul.

After regaining her strength, Hannah Rochel canceled her engagement and vowed never to marry, an unthinkable decision in a culture centered on the family. She returned to the traditionally male religious rituals she had engaged in before her mystical vision and began to perform others, even wearing tefillin (phylacteries). Although he protested, there was nothing Hannah Rochel's beleaguered father could do to change his

daughter's mind, and when he died a few years later, the wealthy merchant left a large inheritance to his only child.

At this point, Hannah Rochel did something completely unheard of for a Jewish woman, no matter how pious: she used the money to build her own beys medresh, or study house. Now that she finally had a room of her own, Hannah Rochel began to transform herself into a public religious figure. Soon poor and working-class women and men were streaming to the red brick study house to receive blessings from the charismatic woman they now called the Maiden of Ludmir, or simply the Maiden. Others, known as the Maiden of Ludmir's Hasidim, arrived to hear the teachings, which she delivered every Sabbath afternoon, or to listen to her powerful prayers. Eventually, even scholars came to take a look at the remarkable woman, and she started to travel to other shtetlekh (Jewish communities) to spread her teachings. But Hannah Rochel had not only attracted followers, she had also attracted opponents. Rumors spread throughout Ludmir that the "woman rebbe" was possessed by a dybbuk (malevolent spirit), and that she had visited a Christian monastery in the town, where the nuns had offered her asylum. Some wanted to storm her study house and drag her out to have the evil spirit exorcised. Others recommended that a powerful rebbe convince Hannah Rochel to marry and give up her disturbing lifestyle. And that is what happened. Well, almost . . .

The wedding was a big event in Ludmir. Hundreds came to see the Maiden become a bride. After the ceremony, some declared that Hannah Rochel had lost the *ruah ha-qodesh* (holy spirit) that had allowed her to heal the sick and perform other wonders. She herself appears to have had a crisis in confidence that further alienated her followers, though a small number remained loyal. For his part, Hannah Rochel's husband was so afraid of her that he refused to consummate the marriage, and the couple soon divorced.

Not content to give up the spiritual authority that she had worked so hard to achieve, the Maiden of Ludmir decided to emigrate to Palestine, where she hoped to reestablish herself as a religious leader. Arriving in Jerusalem as a woman over fifty, the Maiden settled in a Hasidic neighborhood. There she once again attracted a group of devoted followers, including Jewish women from Eastern Europe and the Middle East, Arab Muslim women, and Jewish men who were relegated to the margins of the Maiden's gatherings, a striking reversal of the typical gender hierarchy. The Maiden led her female followers in pilgrimages to the tomb of the biblical matriarch Rachel and to the Western Wall, where she prayed in tefillin and tallis (a fringed prayer shawl traditionally worn by men).

The male Hasidic leaders of the community were impressed enough by the Maiden that they described her in official documents as a "holy woman" and a "woman rabbi."

The Maiden of Ludmir lived the rest of her long life in Jerusalem. From time to time she visited the northern city of Sefad, where she immersed herself in the Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism) and gained a reputation as the only female Kabbalist in history. Some say she even tried to bring the messiah by means of a secret ritual before being thwarted by the prophet Elijah. When she was nearly a hundred, the Maiden of Ludmir died and was buried on the Mount of Olives, where her grave became a site of prayer and devotion for several generations of Jewish women.

This deceptively straightforward narrative belies the complex, even contradictory, accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir's life. For nearly a century, people have taken up the pen to tell her story. Magazine and newspaper articles, four plays, two novels, and a play within a novel, by the famous Yiddish-language author Isaac Bashevis Singer, have been written about the Maiden. For an even longer period, people have told and retold tales about her life. Yet until now, no one has ever written a historical biography of the Maiden of Ludmir. Such a work is long overdue, for the Maiden was a unique figure in the history of Judaism. She is remembered as a teacher, a healer, a mystic, and a charismatic religious leader. During her lifetime, she was both adored and hated. Although it is unclear whether she ever intended to be a role model, she has become one for some contemporary Jewish women who seek to go beyond the limits placed on them by traditional Judaism. By contrast, some within the Orthodox Jewish community have sought to censor her story because of its potentially subversive message. More than a century after her death, therefore, the Maiden of Ludmir continues both to inspire and to provoke.

To learn why she remains a powerful figure today, I invite you to join me as I tell three interwoven tales. The first is the tale of the Maiden of Ludmir's amazing life. The second is the equally intriguing tale of how this life was shaped by broader social and historical forces, both centuries old and newly emerging. The third and final tale traces how knowledge of this life went from the narrow streets of bygone Eastern European shtetlekh to the literary pages and theater stages of the wider world.

# Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I owe an enormous debt to the women and men of Ludmir. Scattered throughout the world, they became my guides and, in some cases, my friends. Three remarkable individuals in particular provided invaluable insight into the town of Ludmir and the life of the Maiden: Nechama Singer Ariel, Janusz Bardach, and Morris Goldstein. I would also like to thank Phyllis Harper Bardach and Dorothy Goldstein for their hospitality. Janusz Bardach, one of the most courageous and compassionate people I have ever met, died before this book was published. It is a terrible loss.

Other former or current residents of Ludmir whom I interviewed include Paula Avner, Yaakov Berger, Isaac Demski, Zipporah Fontek, Leo Gitklig, Joseph Goldberg, David Goldfarb, Leon Klein, Stella Klein, Peter Korduner, Sylvia Korduner, Abe Perlmutter, Victor Pilcz, Joshua Sack, Betty Shuch, Atara Steinberg, Andzje Vorbroe, Jack Zawid, Rose Zawid, William Zucker, Yustina Goldgrabber, Donya Lieberson Klatskavsky, Eda Landsberg, Yitzhak Lendsberg, Moshe Margalit, Ezra Nir, Sarah Tabenbaum, Isaac Tarashovsky, Moshe Weisgarden, Tovah Winer, Shlomo Ziskind, Hedba Zweig, Juliusz Bardach, Rosa Goldman, Yankl Kiperstein, Maria Vavrisevich, Mikhail Vavrisevich, and Nikolai Vavrisevich. Relatives of Ludmirers who provided assistance included Yitzhak Singer Ariel, Leon Glazer, Israel Gottlieb, Mordechai Samet, and Simone Cypel.

Many of the people I interviewed had survived the Holocaust and/or the Soviet Gulag and were very reluctant to sign official-looking forms. For this reason and because none of the interviews were personal but instead focused on the stories of the Maiden of Ludmir, a nineteenth-century figure, I acquired oral permission to use material from these interviews in this book.

Over the years, I also have spoken with members of a number of Hasidic groups, including those of different branches of the Chernobyl dynasty, Karlin-Stolin, Satmar, Bratslav, and Lubavitch. Special thanks go to Michel Twersky, a descendant of Mordechai of Chernobyl, and to Devorah Shmotkin, one of my earliest teachers.

To understand better what motivated earlier biographers of the Maiden, I interviewed their surviving relatives. Leah Taubenhaus (wife of Ephraim Taubenhaus), Judith Kaiserman, (daughter of Menasheh Unger), and Max Raddock (brother of Charles Raddock) were especially helpful.

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Without Ethan Michaeli, I could never have traveled to Ludmir and found what I was looking for. Sudhir Venkatesh and I talked for hours about the links between ethnography and history. Ayla Yavin, Ben Thomases, Naomi Sultan, Susanna Greenberg, Peter Greenberg, Chelsea Clinton, Rich Schuldenfrei, Shai Levy, Yael Deutsch, and David Deutsch all helped in different ways. Many others facilitated my research, including Benyamin Lukin of the Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem; Elena Tsvetova in St. Petersburg; Susan Braunstein, Curator of Archaeology and Judaica at the Jewish Museum in New York; Ludmilla Uritskaya, Chief Curator of the Russian Museum of Ethnography in St. Petersburg; Irina Sergeyeva of the Vernadsky Library in Kiev; Hedba Rochel and Devorah Stavi of Gnazim, the Archives of Agudat Ha-Sofrim in Tel Aviv; Marek Webb at YIVO; Efim Melamad in Zhitomir; Kristine Nute of Blitz, as well as the staffs of the Jewish Division of the New York Public Library, the state archives in Lutsk, the Hekhal Volin in Givatayim, and other libraries in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Warsaw, and Krakow. At the University of California Press I would also like to thank Mimi Kusch for her editing and suggestions and project editor Kristen Cashman.

The Maiden of Ludmir will always be close to my heart for two reasons. First, I read it to my father while he was recovering from a series of illnesses that would have felled a lesser man. Both he and my mother were supportive in too many ways to list here. Second, Miriam Greenberg convinced me to go ahead with the book when I was ready to give up and was a constant source of love, wisdom, and inspiration. Our relationship grew as this book took form.

Finally, I would like to thank Reed Malcolm at the University of California Press for his moral support, critical eye, and imagination. I could not have asked for a better editor.

#### INTRODUCTION

## Ansky Visits Ludmir

Have you ever seen the movie Rashomon? The Maiden of Ludmir's life is like Rashomon. Everyone has his or her own version of what happened.

Nechama Singer Ariel, native of Ludmir, as told to the author

In the summer of 1915 the Russian Jewish writer and ethnographer known as Ansky visited the town of Ludmir (in Russian, Vladimir Volinski). Like other Jewish communities in the western reaches of the Russian Empire, Ludmir was caught between advancing Austro-Hungarian and retreating Russian armies. Ansky knew the area well. From 1912 to 1914, armed with cameras, notebooks, and recording equipment, Ansky and the Jewish Ethnographic Expedition had journeyed into the same region to collect Jewish folk traditions before they disappeared, for, as he put it, "With every old man who dies, with every fire that breaks out, with every exile we suffer, we lose part of our past. The best examples of our traditional lives, our customs, and beliefs are vanishing; the old tales and songs and melodies will soon be forgotten. . . . In short, our past, sanctified by the blood and tears of so many innocent martyrs, is disappearing and will soon be forgotten."

Even at his most pessimistic, Ansky could not have predicted the devastating effect that the outbreak of war would have on the Jewish communities of the Pale of Settlement (the area of the Russian Empire where Jews were allowed to live) and the neighboring region of Galicia. When news of the terrible suffering in these areas began to filter back to St.

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Petersburg, where Ansky was living, he decided to organize and lead a relief mission. Traveling first to Galicia, he witnessed firsthand the destruction carried out by retreating Russian units. Ansky then followed the front to the Ukrainian region of Volhynia in order to warn its Jews of the impending danger. Ansky arrived in the Volhynian town of Ludmir on a July day in his own automobile, wearing a medic's uniform with Red Cross insignia provided by a Russian relief organization. He brought material aid in the form of one thousand rubles, moral support, and, as always, a burning passion for Jewish history and folk culture.

Upon entering the town, Ansky observed that "confusion and bewilderment" reigned among its inhabitants. The war and a raging cholera epidemic had already taken their toll on the Jewish community, though the worst was yet to come, as Ansky knew from his experiences in Galicia. He went straight to the office of the Russian district commander, where he witnessed a scene of ill omen: "The Cossacks standing next to the entrance are yelling, cursing, insulting, and pushing the Jews. Before my eyes a Cossack shoves an elderly Jew from the entrance." Ansky immediately took matters into his own hands. "All of the Jews were very shocked," he later wrote in his Yiddish memoir of those dark days, "when I rebuked him [the Cossack] and said that I would bring him to justice."<sup>2</sup>

Ansky's attempts to organize the leaders of the Jewish community were met with a combination of resignation, pragmatism, and a kind of defiant, almost otherworldly piety, in other words, precisely those qualities that had enabled the Jews to survive for centuries in a region torn by ethnic, economic, and religious conflicts. Many Jews felt that evacuating the town, as Ansky recommended, would leave their properties at the mercy of the Ukrainian peasants, who had already attempted to loot the Jews' stores and houses. Instead, they preferred to dig bunkers and remain hidden during the impending battle between the Austrians and Russians. Most hoped that the former would prove victorious, since they had heard that the Austro-Hungarians and Germans dealt less harshly with Jews than did the Russians, an attitude that Ansky viewed with skepticism, though it eventually proved to be true.

After much discussion, Ansky succeeded in convincing the town's leaders to create a special fund, to which he contributed his one thousand rubles, to purchase emergency supplies. He also advised sending a deputation to Petersburg to plead for governmental protection. The community, Ansky wrote, "decided to send the rabbis of Vladimir and Ustilug. They were supposed to travel that day, but they ended up leaving after four days had passed. The reason for their delay was that the

rabbi [Morgenshtern] of Vladimir was honored to be the *sandak* [god-father] at a circumcision, and he didn't want to leave the city earlier." Looking back on this event, it may be difficult for us to reconcile the rabbi's actions with the grave physical danger facing his community. Yet Morgenshtern's refusal to leave before performing his duty as *sandak* can be seen as a form of spiritual resistance. Precisely because the Jewish community was being physically threatened, it was important for its rabbi (a descendant of the famous Hasidic rebbe Menaham Mendel of Kotsk) to celebrate the entry of a new member into the covenant.

Ansky had labored to ensure the physical survival of Ludmir's Jewish community, but that was just one part of his mission. As he had done so many times during the two years of the Jewish Ethnographic Expedition, Ansky now turned his attention to preserving the town's cultural heritage. He petitioned the locals to give him Ludmir's valuable ritual objects for safekeeping. Unfortunately, Ansky had arrived too late, for an unscrupulous community member had already absconded with them. Shortly after this disheartening encounter, Ansky left Ludmir for Kiev, never to return, though he did hear different rumors about the fate of the town's Jews, none of them good. One even claimed that "the Russians had shot down a German plane, and when it fell to the ground they found a Jewish shoemaker from Vladimir or Kovel next to the German fliers, who showed the Germans where to drop the bombs. Because of this the Cossacks set the city on fire." Concerning this and other tales, Ansky wrote rather ominously, "I have not yet received clear and trustworthy news on what occurred there. But it would appear that the retreat of the Russian soldiers did not pass in peace."4

By retracing Ansky's steps during that blood-soaked summer of 1915, we have successfully arrived in Ludmir, the community that interests us. Yet, along with Ansky, we appear to have departed from Ludmir without encountering this book's main character, the Hasidic holy woman known in Yiddish as Di Ludmirer Moid, or "the Maiden of Ludmir." To introduce the Maiden of Ludmir to Ansky and to our narrative, we must now turn to another version of the visit, one provided by Moshe Sheynbaum, who was at that time a young man working in the community's pharmacy. Writing in the *Pinkas Ludmir*, a "memory book" compiled after the Holocaust by former residents of the town, Sheynbaum describes how "during one of those difficult days" a "tall and skinny man" entered the pharmacy and in a "fine Yiddish" that clashed with the Russian medic's uniform he was wearing, declared "I am Ansky." After revealing the dangers facing the community and outlining his plan to help, Ansky

told Sheynbaum he had a "special request: I am collecting material on the 'Council of the Four Lands,' which used to hold meetings in your town, and therefore I would like to see your town *pinkas* book. It is possible that there will be information about this there. I would also like to go to the cemetery, to photograph some of the old gravestones, and in particular the tombstone of the 'Maiden of Ludmir,' whom, people say, used to lay tefillin, and had many Hasidim. Please give me the address of someone who can help me with this."<sup>5</sup>

What motivated Ansky to interrupt his relief efforts to ask about the Maiden of Ludmir? What was so important about this woman that Ansky mentioned her in the same breath as the Council of the Four Lands, the communal body that had governed Polish Jewry for several centuries? Why did Ansky seek out her tombstone and not that of, say, Rabbi Shlomo Karliner, a famous holy man who was buried in Ludmir's cemetery? In his account of Ansky's visit, Sheynbaum does not raise any of these questions. As a native son of Ludmir, brought up on on tales of the Maiden, Sheynbaum probably took it for granted that Ansky would be interested in the town's most famous Jewish resident. Nevertheless, the wording of Ansky's request gives some sense of why the greatest Jewish folklorist and ethnographer of his generation would find the Maiden of Ludmir compelling. Here was a Hasidic woman who not only wore tefillin, a traditional prerogative of Jewish men, but, even more shockingly, had Hasidim, or followers, of her own. This second detail indicates the unique significance of the Maiden of Ludmir in the Hasidic movement. Although the female relatives of male Hasidic leaders sometimes attracted devotees of their own, the Maiden of Ludmir is popularly known as the only woman in the history of Hasidism to function as a rebbe or charismatic leader in her own right.

This reputation explains Ansky's keen interest in the Maiden, despite the terrible conditions prevailing in the community at the time. According to Sheynbaum, to satisfy Ansky's curiosity, he gave him a note to take to Yossele Dreyer, the head of Ludmir's hevra qadisha (burial society). Then, as Ansky prepared to leave, Sheynbaum asked him to "sit a while" and tell him what "the Russian soldiers had done in the Jewish communities of Galicia." With this, Ansky became pale and in a soft voice answered: "Don't talk to me about this. I was in Kishinev a few hours after the pogrom. . . . But what I have seen in the last few weeks will stay before my eyes for the rest of my life." Nearly half a century later, Sheynbaum wrote that in that moment, Ansky ceased to be "the old revolutionary . . . who had struggled with Russian policemen and gen-

darmes" and instead became "Rabbi Shlomo Zanvil Rappaport [his Jewish name], who was born in Jewish Vitebsk, learned in a *beys medresh* and wrote the hymn for the Jewish 'Bund."<sup>6</sup>

Moshe Sheynbaum does not mention what happened next. However, according to another account in the *Pinkas Ludmir*, Ansky did indeed meet with Yossele Dreyer, who told him the following story about the Maiden of Ludmir:

In 1815 a girl named Hannah Rochel was born to a certain R. Monesh Verbermacher in Ludmir. While she was still a child she studied the Bible and learned to write Hebrew. Later she became well versed in aggadot from the Talmud and midrash and in *musar* [ethical] books. She prayed like a man, three times a day, with such enthusiasm that people couldn't take their eyes off her. The exceptional qualities of the girl, moreover, meant that when she was a little older, people began to talk about matches. Before long Hannah Rochel was engaged to a boy from the same town. This event caused upheaval in her spiritual life. Knowing her fiancé since childhood, she loved him with all the zeal of her fiery soul. She strived to see him in private, but according to the customs of the time, this was strictly forbidden. From great longing, Hannah Rochel became ill; during the same period, her mother died. Hannah Rochel began to withdraw from people and to live a solitary existence. From time to time she would go to her mother's grave, where she would cry out her bitter heart.

People say that once when Hannah Rochel was sitting at her mother's grave, she was overcome by sleep. When she awoke it was already night. She was badly frightened and began to run through the old cemetery, where the great zaddikim of generations past rested. On the way, she tripped on one of the holy graves. She began to cry and fainted. The watchman, when he heard the cry, ran to her, and after she came to, he brought her home. She was sick for several weeks, and the doctors gave up hope. [But] one day she called out to her father and told him, "I was just now in heaven, in a meeting of the heavenly court and they gave me a new lofty soul." A few days later she returned to health. From then on she wore a *tallis katan*, prayed in a tallis and tefillin (Rashi's and Rabbenu Tam's). She returned the *tnaim* [engagement agreement] to her fiancé and decided never to marry. Meanwhile R. Monesh died and left her a big inheritance. She purchased a *beys medresh*, called the *gornshtibl* [the "upper-story *shtibl*"], with a special room where she prayed and studied.

The entire region buzzed with [news about] the Maiden of Ludmir. Not only men and women but also scholars and rabbis from the surrounding towns used to come to her as to a holy person, so that she could bless them. She used to sit in her room near open doors and everyone would stand in the *beys medresh* and listen to her *derashot* [homilies]. A group of Hasidim formed around her, whom men called "The Hasidim of the Maiden of Ludmir." Zaddikim from this time came to take a look at this wonder-woman. They tried to convince her that she should change her way of life and get married. Around that time, the eminent

zaddik R. Mottele of Chernobyl set out to plead with her to marry. She yielded and was married to a rabbi. However, they quickly got divorced. Soon after she left for the Land of Israel and there she died.<sup>7</sup>

Thus far I have retraced the steps of Ansky during the summer of 1915, searching for clues left behind by that great detective of Jewish folklore. Although the path I have followed appears straightforward, closer examination reveals that it is anything but. First, let us return to Ludmir and Ansky's encounter with Moshe Sheynbaum in the town's pharmacy. Sheynbaum recalls this episode in vivid and believable detail, and the fact that he met with Ansky is independently confirmed by another writer in the *Pinkas Ludmir*.<sup>8</sup> Yet precisely that aspect of their encounter that interests us most, that is, Ansky's request, is also the most problematic.

The first complication concerns Ansky's interest in the Council of the Four Lands. Although Ludmir was one of the principal communities (kehilot roshiot) that sent a representative to the Council's meetings, these gatherings were never held in Ludmir but in Yaroslav and Lublin, something that Ansky would have known.9 The second problem arises from another account in the Pinkas Ludmir, which mentions that in 1912 Ansky visited Ludmir during the Jewish Ethnographic Expedition and "photographed all the tombstones, collected legends and other historical material," which "was never published because of the First World War." 10 If he had already visited and photographed Ludmir's cemetery in 1912, why would Ansky seek out the Maiden's tombstone again in 1915? An even more fundamental question, however, is why Ansky would search for the Maiden's tombstone in Ludmir at all. For, according to every account of the Maiden's life, she died and was buried in Palestine, where she spent her final years, and not in Ludmir, where she was born and raised. It is extremely unlikely that Ansky was unaware of this tradition, since he served on the editorial board of Evreiskaia Starina, a Russian journal that had published the first biographical account of the Maiden of Ludmir in 1909, an account that mentioned her final years in Palestine.

More problems appear when we leave the pharmacy and Moshe Sheynbaum and move down the road to Yossele Dreyer, the head of Ludmir's burial society. A postscript to the account attributed to Dreyer in the *Pinkas Ludmir* mentions that "[i]n Ludmir people gave different versions of the history of the Maiden of Ludmir. Yet this is how Yossele Dreyer told it, when Ansky was in our town. And Ansky was extremely careful to write it down word by word, just as he told it." On the one hand, the author's claim that Ansky wrote down the story "word by

word" and "just as he [Dreyer] told it" jibes with the method of transcribing oral traditions Ansky outlined in his writings on ethnography. On the other, the author's insistence on accurate transmission may indicate an attempt to lend historical weight to an invented, or at least highly reworked, episode. Another possible sign of evasion is that the account's author is never named (he or she is identified simply as "a Ludmirer"), the only example of anonymous authorship in the *Pinkas Ludmir*. By far the most puzzling and provocative aspect of the story attributed to Dreyer, however, is its practically verbatim resemblance to a series of accounts on the Maiden of Ludmir written by Samuel Abba Horodezky, including one published in 1909, several years before Ansky ever set foot in Ludmir.<sup>12</sup>

How can we explain the questions raised by this examination of Ansky's visit? Did Ansky actually ask to see the Maiden of Ludmir's tombstone, or did Moshe Sheynbaum's memory play a trick on him after all those years? Did Sheynbaum confuse Ansky's visit in 1915 with his visit in 1912, when Ansky took photographs of the cemetery? Did the anonymous "Ludmirer" basically copy one of Horodezky's writings and place it in the mouth of Yossele Dreyer? I could continue to suggest other scenarios with varying degrees of plausibility, but, in the end, we will never know exactly what happened. My retelling of Ansky's visit to Ludmir reveals how hard it is to reconstruct past events, even when we possess eyewitness testimonies from several sources. It also reveals the intimate, elusive, and sometimes deceptive relationship between memory and history.

Ansky's visit to Ludmir, like the rest of his woefully under-studied life and work, is fascinating in its own right. But why begin a book about a Hasidic holy woman with the story of a male Jewish writer and ethnographer? Why not begin with the Maiden of Ludmir's birth, as the anonymous Ludmirer above does? In fact, that is how I first imagined the introduction to this book when I began my research. The deeper I delved, however, the more I realized that it was impossible to identify and reconstruct a single life of the Maiden of Ludmir. Indeed, even the most basic biographical details, such as the year and circumstances of her birth, are contested in the different — sometimes very different — tellings of her story.

While all biographers encounter this difficulty to one degree or another, the life of the Maiden of Ludmir is particularly challenging for a number of reasons. For years, I searched archives and libraries in the former Soviet Union and Israel for any "official" evidence of her existence, hoping to find her name (or at least the name of her father) in a census list, a marriage record, or another government document. During this period, more than one person—gently—suggested to me that perhaps the Maiden of Ludmir had never actually existed. I myself wondered how a famous woman who had supposedly died at the end of the nineteenth or beginning of the twentieth century could essentially disappear from the public record. Ultimately I came to the conclusion that like so many other pre- and early-modern women, the Maiden of Ludmir suffered from what the feminist historian Joan Wallach Scott has called "the problem of invisibility": "historians searching the past for evidence about women have confronted again and again the phenomenon of women's invisibility. Recent research has shown that women were not inactive or absent from events that made history, but that they have been systematically left out of the official record."<sup>13</sup>

After nearly five years of research, having long since given up hope of finding official documentation of the Maiden of Ludmir's life, I made an archival discovery that — magically, it seemed to me at the time — made the invisible visible. As I sat staring at several official documents that appeared to mention the Maiden of Ludmir, I was reminded of a Princeton mathematician's recent discovery of a proof to Fermat's Theorem, a problem that had stumped mathematicians for centuries. Remembering his combination of excitement and relief, I said to myself, "Here is the Maiden of Ludmir. Here is my proof."

Later I reminded myself that history is not mathematics. While governmental sources can document an individual's year of birth or her ownership of a building, census lists or property deeds cannot solve the riddle of an individual's life. The official record is an indispensable tool for constructing historical outlines and filling in important details. Only rarely does it yield the kind of narratives that illuminate a life's deeper, subtler meaning(s). For these narratives, we must rely on something inextricably linked to official history but not identical with it: we must rely on memory. And this is why I have begun this book with a montage of memories from Ansky's journey to Ludmir and not the officially documented year of her birth. My point in doing this is not to establish history and memory as opposing, even antagonistic, categories but rather to begin the process of illuminating their complex interrelationship.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike most of her female contemporaries in the shtetlekh of Eastern Europe, the Maiden of Ludmir did not disappear from the official record, nor did she disappear from human memory. Instead different versions of her life were transmitted by word of mouth and eventually written down (and, in the process, further transformed) by people from the same cul-

tural milieu as Ansky. These writers possessed intimate knowledge of the Hasidic world of Eastern Europe but did not—or no longer—inhabit this world themselves. To reconstruct the life of the Maiden of Ludmir and solve its riddles, therefore, we must rely primarily on accounts written by authors who were "between two worlds," to quote the original title of Ansky's famous play *The Dybbuk*. Without Ansky and a handful of other writers whom I will discuss below, the Maiden of Ludmir, a Hasidic woman from a small Ukrainian shtetl, would never have become a literary figure. Their works, which straddle the stylistic line between traditional Hasidic hagiography (writing about holy people) and modern historical accounts, transmitted the story of the Maiden of Ludmir from the shtetlekh of Eastern Europe to a broader—though still overwhelmingly Jewish—audience in Europe, the Americas, and Israel.

A close examination of these accounts reveals them to be highly complex, containing elements borrowed from traditional hagiographies about male Hasidic leaders, oral traditions, and earlier written works about the Maiden of Ludmir. While these accounts help us to reconstruct the details of her life, this is not their only value. Just as important, they reveal how the Maiden of Ludmir has been *imagined* by others. These imaginings constitute her afterlife, or, more accurately, her afterlives. The significance of the Maiden of Ludmir as a historical and cultural figure, therefore, lies not only in what she actually did but also in how people have transformed her story to reflect their own interests. Therefore, we need not — indeed, we should not — choose a single, definitive version of the Maiden of Ludmir's life from the different, sometimes conflicting, narratives. Instead, to borrow a term from the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, it is the entire *ensemble* of these tellings that conveys the full significance of the Maiden of Ludmir.

Far from relegating it to the footnotes, therefore, I have made the story of how knowledge of the Maiden of Ludmir moved from the Hasidic communities of Volhynia to the wider public a central thread in this book's narrative. Even within this complex setting, Ansky's relationship to the Maiden of Ludmir is particularly nuanced and, therefore, I would argue, emblematic of the challenges involved in writing her biography. Unlike the other authors I will examine below, Ansky never wrote a biographical account of the Maiden of Ludmir. Nor, as I have already noted, did he even mention the Maiden of Ludmir in his own description of his visit to the town in 1915. Yet, as I will demonstrate in chapter 1, traces of the Maiden of Ludmir may be found throughout Ansky's life and work, including in his magnum opus, *The Dybbuk*. And insofar as traces are all

that remain of the Maiden of Ludmir, Ansky's relationship to her story is a fitting entrée to this book.

I have no illusions about being able to reconstruct the Maiden of Ludmir's life precisely as she lived it. The question, What happened? can never be definitively answered, as my discussion of Ansky's visit to Ludmir has already shown. Yet, as I will argue throughout this book, certain biographical events or details can be confirmed and others rejected based on a comparative examination of different types of sources. Likewise, I will show that it is possible to distinguish between more and less plausible scenarios. <sup>15</sup> The following examples demonstrate my meaning.

All written sources on the Maiden of Ludmir's life state that she built her own study house. On the basis of these secondhand accounts alone, it would be impossible to say whether such a place ever existed in Ludmir. However, the *Pinkas Ludmir* not only contains numerous references to the Maiden of Ludmir's *beys medresh*, it also contains a photograph of its interior. In addition, several former residents of Ludmir have told me that they visited the *beys medresh* as children, though by that time (the early years of the twentieth century), it was used by the followers of a male Hasidic leader. Finally, I have discovered a Russian government map of Ludmir from the mid-nineteenth century that appears to show the Maiden of Ludmir's study house. In this case, the comparative analysis of written accounts, oral traditions, and official documents confirms the historical veracity of a particular detail; in the following case, the same process produces an opposite result.

Beginning with Horodezky's first account in 1909, almost every written work on the Maiden of Ludmir has referred to her study house as the grünshtibl, that is, "the green prayer house." One English-language account, for instance, describes the Maiden as "a holy virgin in Ludmir who dwells in a little green hut."16 Like my predecessors, I initially accepted the veracity of this tradition. Indeed, I spent hours trying to discern whether the color green had some special significance. And why not? Here was a reasonable detail appearing in practically every written account, including the earliest written source on her life. Then, one day, while speaking with a former resident of Ludmir, I asked him whether he knew anything about the grünshtibl. He said he didn't know what I was talking about. I asked him again in a louder voice, thinking that perhaps he hadn't heard me the first time. At this point, he exclaimed: "Ah! You mean the gornshtibl."17 While grün means "green" in Yiddish, the similarsounding word gorn means "upper story" and refers to the fact that the Maiden of Ludmir's prayer house was the only one in town located on the second floor of a building. Moreover, the *gornshtibl* wasn't green at all, but red, since it was built out of brick. This mistake was transmitted from author to author, creating a mystery (why was the *shtibl* green?) and obscuring a potentially significant detail (why was it on the second floor?) in the process.

Alas, not all details of the Maiden of Ludmir's life are as easily reconstructed as the correct name of her study house. In fact, many if not most of the critical elements of her story remain impossible to determine. While this can be frustrating for the biographer — as it was for me initially — it can also open the door to producing a different kind of history, one in which competing memories of the past haunt the present, while the specters of today influence how we remember and interpret the past. <sup>18</sup> The pages of this book are haunted by the ghosts of wonder-workers, storytellers, and, most of all, the unique woman known as the Maiden of Ludmir.

#### CHAPTER I

# A Dybbuk Trilogy, or How the Maiden of Ludmir Became a Literary Figure

In the years following World War I, the town of Ludmir experienced tremendous cultural and economic changes. Gone were the Russian officials who had governed Ludmir since the end of the eighteenth century. In their place arrived representatives from the newly independent Polish state to which Ludmir now belonged. On Farna Street, the town's main commercial strip, Jewish merchants began to sell furniture, fine china, and other luxury goods from Western Europe. Pan Ludachovsky, the Polish nobleman who owned an estate beyond Shulman's flour mill on the road to Lutsk, even purchased a shiny new car to go along with his beautiful horse-drawn carriage. Looking at photographs from this period, one is struck by the prosperity of many of the residents, evident in the stylish European dress of its young people. As several former residents emphasized to me, Ludmir was definitely not the shtetl in *Fiddler on the Roof*.

The town's economic transformation was mirrored by a flowering of cultural and political activities. Touring Yiddish theater groups from Warsaw, Vilna, and other major cities performed in Ludmir. In 1924 branches of Poale Zion, the Jewish socialist worker's party, and Ha-Shomer Ha-Zahir, the Zionist youth group, were established. Many young Jews, inspired by tales of the "workers' paradise" being built in the Soviet Union, joined secret communist cells; some were arrested by the

Polish government and served time in the town's jail. And, yet, as Morris Goldstein told me seventy years later, "Ludmir, between the wars, had one foot in the twentieth century and one foot in the eighteenth century."

Nowhere was Goldstein's observation more apparent than in Kilchizne, Ludmir's poorest neighborhood. Here, in the shadow of the town's two-hundred-year-old *groyser shul* (great synagogue), the unpaved streets still had open sewers, and the people lived in one-room shacks with straw roofs. When it rained, the narrow alleyways began to resemble the Smoytch, the stream that ran alongside Kilchizne, where women emptied slops and night soil. In tall roosts above some of the houses lived storks, whose return every year from their long migration to Africa was thought to bring good luck to the community.

During the first few decades of the twentieth century, Ludmir was still home to many *shtiblekh*, or small prayer houses.. Hasidic groups such as Kotsk, Zlatopel, Chernobyl, Karlin-Stolin, Lubavitch, Radzin, Trisk, Belz, Setphin, and Vlodovka each had their own *shtibl* in Ludmir, as did different groups of artisans, including the town's tailors, metalworkers, and cobblers, whose prayer houses were located in the alcoves of the *groyser shul*. By the 1920s, these *shtiblekh*, long bastions of traditional Judaism, had become hothouses for the political debates occurring in Ludmir.

Goldstein, the son of a Kotsker Hasid, remembered the shtibl of his youth this way: "Now all the people in a Hasidic shul look the same. But in my Kotsker shtibl there were old men with long beards, whose only decent clothes were the kapotes [long coats] they wore on Shabbes; there were communists, Bundists, Zionists, and other secular young people. Everyone got along except during community elections when fights would break out among the supporters of the fifteen different parties and people's beards would get pulled." When Goldstein wore his Tarbut school cap to the Kotsker shtibl, the Hasidim would give him a knip (pinch) and ask him, "Vus haut der shagetz gelernt der letster voch?" [What did the little non-Jew learn last week?] Meir Shatz, writing in the Pinkas Ludmir, confirms this picture: "Even the Zionists came to the shtiblekh despite the fact that in the Zionist club they organized minyanim [prayer quorums] on holidays . . . in the Trisker shtibl, there was a special table for the Zionists, and the Hasidim would call it 'der goyesher tish' [the goy's table]. The Zionists in the shtibl would always stubbornly fight for their rights, for instance, being called up to the Torah."2 Indeed, Goldstein recalled, the biggest outsiders in the Kotsker shtibl were not the young Zionists or socialists from Hasidic backgrounds but the occasional Litvaks

(non-Hasidic Lithuanian Jews) who passed through Ludmir and were amazed by the fervor of the Hasidic prayer houses.

Although men of radically different political beliefs mixed freely in the shtiblekh, women, when they attended at all, had to sit separately and quietly. Many women read only Yiddish, and for some even that was a challenge. As a result, a woman who read Hebrew was often enlisted by her less-literate sisters as a prayer leader. "Vus zogt er itst?" (What is he saying now?) they would ask her. For this reason, such a woman was known as a zogerke (sayer) or firzogerin, that is, one who "says before." In Kilchizne, recalled Stella Klein, a former resident of the neighborhood, there was Hannah Devorah, a zadekkes (holy woman), who helped other women daven in the synagogue and, for a few coins, also recited tkhines in the cemetery. Some shtiblekh, like the Kotsker, didn't even have a separate section for women; others, like the Radziner and Lubavitcher, had a small space called the vayber shul (women's synagogue). During times of trouble, however, even these strictly enforced boundaries would be transgressed. Half a dozen times during his youth, remembered Goldstein, distraught women stormed into the Kotsker shtibl, opened the ark containing the Torah scrolls, and begged God to "shik a rephua shlema" (send a cure) for an ill relative.

In the center of Ludmir, facing the outdoor bourse (exchange) where currency from around the world was bought and sold by petty traders, not far from the shtadt (town) market where every Thursday Ukrainian, Polish, and sometimes even a few ethnic German women arrived from the countryside to sell their smetana (sour cream), yellow plums, and other local produce, was a special prayer house known as the gornshtibl. Located above a bagel bakery in a red brick building, it was the only shtibl in Ludmir on the second floor. Before it was destroyed during World War II, the gornshtibl belonged to the Zlatopel Hasidim, one of many branches of the Chernobler Hasidic dynasty. On a few occasions, the Chernobler Rebbe himself visited the gornshtibl, once even bringing the world-famous hazan (cantor) Yossele Rosenblat, who "davent a shabes" (led Sabbath prayers) in the shtibl.3 Yet these were not the reasons that young people used to climb the building's dark staircase just to get a look at its rather ordinary interior. No, the reason they came is that the gornshtibl once belonged to the holy woman known to everyone in town as Di Ludmirer Moid, or simply Di Moid. Here, behind a curtain, the Maiden would lead her followers in prayer and recite toyre (teaching) to them on Sabbath afternoons.

Not far from the gornshtibl, the Jews who lived in Kilchizne during the

1920s eked out a living however they could, just as they had during the Maiden's day. Some were tailors, shoemakers, or matchmakers; others raised geese for feathers; still others were professional beggars who made the rounds of Ludmir's wealthier neighborhoods on Mondays and Thursdays to gather coins from sympathetic housewives. Kilchizne was also home to some of Ludmir's best Klezmer musicians, including a *vasser trayger* (water carrier) named Yankel, who moonlit as a Klezmer violinist. During the summer Yankel played with the Roma (gypsies), who camped every year on the outskirts of Ludmir, where, for as long as the warm weather remained, they fixed tin pots and pans brought by the townspeople.

Among the residents of Kilchizne in the late 1920s was Bela-Risha Yelen, an eighteen-year-old *yesoma* (orphan) who was engaged to be married. As was the custom before a wedding, Bela-Risha went to the cemetery to invite her dead parents and other relatives, including a beloved grandmother named Tshupe who had been one of the town's midwives, to the ceremony. While praying at her grandmother's grave, Bela-Risha fainted and was brought back home. There the worst fears of those gathered were confirmed when an otherworldly voice spoke from her throat: Bela-Risha, they said, was possessed by a dybbuk, the soul of a dead person.

First the older women and then a few of their daughters began to cry, "Where is the Moid?" Even though the Maiden of Ludmir had left town a long time ago, it comforted them to invoke her name at a time like this. Now, instead of the Maiden, they relied on another healer, the beloved holy man Rabbi Pinhas Gottlieb, or, as he was known to everyone, Rab Pinhasl. Someone ran over to Sinkeivitz Street, where beyond the second dip in the road stood Rab Pinhasl's shtibl. Rab Pinhasl was a small, stocky redhead with a big beard, whose son, Shloyme, had only one leg. He was also an eynkl, or descendant, of Sholomo Karliner, the second rebbe of the Karlin-Shtolin Hasidic dynasty who was buried in a tomb (ohel) in Ludmir's cemetery after being shot to death by a Cossack in 1792. Most of the town's residents knew Shlomo Karliner by a different name, however, one given to him by his awed contemporaries: "Moshiah ben Yosef" (Messiah, the son of Joseph). His descendants, including Rab Pinhasl, had served as rabbis in Ludmir since the end of the eighteenth century.

Some people — particularly those who didn't live in Kilchizne — considered Rab Pinhasl to be a bit "touched." Yet a person's *yihus* (ancestry) was important in Ludmir, and Rab Pinhasl had an illustrious family tree. He was known for his warm personality and his ability to interpret

dreams, predict the future, and most important in this case, to exorcise evil spirits. Rab Pinhasl made his way through the narrow streets to the house of Bela-Risha. He placed the girl on a table and surrounded her body with lit candles. Raising his hands toward the heavens, Rab Pinhasl commanded the dybbuk to leave. Whether it left or not, nobody knows, for Bela-Risha, the orphan engaged to be married, never recovered.

Scene two: After first visiting the town in 1912, the Jewish writer and ethnographer Ansky returned to Ludmir in 1915 on the aid mission described in the introduction. In the years between these visits, Ansky began to write a play called *Between Two Worlds: The Dybbuk*. The drama revolved around a girl named Leah who falls in love with Chonen, a young scholar who used to eat meals with her family. Many years earlier, Sender, the girl's wealthy father, had vowed that Leah would marry Chonen, but the prospect of a rich son-in-law proved too tempting, and he betrothed Leah to a boy from a wealthy family instead. Upon hearing the news of Leah's impending marriage, Chonen died from grief.

On the day of the wedding, Leah visited the grave of her mother, who "died young . . . [to] ask her to lead me to the bridal canopy together with my father." While in the cemetery, she decided to visit Chonen's grave, whose unmarked location she had seen in a dream. When she returned from the cemetery, Leah violently rejected her waiting bridegroom and collapsed. An alien voice began to speak from Leah's throat, and it became clear to all that she was possessed by the dybbuk of Chonen's soul. Sender brought Leah to Rabbi Azrael of Miropol, who lit candles around the girl's prone body and declared, "Sinful and rebellious spirit! With the power of the Almighty God and with the authority of the holy Torah, I, Azrael the son of Hadas, sever all the threads that bind you to the world of the living and to the body and soul of the maiden Leah the daughter of Hannah!" The exorcism was successful, but instead of recovering her health and marrying the man chosen by her father, Leah died and was united with her beloved Chonen for eternity.

The third and final scene in this trilogy is based on the first printed account of the Maiden of Ludmir's life, S. A. Horodezky's 1909 article in the Russian journal *Evreiskaia Starina*. A girl named Hannah Rochel is engaged to be married, but tradition forbids her from seeing her beloved fiancé before the wedding, which causes her great pain. She secludes herself from other people, only going to mourn at her mother's grave. One day, exhausted from crying, Hannah Rochel falls asleep in the cemetery. She awakens at night and runs, terrified, through the uneven rows of

tombstones, until she stumbles and falls unconscious. Alerted by her screams, the cemetery's guard discovers Hannah Rochel's comatose body and carries it to her father, Monesh Verbermacher, a wealthy merchant. Monesh places her body in bed and calls Ludmir's finest doctors and ba'ale shem (shamanistic healers), but none are able to help the girl. Suddenly, Hannah Rochel sits up in bed and declares that she just had a heavenly vision. From this point on, she refuses to marry, and people begin to call her the "Maiden of Ludmir." Others, whispering that Hannah Rochel Verbermercher is possessed by a dybbuk, ask Mordechai of Chernobyl, a famous zaddik, to come to Ludmir. After examining Hannah Rochel he declares, "We don't know which soul of a famous Tsaddik transmigrated into this woman, but it is difficult all the same for the soul of a Tsaddik to find peace in the body of a woman."5

Although there are significant differences between these three scenes, they share the same basic story: a young Volhynian girl who is engaged to be married visits the grave of her dead parent(s) before the wedding and is possessed by a dybbuk. The parallels suggest that they may be connected in some way. But are they? The central event of the first scene was told to me in 1999 by Stella Klein, a former resident of Ludmir who was born in 1921 and grew up in Kilchizne. The second is drawn from Ansky's play The Dybbuk, which was first translated into Hebrew by Chaim Bialik in 1918 and then published in its Yiddish original in 1919. The third scene is based on the first account of the Maiden of Ludmir's life, which was published in 1909 by S. A. Horodezky, who cited oral traditions circulating in Volhynia as his primary sources. Their juxtaposition raises the cluster of issues that I will explore in this chapter, namely, how, why, and when did stories about the Maiden of Ludmir enter the public imagination and whether it is possible to untangle the complex web of interrelationships among the different accounts of her life.

Let us begin with Stella Klein's recollection of Bela-Risha's possession by a dybbuk. This episode is not (explicitly, at least) about the Maiden of Ludmir, but since it takes place in the same town and possesses so many of the same elements as her story, it is worthwhile asking whether a link exists among these accounts. Anyone who has listened to an older person recalling childhood events knows that such memories are flexible, often revealing the influence of more recent experiences as well as those of the distant past. When Stella Klein told me the story of Bela-Risha during one of our conversations, I couldn't help but wonder whether, after seventy years, her memories had become interwoven with details from other sto-

ries, perhaps including those of the Maiden of Ludmir and Ansky's play *The Dybbuk*.

In fact, Klein remembers a number of vivid details about the Maiden of Ludmir that she heard as a child and teenager. Klein's recollections — which I will discuss in chapter 3 — are highly significant and contain many elements not found in other sources, written or oral. Interestingly, however, she does not remember the Maiden of Ludmir as being possessed by a dybbuk, a feature that appears in practically every written account of the Maiden's life. While this suggests that Klein's recollections of Bela-Risha are uninfluenced by her knowledge of the Maiden of Ludmir, it is also possible that, over time, Klein has forgotten about the Maiden's dybbuk possession or has even transposed this event, or some of its details, onto the story of Bela-Risha.

What about Ansky's play The Dybbuk? Could it have influenced Stella Klein's memories of Bela-Risha? In 1931, when Klein was ten years old, she attended a performance of the play in Ludmir. Almost a decade later, in 1939, the film adaptation of the The Dybbuk came to Ludmir and was shown in the kino (cinema) on Farna Street across from the park. Although Klein did not see the film, it made a big impression on those who did and must have been a hot topic of discussion in the town. Even sixty years later, Nechama Singer Ariel, another former resident of Ludmir, remembered being terrified of the mysterious meshulah (messenger) in the film. Because both her parents had strep throat and were afraid she would catch it, Ariel was staying with her distant relatives, the Bardach family, when the film came to town. She went to the cinema alone and sat in one of the more expensive seats next to Dr. Shetsky's wife, whose presence was notable, since non-Jews rarely went to see a Jewish movie, despite the fact that the Yiddish films that played in Ludmir, like The Dybbuk and Yidl mit a Fidl, had Polish subtitles.

While there is always the chance that over the decades some details of Klein's recollections were influenced by these sources, other factors suggest that at least the basic events of 1928 occurred as she has remembered them. First, Klein's older sister, Betty Shuch, who was born in 1919, independently confirmed the story of Bela-Risha Yelen and her tragic end to me. Other former Ludmir residents recall different episodes that support Klein's depiction of Rab Pinhasl as a wonder-worker. For example, Moshe Margalit, who was born in 1929 and grew up on the southern outskirts of Ludmir, beyond Shulman's flour mill and *shtibl*, remembered that his ardently Zionist sister went to Rab Pinhasl seeking a blessing before she emigrated to Israel. Rab Pinhasl, who died in 1937, promised her a

successful journey, and so it came to pass. On another occasion, Margalit recalled, a merchant came to Rab Pinhasl's one-legged son, Shloyme, seeking a blessing for cold in January, so that the ice preserving his goods would not melt. Rab Shloyme, who was killed by the Nazis in Ludmir's ghetto on November 13, 1942, gave the blessing, and that winter was bitterly cold. Years later, Margalit recalled these events with a combination of nostalgia, skepticism, and humor, for as he put it, "Promising ice in January is one thing, promising it in June is quite another!"

Klein's is not the only dybbuk tale that former Ludmir residents associate with the town's cemetery. Moshe Weisgarden, born in 1914, remembers being afraid of the cemetery and the *shadim* (demons) that supposedly congregated there. One night, when Weisgarden was returning from heder (school) with a group of friends, one of the boys decided to take a shortcut through the cemetery. As he ran through the rows of tombstones, the boy suddenly felt a tug at his *kapote*. Thinking that a dybbuk or perhaps even death itself was grabbing him, the boy nearly fainted, until he realized that his coat had become caught on a stick.

These recollections teach us three important lessons. First, they reveal the difficulty in separating memories of actual events from memories derived from stories, plays, films, and other fictional sources. This suggests how complicated the relationship between oral and written traditions can be. For example, instead of reflecting childhood memories, it is likely that some of the details about the Maiden of Ludmir "recalled" by former residents actually have a basis in written accounts, films, and plays (some not even explicitly about the Maiden of Ludmir) that they read or saw after leaving Ludmir. Thus we should not simply assume that transmission of traditions is always unidirectional—from oral to written. The longer a figure or event remains within the public imagination, the more likely it is that cross-pollination of memories and sources will occur.

The second lesson that these recollections from Ludmir teach us is that many of the traditional beliefs and practices that appear in accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir and that were immortalized by Ansky in *The Dybbuk* continued to be woven into Ludmir's cultural fabric well into the twentieth century. While it would be inaccurate to suggest that all Ludmir's residents still believed in dybbukim by the 1920s, some people—especially those in Kilchizne, where poverty appears to have arrested the assimilation that was occurring in other more prosperous neighborhoods—believed that one's own neighbor, and not only a character in a folk tale or play, could become possessed by a dybbuk.

Finally, these recollections open a window onto the cultural setting for the publication and reception of the earliest written accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir's life. Many of the authors and readers of these accounts came from Eastern European Jewish communities like Ludmir. Although the majority no longer lived in a shtetl themselves, they had an intimate relationship with its way of life and were drawn by stories like that of the Maiden of Ludmir, that returned them, if only in their imaginations, to its narrow streets, its dybbukim, and its wonder-working rabbis. Let us now return to the second scene in our trilogy and watch as the story of how the Maiden of Ludmir went from the shtetlekh of Volhynia to the printed page unfolds.

The adventures and misadventures of *The Dybbuk* are almost as legendary as those of its author. Scholar David Roskies has written, "No Jewish drama was ever more popular—or controversial." In 1926 a group of Zionist critics even put the Hebrew version of the play on trial in Tel Aviv, convicting it of being a hodgepodge of "legendary, realist, and symbolist" styles. Despite this and other criticisms, the play was an immediate and great success with audiences in Europe, Israel, and the Americas, where it played in Yiddish theaters from Second Avenue on the Lower East Side to Buenos Aires, Argentina. Tragically, Ansky never lived to see his beloved work performed, for he died on November 8, 1920, in Warsaw, penniless and weakened by pneumonia. The premiere of *The Dybbuk* took place a month later, after the thirty days of mourning for its creator had passed.

During the years when he wrote and rewrote it, *The Dybbuk* became like a child to Ansky, who lacked children of his own. The beginning of his labor on the play coincided with the Jewish Ethnographic Expedition of 1912–1914 and continued through his relief efforts of 1915–1916. Several people who accompanied Ansky have stated that he incorporated material from the expedition into *The Dybbuk*. One of Ansky's friends, S. L. Zitron, remembered him saying, "The idea [for the play] came to me when I was traveling in the Volhynia and Podolia provinces collecting Jewish folklore." We know that Ansky visited Ludmir twice when he was writing *The Dybbuk*. Did Ansky know about the Maiden of Ludmir, and did he incorporate elements of her life into his most famous work?

The most direct way of answering these questions is also the most time-consuming: examining Ansky's published works, as well as the unpublished memoirs, correspondence, and papers that were scattered in archives throughout the world following his death. None of these sources appears to link Ansky to the Maiden of Ludmir. <sup>10</sup> Among Ansky's published works, however, I have discovered one source that mentions her. In 1914, between his visits to Ludmir, Ansky published a Yiddish document called *Dos yidishe etnografishe program* (The Jewish ethnographic program). <sup>11</sup> A remarkable and still untranslated work, it consists of 2,087 questions addressing a wide range of life experiences and related Jewish traditions, ranging from pregnancy and birth to death and mourning. At the beginning of the questionnaire, Ansky emphasized that informants "should write [answers to the questions] exactly as they speak in the locality, even if it isn't grammatically correct." These instructions suggest the great value Ansky placed on the oral traditions of Eastern European Jewry, even going so far as to describe them as "like the Bible" in their ability to express the "beauty and purity of the Jewish soul . . . the same loftiness and depth of Jewish thought." <sup>12</sup>

Among the questions that Ansky included in his document were a great number concerning the education, religious practices, economic activities, and social roles of women in the shtetl.<sup>13</sup> This work represents the first major effort to collect extensive ethnographic data on the lives of Eastern European Jewish women. In addition to asking general questions such as what kind of women became midwifes, how women learned to read (when they did), and whether his informants knew of any female teachers, Ansky also asked a specific question (number 896) concerning the Maiden of Ludmir. Whereas other questions asked whether the informant knew of a particular tradition or practice, this question's phrasing-"Which stories do you know about the Maiden of Ludmir"assumed previous knowledge of her. Significantly, the question appeared in a series about "old maids" (alte moiden), implying that the Maiden of Ludmir's refusal to get married was her most distinguishing feature, or at least the one most likely to define her according to the cultural taxonomy of the average informant.

Ansky's efforts to collect information about the Maiden of Ludmir and other Jewish women anticipated contemporary historical research on women's lives, just as his research into the everyday lives of shtetl Jews anticipated the work of social historians. Ansky was well aware that his decision to produce an ethnography of the Jews of Russia was nothing less than groundbreaking: "It may well be that less has been done in the field of Jewish ethnography, than is the case with any of the semi-savage tribes. It is true that the Russian Jews have produced from among their ranks quite a number of eminent ethnographers, but not one of them has worked on the development of Jewish ethnography . . . the Jewish peo-

ple still awaits its ethnographer."<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, Ansky implicitly likened Russian Jewish culture to the "semi-savage tribes," who were the typical focus of ethnography; on the other, he acknowledged that many of the ethnographers who studied these tribes were products of this same Jewish culture. At the turn of the twentieth century, therefore, Russian Jewish culture had produced "savages" and scholars alike, and, in the person of Ansky, its own ethnographer.

Ansky's examination of Jewish folk culture represented a dramatic break with what had been the dominant method of studying Judaism during the nineteenth century, the Wissenschaft des Judentums (science of Judaism). With their almost fetishistic emphasis on texts and the rabbinic elite who produced them, nineteenth-century German Jewish scholars such as Heinrich Graetz had practically no interest in the "folklore - stories, legends, parables, songs, witticisms, melodies, customs and beliefs" that so fascinated Ansky. Indeed, they were frequently openly hostile to these traditions and their bearers. Most deserving of scorn, according to Graetz, were members of the Hasidic movement, "the adherents of which announced the grossest superstition to be the fundamental principles of Judaism, and formed an order of wonder-seeking confederates."15 By contrast, Ansky argued at a board meeting of the Jewish Ethnographic Expedition that "hasidic tales and legends were the best possible means of acquainting non-Jews with the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of Jewish culture."16

This is the historiographical context for Ansky's creation of *The Dybbuk* and for his only published reference to the Maiden of Ludmir, the third ever to appear in print and the first in Yiddish. Of course, it is possible that stories about the Maiden were among the folk sources for Ansky's play. In the absence of explicit evidence of such direct influence, however, we should still see them as indirectly linked by their common participation in a centuries-old tradition of dybbuk possession. Stories of dybbukim, such as the famous "Tale of an Exorcism in Koretz" (from seventeenth-century Prague) were not only spread by word of mouth in the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe, but they were also published in popular pamphlets that edified and — not unlike contemporary comic books - entertained with images of young women threatened by evil forces and the male heroes who come to their rescue.<sup>17</sup> Instead of heavily muscled masked men, however, the superheroes in dybbuk tales were wonder-working rabbis who used their knowledge of the Kabbalah to vanquish their foes.

Dybbuk tales functioned as powerful metaphors for the ways in which

sexuality, gender, and class shaped power relations within the Jewish community. More specifically, these accounts reflected deep-seated anxiety over the sexuality and social autonomy of women, particularly young lower-class women. The typical tale involved a working-class or poor young woman who became possessed by a malevolent male spirit (sometimes via the vagina) at precisely the moment when she committed an infraction against Jewish law or social convention. Dybbuk tales responded to this anxiety by emphasizing the need for strict regulation of women of all classes (particularly during adolescence) and, concomitantly, by reinforcing the supreme social and religious authority of the male elite. At the same time, however, their central drama of a woman possessed by a male spirit blurred the line between the genders and, in so doing, subtly undermined the strict hierarchy that they were seeking to reinforce.

Both Ansky's play and accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir remain within the framework of the traditional dybbuk tale, yet they transcend the genre by adding modern twists to the older tropes they have inherited. Ansky does this by creating a love story about a young woman possessed by the spirit of her dead lover. At the end of the play, romantic love rather than the traditional male authority represented by Rabbi Azrael, the exorcist, and Sender, the girl's father, wins out. As for accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir, I will examine their use of the dybbuk theme in later chapters.

Let us now turn to the inspiration for the third and final scene in our "dybbuk trilogy": S. A. Horodezky's 1909 Russian-language article on the Maiden of Ludmir. To appreciate the great significance of this work in reconstructing the Maiden's story, we must first understand the complicated man who produced it. More than any of the authors who followed him, Samuel Abba Horodezky was intimately linked to the story of the Maiden of Ludmir. Though he is little known today, Horodezky was one of the first and most important scholars of Jewish mysticism and Hasidism. Born in 1871 in the Ukrainian town of Malin, not far from Kiev, Horodezky was only three when his father died and his mother took him to live with her own father, a grandson of Aharon of Chernobyl and a great grandson of Nahman of Bratslav. One of Horodezky's earliest memories was of his grandfather's most prized possession: the silk garment that Nahman of Bratslav wore on the Sabbath and holidays. "From this garment," Horodezky later wrote in his memoirs, "I could tell that R. Nahman was thin and small in stature."18

At the age of ten, Horodezky was sent to live with his paternal grand-

father in Chernobyl. On the way, the coachman decided that they should spend the night in an inn, "not because he [the coachman] took pity on us or on the horses but because the horses refused to go any further." The inn had two rooms; one was full of boisterous peasants drinking brandy, and the other served as sleeping quarters for tired wayfarers and for the elderly Jewish innkeeper. In the middle of the night, Horodezky woke to the sound of crying and "saw the old innkeeper sitting on the ground in the corner of the dark room, with two lit candles at his side, conducting the 'tikkun hazot' [midnight vigil], praying and crying like an innocent child over the destruction of the Temple, the exile of the Shekhinah [God's presence] and of Israel." This scene of intense and simple piety would stay with Horodezky for the rest of his life as an example of what he considered the true and original spirit of Hasidism, as he wrote many years later: "I have not forgotten you, loyal and innocent old man. I have not forgotten you these seventy years. May your memory be blessed." "19

Like other towns associated with Hasidic dynasties, Chernobyl was considered a holy place. As the old saying went, "It is not for nothing that it is called Chernobyl: for he who arrives heavy with sin under the measure of darkness (in Russian cherni, or black), leaves after visiting the zaddik, pure and white (in Russian beli, or white)." After arriving in Chernobyl, Horodezky moved in with his grandfather, Baruch, and his grandfather's mother, Hannah Haya, a famous holy woman and daughter of Mordechai of Chernobyl, whose eight brothers described her as "no different from them save for the shtreimel [fur hat] which they wore on their heads."20 In his memoirs Horodezky remembered how people would come to their house on dem rebins gas (the rebbe's street, where the Chernobler Rebbe also lived) to receive Hanna Haya's blessing. My greatgrandmother "had a great influence on me," he later wrote. "Out of the goodness of her heart and the humility of her spirit she would tell me 'holy stories' about her father R. Mordechai and about his father R. Nahum the Great, and her stories would enter into my heart."21

Horodezky remained completely committed to a Hasidic way of life until the age of sixteen, when he began to gravitate toward the small circle of *maskilim* (enlighteners) in Chernobyl. Despite the great disapproval of his family, Horodezky eventually left the fold and, at the age of twenty, moved to the larger town of Berdichev, where he attempted to establish himself as a Hebrew-language journalist. After pogroms ravaged the Ukraine in 1905–1906, Horodezky moved to Western Europe and lived in Switzerland and Germany until 1938, when he emigrated to Palestine. Unlike some of his contemporaries, he never lost his love for the Hasidic

world of his youth, though he no longer chose to dwell there himself. It is no accident, therefore, that Horodezky entitled the second chapter of his memoirs "Between Two Worlds," the same name given by Ansky to *The Dybbuk*. Like Ansky, Horodezky spent his life navigating between the worlds of traditional Judaism and modern, secular culture.

In its entry on Horodezky, the *Encylopedia Judaica* describes him as "one of the last scholars to write in the manner of the *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* before its development into modern Jewish scholarship."<sup>22</sup> While Horodezky did indeed come under the influence of this intellectual school, there remained an enormous gulf between him and the largely German Jewish proponents of the so-called science of Judaism. It is impossible to imagine a *Wissenschaft* scholar such as Heinrich Graetz addressing a colleague as "my zaddik," yet this is how the great Russian Jewish historian Simon Dubnow addressed Horodezky in one of his many letters to him.<sup>23</sup> For his part, Horodezky wrote an article in which he traced Dubnow's rabbinic ancestry and described his subject as "the last great bearer of the spirit which governed his family for centuries."<sup>24</sup> These details suggest that whatever influence the *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* had on Horodezky, it never completely erased his personal, though ambivalent, identification with Hasidism.

Over the years, Horodezky wrote numerous books and articles on Hasidism and Jewish mysticism, including a four-volume survey of the Hasidic movement and its masters. Even within this large body of work, Horodezky's writings on the Maiden of Ludmir hold a special place. In 1909, only a short while after leaving Ukraine for Western Europe, he published his first essay on her life in Russian; in 1946, a decade before his death in Israel, he published his last work on the Maiden of Ludmir in Hebrew. In between, Horodezky published book chapters on the Maiden of Ludmir in Hebrew, German, English, and Yiddish. Spanning nearly fifty years and five languages, Horodezky's literary engagement with the Maiden of Ludmir was unique both in its duration and its linguistic diversity. Indeed, like a dybbuk, the Maiden of Ludmir accompanied Horodezky throughout his own incarnations.

We do not know exactly why Horodezky chose to write about the Maiden of Ludmir for the inaugural volume of Simon Dubnow's Russian-language journal *Evreiskaia Starina* (Jewish antiquity) in 1909.<sup>25</sup> Published under the auspices of the Jewish Historico-Ethnographic Society founded by Dubnow in 1892, *Evreiskaia Starina* was part of a broader effort among Russian Jewish intellectuals to explore and catalog the rich traditions of the Pale of Settlement. Neither Horodezky nor

Dubnow mention the Maiden of Ludmir article in their respective memoirs, and I have found no reference to it in the published and unpublished correspondence between the men.<sup>26</sup> We do know that the journal was Dubnow's favorite project during this period and that in addition to assembling an impressive list of regular contributors, including Ansky, Horodezky, and the Polish Jewish historian Meir Balaban, Dubnow edited each volume from cover to cover. Given the great importance of the journal to Dubnow, whom Horodezky referred to as a "dear friend" in their correspondence, we may assume that Horodezky chose an essay that he thought would be of significant interest to Dubnow and to the journal's readers. Likewise, Dubnow's inclusion of the essay in *Evreiskaia Starina* suggests that he, like Ansky, was at least beginning to see women's participation in Jewish culture as a subject worthy of exploration, though it should be pointed out that Dubnow did little to examine the role of women in his own voluminous writings on Jewish history.

For Horodezky, the article served as a bridge to the Hasidic traditions of his youth and to the Russian Jewish world of letters of his early adulthood, both of which he had recently left behind when he moved to Western Europe. Reflecting Horodezky's own "betwixt-and-between" existence at the time, the article on the Maiden of Ludmir reads like a cross between traditional Hasidic hagiography and modern scholarship.<sup>27</sup> Thus after a brief introductory paragraph that addresses the role of women in Hasidism and the special significance of the Maiden of Ludmir to the movement, the rest of the article is a straightforward narrative of her life, with only minimal interpretation.

Despite its strong resemblance to a typical work of Hasidic hagiography, three things set Horodezky's article apart. First, for the first time in history, a Hasidic holy woman, rather than a male zaddik, had become the subject of a written work. Second, unlike the vast majority of Hasidic hagiographies, which were written in Hebrew or Yiddish, Horodezky's article appeared in Russian, though I have uncovered evidence suggesting that Dubnow translated it from a Hebrew original. Finally, the article was published in a scholarly journal whose intended audience included Jewish and non-Jewish Russian academics. This differentiated it from hagiographical works that appealed exclusively to Hasidim or to those who grew up in a Hasidic milieu and were still interested in its traditions.

Perhaps the key to understanding Horodezky's interest in the Maiden of Ludmir lies in his family background. One of the most important aspects of Horodezky's account is the crucial role played by his ancestor Mordechai of Chernobyl in compelling the Maiden of Ludmir to marry

and adopt a "lower, more normal" lifestyle, as Horodezky put it. Despite Horodezky's own links to the Chernobler dynasty, in his four-volume history of the Hasidic movement he criticized the opulent lifestyle and dynastic aspirations of Mordechai of Chernobyl, arguing that he had "greatly caused the decline of Hasidism in the Ukraine." For Horodezky, the true spirit of Hasidism was exemplified by figures such as the old innkeeper from his childhood journey or by Mordechai of Chernobyl's own father, Menachem Nahum, who once described poverty as a gift. Horodezky's critical attitude toward Mordechai of Chernobyl suggests an underlying ambivalence about his own Hasidic upbringing. On the one hand, more than sixty years after leaving the fold, Horodezky could look back on his childhood in his memoirs with great nostalgia. On the other, he had abandoned his own place within the Hasidic aristocracy, and, in his historical works on the movement, had written critically of the spiritual decline initiated by his ancestor.

These observations raise an intriguing question: Did Horodezky write about the Maiden of Ludmir because he identified with her on some level? Both the Maiden of Ludmir and Horodezky rejected the traditional social roles expected of them, rebellions that brought them into conflict with the chief representative of Hasidic authority in Ukraine-the Chernobler dynasty. Both eventually emigrated to Palestine to escape difficult conditions and out of a love of Zion. Finally, the Maiden of Ludmir's nonaristocratic background, simple piety, and frugal lifestyle all sharp contrasts to the court of Chernobyl - matched Horodezky's image of the true spirit of Hasidism. These points suggest that Horodezky may have identified or, at least, empathized with the Maiden of Ludmir in her struggle. Yet as a direct descendant of Mordechai of Chernobyl, one who was raised on stories of his illustrious ancestor, Horodezky probably felt some identification with his great-great-grandfather as well. It is clear, in any case, that he always remained emotionally attached to the Chernobler court of his childhood. I would argue, therefore, that one of the chief reasons that Horodezky chose to write about the Maiden of Ludmir was that her story captured both sides of his own relationship to Hasidism and to one of its most prestigious but, from his perspective, problematic families. In other words, Horodezky saw himself both in the Maiden of Ludmir and in Mordechai of Chernobyl.

Despite or perhaps because of this intimate connection, Horodezky sought, in print at least, to maintain a scholarly distance from his subject. He does not mention his own relationship to Mordechai of Chernobyl, nor does he cite members of the Chernobler family as sources for his arti-

cle on the Maiden of Ludmir. Instead, Horodezky notes that "[s]tories of long time residents of Volhynia who personally knew and remember the Maiden of Ludmir served as source material for this piece." It is likely, however, that Horodezky had first heard about the Maiden of Ludmir and her encounter with Mordechai of Chernobyl from his own greatgrandmother, Hannah Haya, whose stories had had such a powerful impact on him while he was growing up. Indeed, the example of Hannah Haya, who herself may have known the Maiden of Ludmir, must have been a major influence on Horodezky's pioneering decision to write about Hasidic women.

As mentioned above, Horodezky began his 1909 article with some general remarks about the status of women in Hasidism, a subject to which he would return throughout his life. By way of introducing the Maiden of Ludmir's significance, Horodezky writes:

In Hasidism, the woman generally has a modest, passive role [in Russian, *skromnaia passivnaia rol*]. From time to time she may approach a "zaddik" in order to pour out her soul before him and receive his council and blessings. Very rarely do we encounter in the history of Hasidism active female figures who have an influence on the surrounding milieu. Among the holy women approximating the degree of "zaddika" belonged the enigmatic figure who appeared in the second quarter of the nineteenth century and was preserved in popular legends under the name "the Maiden of Ludmir."<sup>31</sup>

In his first account of the Maiden of Ludmir, therefore, Horodezky explicitly depicts her as a highly unusual, though not unique, figure within a movement that generally relegates its female members to a "modest and passive role."

During the next four decades, Horodezky published at least five different versions of the Maiden of Ludmir's story, in German (1920), Hebrew (1922, 1946), English (1928), and Yiddish (1937). While they differ from one another in certain details (which I will explore in later chapters), all share the same basic narrative of the Maiden of Ludmir's life. Even a casual comparison of these accounts, however, reveals that over the years Horodezky underwent a striking ideological shift regarding the role of women in Hasidism and the particular significance of the Maiden of Ludmir within the movement.

Appearing a little more than a decade after his *Evreiskaia Starina* article, Horodezky's German and Hebrew accounts from the early 1920s depict the status of women within Hasidism in a much more positive light. In sharp contrast to the 1909 article, both accounts preface their

depictions of the Maiden of Ludmir with the assertion that Hasidic women achieved "complete equality in religious life." They add that "Hasidism enabled the Jewish woman to rise to the level of the zaddik, if she were deserving," then list a number of Hasidic holy women including the mother of Nahman of Bratslav, the granddaughter of Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apt, and the daughter of Mordechai of Chernobyl (that is, Hannah Haya). Horodezky mentions only one caveat to this glowing portrait. All of these holy women were related to a powerful male leader except for the Maiden of Ludmir, who was from "the masses."<sup>32</sup>

In 1928, with translation help from his wife, Horodezky published an English-language version of the Maiden of Ludmir's story in a book entitled Leaders of Hassidism. Even more strongly than the German and Hebrew versions, it depicts the Maiden's life as a success story, one symbolizing the general empowerment of women in Hasidism. The chapter on the Maiden begins in a similar vein as the German and Hebrew accounts: "The Jewish woman was given complete equality in all religious matters among the Hassidic followers of Baal Shem Tob ('Besht')," adding that a woman could "rise to the rank of a Tzaddik. If she were worthy nothing could stand in her way." Perhaps the most interesting feature of the account is a revealing error made by Horodezky's wife and cousin, Maria Horodezky-Magasanik, in her English translation. Instead of marrying because of Mordechai of Chernobyl's intervention, as in the other accounts, here the Maiden of Ludmir actually "became the wife of the celebrated Tzaddik, Rabbi Mordechai of Czernobyl . . . He thought that through marriage, he would be able to bring her soul down to a lower and more normal state."33 Though erroneous, this slip brings to the surface the erotic undercurrent between the Maiden of Ludmir and Mordechai of Chernobyl that animates Horodezky's other accounts.

A decade later, in 1937, Horodezky finally published a Yiddish version of the Maiden of Ludmir's story. Like its predecessors, this account asserts that women achieved religious equality in Hasidism and then—to prove its point, as it were—provides a by now standard roll call of Hasidic holy women, culminating with the Maiden of Ludmir, who attained a uniquely exalted spiritual "level" (madregah) among Jewish women, according to Horodezky. Perhaps because he had only recently come into contact with him, or perhaps because of the more traditional audience of the Yiddish account, for the first time Horodezky mentions meeting a follower of the Maiden: "I met a Hasid of the Maiden of Ludmir, an old, pious Jew, who told me with great excitement about her

great holiness and her teachings."<sup>34</sup> One detail in particular supports the view that this Hasid had provided Horodezky with new firsthand information about the Maiden of Ludmir. Whereas in the other accounts, he incorrectly refers to the Maiden of Ludmir's prayer house as the *grünshtibl*, in the Yiddish version, Horodezky correctly calls it the *gornshtibl*.

In 1946, while living in Palestine, Horodezky published his sixth and final account of the Maiden of Ludmir's life. Like all but the first Russian article, it appears as a book chapter, in this case in a Hebrew work called Ole Tsiyon (Immigrants to Zion). Once again we find the same platitudes concerning the religious equality of women in Hasidism and their ability to rise to the rank of zaddik, as well as a list of Hasidic holy women, whose crowning glory is the Maiden of Ludmir: "more exalted and famous than any of them, from among the masses she came and achieved the level of zaddeket." The account offers little to suggest that since arriving in Palestine a decade earlier Horodezky had gained much new knowledge about the Maiden's life in Ludmir. Concerning her time in Palestine, Horodezky hints that he knows something but is unwilling to publish it in a work of history: "And also in the land of Israel Hannah Rochel remained in a state of virginity until the day of her death . . . however, where she lived and died in the land of Israel are unknown. Her last days in the land of Israel were like her first in the Exile, they were one great aggadah [legend] and are shrouded in secrecy and no one can confirm them. She was a riddle in life and in death, and so she remains until today."35 As we will see in the next chapter, Horodezky's cautious approach to the Maiden of Ludmir's life in Palestine was not shared by all her subsequent biographers, many of whom provided detailed descriptions of this period.

Even this brief survey reveals that Horodezky's views underwent two major changes over the years. First, instead of describing the role of women as "modest and passive," as he had in 1909, by the 1920s Horodezky had begun to emphasize the "complete equality" of women in the Hasidic movement. Second, Horodezky noted in later works that the Maiden of Ludmir was the only Hasidic holy woman to hail from the "masses" rather than from a prestigious family, a point missing from the first account. Were these views at odds with one another? For Horodezky, the answer was no, since after the first few generations of the movement it was almost impossible for anyone — man or woman — to achieve a position of leadership unless he or she had close ties to a dynastic family. In Horodezky's eyes, the fact that a woman without such ties was able to become a spiritual leader during a time when almost no men from sim-

ple backgrounds accomplished this feat only confirmed that Hasidism empowered women. During the space of a decade, therefore, the Maiden of Ludmir had gone from being the exception that proved the rule that women possessed limited spiritual opportunities in Hasidism to the most striking proof of the complete religious equality of women within the movement. In short, the Maiden of Ludmir had become a poster girl for Horodezky's idealized view of Hasidism.

Though he never acknowledged it, Horodezky's ideological shift was dramatically at odds with the basically unchanged narrative of the Maiden of Ludmir's life that he transported from account to account. For example, while Mordechai of Chernobyl's attempt to "lead the soul of this woman [the Maiden] to a lower, more normal state by means of marriage" made sense within a movement that limited women to a "modest and passive role," it did not jibe with a movement that granted "complete religious equality to women," as Horodezky claimed in later accounts. Far from supporting Horodezsky's persistent claims that Hasidism encouraged women to become independent leaders, therefore, his biography of the Maiden of Ludmir actually confirmed the opposite: that the official establishment of the movement as embodied by Mordechai of Chernobyl sought to rein in independent female leaders. Had Horodezky chosen to contrast Mordechai of Chernobyl's attitude toward the Maiden of Ludmir with his attitude toward his daughter, the holy woman Hannah Haya, he would have seen that at least this particular member of the Hasidic establishment only supported holy women who knew their place; they needed to come from a powerful family (preferably his own), be married, have children, and not engage in activities that were seen as inappropriate, namely, those challenging male prerogatives.

Horodezky's ideological about-face may be traced to changes in his own life between 1909 and the 1920s. When his first account of the Maiden of Ludmir was published, Horodezky had only recently arrived in Western Europe. For both personal and professional reasons, he sought to distance himself physically, emotionally, and ideologically from the Hasidic world of his youth. Since his account was to appear in a Russian-language journal with an audience of "enlightened" Jews as well as non-Jews, Horodezky wrote dispassionately about the religious role of women in Hasidism, which, from his own upbringing, he knew to be limited—though certain exceptions existed, such as his own greatgrandmother and the Maiden of Ludmir herself.

By the 1920s much had changed for Horodezky and for his fellow Eastern European Jews. In the decade since the publication of his first account, World War I, the Russian Revolution, a series of pogroms, and the effects of a rapidly encroaching modernity had combined to endanger the traditional way of life in Jewish communities throughout Eastern Europe. Many shtetl Jews responded by emigrating to America and to Western Europe, where they frequently encountered hostility from both non-Jews and from their more assimilated coreligionists. Horodezky describes this in his memoirs as a dark time. After writing about his beloved uncle's murder during a 1919 pogrom and the uprooting of his relatives, Horodezky adds, "And I am here, in Switzerland, full of despair and tormented by anguish and longing." 36

Horodezky's immediate response was to move to Berlin, where he would be closer to his remaining relatives and to what he hoped would be a more vibrant Jewish community. What he encountered in Germany, however, convinced him that the only solution to the so-called Jewish problem was emigration to Palestine. Horodezky's writings from this period depict Hasidism as a populist and genuinely Jewish antidote (unlike Reform Judaism, for example) to the dry and spiritually bankrupt "rabbinism" that he felt dominated Jews in the Diaspora. Ironically, Horodezky had adopted the same distorted categories as Wissenschaft scholars such as Heinrich Graetz, who not only criticized "rabbinism," for being empty but also condemned Hasidism as "primitive" in its emotionality and mysticism. Yet for Horodezky, as for Martin Buber, it was precisely these qualities of Hasidism that could lead Jews out of the darkness of the Diaspora to a spiritually valid life in the land of Israel. Thus, as Ada Rapoport-Albert has noted, Horodezky came to view Hasidism as "capable of providing an authentically Jewish model for the rebirth of the Jewish nation on its land, cleansed of all the Diaspora maladies of 'rabbinism.' "37

In line with what Rapoport-Albert has called his "Zionist feminism," Horodezky claimed that women enjoyed religious and social equality in the Hasidic movement, in sharp contrast to their inferior status under rabbinism. Had Horodezky simply forgotten about his earlier position that women had a "modest and passive role" in Hasidism? Had he genuinely changed his mind? Several factors help to explain the dramatic shift in Horodezky's views. First, with time and distance, Horodezky could now look back nostalgically on the Hasidic world that he had once abandoned. Second, feeling that the Hasidic movement and its members—including his own close relatives—were increasingly embattled, Horodezky sought to present them in a positive light. Finally, having internalized an "enlightened" attitude toward women since arriving in

Western Europe, Horodezky attempted to portray Hasidism as an egalitarian movement. Unfortunately, the result was a distorted picture of women's true status within Hasidism.

Despite his apologetic approach, Horodezky deserves credit for being the first to write about women in Hasidism and about the life of the Maiden of Ludmir in particular. Concerning his 1909 account, Rapoport-Albert has gone so far as to write that "[a]ll subsequent accounts [about the Maiden of Ludmir] . . . are derived from this original version."38 As I will show in the next chapter, this claim is not supported by a comparison of the biographical accounts, many of which possess significant departures from Horodezky's version. Nevertheless, his work did influence other writers in a number of extremely important ways. First, the value of Horodezky's scholarly imprimatur during the first half of twentieth century should not be underestimated. By transforming the Maiden of Ludmir into a literary subject, he opened the door to subsequent authors. Some of the writers who followed in his footsteps do appear to have borrowed their basic narratives from him, adding minor and, on occasion, major changes. They also inherited a number of interpretations, including his view that the Maiden of Ludmir was a woman rebbe and that she had undergone a gender reversal following her ecstatic vision, thereafter "acting like a man in her conduct." Finally, Horodezky's methodological decision to employ oral traditions influenced many of his successors to do the same in their accounts.

We have seen how the story of the Maiden of Ludmir moved from word to pen in the first few decades of the twentieth century. At a time when women in Kilchizne still cried for the "Moid" when their children fell ill, Ansky and Horodezky, especially, began the process of communicating her story to the wider world. In the following chapters, we will continue to reconstruct the different literary incarnations of the Maiden of Ludmir, search for evidence of her life in official documents and Hasidic hagiographies, and explore the tales still told by former Ludmir residents.

#### CHAPTER 2

# Writing the Maiden

In 1924 Leyb Malakh, a young Jewish immigrant to Argentina, published the first dramatic adaptation of the Maiden of Ludmir's life. Malakh was born Leybl Zalzman in the Polish shtetl of Zvolin, where his Hasidic father eked out a living as a *melamed* (teacher) and horse dealer. After the traumatic death of his mother, in his early teens Malakh abandoned Zvolin for the bright lights of Warsaw, where he earned his keep as a mirror polisher, a baker's boy, and a painter, before deciding to become a Yiddish writer at the age of sixteen. By the time Malakh stepped off the boat in Argentina ten years later, he was already an accomplished and prolific author. The Jewish community of Buenos Aires that greeted Malakh upon his arrival teemed with Yiddish organizations, theaters, and newspapers, as well as enough Jewish pimps and prostitutes to warrant their own synagogue and cemetery.

"Das Gorn Shtibl," Malakh's work on the Maiden of Ludmir, was serialized in a Buenos Aires Yiddish weekly from November 1923 to May 1924. Stylistically "Das Gorn Shtibl" most resembles a play, but Malakh called his drama "a legendary poem." Several factors suggest that Malakh had access to oral traditions different from those earlier employed by Horodezky. Most notably, as the work's title indicates, Malakh knew the correct name of the Maiden of Ludmir's study house, though he mistakenly refers to her as "Feyge," rather than as Hannah Rochel, a name sup-

ported by archival sources. The real significance of Malakh's highly fictionalized work lies not in the historicity of its details, however, but in its groundbreaking awareness of the dramatic appeal of the Maiden of Ludmir's life.

Malakh, who later wrote a Yiddish drama called Mississippi concerning race relations in the Deep South, perceived that the story of a Jewish woman attempting to navigate the rough waters between tradition and her own desires would resonate with Jewish immigrants confronting modernity on the mean streets of Buenos Aires. Like Ansky's play The Dybbuk, Malakh's drama unfolds in a Hasidic shtetl, but both works speak to the very modern question of what happens when an individual questions the absolute authority of her family, her community, and her culture. The fact that the Maiden of Ludmir was a woman, like the main character in The Dybbuk, intensified this sense of conflict, since the changing role of women was one of the most significant social issues affecting Jewish society during the first few decades of the twentieth century. While Jewish immigrants could identify with the subversive elements of the Maiden of Ludmir's story, they could also look with nostalgia at her painful struggle to remain within the Hasidic fold, albeit on her own terms. Perhaps this very ambivalence is what made the Maiden of Ludmir's story compelling to Jews — including Leyb Malakh — who felt torn between the Hasidic shtetlekh of their youth and their current lives in the bustling immigrant neighborhoods of cities like Buenos Aires and New York.

"Das Gorn Shtibl" was the first work that Malakh published after arriving in Argentina, but it was not his last to deal with the issue of women's rights. Only three years later, in 1926, Malakh ignited a controversy when he wrote a play sharply criticizing the powerful Jewish pimps of Buenos Aires for their abuse of immigrant Jewish women. Enraged, the pimps pressured a theater to withdraw the drama, sparking a broader struggle to free the local Yiddish theater from the patronage of the sex industry. In the same year, Malakh adapted his work on the Maiden of Ludmir to the stage, where it was performed by the Young Argentina theater group. Before his premature death in 1936, Malakh extensively revised "Das Gorn Shtibl." Now called "The Maiden from Ludmir," the unpublished manuscript attracted favorable attention from the great Yiddish dramatists Maurice Schwartz in New York and Michael Veichert in Warsaw, as well as from the literary critic Elhanan Zeitlin.

During the next seventy-five years, the story of the Maiden of Ludmir would be adapted into two novels, four plays, and one play within a novel, Isaac Bashevis Singer's *Shosha*.<sup>3</sup> Rather than focus on these explicitly dramatic treatments of her life, however, in this chapter I would like to explore another genre of literature concerning the Maiden of Ludmir: biographical accounts that, like the pioneering work of Horodezky, straddle both history and hagiography. While the novels and plays mentioned above have little if any use as primary sources, the accounts that I will examine below all make use of oral traditions originating in Eastern Europe or Israel. As such, they constitute an indispensable archive for reconstructing the central events of the Maiden's life, and, just as important, for understanding the ways in which the Maiden was perceived by her contemporaries, both in Ludmir and later in Jerusalem.

Despite their biographical value, it would be naive to read these accounts as objective or neutral in any sense. On the contrary, as I will demonstrate below, each account reflects the distinct ideological orientation and cultural context of its author. In the words of Michel de Certeau, "while these discourses speak of history, they are already situated in history." Each account employs earlier written sources, oral traditions, and interviews with living Hasidim, some of whom claimed to have known the Maiden when she was living in Palestine. Despite their efforts to reconstruct her life, however, all the accounts contain obvious historical errors.

Collectively the authors of these works represent a lost world of Jewish letters, a world in which Hasidic figures like the Maiden of Ludmir were brought to life by authors who felt a duty to memorialize the culture of their childhoods. Without exception, all came from Hasidic backgrounds themselves, and all maintained contact with this culture, even after they had left it. Several, including Ephraim Taubenhaus, Samuel Abba Horodezky, and Yohanan Twersky, had close female relatives who were considered holy women in their own right. For some of them, this may have played an important role in their decision to write about the Maiden of Ludmir; at the very least, it must have sensitized them to the status of women within the Hasidic movement.

Their accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir's life can be classified according to certain common features. For example, some authors (Horodezky, Mekler, Twersky) emphasize the role of the Chernobler Rebbe in the Maiden of Ludmir's birth, while others (Taubenhaus, Gross, Raddock, Evan) stress the involvement of the Seer of Lublin in the same event. This indicates that some authors drew on the same pool of oral traditions and/or that they were influenced by each other's accounts. Despite their similarities, all accounts possess unique features and are of value in reconstructing the Maiden of Ludmir's story.

The list of authors who wrote about the Maiden of Ludmir is long, but in this chapter I have chosen to concentrate on the work of three: Charles Raddock, Menasheh Unger, and Ephraim Taubenhaus.<sup>6</sup> My choice reflects a number of factors. First, each writer represents a different geographical region and language. Raddock was an American who wrote in English; Unger was born and raised in Eastern Europe (though he eventually immigrated to Palestine and, later, America) and wrote in Yiddish; and Taubenhaus was an Israeli who wrote in Hebrew. Second, each writer had a definite ideological orientation that strongly influenced his portrait of the Maiden of Ludmir: Americanism, socialism, and Zionism, respectively. Third, each wrote more than one account of the Maiden of Ludmir's life and remained interested in her story for years. Fourth, each writer employed oral traditions as well as the testimony of eyewitnesses who claimed they knew the Maiden of Ludmir. In sum, along with the work of Horodezky, their accounts represent the most important written sources on the life of the Maiden of Ludmir.

Charles Raddock was born in New York City in 1912 to Rivke and David Raddock, immigrants from Eastern Europe. In Williamsburg, the Brooklyn neighborhood where they had settled, Rivke Raddock functioned as a firzogerin for women who could not read Hebrew and was known for her great piety.7 After studying in several Orthodox rabbinic academies, her son Charles became an English-language author and journalist, specializing in Jewish and labor issues. Though Raddock was not the first American to write about the Maiden of Ludmir in English a lawyer named Joseph Gross had already written an account for a Rochester, New York, paper called The Jewish Ledger in 1936 — he became her most important and prolific biographer in English. Raddock's literary engagement with the Maiden of Ludmir began in 1948 and continued for the next three decades, during which he published four accounts of her life in English-language publications, thereby introducing the Maiden to the growing number of American Jews who could no longer read Yiddish.8

Raddock keenly felt the need to translate the Maiden of Ludmir's life into an American idiom for his postwar audience, as his first account from 1948 plainly reveals. In its opening paragraphs, Raddock did not discuss her position within the Hasidic movement, as had Horodezky, but instead chose to place her story within three contexts more familiar and relevant to his rapidly assimilating American Jewish readers: Hollywood, Christianity, and Freudian psychology. Thus he began by writing, "No

motion picture company, you may be sure, will ever lay out \$4,600,000 to film the story of Hannah of Ludmir as they are doing for Joan of Lorraine" and added, "Modern psychologists would probably ascribe the unconventional behavior of both these adolescent girls to an 'Electra complex,' and perhaps trace their conduct to some psycho-sexual disorders."9

Raddock did not explain Hollywood's unwillingness to produce a film about the Maiden of Ludmir. Perhaps he felt that this would be self-evident to an American Jewish audience in the late 1940s, when studios, including those run by Jews, were reluctant to explore Jewish themes in their movies. Nor did he speculate further on the possible psychoanalytical explanations of the Maiden of Ludmir's behavior. Raddock did unpack the comparison with Joan of Arc, however, pointing out that like her "Catholic prototype," the Maiden of Ludmir "was of humble origin; she deserted feminine ways, challenged the most influential ecclesiastics of her time, suffered persecution, and finally was excommunicated." Yet in contrast to Joan of Arc, the Maiden of Ludmir was not executed, since "Judaism has never done that kind of thing, not even to its worst heretics." 10

Raddock was not the first to liken the Maiden of Ludmir to Joan of Arc. In a footnote to a German article on Hasidism from 1916, Horodezky had already referred to the Maiden of Ludmir as the "chassidische Jeanne d'Arc."11 It is unclear to what extent Raddock drew on Horodezky's work for this and other details. While there are a number of parallels between their writings, there are also very significant differences. Unlike Horodezky, for instance, Raddock attributes the Maiden's birth to a blessing from the Seer of Lublin, depicts her fiancé as a young cantonist garrisoned in Ludmir, mentions a rumor that she sought refuge in a Greek Orthodox convent, and, perhaps most strikingly, provides a detailed account of her life in Palestine. In these respects, Raddock's accounts greatly resemble Ephraim Taubenhaus's writings on the Maiden, which I will discuss below. Like Taubenhaus, Raddock also claims to have had contact with individuals who personally knew the Maiden of Ludmir in Palestine or, as he put it, "an old follower informed me [about the Maiden's life] in 1951 on my first visit to Israel."12

Whereas Raddock was an American by birth, Menasheh Unger was born in 1899 in the Galician shtetl of Zabno, where his father, Shalom David (1860–1923), was a Hasidic rebbe. By his late teens, Unger was already torn between the Hasidic traditions of his family and the secular world. After moving to Vienna, where he received rabbinic ordination at the age

of eighteen from a Hasidic yeshiva, Unger began to take courses at the University of Vienna. Soon Unger was deeply involved in the Jewish socialist movement, and in 1925 he immigrated to Palestine, where he attended the newly established Hebrew University and worked as a stonemason. In 1934 Unger left Palestine for America, quickly finding work as a writer for *Der Tog*, a Yiddish newspaper published in New York.

During the next three decades, until his death in 1969, Unger continued to live a kind of dual existence. As his surviving personal papers in the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research archives indicate, Unger remained in close contact with prominent members of Hasidic dynasties in America, Israel, and Europe. At the same time, however, Unger remained deeply committed to socialism. Rather than seeing Hasidism and socialism as ideologically incompatible, as did many of his fellow leftists, Unger saw them as sharing the same proletarian spirit, at least until the Hasidic movement began to stray from its original principles. In a 1946 Yiddish book, Unger described Hasidism as a "development of the Jewish popular masses" that "defended the simple man of the people." According to Unger, Hasidism declined when its originally proletarian structure was replaced by a system of inherited leadership and wealthy courts. Nevertheless, even in our own day, Unger noted, "folk rebbes" could still be found who preserved the original "glow of Beshtian Hasidism." Instead of relegating Hasidism to the dustbin of history, therefore, Unger sought to emphasize the originally progressive values that "we can inherit from this movement."13

Unger's socialist yet sympathetic reading of Hasidism extended to his interpretation of women's status within the movement, for, as he put it, "Hasidism not only liberated the simple Jews, the humble people, from the hegemony, from the sovereignty of the powerful and the scholars, but it also freed women, who were fettered in spiritual shackles and completely estranged from social life." Unger's apologetic interpretation betrays the influence of Horodezky, whose 1937 Yiddish work on Hasidism he cites for support. Like Horodezky, Unger also developed an intense, decades-long interest in the Maiden of Ludmir, whom he viewed as the most potent symbol of the empowerment of women in the Hasidic movement. Thanks to the collection of his unpublished papers in the YIVO archives in New York, I was able to explore Unger's profound engagement with her story.

At some point in the 1930s, while he was living in Tel Aviv, Unger composed a Hebrew account entitled "'The Holy Virgin of Ludmir': Her Final Years in the Land of Israel." <sup>15</sup> In this never-published manuscript,

Unger depicts the Maiden's life in Ludmir and Palestine in great detail, drawing heavily on the work of Horodezky (though he doesn't cite him) and on a now-lost account by the Yiddish journalist Yitzhak Evan, whom he quotes extensively. <sup>16</sup> Significantly, Unger cites conversations with a Jerusalem Hasid named Yosl Akiba's (that is, the son of Akiba) as the source for his information on the Maiden's life in Palestine, including her physical appearance, where she lived, her religious activities, and the circumstances of her death.

Despite this early expression of interest, nearly forty years would pass before Unger finally published an account devoted to the Maiden of Ludmir's life in 1968. <sup>17</sup> Perhaps the progressive political climate of the late 1960s had inspired Unger to tell the story of a woman whom he viewed as a protofeminist and a "daughter of the Jewish masses." The result was an eight-part series that appeared in the Yiddish newspaper *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal* during the tumultuous spring of 1968. Drawing on a wide variety of written sources, including the work of Horodezky, Evan, Raddock, Balaban, Mekler, and Biber, as well as on his own contacts within the Hasidic world, Unger succeeded in producing the most comprehensive biography of the Maiden of Ludmir in any language.

In an unpublished manuscript of this Yiddish work (but not in the printed version), Unger included the following tradition:

In Ludmir proper there lived two pious young men who were called Meir and Shlomo Bardach, whose father used to visit the Seer of Lublin. Once the rebbe tested the young men's learning and declared, "Meir learns with madness and Shlomo with intelligence." And so Meir went mad and a match was proposed between Shlomo Bardach [and the Maiden of Ludmir]. Thereafter Shlomo went into her room and she [the Maiden] looked at him and said, "Shlomo is as pure as pure white wool." Her father wondered whether he had finally found a man who was worthy to be her husband, but the young man Shlomo did not want to hear of it. He said, "It is not good to confuse one thing with another, a rabbi and a woman [or wife] are each in a category of their own and should not be brought together in the same individual.\(^{18}\)

On the surface, there is nothing remarkable about this episode, yet I nearly fell out of my chair when I first set eyes on it in YIVO's library. The cause of my shock requires some explanation. In 1998 I came across a powerful memoir called *Man Is Wolf to Man*, whose author, Janusz Bardach, not only survived seven years in the Soviet Gulag, but, upon his release, also became a world-renowned surgeon in Poland before emigrating to America in the early 1970s. Bardach's journey was remarkable

in itself, but what caught my attention as soon as I opened the book was that he hailed from Ludmir. With the help of another former resident of the town, I managed to track down Bardach and ask him whether he had heard about the Maiden of Ludmir while growing up. His response was more than surprising; it was unbelievable.

"Certainly I know about the Maiden of Ludmir," Bardach exclaimed in his robust voice. "After all, she was my great-great-grandmother." Since her biographers insisted that the Maiden had remained a virgin, I listened to Bardach with skepticism as he told me a tale he said he had heard from his own grandparents more than seven decades earlier. One day, Bardach began, when she was fourteen or fifteen, the Moid went to the cemetery with some friends. While in the cemetery, she fell and hit her head on a stone, suffering a concussion so severe that her parents thought she would die. Suddenly she sat up and began to "recite pieces of Torah, as if she knew them by heart." From this point on, she sat behind a sheet and spoke to other people through a hole. The Maiden quickly gained a reputation for learning and even mastered the legal code known as the Shulhan Arukh. Her parents, however, said "enough with this meshugas, and they arranged a *shiduch* [match] with one of my ancestors." After the wedding, the Maiden cut off her hair, as was the custom for married Hasidic women, and immediately lost her knowledge of the Torah. Eventually she had a child who fell deathly ill. The Maiden prayed that if the child recovered, she would go to Israel. When this occurred, the Maiden left for the Holy Land, where she spent her final years. The child who remained in Ludmir, Bardach claimed, became his ancestor.

Bardach's version of the Maiden's story resembles published accounts in some respects and differs in others, most notably, of course, in his claim that the second most famous virgin in Jewish history was actually a mother. Given the contrast between Bardach's dramatic assertion and every other account of the Maiden's life, I couldn't help but think that his grandparents had told him a *bubbe mayse* (old wive's tale) those many decades ago in Ludmir. Then one day I came across the reference to the Bardach brothers in Menasheh Unger's Yiddish manuscript. Bewildered and curious, I called Janusz Bardach and asked him if he knew of any relatives named Meir and Shlomo. "Of course!" he boomed in his Polish-Iowa accent. "Meir was my great-great-grandfather, and Shlomo was his brother. They started a fur business together, which my grandfather, Mottel, turned into a success."

How did Unger come across a tale linking the Maiden of Ludmir to the Bardach family? What was the relationship between Unger's story and the one told to me by Janusz Bardach? Did Bardach originally hear a tale like the one preserved in Unger's manuscript, only to remember a different, more romantic version decades later? Do both traditions refer back to a single episode that actually occurred? Hoping to answer these questions, I sought information about Meir and Shlomo Bardach in the Russian and Ukrainian archives. Although what I discovered did not provide any concrete answers to my questions, it did lend more credence to the assertion that the Bardach brothers and Hannah Rochel had known each other in Ludmir.

Both Mayer and Shlomo Bardach appear in the Russian Empire's 1858 census (revizkie skazki) of Ludmir. 19 According to this list, Meyer Chaim Moshkovich Bardach was sixty-two and his brother, Shlomo Chaim Moshkovich, sixty-six when the census was taken. This would put them in their early twenties during the first few decades of the nineteenth century, making them contemporaries of the Maiden of Ludmir, whose own year of birth appears to have been 1806. Another piece of the puzzle was supplied by a government list of merchants living in Ludmir in 1827 that mentions Moshe Shlomovich Bardach, his wife, and his sons (Meier and Shlomo). This document confirms, therefore, that the Bardach brothers were residents of Ludmir during the period in which the Maiden's father would have sought a match for his daughter. 20

The most important Israeli biographer of the Maiden of Ludmir was Ephraim Taubenhaus, a member of one of the most prominent families of the Old Yishuv or "settlement" in Palestine. Ephraim's mother, Bat-Sheva Taubenhaus (née Goldenblum), was born in 1865 in the northern city of Sefad, where her father, a direct descendant of the Magid of Mezeritch, served as a judge on the Ashkenazi community's *bet din* (rabbinic court). Meir Taubenhaus, Ephraim's father, was born the same year in Jerusalem to a Hasidic family from Galicia. After marrying as teenagers, the couple settled in Sefad, where for many decades their home served as a kind of spiritual and cultural salon for the residents of the town and for those who were just passing through, including Nahum Sokolov, the early Zionist leader, and, apparently, the Maiden of Ludmir.

After becoming interested in secular literature in his youth, Meir Taubenhaus became a prolific author, publishing hundreds of Hebrew and Yiddish articles on Jewish life under his own name as well as under pseudonyms such as "the Scout from Galilee" and "a Man of Jerusalem." Bat-Sheva Taubenhaus became a powerful figure in her own right, famous in the Old Yishuv for her combination of religious piety and social

activism. One of several obituaries published after her death noted her many accomplishments, including the establishment of a free clinic for the poor, as well as her relationship with the Maiden of Ludmir, who "became friends with the deceased. The 'Virgin of Ludmir' was alone in the Land and settled for several years in Sefad, where she associated with the Taubenhaus family."<sup>21</sup>

Following in his father's footsteps, Ephraim Taubenhaus devoted his life to chronicling the traditions and personalities of the old Yishuv, among them, the Maiden of Ludmir. His first account of the Maiden appeared in an Israeli journal in 1952 under the title "The Virgin Hannah Rochel from Ludmir, Zaddeket and Admor of Hasidim, on the Sixtieth Anniversary of her Death." Like Unger, Taubenhaus emphasized the working-class character of the Maiden's following, writing that "she made a special effort to attract workers [ba'ale meloche] and kept the rich away, not receiving them at all." He also described the Maiden's love of nature and her habit of wandering alone in the fields around Ludmir, where she listened to the "conversations of grasses and trees." The Maiden of Ludmir who appears in these pages closely resembles the traditional Hasidic portrait of the Baal Shem Tov himself, and it is possible that Taubenhaus employed the Besht's hagiographical image as a model for his depiction.

Taubenhaus's first account contains a number of biographical details not found in any other source, for example, that the Maiden of Ludmir emigrated to Palestine with her husband. But its greatest contribution to the literature on the Maiden lies in the fact that it alone claims to preserve some of her teachings. In an appendix entitled "From Her Torah and Sayings," Taubenhaus includes the following traditions:

- A person whose holy thoughts accompany him on his life's journey is not alone and wretched, for the noble thoughts shelter him from loneliness.
- 2. Every pure thought that flows from the desires of the heart the intellect is unable to grasp at all.
- 3. Every moment of "existence" [yesh] is for itself, all that is in the present is no longer in the past, and if it was, it is renewed.
- 4. A person who does not see the Holy One Blessed be he in every place does not see him at all.

Taubenhaus does not describe how he learned of these teachings, though he implies that they were oral traditions that circulated among the Maiden's followers. Elsewhere in the account, for example, he writes that the Maiden's "sayings were transmitted from mouth to mouth, especially by the workers and the simple folk," something that "awakened great opposition among many of the powerful rabbis" in the area of Ludmir. Later he adds that "there are still people living in Jerusalem today who remember this amazing *zaddeket*." The teachings themselves combine kabbalistic and philosophical terminology with Hasidic themes of loneliness, the power of the heart, and the presence of God everywhere. They resemble the aphorisms attributed to Hasidic masters such as Nahman of Bratslav, Menahem Mendel of Kotsk, and Shlomo Karliner — individuals who struggled between the desires of the heart and the demands of the intellect, between the lonely life of the *zaddik nistar* (hidden master) and the public pressures of the *zaddik mefursam* (revealed master).

Several years after publishing his first biographical sketch of the Maiden of Ludmir, Ephraim Taubenhaus devoted an entire chapter to her life in a book about his father. The account is notable because it claims to quote extensively from the unpublished diaries of Meir Taubenhaus, who, according to his son, spoke with the Maiden of Ludmir on several occasions in Jerusalem, interviewed her followers, and even traveled to Ludmir to further research her life. Several factors lend credence to Ephraim Taubenhaus's claims about his father and the Maiden of Ludmir. First, the elder Taubenhaus was a member of Jerusalem's Hasidic community from 1865 to the early 1880s, when he married and moved to Sefad. This places him in the Holy City during the same period as the Maiden of Ludmir, and it is likely that the curious youth sought her out, particularly given his penchant for observing the Yishuv's interesting characters. Second, we know from other sources that Meir did, in fact, travel to Poland on several occasions to raise money for the Jewish settlement in Palestine, trips on which he could have visited Ludmir.<sup>25</sup>

Claiming to draw on his father's conversations with the Maiden of Ludmir, Ephraim Taubenhaus concludes his account by describing her attitudes about Israel and about the newly arriving Zionist settlers:

Her love for the Holy Land knew no boundaries, and she believed that [quoting from Meir's diary] "the land of Israel will only be built by a tremendous belief in God and by acting according to his word. The new Biluim, who desecrate the holiness of Israel and do not observe the Sabbath are making the land impure and delaying the redemption. It is necessary to educate the settlers of the Holy Land to believe, to love God and to venerate the holiness of Israel, and the more our brothers pray at the Western Wall and prostrate themselves at Rachel's Tomb, the sooner the redemption will arrive." <sup>226</sup>

This reference to the "Biluim" places this passage in the early 1880s, when, in response to pogroms in southern Russia, a group of young Russian Jews established an early Zionist organization called "Bilu," an acronym standing for *beyt yaakov lekhu ve nelkhah* (from Isaiah 2:5: "house of Jacob come ye and let us go"). Although only fifty-three members left Russia for Palestine — where three settled in Jerusalem — they made up in militant zeal what they lacked in numbers. As one Bilui named Ze'ev Dubnow wrote, "We want to conquer Palestine. . . . We must establish agricultural settlements, factories and industry. . . . And above all we must give young people military training and provide them with weapons. With their weapons in their hands, the Jews will declare that they are masters of their ancient homeland." Whether or not she actually expressed the views attributed to her by Taubenhaus, it is likely that the Biluim came to the attention of the Maiden of Ludmir after they began arriving in 1882 and 1883.

Throughout his life, the elder Taubenhaus remained committed to the religious traditions of his youth; yet, over the years, he also embraced Zionist political views. It is not surprising, therefore, that his son Ephraim concludes his account with the following words, apparently from his father's diary: "If Hannah from Ludmir had been born to a healthy nation settled in its own land, her fate would have been completely different."28 Although we are left to wonder exactly how the Maiden of Ludmir's life would have been different had she been born and raised in Israel, perhaps what mattered most for father and son alike was that Zionism provided the antidote to whatever ailed Jews in the Diaspora, including the problems faced by the Maiden of Ludmir. Perhaps they viewed the life of Bat Sheva Taubenhaus as a kind of counterexample to that of the Maiden of Ludmir. Born in Palestine to a Hasidic family from Volhynia, Bat Sheva Taubenhaus successfully combined religious devotion, family life, and social activism. While this version of the Zionist dream never became a reality for the majority of women in the Old Yishuv or the new state of Israel, it is easy to imagine how Meir and Ephraim could have seen the matriarch of the Taubenhaus clan as an example of what life could have been like for the Maiden of Ludmir.

#### CHAPTER 3

## **Afterlives**

### Remembering the Maiden

On November 28, 1997, the *New York Times* reported on the reunion of a Jewish woman named Nechama Singer Ariel with two Ukrainian brothers, Mikhail and Nikolai Vavriseevich. More than fifty years earlier, in the town of Ludmir, the brothers and their parents had helped to save Nechama and her mother during the Holocaust. Now in their seventies, the ailing Vavriseevich brothers had traveled from Ludmir to New York to be reunited with Ariel for the first time since the war. As I looked at the photograph that accompanied the article, I realized that after several years of researching the Maiden of Ludmir's life, this image was the closest I had ever come to a former or current resident of her hometown. Like many scholars of Judaism, I had been trained to study texts, and I still clung tenaciously to the idea that the sole path to the Maiden of Ludmir lay in the written accounts of her life. And yet, after analyzing these accounts, I was left with the nagging feeling that something was missing.

I ignored this feeling for more than a year until one day, without knowing exactly why I was doing it, I retrieved the article that I had stuffed in a drawer. A few minutes later, I found myself on the telephone with Nechama Ariel, the remarkable woman who would lead me to another path to the Maiden of Ludmir — the path of memory. From this point on, the significance of Ludmir changed dramatically for me. No longer was the town's name merely a part of the Maiden's title. Instead

Ludmir became a real place where the Maiden was born, raised, and, just as important, remembered.

Over time I came to realize that the memories of former residents of the town were both an invaluable and a limited source of information about the Maiden of Ludmir. They were invaluable because they represented an unbroken chain of oral traditions reaching back to the Maiden's lifetime. In some cases, former residents remembered stories told to them by parents or grandparents concerning older relatives who actually knew or had contact with the Maiden of Ludmir. Even when such personal links were lacking, many former residents recalled illuminating details about the Maiden's life that they had heard as children or young adults. While some of these details appear in written accounts, others do not.

Despite their great importance, the historical value of these memories was limited by a number of factors. It was impossible to verify the accuracy of the oral traditions preserved by former residents. Even when a particular detail was recalled by more than one resident, instead of remembering a story about something that had actually occurred, they may have simply been repeating the same fictional account they had heard as children. In some cases former residents seemed to have been influenced by works about the Maiden of Ludmir or about similar female figures, such as Isaac Bashevis Singer's Yentl, which they were exposed to after leaving Ludmir. Yet even then it was difficult to say in what direction the influence went, since the former residents may have remembered childhood stories that later found their way into these dramatic adaptations.

Ultimately, I decided to include these oral traditions to enrich my biographical portrait of the Maiden of Ludmir. In so doing, I hoped to call attention to the importance of employing oral traditions when studying the lives of pre- and early-modern Jewish women on the one hand and Eastern European Hasidic culture on the other. This is particularly important at a time when the last generation of Jews who were born and raised in the shtetlekh of Eastern Europe is dying off. With their passing, we will lose our last living links to this vanished world.

It was only after I began to speak with former Ludmir residents that I earnestly began to search for traces of the Maiden in official documents, government archives, and, ultimately, in the town of Ludmir itself. In retrospect, my relationship with the Ludmirers (as they call one another) brought home to me the physical reality of the Maiden of Ludmir in a way that none of the written accounts had done. The residents' vivid memories transformed the Maiden of Ludmir into a real person, not just

a literary figure, and as such, I began to believe for the first time that she might appear in census lists, birth records, and other official sources.

When I first telephoned Nechama Ariel and mentioned that I was writing a book about someone from Ludmir, her immediate response was, "Oh, you want to write about Di Ludmirer Moid." Although that day I was surprised by her intuition, I later came to expect this kind of insight from this amazing woman who had survived the murderous Nazi occupation of Ludmir when she was just a teenager. Eventually I would speak with almost fifty former residents of the town living in America, Israel, and Europe, as well as with the last remaining Jewish residents of Ludmir and some of their Ukrainian neighbors.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the former residents I spoke with were among the few hundred Jews who had survived the Holocaust in Ludmir; a handful had emigrated before the war. Ranging in age from the late sixties to one hundred, some were highly educated and worked as professionals, while others were uneducated and had working-class jobs. Almost all had been raised in Hasidic homes, but few still considered themselves Hasidim. Many had abandoned the religious orthodoxy of their families for Zionism, communism, or socialism when they were still teenagers or young adults.

A number of patterns emerged in the course of my interviews. With a few notable exceptions, women tended to give more precise descriptions of mundane life in Ludmir before World War II and were also more likely to remember detailed stories about the Maiden of Ludmir that they had heard as children. When speaking with men, I frequently got the impression that they were omitting potentially important information that they considered insignificant, for example, details about home life and women's activities. The women seemed to censor themselves less and were generally - though not always - more forthcoming about a wider range of subjects. Both women and men were curious about my interest in the Maiden of Ludmir. Some could not understand why I would want to write about her life, while others were excited that their town's most famous resident was to be the subject of a book. When I first contacted them on the telephone, many assumed either that I was from Ludmir or that I belonged to a family from the town. One former resident, surprised that I knew so much about his beloved community, speculated that I must be the reincarnation of a Ludmirer.

Of all my conversations with former residents, one of the most important would turn out to be my first, in which Nechama Ariel told me the following captivating story about the Maiden of Ludmir. When she was a child, Nechama loved to sit and listen while the older members of her Radziner Hasidic family traded tales. One of the best storytellers was her maternal grandfather, Yekutiel Roytenstein, a native of Ludmir whose ancestors had lived in the town for generations. Among Yekutiel's favorites was a tale he had heard from his own grandfather, Abraham Yitzhak, that went something like this:

One day, when Abraham and his younger brother, Benyamin, were children, they decided to pay a visit to the Maiden of Ludmir. The boys made their way to the *gornshtibl* and parked themselves under the window. There they whispered and giggled while the Maiden was *proven a tish*, or leading a gathering of followers around a table, a customary Hasidic activity. Suddenly, the Maiden of Ludmir interrupted her *toyre*, and called out to the boys, "Why don't you come inside? You don't have to hide. You can sit at the table like everyone else." As Nechama's grandfather explained it to her, either the Maiden had seen the boys hide under the window, or she had detected them with the power of *ruah neviah* (the gift of prophesy), for which she was famous in the town.

This remarkable story illuminates a central feature of written accounts on the Maiden of Ludmir, namely, that she instructed her followers during traditional Hasidic gatherings in her own study house. As Nechama Ariel put it, "Every woman was baking challah, and learning to daven, and every woman knew some remedies, but she learned Torah, and that was the difference." The Maiden's invitation suggests that men, or at least, boys, were welcome at her gatherings. Finally, the reference to *ruah neviah* confirms that some people in Ludmir believed that the Maiden possessed pneumatic powers by virtue of *ruah ha-qodesh* (the holy spirit), a detail mentioned in written accounts as well.

Although official sources are unable to confirm the veracity of Yekutiel Roytenstein's story, the Russian government's census of Ludmir from 1858 does indicate that Abraham-Yitzhak Roytenstein and his younger brother, Benyamin, were residents of Ludmir during the period when the Maiden functioned as a charismatic religious leader. According to the census, Abraham-Yitzhak was forty-three and his brother thirty-two in 1858. This would make Abraham-Yitzhak a teenager and Benyamin a child when the Maiden of Ludmir began her public career in the late 1820s and early 1830s.

According to Nechama Ariel, her grandfather did not venerate the Maiden of Ludmir. Instead, she remembered, he thought "she was a little meshuga. Not in a bad way, just deviating from the norm. To the Hasidim she wasn't revered. No one followed her except for the poor and

the sick. She was a curio and no one made a *tsimis* [fuss] over her. She was not considered a *gadol ha-dor* [great leader of her generation], nor was she considered a trailblazer. Rather, she was considered an oddity, a *hidush* [something new] not to be taken seriously by the male establishment. They were not threatened; they were dismissive. Everyone was happy when she got married and stopped putting on tefillin. This is what I got from my grandfather."

I must admit that when I first heard Nechama's recollections, I was shocked. Like many of her biographers, I had been swayed by the romantic, even heroic, quality of the Maiden of Ludmir's story and had naively assumed that she was considered a major figure by everyone in her community. What I hadn't expected was the dismissive attitude that Yekutial Roytenstein communicated to his granddaughter. And he was not the only one to hold this view, as I discovered by talking to other former Ludmir residents.

Hedba Zweig, a Ludmirer living in Israel who also grew up in a pious Radziner home, shocked her family by joining the secular Zionist Shomer Ha-Zahir movement as a teenager. She remembered, "People didn't want to talk about the Maiden of Ludmir. They censored her story. She was an abnormal phenomenon and an anomaly. People thought she was meshuga'at (crazy) and she was excommunicated." Zipporah Fontek, now a resident of the United States, recalled, "Everyone was laughing about her. They found her strange." In retrospect, however, Fontek viewed the Maiden as the "first emancipated woman" in Judaism and felt that "the fact that they talked about her was already positive." Morris Goldstein, who was raised in a Kotsker home and who prayed in the gornshtibl on a few occasions, had this to share: "We accepted it the way you accept an odd person. Her father did not have any sons, so he taught her Talmud. Because of the unusual nature of her life in a very masculine city, she was held in some scorn by the religious establishment. It was treated almost like a joke, that she davened like a man. She was ridiculed. They said she must be meshuga."

Several important viewpoints are embedded in these recollections: that the Maiden of Ludmir was insane, that she was an anomaly and did not have a broader impact on other Jewish women or on the culture of Ludmir more generally, and that the male Hasidic establishment of the town adopted a dismissive rather than a threatened attitude toward her. And, finally, that at least some townspeople viewed the Maiden of Ludmir as a joke to be laughed at.

The Maiden of Ludmir appears in these recollections as a madwoman,

relegated to the margins of her community by those in power. But the only evidence of the Maiden's madness appeared to be her refusal to marry and her desire to learn and teach Torah. Yet it was common for those in power to condemn popular but unofficial holy people as lunatics or fools. Indeed the opponents of the Baal Shem Tov himself dismissed him as an ignoramus and a madman. These observations complicated the picture of the Maiden of Ludmir painted by former residents and suggested to me that more was going on below the surface.

It is impossible to know whether the memories of people who lived in Ludmir during the early twentieth century accurately reflect the perceptions of the Maiden of Ludmir during her lifetime. It may not be a coincidence that three of the four people who remembered hearing dismissive comments about the Maiden of Ludmir from their parents or grandparents were young women at the time. Older family members may have felt that by branding the Maiden of Ludmir as a lunatic and anomaly they would discourage their own daughters and granddaughters from abandoning the traditional path of marriage and children.

Not all the former residents of Ludmir with whom I spoke remembered the Maiden so dismissively. For example, Moshe Weisgarden, the son of a Vlodovka Hasid currently living in Israel, portrayed the Maiden of Ludmir as a populist threat to the Hasidic leadership in town. According to Weisgarden, "Hasidim invented all sorts of negative things about the Maiden of Ludmir, but during her day, not only women but also men were her followers. The rabbis were against her out of jealousy, and therefore they issued a *herem* [decree of excommunication]." Yaakov Berger, now in the United States, recalled that the Maiden of Ludmir "was a positive story in the town," while Janusz Bardach remembered "that his entire family was proud of their connection to the Maiden" and that "Hasidic yeshiva students would ask questions about the Maiden when they heard that we were related to her." These memories suggest that some members of the community had more positive views of the Maiden of Ludmir and that she may, in fact, have posed a threat to some within the Hasidic establishment.

Besides their recollections of how she was perceived within the community, former Ludmir residents also remembered specific details about the Maiden. Nechama recalled a woman with red hair whose father nicknamed her Di Ludmirer Moid because of her hair color and fiery temper. A number of people remembered that the Maiden wore tefillin (one mentioned two pairs), that she learned Torah, and that she was briefly married. Morris Goldstein and Moshe Weisgarden both recalled that the

Maiden of Ludmir had served as a *dayan* (judge) in the community. This description, which does not appear in any written source, is significant, since the function of the *dayan* was to make Halakhic (legal) decisions for members of the community, something that women were traditionally prohibited from doing. As Goldstein pointed out, however, this did not mean that the Maiden was considered an outstanding Talmudic scholar in Ludmir: "You didn't have to be a great sage to be a *dayan*, you needed to know whether a needle in a chicken's *pipik* [belly] made it *treyf* [unkosher]."

One of the richest descriptions of the Maiden of Ludmir was provided by Stella Klein. According to Betty Shuch, her older sister, Stella "would visit people's houses and listen to their stories. My sister is a storyteller. She could make a book with all her stories." During one of our conversations, Stella recounted the tales told about the Maiden of Ludmir in Kilchizne's straw-roofed huts. I have repeated her recollections as she told them to me:

The Moid was very skinny and had shaved hair. She wore a *sheytel* [wig] and women's clothes. She always wore a white head covering. The Moid was very *hasidish* [pious] and was always praying like a Hasid. Because she didn't marry, people called her *di alte moid*. Her father was a tailor whose name was either Monesh or Zalman. Rochel Leah was her name. Her family name may have been Zilbermacher. She was a healer and would fast a lot. Children would run after her, so she closed herself in the *shtibl*. The *moshiah* [messiah] would talk to her. She was a *shaliah* [emissary] from the *moshiah*. She would sit with women but not with men. She always sat with a siddur. She shared with poor people and was a lonely woman. People would come to her for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. She had no relatives. Everyone forgot about her. She was a *tirye maidel* [beloved girl]. In Kilchizne, people would cry out, "Where's the Moid?" when someone was sick. Before the war they would talk; after the war they didn't want to talk about the Ludmirer Moid.

Klein's memories of the Maiden of Ludmir represent traditions that circulated in Kilchizne until World War II. There, interest in the Maiden of Ludmir appears to have survived longer than in the town's wealthier neighborhoods. This lends support to the claims made by Klein, Nechama Ariel, and several authors that the Maiden of Ludmir was particularly popular among poor and working-class people, on whose concerns she focused. While most families in the rest of Ludmir were followers of rebbes who lived in other towns (such as Kotsk, Trisk, and Lubavitch) and prayed in their *shtiblekh* in Ludmir, many residents of Kilchizne appear to have lacked such affiliations. Instead, they prayed in

the town's *groyser shul* and relied on local holy men such as Rab Pinhasl for their religious needs. During the nineteenth century, this difference may have encouraged poorer residents of Ludmir who were not followers of Hasidic rebbes elsewhere to become devotees of the Maiden of Ludmir.

Klein's recollections suggest that the Maiden of Ludmir occupied an ambivalent place within the community. On the one hand, she was considered a "beloved girl" by the poor people whom she helped. On the other, she was a lonely figure, forced to hide in her *shtibl* to escape from the children who pursued her, an image recalled in the story told to Nechama by her grandfather, although in that case, the Maiden actually welcomed two such children *into* her *shtibl*.

Many of the details recalled by Klein appear in written accounts. For example, Klein remembered the Maiden's father's name as Monesh, and her approximation of the Maiden's name, Rochel Leah Zilbermacher, closely resembles the version typically given in written sources, Hannah Rochel Vebermacher. Her description of Monesh as a tailor does not jibe with the common claim that he was a wealthy merchant, but it does reflect one author's description of him as a weaver. Klein depicts the Maiden as an ascetic healer who fasted regularly; dressed in women's clothes, including the head covering traditionally worn by married women even during periods when she does not appear to have been married; and sat with women but not men. All these details appear in written accounts as well, though it should be noted that Klein stated to me that she had never read anything about the Maiden of Ludmir.

One of the most striking features of Klein's account is her claim that the Maiden of Ludmir was an emissary of the messiah. Could this be a reference to Shlomo Karliner, also known as Moshiah ben Yosef, who was buried in Ludmir's cemetery? After all, by the beginning of the twentieth century many people in Ludmir had forgotten his given name and simply referred to him as the messiah. According to Horodezky, the Maiden had collapsed on a "holy grave" in the town's cemetery before experiencing her mystical vision of the heavenly court. Did some townspeople believe that the Maiden of Ludmir had collapsed on Shlomo Karliner's grave? Could this be the basis of Klein's claim? Intriguingly, Klein's description of the Maiden of Ludmir as an emissary of the messiah also raises the specter of Frankism, a Polish branch of the Sabbatean movement in which a woman, Eva Frank, filled a messianic role. I will explore the possible connection between the Maiden of Ludmir and the Frankist movement in chapter 9.

Klein's final words about the Maiden of Ludmir — that people spoke of her before the war but not after — resonated with the comments of other former residents. One of the least-understood tragedies of the Holocaust is its impact on Jewish memory. Like a barrier placed in a stream, the Holocaust cut off the memories of prewar life for many survivors. Having grown up surrounded by Holocaust survivors, I had long noticed that for some the powerful need to remember outweighed the pain of recalling memories, while for others the pain of what they had experienced was so great that they preferred not to remember at all. Still others tried to compartmentalize their memories, opening the floodgates about some things but not others, and only at certain times or on particular occasions.

The effect of the Holocaust on memories of the Maiden of Ludmir was brought home to me on September 5, 1999, when I attended the annual Hazkarah (memorial) ceremony for the martyred Jews of Ludmir. A light rain began to fall as I joined a handful of elderly women and men gathered in the Queens cemetery, where a monument to Ludmir's Jewish community stands. Since his father, Rabbi Isaac Gottlieb, had recently passed away, Rabbi Israel Gottlieb, a direct descendant of Shlomo Karliner and a relative of Rab Pinhasl, led the poignant service. For the first time, Gottlieb sadly noted, there were not enough men for a minyan. Looking around at the small group of elderly men and women, he commented that at many services he had to explain what to do. But not here. "Here," he said, "are Jews who still know how to pray."

After the ceremony, I spoke with the mourners, including Victor Pilcz, the elderly head of the First Ludmer Benevolent Society, established in 1903. Pilcz, who had organized the memorial service, struggled with what he felt was his duty to remember on the one hand and the terrible pain his memories evoked on the other. In an earlier conversation, he had told me, "Before the war, the older generation knew a lot about the Ludmirer Moid. We lived through the Holocaust. After that we didn't remember things like the Ludmirer Moid." That day, his suddenly burning eyes staring off into what seemed like the Ludmir ghetto itself, Pilcz said, "I lived with the Germans for three years and a month, and I know them well, very well. They treated us like slaves. No, they treated us worse. At least you give food to slaves. I saw enough things to make me forget."

The Holocaust eclipsed memories of the Maiden of Ludmir for many former residents of her town, but it does not explain why she appears to be completely absent from Hasidic hagiographical sources. This erasure is particularly striking when the catholic character of Hasidic hagiography is appreciated. Countless Hasidic holy men, including those whose contributions to the history of the movement were minor indeed, are memorialized in the pages of Hasidic works. And yet the only Hasidic woman to gain a reputation as a rebbe in her own right apparently did not merit inclusion. We can only speculate about why Hasidic writers chose not to record the oral traditions that circulated about the Maiden of Ludmir since they themselves are silent on this issue. Given the overwhelmingly androcentric focus of these sources, however, it seems clear that a combination of the same Hasidic attitudes mentioned by the Ludmirers — indifference, fear, and derision — toward a female religious leader excluded the Maiden of Ludmir from the writings of Hasidic authors.

The one possible rumble in this deafening silence is so ambiguous that it is unclear whether the text refers to the Maiden of Ludmir at all. In a hagiographical work published in 1892 devoted to a wonder-working zaddik named Yitzhak of Neshkhiz (1788–1868), we find a reference to a "kosher woman [isha keshara] in the town of Ludmir who foretold the future." When informed about one of the woman's predictions, Yitzhak of Neshkhiz, who was in Berdichev at the time, replied "this is nothing new to me." The episode is written in a highly elliptical fashion and follows two anecdotes concerning a visit Yitzhak of Neshkhiz paid to Ludmir.

It is highly tempting to identify the prophetic woman in this story as the Maiden of Ludmir.<sup>4</sup> After all, both written and oral traditions hold that the Maiden possessed the gift of prophesy. The reference to the woman as "kosher" indicates that she was viewed as pious and law-abiding in her community. Whether or not the text is referring to the Maiden of Ludmir – and I believe that it is – it makes sense that Yitzhak of Neshkhiz would be threatened by the presence of a female visionary in Ludmir. Yitzhak of Neshkhiz had a longstanding and intimate connection to the town and its religious establishment. His father, Mordechai, "the Old Man" of Neshkhiz, had once served as Ludmir's rabbi, while his brother, Jacob Aryeh of Kovel, was the head of the town's rabbinic court for a time. We also possess a letter from Shlomo of Ludmir (Shlomo Karliner's grandson), in which he asks Yitzhak of Neshkhiz to pray on his behalf.<sup>5</sup> All this adds up to an individual with a marked interest in protecting the status quo of Ludmir's male leadership. Against this backdrop, a popular and pious woman prophet in Ludmir would only serve as a competitor, particularly in the eyes of a charismatic wonder-worker such

as Yitzhak of Neshkhiz.<sup>6</sup> His response upon hearing of the woman's correct prediction—"this is nothing new to me"—suggests a need to defend his own visionary status in the face of what he considered a presumptive challenge.

Besides this enigmatic text, there is another nineteenth-century work that may contain a reference to the Maiden of Ludmir. While the work itself is not a Hasidic hagiography, its author, Michael Rodkinssohn, grew up in a Hasidic home and published several collections of Hasidic tales.<sup>7</sup> Rodkinssohn (né Frumkin) was born in 1845 to a prominent Habad family (his grandfather was the famous zaddik Aaron of Staroszeleh) in the White Russian shtetl of Dubrovno. In a book devoted to the history of tefillin, Rodkinssohn writes, "I, the author, remember that in White Russia near my native city, there was a young woman who was a miracle worker [ba'alat mufat], whom people considered to be a prophetess [neviah]. And she would lay tefillin every day. Not one pair, but two pairs. And the zaddikim did not prevent her from wearing them."8 Like the woman visionary in the Yitzhak of Neshkhiz text, the anonymous woman recalled by Rodkinssohn bears a striking resemblance to the Maiden of Ludmir. Yet even if they do refer to her, these texts are not written in praise of the Maiden of Ludmir and therefore do not properly constitute exceptions to what may be called her hagiographical blacklisting.

The two texts discussed above represent the earliest possible evidence of the spread of oral traditions concerning the Maiden of Ludmir outside her own community. Seeking to determine whether oral traditions about the Maiden of Ludmir have continued to circulate among contemporary Hasidim, I spoke with members of Hasidic communities in America and Israel, including those most closely connected to her story: the Chernobler and Karlin-Stolin dynasties. While not definitive by any means, my conversations with Hasidim revealed that all had heard of the Maiden of Ludmir, but none knew - or, at least, would tell me - any stories about her life. For example, one prominent member of the Chernobler line informed me that he had heard stories about the Maiden of Ludmir when he was a child but hadn't paid much attention to them and so couldn't recall any details. A Satmar Hasid who writes contemporary hagiographical works under a pseudonym responded to my questions about the Maiden by referring me to a published Yiddish account. When I asked him whether he knew of any oral traditions, his response was ambiguous - "I don't have any tales for you" - yet he then directed me to other Hasidim whom he thought might be able to help.

Unfortunately, my attempts to speak freely with Hasidic women

about the Maiden of Ludmir were frequently hampered by my gender. Because of my own limited access to this important group of informants, it would be worthwhile for a female researcher to conduct extensive interviews with Hasidic women concerning the Maiden of Ludmir. Preliminary work in this area has already been conducted by Robin Goldberg. In an unpublished study on storytelling among contemporary Lubavitch women, Goldberg writes, "[W]henever I said that I was interested in storytelling, women and Hasidism, the Legend of the Maid was often referred to, although I never heard it fully and spontaneously told among Lubavitch women or men." Significantly, according to Goldberg, the Hasidic women with whom she spoke were introduced to the story of the Maiden of Ludmir through the Hebrew-language novel of Yohanan Twersky and not through oral traditions. Goldberg's research revealed that both female and male members of the Habad community

proudly emphasized that the story [of the Maiden] underscored how Hasidism has "long recognized" and supported the spiritual power of women. Never did they volunteer that other zaddikim disapproved of her nor did they acknowledge the ignominious end of the Maid's story. When I pressed these aspects of the story on them, they merely shrugged, look puzzled for a moment, or ignored me. . . . They patiently explained that the story demonstrated that women as well as men were capable of prophecy, piety, intellectual achievement, and leadership. <sup>10</sup>

This positive, even apologetic, appraisal of the Maiden of Ludmir must be seen within the context of the Habad movement's complex attitudes toward women in general. Since at least the beginning of the twentieth century, Habad leaders have stressed the particular dangers that secularization poses to Jewish women and, concomitantly, the need for women to receive more educational and organizational attention from the movement. In practice, these efforts have focused on educating women in their Halakhic duties (through a curriculum that includes Hasidic teachings) and on training them to maintain proper Jewish homes. At first glance, the Maiden of Ludmir, an unmarried woman and independent spiritual leader who went far beyond the Halakhic performance traditionally expected of women, would seem an unlikely heroine for Habad Hasidim. Yet the Lubavitchers who spoke with Goldberg appear to have ignored these problematic aspects of her story as well as the strident opposition of her male contemporaries in favor of a positive reading.

How can we account for the apparent contradiction between the Habad movement's expectations for women and the attitude of some of its members toward the Maiden of Ludmir? I think that part of the answer lies in another dimension of Habad's approach to women. As Ada Rapoport-Albert has noted, the Habad movement is "quite ingenious in appropriating feminist concerns and terminology, and exploiting precisely those areas of overlap between the female separatism of some of the more extreme feminists and the traditional separation of the sexes as practiced in the strictest possible way within Habad." Some Lubavitchers may therefore see the Maiden of Ludmir through the lens of their "separate but equal" approach to women's religiosity. Of course this interpretation is only possible when the problematic aspects of the Maiden of Ludmir's story are set aside. Perhaps the ultimate litmus test would be to present the Habad community with a female member whose behavior resembled the Maiden of Ludmir's.

Not all Hasidim are as receptive to the Maiden of Ludmir's story as the members of Habad who spoke with Robin Goldberg. This is illustrated by the recent publication of a hagiographical collection on the Chernobler dynasty. The book is basically a reprint of the first volume of David Mekler's 1931 Yiddish work, *Fun rebbins hoyf*, with one major exception: while Mekler included six chapters on the Maiden of Ludmir and her relationship with Mordechai of Chernobyl, the Hasidic editors of the new volume have excised them completely. Mekler, a Yiddish newspaper editor and devotee of the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe, based his volume on stories he had heard from prominent members of the Chernobler dynasty, as he states in the introduction to his work. He Hasidic editors of the reprinted volume appear to have chosen to eliminate traditions originating within their own community rather than expose their readers to the story of the Maiden of Ludmir.

Another indication of how threatening the Maiden of Ludmir's story remains for some within the Orthodox Jewish community is the heated debate surrounding the publication of Gershon Winkler's children's novel *They Called Her Rebbe: The Maiden of Ludomir.* In a favorable review that appeared in the Orthodox Jewish newspaper *The Jewish Press*, Irene Klass recounted how the book's publisher had taken the unusual step of submitting Winkler's manuscript to a "prominent rabbi" who was asked to read it with a "critical eye, because of "loud whispers about the book." The rabbi, who "was conceptually against the book . . . submitted a list of several dozen changes and deletions he felt were still necessary." Although it meant delaying publication, the publisher decided to incorporate all the rabbi's revisions, including his suggested deletions. Despite this and other precautions, after the book appeared, Klass writes that "rabbinic leaders who never read the book, including some who cannot read

English at all, were encouraged to discourage followers from reading it. Others advised booksellers, under threat of censure by the community, to return the books immediately to the publisher." By contrast, Klass praised Winkler's book for telling the story of a "tragic Jewish female anti-hero" and "remarkable woman whose lifestyle — though halakhically correct — continues to provoke debate one hundred years after her death." <sup>15</sup>

Klass's sympathetic view was not shared by Meir Fund, a prominent Brooklyn-based Orthodox rabbi who appeared on the public television program *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly* to declare sarcastically:

They Called Her Rebbe, Rabbi Gershon Winkler's masterpiece, is, in my opinion and the opinion of many people here [Brooklyn's Orthodox community], the ultimate chutzpah. And I would add it's a pristine example of consumer fraud. What I object to, and what many of us object to, is the deceptiveness of Gershon Winkler in using the guise of being a writer of Jewish books and Judaica for young Jewish children, and slipping into the pages of that book beliefs and attitudes that are totally antithetical to what these Jewish children would expect to find in such a book, and their parents. . . . [Winkler uses] the Maiden of Ludmir as his spokesperson to voice all of his anger and his wishes to downgrade the authority of rabbinic Judaism. 16

Why did Winkler's novel represent such a threat to "the authority of rabbinic Judaism"? In the book's introduction, Winkler wrote that the Maiden strove "to avoid any competitiveness with male-designated roles. She had no intention of becoming a woman rabbi; she wanted to be just a woman, just Chana Rochel." Yet he also pointed out that the "rabbis of her time found it difficult to accept her as a gifted woman, empowered like they were with the wisdom of learning, counsel, healing" and added that the Maiden's "followers considered her to be no less a rebbe than Reb Aron of Tchernobyl or Reb Menahem Mendel of Kotsk, both contemporaries." And perhaps most disturbing to his critics, Winkler enjoined his readers that "[i]t's time to reexamine G-d's two most important creations — man and woman — to honor both, to acknowledge both, and to strive for a better understanding of both. Maybe these are some of the truly important lessons of Chana Rochel's creative life and aspirations."17 It is a troubling testament to the intransigent sexism of some in the Orthodox Jewish community that Winkler's gently phrased observations could provoke such a strong reaction. Yet interesting enough, I first came across a copy of Winkler's novel in a Lubavitcher shtibl in New York, further indicating that Habad is more receptive than other Hasidic groups to the Maiden of Ludmir's story.

#### CHAPTER 4

# The Curse, the Cossacks, and the Messiah

Ludmir Before the Maiden

In 1840, during the reign of Czar Nicholas I, an archeological discovery was made in the town of Ludmir that confirmed its reputation as one of the oldest settlements in Ukraine. Not far from the centuries-old Russian Orthodox Uspensky Sabor (a cathedral), deep within the famously fertile "black soil" that had made the region Eastern Europe's breadbasket, an ancient stone altar surrounded by bones and ashes was unearthed. Here, more than one thousand years earlier, the pagans who first settled on the banks of the Luga River offered animal sacrifices. Their altar had survived to tell its tale, but Ludmir's original inhabitants left little else to discover.

For written information on the town's first few centuries and its earliest Jewish settlers, we must turn to the ancient Russian chronicles.¹ According to Nestor's *letopis* (chronicle), in 988 Prince Vladimir the Great of Kiev christened the settlement "Vladimir" in his own honor before giving it to his son as a gift. By 1171 a Jewish merchant named Yehuda Handes lived in Ludmir, and during the next century, a Jewish community took shape, making the town one of the earliest Jewish settlements in Ukraine. The chronicler Ipatevskii reports that following the death of Prince Vasily in 1288, the Jews of Ludmir "cried over him as they had over the destruction of Jerusalem." Perhaps they sensed the storm that was brewing. For the next three centuries, Russians, Tatars, Poles,

and Lithuanians took turns conquering Ludmir and its small Jewish community. Only in the second half of the sixteenth century, when records show that Jews owned thirty-one buildings in Ludmir, did a measure of short-lived stability finally arrive under Polish rule.

As part of their efforts to assimilate the local Russian Orthodox population, the Polish Catholic rulers encouraged the development of what became known as the Uniate, or Greek Catholic Church in their newly conquered territory. Seen by many in power as a way to wean people away from Orthodoxy (and, concomitantly, Russian cultural influence), the Uniate Church retained a Slavonic-rather than a Latin-liturgy but swore allegiance to the Catholic pope instead of to the Orthodox patriarch. Ludmir, traditionally second in importance to Kiev among all the Orthodox districts in Ukraine, became one of the centers of the new movement when the town's bishop, Potii, joined the Uniate Church at a gathering of spiritual leaders in Brest-Litovsk in 1596. Despite these inroads, Ludmir remained an important spiritual center for the Russian Orthodox Church, which founded a religious Brotherhood (in Russian, bratsvo) school in Ludmir in 1587 to counter Polish influence. In addition to Uniates and Russian Orthodox believers, over the years Polish Catholics, German Lutherans, Raskolniki (Russian Orthodox sectarians), and even a handful of Muslim Tatars also settled in Ludmir and its environs.

During the same period that Ludmir's Christians were witnessing new challenges to traditional ecclesiastical authority, the town's Jewish community began to emerge as one of the most important in Volhynia. Ludmir's Jews benefited from a number of factors. In 1564 King Sigismund Augustus of Poland, a ruler known for his Renaissance humanism, lessened the tax burden on Ludmir's Jewish community, as he had already done in 1556 with the Jewish community of nearby Lutsk. In the same year, Sigismund Augustus issued decrees that protected Jewish debtors and undermined the blood libel (the belief that Jews used the blood of Christian babies in making matzo), though this did not prevent it from being spread in communities throughout Poland.3 Another factor in Ludmir's prosperity was the increasing involvement of Polish Jewish women in a wide variety of economic activities, from running large firms and manufacturing clothing to working as street vendors. Though legal and business records from this period indicate that Jewish women in Poland enjoyed a significant degree of economic power, contemporary rabbinic sources, such as the responsa of the important Polish rabbi Solomon Luria (1510–1573), continued to treat women as second-class figures.4 As we will see, Jewish women in communities like Ludmir continued to experience this pattern of economic integration and religious segregation well into the modern period.

The central event in Ludmir's economic and social transformation during the sixteenth century was its participation in the Council of the Four Lands or, as it was known in Hebrew, the Vaad Arba Aratsot. The council was founded in the middle of the sixteenth century at the behest of Polish officials who sought a mechanism to govern and, most important, to collect taxes from the large and, according to demographic statistics from the period, rapidly increasing Jewish population within Poland's newly constituted borders. The organization's members were elected by a small number of socially prominent men from major Jewish communities, known as *kehilot roshiot* in Hebrew. As one of the four largest Jewish communities in Volhynia (along with Lutsk, Ostrog, and Kremnitz), Ludmir became one of the *kehilot roshiot* and sent a representative twice yearly to fairs in Lublin and Yaroslav, where the council gathered to adjudicate disputes and make rulings.

It is through the Council of the Four Lands that we encounter the first significant character in our story, Yom-Tov Lippman Heller (1579–1654), also known as Tosefot Yom-Tov, after the title of his most famous work. Heller was a child prodigy (*ilui*) who served as a judge in Prague at the age of eighteen before becoming the rabbi of Nicholsberg in 1625, and, in 1627, of Prague. As a staunch defender of the city's large Jewish community during the travails of the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), Heller made enemies who accused him of writing works expressing antigovernment and anti-Christian sentiment. Brought before a gentile court, Heller's books were banned, and he was condemned to death. Only a large ransom paid by wealthy members of the Jewish community assured that Heller's head would remain attached to his shoulders. After serving forty days in prison, Heller wisely left Prague and became the rabbi of Nemirov in Podolia.

Heller was one of only a handful of premodern Jews to write an autobiography. The title of this concise but fascinating work, *Megilat Evah* (The scroll of hatred), reflects Heller's bitterness over his many struggles. Indeed it is ironic that someone whose name literally means "good day" (*yom tov*), should have experienced so many bad ones. In his autobiography, Heller describes the events that brought him from Nemirov to Ludmir in 1634: "At the beginning of the month of Iyar a Jewish emissary arrived from the holy community of Ludmir, which belonged to the Council of the Four Lands in the country of Volhynia, to serve as the head of its *bet din* and as the town rabbi for three years. I went to them at the

end of the month of Iyar and was received with great honor." After Heller arrived in Ludmir, the inhabitants of another town tried to tempt him away but, as he writes, "the people of the community of Ludmir offered me an additional four years." This was an unusual move, since rabbinic contracts in this period were typically for three years, and it indicates the strong degree of support Heller enjoyed among some of Ludmir's residents.

Not surprisingly, given his track record, Heller's honeymoon with Ludmir proved to be short-lived. As he had in Prague, Heller provoked a controversy in Ludmir, this time by campaigning to end the nefarious practice of purchasing the rabbinate. It had become commonplace for wealthy Jews throughout Poland to bribe Polish officials to have their own candidates installed as town rabbis (an official position appointed by the government), regardless of their lack of qualifications for the post. After securing the signatures of thirty rabbis in support of his cause, in 1640 Heller convinced the Council of the Four Lands to prohibit the practice formally. Despite the rising opposition to Heller, his loyal supporters in Ludmir managed to extend his contract for a second time. Then, in 1643, Heller's opponents, fearing an erosion of their power, sent an anonymous letter to the Polish authorities full of what Heller described as "fabrications, untruths, lies, and deceptions, like nothing heard before from any man in Israel." As a result of this letter, the Polish head of the district set out for Ludmir on Wednesday, the evening of the first day of Tammuz, having "sent orders that he not find me [Heller] when he arrived." By the time the government official set foot in Ludmir, Heller was already gone. Once again, Heller's powerful allies managed to intercede on his behalf, and he was allowed to return to Ludmir for six weeks to organize his affairs before leaving town for good. Of his final days in Ludmir, Heller writes, "[A]fter the government official left I returned to my home in peace. On a Tuesday, the fifth day of Tammuz, which I have established as a fast day for my descendants forever, I sat in a state of shock, worry, and sorrow, of which it is not proper to describe in a book."

What happened next has become the stuff of legend. Heller describes the crushing blow of the "death of my modest and pious daughter [Davrish], whose like cannot be found in the entire land," followed by the news that "the government official was going to return by way of Ludmir." Though it does not appear in his autobiography, something else may have occurred as Heller prepared to flee before the Polish official's return: Heller may have put a curse on Ludmir. As Ephraim Fishel Mamet, an author in the *Pinkas Ludmir*, writes: "The property

owners [balebatim] in this time did not respect him and expelled him from the city. On the Sabbath eve he emitted a harsh curse that remained on the city for generations."

According to Mamet, the people of Ludmir attributed a number of phenomena to Heller's curse: "He cursed his contemporaries and, indeed, on the grounds of the old cemetery they built a municipal electrical station, and. . . . The synagogue was never in good condition, despite its many repairs." Another former resident, Nechama Singer Ariel, told me that people in town believed that "Ludmir always had *tsuris* [troubles] with its rabbis," because of Heller's curse. Hasidic hagiographies from the Karlin-Stolin and Chernobyl dynasties preserve yet a third version of what happened. According to these sources, Heller decreed that the town would always suffer from fires, that it would be overrun by mice, and that "[t]he leaders of the community would always war with one another and peace would never reign among the heads of the people."

As it turns out, Ludmir did experience problems with fires, mice, and rabbis in the centuries following Yom-Tov Lippman Heller's exile. To put his legendary curse into perspective, however, we should remember that most, if not all, Jewish communities in Eastern Europe suffered from the same problems. Whether Heller's curse was miraculous in character or whether he merely predicted the inevitable—indeed, whether he even placed a curse on Ludmir at all—it is significant that memories of Heller's tumultuous stay remained alive in Ludmir well into the twentieth century. When I first heard about this tradition, I wondered whether residents of Ludmir had ever interpreted the controversy between the Maiden of Ludmir and her opponents as a fulfillment of Heller's curse. In the end, neither the texts I read nor the people whom I interviewed ever made this connection. Yet as we will see in a subsequent chapter, Heller's curse did find its way into the Maiden of Ludmir's story—in a most unpredictable way.

Only a few years after Heller's expulsion from Ludmir, the town's Jewish community was devastated by Bogdan Chmielnicki's Cossacks. The Cossacks (a Turkic word meaning "itinerant warriors") were groups of runaway serfs, adventurers (some of them baptized Jews), and their descendants, who lived in the border regions of Poland and Russia. Beginning in the fifteenth century, the Cossacks were encouraged to settle these areas for two reasons. First, they were kept at a safe distance from the population centers to the north and were therefore less able to foment rebellion. Second, they could function as a military buffer between the Slavic states and the Tatar Khanates that perpetually threat-

ened them. Over time, the Cossacks developed their own culture, one that clung tenaciously to Russian Orthodox traditions on the one hand, while absorbing many Tatar influences on the other.

While the plan to contain the Cossacks seemed good in theory, by 1648 things had fallen apart. Chafing under Polish rule, the Cossack hetman Bogdan Chmielnicki formed an alliance with the Tatar hordes and rebelled. As the Cossacks and their allies fanned out across the country-side they gained the support of the Ukrainian peasantry. In the words of the historian Eric Hobsbawm, "Banditry merge[d] with peasant revolt or revolution." Soon Polish and Jewish blood was flowing in towns throughout Podolia and Volhynia, including Ludmir. Jews were targeted because of Christian anti-Jewish sentiment and because Jews frequently functioned as leaseholders and revenue collectors for the Polish nobility, thereby drawing the ire of the Ukrainian peasants.

Today, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, we seldom hear of these massacres, but they had a powerful and lasting impact on the collective memory of Eastern European Jewry. Among the survivors who lamented the Jews' suffering was Abraham ben Shmuel Ashkenazi, a native of Ludmir who sold medicinal herbs for a living. After leaving Ludmir, Ashkenazi went to Venice, where he unsuccessfully tried to have his account of the catastrophe published. It took another two hundred years for Ashkenazi's manuscript finally to appear in print. This is how Ashkenzai describes the invasion of Volhynia: "Who can tell of all our sufferings? . . . How the Tatars [and Cossacks] came to Volhynia and set our communities on fire, with all our synagogues and Torah scrolls, and killed all the sages who are our crowns. . . . And you, Lord and God of our ancestors, look down and hear our cries!" In their wake, the invaders left thirty-nine Jewish buildings standing in Ludmir, a number that was reduced to only two by the Lithuanian forces who further devastated the town in 1653. 10

At a time when Ludmir and other communities in Poland were just beginning to recover from these disasters, rumors leaked from the Ottoman Empire that the Jewish messiah had arrived in the person of Sabbatai Zevi. Born in 1626 in the Anatolian city of Smyrna (in Turkish, Izmir), Sabbatai Zevi became the leader of an antinomian apocalyptic movement whose followers could be found in practically every corner of the Jewish world. When Zevi's popularity became so great that it threatened the Sultan himself, he imprisoned the false messiah in Gallipoli and gave him a choice between death and conversion to Islam. Sabbatai Zevi's decision to "don the turban" and convert to Islam was a major blow to many of his followers. Others, including some who became crypto-

Muslims, or *Dönmeh*, remained devoted to him and his teachings for generations. In 1672 the Jewish opponents of Sabbatai Zevi (or Mahmet Efendi, as he was now called) convinced the Ottoman authorities to exile him to the Albanian fortress of Dulcigno (in Turkish, Ülgün), where he died in 1676.

In the summer of 1666, during the height of his influence, Sabbatai Zevi warmly received two visitors from Poland. The men, named Isaiah and Aryeh Leib, were the son and stepson, respectively, of David ben Samuel Halevi, better known as the TaZ, after the title of his work *Turei Zahav*. Halevi was born (c. 1586) in Ludmir to a prominent local family. His maternal grandfather, Isaac ben Bazalel, was the head of Ludmir's rabbinic court (*av bet din*) and of its rabbinic academy (*rosh yeshiva*). Hs older brother and teacher, Isaac Halevi, took over as head of Ludmir's rabbinic court and authored important works of grammar, poetry, and Halakhah. After leaving Ludmir, David Halevi led an itinerant life, serving as rabbi in Putalicze, Posen, and Ostrog (where he narrowly escaped Chmielnicki's forces), before finally becoming the head of the academy and rabbinic court in Lvov.

It is unclear whether Halevi sent his sons to meet with Sabbatai Zevi or whether they volunteered for the mission out of curiosity, devotion, or a combination of the two. What is clear from the different versions of the visit that have survived, however, is that the emissaries were so favorably impressed by Sabbatai Zevi that they literally sang his praises upon returning home to Poland. During their interview, Sabbatai Zevi asked the men about the health of their famous father. When they responded that he suffered from illness and advanced age, Zevi "handed them his robe and a gold-covered cloth, instructing Aryeh Leib to place the garment upon his father while reciting the verse 'so that thy youth be renewed like the eagle." Zevi also gave them a piece of sugar (to speed Halevi's recovery), a gold-embroidered cloth, and a letter in which he addressed Halevi as "a man of belief (ish emunah)." Since the gematria (numerical value) of the Hebrew word emunah is equivalent to the word zevi, Gershom Scholem has argued that Halevi was a Sabbatean believer. Whether Halevi was a follower of the false messiah or not, the old sage does not appear to have benefited much from Sabbatai Zevi's gifts, for he died a short while after receiving them in 1667.11

Following Halevi's death, one branch of his family remained in Ludmir, where they were known by the surname Bardach (a Hebrew acronym standing for *ben rav david harif*, "the son of rabbi David the sharp"). For many generations, indeed, until the Holocaust, the Bardachs

played an important role in Ludmir's Jewish community and, as we saw in chapter 2, also appear to have been intimately connected to the Maiden of Ludmir.

Little is known about Ludmir's Jews in the decades before the Maiden's birth, though the introduction of a book published in 1740 by Eliahu ben Yaakov, a rabbi from Ludmir, mentions a fire that devastated the town.<sup>12</sup> The following figures should be taken with a grain of salt, since they were collected for the purposes of taxation. In 1764 the Jewish community listed 1,401 members, while only a year later the number had dropped to 1,327. Because of the enmity of their Christian neighbors, the Jews complained that they were forced to bury their dead at night. By 1784 the Jewish population had declined to only 340 souls, rising to 630 in 1790. During this period, many Jews were involved in the horse trade or sold equipment and provisions to the Polish soldiers who were garrisoned in the town.<sup>13</sup> Although the community fluctuated in size throughout the 1700s, it had recovered sufficiently from the troubles of the previous century to attract a number of important rabbis whose names appear frequently in the minutes of the Council of the Four Lands. Among the rabbinic figures who spent time in Ludmir in this period were Yehezkel Landau (1713-1793) and Nahman of Kosov (d. 1746), who met as students in the town and were later accused of heresy by the fiery anti-Sabbatean rabbi Jacob Emden (1697-1776), though these charges were never proven.14

In the second half of the eighteenth century, another religious movement began to attract adherents—and charges of heresy—in Jewish communities throughout Podolia and Volhynia, including Ludmir. Hasidic legends declare that the Baal Shem Tov (1700–1760) emerged from a period of seclusion in Podolia to become the leader of a circle of disciples who spread his teachings far and wide. One of the first members of the nascent Hasidic movement to settle in Ludmir was Mordechai of Neshkhiz, a disciple of Michel of Zlotchov, himself a disciple of Dov Ber the "Magid" of Mezeritch, the Baal Shem Tov's most important follower in Volhynia. As we saw above, Mordechai served for a time as Ludmir's rabbi and the head of its rabbinic court before returning to his native Neshkhiz, while his sons, Yaakov Leib of Kovel and Yitzhak of Neshkhiz, also spent considerable time in Ludmir.

Only a few decades before the Maiden's birth, according to Hasidic tradition, the messiah came to Ludmir. Shlomo Karliner, the man whom Hasidim would later call the Messiah son of Joseph, was born in 1738 in Karlin. Located in the marshy region known as Polesia, the town of

Karlin was a satellite of the city of Pinsk, one of the five member communities of the Lithuanian Vaad, or council (the others were Vilna, Brest, Slutsk, and Grodno), that governed the Jews of Lithuania and White Russia from 1623 to 1761. Compared to the Jews in Podolia and Volhynia, the Jews in these northern territories were more urbanized, their community structures were more centralized, and the level of their talmudic scholarship was higher. While Hasidism quickly spread among the small villages of Podolia and Volhynia, it encountered fierce resistance from the rabbinic leaders of Lithuania, who became known as *mitnagdim*, or "opponents."

During the Besht's lifetime, the Hasidic movement made few inroads into Lithuania and the neighboring region of White Russia. After the Besht died in 1760, however, his disciple Dov Ber established an important Hasidic center in the Volhynian town of Mezeritch, where he was able to attract followers from Lithuania and White Russia. The first of the Magid's followers to establish a base in Lithuania was Aaron of Karlin (1736–1772), whose influence radiated far beyond the confines of his hometown, even reaching the rabbinic center of Vilna. Indeed, in the short period between his first contact with the Magid of Mezeritch in the 1760s to his death in 1772, Aaron "the Great" transformed the term Karliner into a synonym for Hasid in Lithuania.

Aaron of Karlin's public endorsements of Hasidic practices (such as ecstatic prayer and the use of razor-sharp knives for ritual slaughter), helped to inspire the first ban of excommunication against the Hasidic movement in 1772. Signed by Elijah the Gaon of Vilna, the most important rabbi in Lithuania, the *herem* accused the Hasidim of being "wise men in their own eyes and wonder-workers," when in reality, they "conduct themselves like madmen . . . neglect Torah study . . . and desecrate the men of greatness in the presence of ignoramuses." "Therefore," the ban continued, "all heads of the people shall robe themselves in the raiment of zeal, of zeal for the Lord of Hosts, to extirpate, to destroy, to outlaw, and to excommunicate them." In response, *mitnagdim* throughout Lithuania began to burn Hasidic writings, physically attack Hasidim, and destroy their houses of prayer.

In 1772, at the height of these attacks on the Hasidim, during the stormy period of the first partition of Poland, Aaron of Karlin died at age thirty-six. Among the disciples whom Aaron of Karlin had attracted before his death was Shlomo Karliner. Like his master, Shlomo Karliner had also studied with the Magid of Mezeritch, who, according to Hasidic tradition, had declared upon meeting him, "This Litvak [Lithuanian]

gets to the point, to the pure fear of heaven." <sup>16</sup> Though Hasidic sources depict him as a reluctant successor, Shlomo Karliner ultimately took over as leader of the Hasidim in Lithuania, a situation that continued until 1783, when mounting tensions with the town's *mitnagdim* caused him to flee Karlin.

At first Shlomo Karliner attempted to settle in White Russia, by then the turf of Shneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of the Habad (aka Lubavitch) branch of Hasidism. From correspondence preserved by one of Shneur Zalman's followers, we know that Shlomo Karliner asked Shneur Zalman for permission to settle in the vicinity of Vitebsk. Because of a doctrinal disagreement between him and Shneur Zalman, Shlomo Karliner ultimately did not settle in White Russia.<sup>17</sup> Instead, some time between 1783 and 1784, he made his way to Ludmir. There are many legends, some clearly apocryphal, concerning the ten years that Shlomo Karliner spent in Ludmir, beginning with the circumstances surrounding his arrival. According to a tradition of the Rozhin-Sadigora Hasidim, the people of Ludmir tried repeatedly to recruit Shlomo Karliner to be their rabbi while he was still in Karlin. He stubbornly refused their requests, until a contingent from Ludmir visited him on the holiday of Lag Ba-Omer, which commemorates the day when the Romans are said to have taken a break in the torture and murder of Rabbi Akiva's disciples during the Bar Kokhba Rebellion of 132–135 C.E. In jest, Shlomo Karliner asked the emissaries from Ludmir how they celebrated the holiday. They answered that the town's young people went out into the fields and shot each other with play arrows. The zaddik responded, "If this is so, if you shoot arrows among yourselves, then I want to come to you." Shlomo Karliner had happily realized that if he settled in Ludmir he would die a martyr's death, like Rabbi Akiba and his students.18

In Ludmir, say Hasidic sources, Shlomo Karliner led his followers in such fervent prayer that they sometimes collapsed on the ground from hit-pashtut ha-gashmiut (the annihilation of corporeality), until he revived them. On one occasion, a Polish lord and his wife were passing by the beys medresh in Ludmir and overheard Shlomo Karliner praying. The lord turned to his wife and declared, "This Jew loves his God much more than I love you." In this anecdote, the unlikely figure of a Polish nobleman is transformed into a spokesman for an ideology that the scholar David Biale has called "the displacement of desire in eighteenth-century Hasidism." In its most radical form, Biale writes, this doctrine held that "[t]o marry and engage in a full sexual life seemed to the Hasidim . . . nothing short of adultery against God." I will explore this theological

doctrine and how it may have influenced the Maiden of Ludmir's decision to remain celibate in chapter 11.

Unlike Shneur Zalman of Liadi, who emphasized the power of the intellect in his voluminous writings, Shlomo Karliner refrained from writing and declared that when a Hasid approached him, the first thing he did was to remove the Hasid's *sekhel* (intellect), so that he could act solely with his *emunah* (belief).<sup>21</sup> Among the future zaddikim who accepted Shlomo Karliner's tutelage in Ludmir were Uri the "Seraph" of Strelisk, Mordechai of Lekhovitz, and Asher of Stolin, the orphaned son of Aaron of Karlin. These men preserved their master's teachings, including, "Without love there is no perfection. Fear without love is nothing," "He who does not have anything, needs nothing," and "I wish I could love the greatest zaddik in Israel like God loves the greatest evildoer in Israel."<sup>22</sup>

While living in Ludmir, Shlomo Karliner gained fame as one of the Hasidic movement's first "wonder-working" rebbes. Like Yohanan ben Zakkai in the Talmud (Sukkah 28:1), he is said to have understood the conversations of birds, date palms, and the ministering angels.<sup>23</sup> Hasidic tradition says that he could travel great distances in an instant, a phenomenon known as kefitsat ha-derekh (literally, "jumping the way") and burn someone to a crisp with a single glance - powers not unlike those of contemporary superheroes like the X-Men.<sup>24</sup> One of the more mundane (and, therefore, unusual) miracles attributed to Shlomo Karliner involved his son, a cup of tea, and a lump of sugar. Every time Shlomo Karliner drank a cup of tea, he would hold a lump of sugar between his fingers. When his son asked him why he didn't hold the sugar between his teeth like everyone else, Shlomo Karliner "gave his son the sugar to taste, and there was no sweetness in it. And it was a wonder!"25 He had miraculously absorbed the sweetness of the sugar through the tips of his fingers. Because of these powers, his contemporaries nicknamed Shlomo Karliner the "little Baal Shem," though his student Mordechai of Lekhovitz protested that his teacher "was the great Baal Shem, the perfect Baal Shem."26

In 1792 Shlomo Karliner's lifelong desire to die as a martyr was fulfilled. The town of Ludmir was caught between Russian and Polish troops embroiled in a wider conflict that led to the second and third partitions of Poland, when the Russian Empire annexed many new provinces, including Volhynia. Like the events of his life, those of Shlomo Karliner's death are the stuff of legend. According to a tradition originating in Ludmir, the hidden zaddik Reb Leyb Sarah's (the only Hasidic master named after his mother) visited the town before the conflict to

save Shlomo Karliner's life. Detecting the presence of Leyb Sarah's, Shlomo Karliner sent his disciple Asher of Stolin to ask him, "What do you want from my town of Ludmir?' Immediately, the holy one [Leyb Sarah's] took his walking stick and sack and left. Weeks passed and the war broke out. . . . Then everyone knew that the zaddik, Rabbi Leyb, had come to the town in order to save him, but, our rabbi yearned for the death of a martyr like Rabbi Akiba in his day."<sup>27</sup>

On the Sabbath eve before his death, Hasidic legend states that Shlomo Karliner delayed the kiddush over the wine so that he could visit the horses in his courtyard. Returning, he declared that he had heard inauspicious tidings from the animals. The next day, the tide of battle shifted in favor of the Russians, and they succeeded in driving the Polish troops out of Ludmir. As a reward, the Russian commander allowed his soldiers to do whatever they wanted for two hours. Cossacks began to attack Ludmir's Jewish homes: "Rifle shots, the galloping of horses, and savage yells were heard all around. The Jews of the town ran to the beys medresh of our holy rabbi [Shlomo Karliner]." Upon arriving, the terrified Jews discovered their leader in a state of apparent collapse, his head in the holy ark (aron ha-qodesh). Fearing that he had fainted, one of Shlomo Karliner's relatives grabbed his legs to drag him out of the ark. In fact, he had been immersed in an ecstatic state of *devekut* (mystical communion) that had protected him and those in the beys medresh from harm. Hasidic sources variously identify the figure who tugged at Shlomo Karliner as his wife, his grandson, or his granddaughter, Devorah, "a great holy woman [a groyse zaddekes] who possessed the holy spirit [baalas ruah ha-qodesh]," according to one Hasidic author.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, we have no other information about Devorah, whose reputation for holiness may have originated with the story of her decisive but ambivalent role in Shlomo Karliner's martyrdom.

Precisely when Shlomo Karliner's state of *devekut* was interrupted, a Cossack with a limp glanced through a window of the *beys medresh*. Spying the rabbi, the Cossack unshouldered his rifle and took a shot, hitting Shlomo Karliner in the leg. During the massacre that followed, Noah, the son of Mordechai of Lekhovitz, witnessed a soldier trying to stick his sword into a pile of corpses to see if anyone were still alive. His comrade said to him, "Are you lacking people to kill? There are enough in the town. What are you searching for here?"<sup>29</sup> After the Cossacks' rampage was over, Shlomo Karliner was placed in bed, where for nearly a week he rejected doctors' efforts to remove the bullet from his leg. Lying in bed, he read from a book of the Zohar until he passed away on

Thursday, the twenty-second of Tammuz. Afterward, Asher of Stolin recounted that before Shlomo Karliner died, "he started roaring like a lion and no one was able to calm him, until God, himself, said to him: 'Shloymele, my child, this you prepared for yourself?'"<sup>30</sup> According to his wishes, Shlomo Karliner was buried in an *ohel*, or chapel, in the same unmarked grave as a poor man named Yudel Koveler, identified by later Hasidic tradition as a secret zaddik.<sup>31</sup> In the following years, this simple grave became an important pilgrimage site for Hasidim from all over Eastern Europe, and its sanctity inspired a slew of legends.

Shlomo Karliner's martyrdom struck a profound chord in his fellow Hasidim, who saw the terrible events in Ludmir as the fulfillment of a messianic prophecy. According to an old Jewish tradition, the redemption of Israel would involve not one, but two, messiahs. Before Messiah son of David could reveal himself, a predecessor named Messiah son of Joseph had to be killed at the hands of a terrible foe named Armilus. This figure, whose name may come from Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome, is described as the son of Satan and a beautiful statue. He is bald, leprous, and, like the Cossack in Ludmir, deformed.<sup>32</sup> Just as today's Hasidim view Hitler as an incarnation of the biblical figure Haman, so the contemporaries of Shlomo Karliner viewed his Cossack murderer as an incarnation of Armilus.<sup>33</sup>

The identification of Shlomo Karliner as Messiah son of Joseph became so complete in Ludmir that by the twentieth century many of the town's residents had forgotten the name Shlomo Karliner altogether.<sup>34</sup> Instead, they talked about the Moshiah ben Yosef or simply the moshiah who was buried in their cemetery. Even people who tried to remember the messiah's given name made mistakes. Thus in the Pinkas Ludmir, Yosef Ukun refers to Shlomo Karliner as "Abramale Karlin," while Ephraim Fishel Mamet mistakenly substitutes Aaron of Karlin for his disciple.<sup>35</sup> Mamet's recollections are worth quoting, since they indicate the confusion caused by having the messiah buried in one's hometown: "In the old Jewish cemetery they would always point out the small ohel of Rabbi Aaron the Great [sic], who was called Moshiah ben Yosef by everyone, and in my childhood when I couldn't differentiate between Moshiah ben David and Moshiah ben Yosef, I couldn't understand how the moshiah could have died and been buried in Ludmir, and yet we wait for him to arrive every day."36

After Shlomo Karliner's death, his chief disciples, including Uri of Strelisk and Asher of Stolin, who became the new leader of the Karlin-Stolin branch of Hasidism, left Ludmir for other communities. Shlomo Karliner's eldest son, Moshe of Ludmir, or Moshe Gottlieb, as he was known in official Russian documents, succeeded his father as the leader of a small circle of Hasidim in Ludmir. Although he never approached the fame or influence of his father, as the most prominent Hasidic figure in Ludmir during the first half of the nineteenth century, Moshe Gottlieb must have played a significant role in the Maiden of Ludmir's life, an issue that I will explore in chapter 10.

As this brief survey reveals, our knowledge of Ludmir's Jewish community before 1800 in general and of its female members in particular is limited by the narrow range of available sources. Save for a few passing remarks in ancient Russian chronicles and Polish legal and economic documents, we must rely on Hebrew accounts that focus on the experiences of prominent rabbis in Ludmir, written either by these rabbis themselves or by other rabbinic authors. Only rarely do these male authors mention women living in Ludmir, such as Yom Tov Lippman Heller's daughter Davrish or Shlomo Karliner's granddaughter Devorah (both connected to important male figures), and such references are always brief and never provide much information. Even the extant pinkas (minute book) from the Council of the Four Lands, which frequently mentions prominent male residents of Ludmir, reveals little about the women of the community. For these reasons, it is difficult to paint a picture of the community's socioeconomic, cultural, and religious life that does not reflect the narrow perspective of the male rabbinic elite.

As we will see in the following chapters, new kinds of information about the Jewish community of Ludmir become available in the nine-teenth century owing to modern methods of information gathering employed by the state and other agents, such as newspapers (which were sometimes but not always controlled by the government). In this period, we begin to learn more about the different socioeconomic strata in Ludmir and, to a lesser degree, about the town's Jewish women, who still remain poorly documented relative to Ludmir's male residents.

Against this historiographical background, the Maiden of Ludmir's unique significance becomes apparent. On the one hand, like most of her female predecessors and contemporaries in Ludmir, little if any official documentation exists concerning the Maiden's life in Ludmir. Nor did the Maiden of Ludmir leave behind any writings of her own from which to glean information. On the other, the Maiden is the only pre- or early-modern Jewish woman from the town of Ludmir whose life was preserved not only in the collective memory of the community but also in popular and scholarly accounts. In these respects, the Maiden of Ludmir

resembles male rabbinic figures such as Yom-Tov Lippman Heller and, in particular, Shlomo Karliner, who though he produced no writings of his own and is undocumented in contemporary official sources, inspired numerous hagiographical accounts.

Despite its unavoidable limitations as a history of pre- and early-modern Jewish Ludmir, this chapter has revealed — albeit through a rabbinic lens — the community's intimate relationship to a number of major events that affected all of Polish Jewry, including the Council of the Four Lands, Chmielnicki's massacres, the Sabbatean heresy, and the rise of Hasidism. Of these phenomena, it is the last that most shaped the Maiden of Ludmir's story. Indeed I would argue that without knowledge of the town's early Hasidic history, it is impossible to understand how the Maiden was able to become a religious leader and why the town of Ludmir, in particular, was fertile ground for such a development during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Shlomo Karliner placed Ludmir on the Hasidic map, but the events following his death guaranteed that the town would not become a major center of the Hasidic movement. As we have seen, his chief disciples abandoned Ludmir and established themselves in other communities. Meanwhile, Shlomo Karliner's eldest son, Moshe of Ludmir, did little to cultivate a following and even refused to teach Torah in public, according to Hasidic tradition. As I will argue, the marked absence of a charismatic male zaddik in Ludmir during this period created a power vacuum in the town, one that allowed the Maiden to establish herself as a religious leader.

At the same time, the town of Ludmir never completely disappeared from the radar screen of the Hasidic movement for two reasons. First, Shlomo Karliner's grave remained an important pilgrimage site, particularly for Hasidim connected to the Karlin-Stolin branch of the movement. Second, Shlomo Karliner's descendants in Ludmir were still considered members of the Hasidic aristocracy and therefore suitable marriage partners for the movement's most powerful dynasties. Over the years, therefore, weddings held in Ludmir attracted important figures from throughout the Hasidic world and established alliances between Ludmir's "first" Hasidic family and dynasties such as the Chernoblers. As I will contend, this phenomenon helped to bring the Maiden of Ludmir to the attention of the wider Hasidic world and its leaders — with mixed results.

### CHAPTER 5

## Birth and Childhood

The Maiden of Ludmir was born in 1815. Or was she? This is the year given by Horodezky and most of her other biographers. It is also the year that several important zaddikim, including the Seer of Lublin, passed away. As I contemplated her story, I wondered whether people had remembered the Maiden of Ludmir's year of birth because it happened to coincide with the death of these sages or whether someone had simply chosen 1815 because it already stood out in the collective memory of the Hasidic community. After years of searching, I had almost given up hope of ever finding official confirmation of the Maiden of Ludmir's year of birth. Then, while examining census lists from nineteenth-century Palestine, I came across two documents strongly indicating that the Maiden was born in Ludmir in 1806 to a wealthy family. These are the only likely official references to her birth and childhood. The rest is commentary.

According to her biographers, the Maiden of Ludmir's parents were both pious and learned Jews who were married for more than a decade before finally having their first and only child. All agree that her father's name was Monesh Verbermacher (or Vebermacher), but none give her mother's name, despite the important role she played in her daughter's life. Most authors describe Monesh as a wealthy merchant, but one portrays him as a weaver, hence the alternative spelling of the family name (*veber* means "weaver"). Interestingly, neither Verbermacher nor

Vebermacher appear in any name lists of Eastern European Jews, and it is possible that the Maiden's correct surname was mistransmitted, perhaps beginning with Horodezky in his 1909 Russian essay (in which he calls her Verbermacher). Some say that Monesh was a strident opponent of the Hasidic movement. Others portray him as a follower either of Mottel of Chernobyl, of the Seer of Lublin, or of Zvi Hirsh Zidichiver, all famous zaddikim of the day. Whatever the case, neither he nor his wife belonged to prominent Hasidic families.

Hannah Rochel was born during a period of intense crisis for Jews throughout the Russian Empire. In 1804 Czar Alexander I enacted the socalled Jewish Constitution, which attempted to structure and, in certain respects, radically transform Russian Jewish society. Jews were officially placed under the authority of Russian courts, police, and municipalities but had the right to elect their own rabbis, who were "to look after all the ceremonies of the Jewish faith and decide all disputes bearing on religion."1 They were, however, prohibited from employing the decree of excommunication, or herem, though as we will see below, this particular restriction appears to have had little impact on actual practice. Two statutes in particular threatened to cause severe disruptions among the Jewish population: the expulsion of Jews from villages and their forced resettlement in larger towns and the prohibition of Jews in the countryside to produce or sell alcohol, heretofore a mainstay of the rural Jewish economy.<sup>2</sup> In his monumental history of the Jews in Russia and Poland, Simon Dubnow writes that any possible benefits from these decrees "had no fascination for Russian Jews, who had not yet been touched by the influences of Western Europe. But what the Russian Jews did feel, and feel with sickening pain, was the imminence of terrible economic catastrophe."3 Ultimately this disaster would be averted, for as Dubnow writes, "the Government was overwhelmed by the difficulties of the task, and brought the whole movement to a standstill," but the experiment would have lasting effects on Russian Jewish society.4

Ludmir became part of the Russian Empire as a result of the partitions of Poland during the 1790s. Although little documentation of the town survives from this initial period of Russification, population statistics reveal that the number of Jews in the district of Ludmir increased from 1834 in the year 1799 to 1942 in 1805. By contrast, the number of non-Jews declined radically from 1,076 people in the year 1799 to only 673 in 1805. Of the Jewish residents, fifteen were officially listed as merchants in 1799, and thirty-four in 1805.<sup>5</sup> Although statistics from this period are problematic because respondents frequently concealed true population

numbers, the figures for Ludmir indicate the growing demographic and economic strength of the Jewish community relative to the Christian population. Jewish immigration to larger towns as a result of Alexander's decree may have caused some of this increase, while the apparent decline in Christian numbers may reflect an outflow of ethnic Poles from the Ukrainian border regions following the Russian conquest.

Maps of Ludmir from this period reveal a town still in transition from Polish to Russian rule. On the one hand, Polish noblemen (a source lists 132 at the beginning of the century) continued to form a powerful bloc in the town and would later participate in the Polish rebellion of 1831. On the other, because of its strategic location on the eastern bank of the Bug River and its function as a district capital, Ludmir became the site of a Russian military garrison. Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian religious institutions shared space in the town. Of these, Polish Catholic churches and monasteries still appear in greater numbers at the turn of the nineteenth century, though the oldest church in Ludmir was the Uspensky Sabor, a Russian Orthodox cathedral dating from the thirteenth century. A map from 1807 lists Dominican and Capuchin Roman Catholic monasteries, as well as men's and women's monasteries belonging to the Basilian (that is, Uniate) order. In chapter 9, I will explore the role that this Uniate women's monastery may have played in the Maiden of Ludmir's story.

The eastern border of Ludmir was marked by a swampy region through which the Smoytch flowed, the southern border was delineated by the Luga River and an ancient fortress (where the Russians now placed a prison), the western border was marked by a large cherry orchard, and the northern border was defined by open fields and forests. The maps reveal a number of economic enterprises in Ludmir's precincts: a flour mill, pharmacy, brick kiln, depot for wagons, inn (owned by an ethnic Pole named Kozlovsky), Jewish- and Polish-run stores, and several openair markets. Municipal services included a school, court, treasury, prison, and infirmary. Jewish homes were located throughout the town, although their highest concentration appears to have been in the area of Ludmir's central square, or *ploshad*. The town had an old and new Jewish cemetery and two synagogues, one wooden and the other stone (the *groyser shul*, which was built in 1801), though there were unofficial *shtiblekh* as well.

There are two basic versions of the events leading up to Hannah Rochel's birth, both involving the intervention of a powerful rebbe. According to the first version, Monesh Verbermacher blamed his wife for their lack of children and sought to divorce her on the grounds that ten years of marriage had passed childless — the requisite number before the

Talmud encourages a man to divorce his wife and marry another. Monesh's wife desperately wanted to remain married and pleaded with her husband to come with her to Mottel of Chernobyl, a zaddik famous for his ability to cure barrenness. Monesh, skeptical about the Hasidic movement, told her that the fault was not his and that if anyone should go to a zaddik for a blessing it should be her.

According to David Mekler, the Maiden's mother traveled alone to the Chernobler Rebbe, who declared, "I know that your sorrow is great and you have awakened great pity in my heart, because the fault is not yours, but your husband's, and he and not you should implore God for mercy. Go home and you, God willing, will have a child. And in order to show your husband that you are in the right, you will have a sign, giving birth to a girl." Although her mother preferred a boy, "the zaddik had said a girl — and a girl is also good." She went home to tell her husband, who greeted the news with skepticism. Nevertheless, within the year, a daughter was born to the couple.

This version of the birth narrative introduces an element of tension into the parents' relationship. In Mekler's account, this tension increases as the couple struggles over their daughter's education and betrothal. By emphasizing the zaddik's role in the Maiden of Ludmir's birth, the narrative links her story to the Chernobler dynasty from the very beginning. It also deemphasizes the role of the biological father in the child's conception in favor of a famous zaddik, thereby subtly integrating the Maiden of Ludmir into the more typical dynastic model of leadership. Finally, the birth narrative establishes the close relationship between the Maiden and her mother. Indeed, the child's gender functions as a sign that her mother's merit resulted in her birth rather than her father's. Yet it is an ambivalent sign, since the child's femaleness also signifies Monesh Verbermacher's punishment for doubting the zaddik and the Hasidic movement.

Unlike the first version, the second stresses the love between the Maiden's parents. Although Ludmir's rabbi encouraged Monesh to divorce his barren wife, Ephraim Taubenhaus writes that "Monesh loved his wife and rejected the suggestion of the rabbi." Instead, Monesh went to the famous Seer of Lublin, who declared, "Go in peace to your home and your business. Before a year passes, your spouse will embrace a son with good fortune. You must dedicate this son to Torah and good deeds, so that he will be a rabbi in Israel!" Monesh returned home, vowing to dedicate his son as the Seer of Lublin had instructed. Yet "In that year a daughter was born to Monesh and he declared that he would keep the

vow that he made in regards to his daughter."8 Thus, the child was originally *supposed to be male*, but the Seer of Lublin, famous for his prophetic ability, appears to have misseen the outcome of the pregnancy. This ironic twist introduces an element of gender reversal into the birth narrative itself.

In a variant of this tradition, Menasheh Unger writes that Monesh Verbermacher was a Hasid of the Seer of Lublin and frequently visited the zaddik's court to seek a blessing for his barren wife. The rebbe implored him to be patient, for this would result in a great soul being brought into the world, warning him that "unripe fruit was not good to eat." After years of waiting, Monesh could no longer bear his suffering, and although the Seer had instructed his assistant to bar anyone from disturbing him, Monesh burst in on the zaddik while he was engaged in tikkun hazot, the midnight rite of mourning for the Shekhinah's exile. Standing before his master, Monesh cried, "Rebbe, how long must I wait? Have pity on me and my wife and bless us with a son." The Seer heard him out and responded, "You have rushed things a bit, Monesh, nevertheless you will be helped within the year."9 A short while later, the Seer of Lublin passed away, and Monesh's wife became pregnant. Although the Seer's Hasidim were sure that the child would be a boy, it turned out to be a girl. Unger's account implies that Monesh's impatience may have resulted in his wife giving birth to "unripe fruit," that is, a daughter. Both versions, therefore, provide an etiology for the Maiden of Ludmir's later masculine behavior by implying that she was originally supposed to be a boy. Somehow perhaps to punish her father - the girls' gender was reversed before birth.

Despite their differences, all these accounts attribute the Maiden of Ludmir's birth to the intervention of a powerful rebbe, thereby symbolically integrating her story into the dynastic model. There is no way of knowing whether either zaddik was actually involved in her birth. However, since the Maiden was probably born in 1806 and the Seer of Lublin died in 1815, Unger's version of the events is very unlikely. Rather than focus on the accuracy of these narratives, however, it is more important to appreciate their function in the Maiden of Ludmir's story. The Chernobler Rebbe was the founding figure of Ukrainian Hasidism, while the Seer of Lublin established the Polish school of Hasidism. The town of Ludmir is located between Chernobyl and Lublin, between the Western and Eastern branches of the movement. By attributing the Maiden's birth either to the Seer of Lublin or to Mottel of Chernobyl, these traditions place her story within one of the centers rather than on

the margins of the Hasidic world. And although she was not biologically related to an important Hasidic leader, the Maiden of Ludmir was spiritually related through the blessing that resulted in her conception.

Like many future saints, Hannah Rochel is described as a physically beautiful and intellectually precocious child. All her biographers agree that she received an intense early education but disagree on where she received it. Several depict Hannah Rochel as studying in a heder, the elementary school traditionally attended by Jewish boys.<sup>10</sup> Charles Raddock is the only author to imply that this posed any kind of problem, writing that the girl sat behind a screen separating her from the male pupils. Other biographers portray one or both of the girl's parents as teaching her within the home. Mordechai Biber states that Hannah Rochel's father and mother were both involved in her education but that the girl learned Hebrew on her own. According to him, Hannah Rochel read "the siddur and the prayer books and thhines works for women in Yiddish" but also taught herself Hebrew "with the help of translations in Yiddish, that were in the margins of prayer books and holy books."11 Biber's depiction of the Maiden as a reader of thhines literature reflects the widespread popularity and production of thhine texts in the region of Volhynia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. 12 While practically every Jewish boy learned some Hebrew, Hannah Rochel was compelled to teach herself from the margins.

David Mekler offers a poignant account of Hannah Rochel's early education, one that stresses the involvement of her mother. Though highly embellished, it jibes with the historian Paula Hyman's observation that older Eastern European Jewish women sometimes played an important role in providing their younger female relatives with superior educations: "In several cases mothers or grandmothers, perhaps compensating for their own missed opportunities for education, made sure that their daughters or granddaughters received the instruction that they sought." According to Mekler, Hannah Rochel's parents were mutually aware of their daughter's prodigious intellectual ability but disagreed over whether to nurture it through instruction:

"A pity, that she is a girl," R. Monesh often lamented to his wife. 'With such talents a boy could develop into a genius [gaon]."

"And if she is a girl, so what?" The wife didn't want to give in to him. "She will be able to achieve the same greatness as a boy. I feel it in my bones."

"One does not send a girl to study Torah," R. Monesh said.

"However, our Hannah Rochele will indeed learn Torah," declared the mother.

"And the mother began to give Hannah Rochele more attention regarding her education. She taught her to recite the blessing[s], to pray, [she] read to her from the women's books and told her stories of rabbis." <sup>14</sup>

Eventually Hannah Rochel became frustrated with this basic level of knowledge and thirsted for more. She began to watch her father when he studied. At first Monesh Verbermacher thought his daughter was just observing him, but then it became clear that Hannah Rochel wanted to learn along with him. Monesh still held back from teaching his daughter, and initially she learned on her own after listening to her father study aloud. After she began asking him pointed questions that indicated her insight and seriousness, however, Monesh realized that "one could learn with her as with a boy," and instructed his daughter in all he knew. In Mekler's version, therefore, the Maiden acquires her knowledge of "men's literature" initially by watching and listening from the margins, just as in Biber's account she learns Hebrew by reading from the margins.

According to Horodezky, Hannah Rochel learned to read and write Hebrew and studied talmudic aggadot, midrashim, musar literature and the Bible in their original language, unlike most Jewish women who only read these works in Yiddish translation. Significantly, he does not describe the girl as studying the legal material in the Talmud, and other authors explicitly state that Hannah Rochel was uninterested in the Halakhah. 15 This omission may reflect the traditional prejudice against women studying Halakhah, or it may be related to the early Hasidic preference for aggadic rather than legal texts, as Shlomo ben Moshe Chelma of Lwow declared: "Some of them [Hasidim] are attracted mainly to aggadic lore."16 Joseph Gross notes that Hannah Rochel was "by far the brightest pupil in her class" and even knew the Bible by heart when she was only six, while Nahman Shemen mentions that she immersed herself "in the Zohar and in other kabbalistic books" while still a youngster.<sup>17</sup> These comments foreshadow descriptions of the Maiden of Ludmir's later involvement in the Kabbalah.

How are we to understand these descriptions of the Maiden of Ludmir's early education? Was Hannah Rochel an anomaly, or did other Eastern European Jewish girls receive similar instruction? The Talmud declares that Jewish fathers have certain obligations to their sons (*mitzvot ha-ben al ha-av*), including the duty to instruct them in Torah. <sup>18</sup> Not only does the Talmud not require fathers to teach their daughters, it presents an ambivalent picture of whether they are even allowed to engage in this activity or whether women may study Torah on their

own.<sup>19</sup> Medieval and later legal commentaries retain the Talmud's equivocal attitudes and, not surprisingly, the common perception concerning Eastern European Jewish culture is that men received a strong education, while women, if they were lucky, only acquired basic literacy.<sup>20</sup> While this stereotype reflects the reality for many Jews in the Pale of Settlement, it is important to point out the ways in which it may obscure the range of educational opportunities available to Jewish girls such as Hannah Rochel Verbermacher.

Although the institution of the heder was primarily intended for Jewish boys, there is evidence that many shtetlekh had hederim for girls as well. Male heder students learned to read Hebrew texts, while girls typically studied Yiddish *tekhines*, the prayer book, the *Ts'ena Urena* (a Yiddish retelling of aggadic material), and *Nachlas Tsvi* (a Yiddish kabbalistic and ethical work). In many cases, the actual knowledge of Jewish traditions acquired by the two groups may have been comparable, but as Shaul Stampfer has written, "the most significant difference between the evaluation of male study of classical Hebrew texts and female study of *Tse'ena Urena* was that only the former was regarded as true study of the Torah while the latter was merely an act of piety."<sup>21</sup> In addition to hederim specifically for girls, in some communities girls attended hederim for boys, apparently without any controversy. After learning how to read, however, such girls typically dropped out, while their male counterparts went on to study rabbinic texts.<sup>22</sup>

Whereas poorer families were often forced to rely on hederim to provide their daughters with rudimentary reading and writing skills, girls born into wealthier families, such as Hannah Rochel, were frequently educated at home by private tutors, who were usually older women. In addition, over the centuries, some Jewish girls, including the daughters of Rashi, received extensive educations from their own fathers. Most of these girls lacked brothers and therefore had their father's undivided pedagogical attention. Indeed, several former residents of Ludmir mentioned to me that this phenomenon had occurred in their own families.

Within this broader cultural context, the Maiden of Ludmir's early education appears less exceptional than it does at first glance. Whether she learned at home or in a heder, Hannah Rochel was not unique among her female contemporaries in the Pale of Settlement. Indeed, what turns out to be striking about the traditions that describe her as studying in a heder is not the fact that she was a girl but that she was from a wealthy family that could have afforded to educate her in the home. Even Charles Raddock's assertion that Hannah Rochel sat behind a screen to separate

her from the male students appears anachronistic in light of evidence that girls and boys sat together in hederim during the nineteenth century without any problems.

Important elements of Hannah Rochel's curriculum also mirror the educational opportunities available to other nineteenth-century Eastern European Jewish girls. Thus, for example, she is described as learning biblical, aggadic, and ethical literature but not legal material (her study of the Zohar as a child seems like a fanciful invention). Like most, though certainly not all, her female contemporaries, Hannah Rochel was not taught to read and write Hebrew, yet she eventually learned it on her own. This more than anything else attests to the girl's extraordinary intellectual gifts and her great desire to learn Torah, that is, classical Jewish texts in the original Hebrew.

If Hannah Rochel's early love of Torah represents a parallel with the lives of Jewish holy men, her apparent fascination with secular and business matters sets her apart. Taubenhaus portrays Hannah Rochel as working in her father's weaving business after her daily prayers.<sup>23</sup> Mordechai Biber writes, "By virtue of her powerful intellect, she also understood secular affairs. The house of her father, a businessman, served as a gathering place for both Jewish and non-Jewish businessmen, and on rare occasions they would host men from foreign countries as well. She was attracted to this world and listened to the conversations and negotiations concerning different things." Eventually the girl's level of comprehension developed enough that she could participate herself: "She surprised everyone with her exact approach, her intelligence, and her analytical ability, and it came to pass that merchants and veteran men of affairs took advice from the girl concerning different matters, acted according to her words and experienced success."<sup>24</sup>

While it is tempting to view this behavior as early evidence of Hannah Rochel's masculinization, it is important to point out that the so-called cult of domesticity prevalent in Western Europe during the nineteenth century did not take root in Eastern European Jewish society. Instead, to quote Paula Hyman, "the cultural ideal of male learning and female labor" encouraged Eastern European Jewish women to take an active role in business and, in some cases, to become the sole breadwinners for their families. Frequently, the first step in a Jewish girl's education was learning how to write business documents and to read sentences such as "I went to Odessa to purchase merchandise." Seen within this broader cultural context, Hannah Rochel's early talent in business appears less like a sign of masculinity than of the precociousness of her intellect in an area

in which women were expected to excel. As we will presently see, however, the girl's intense interest in mundane affairs was at odds with her otherworldly and, in the eyes of her biographers, at least, masculine piety.

As a child Hannah Rochel began to engage in a wide range of traditionally male religious activities. For example, Horodezky writes, "The girl prayed like a man, three times a day and prayed with such ecstasy that it brought amazement to all around her. The area's inhabitants said that the daughter of Rabbi Monesh was worthy to become a zaddekes." Biber mentions that the girl "Was meticulous in praying three times a day, in washing her hands, blessing the bread and in the rest of the traditions of Israel — male behavior [ma'aseh gever]." Unger declares that "as a child, Hannah Rochel came before her parents wearing a tallis katan. Her father began to reproach her that a girl was not required to wear a tallis katan, but Hannah Rochel answered, 'Why do people make such a great difference between men and women? I will tear down the fences; I will wear a tallis katan, and when I'm twelve years old I'll start to lay tefillin!"

According to Unger, the Maiden's father assumed that she would forget about her vow but when she turned twelve - before her mother died – the Maiden did indeed begin to lay tefillin and pray in private so that men wouldn't see her. Seeing the pain this caused Monesh, his wife suggested that he ask the Chernobler Rebbe for advice. Monesh went to Chernobyl and gave the rebbe's gabbai (assistant) a large donation so that he wouldn't have to wait. After listening to the distraught father, the rebbe "rubbed his forehead with his silver tobacco box and said, I see nothing wrong with this. The Besht wanted to tear down the mehitsas [screens]. If your girl wants to go in a tallis katan and set out to be frum [pious], she should go in her way!" Yet the rebbe also gave Monesh "a blessing that his daughter should begin to behave in the manner of all other holy woman," in other words, that she should eventually marry and have children. After receiving the rebbe's blessing, Monesh returned to Ludmir with a "lighter heart," but his visit to Chernobyl may have actually emboldened Hannah Rochel, for a few paragraphs later, Unger writes that the girl went public with her previously private behavior: "In the women's section of the shul, she had her own stand and in the morning she used to pray in a tallis and tefillin and in a gartel [ritual belt] like a young man. It became known in the town that Hannah Rochel prayed in a tallit and tefillin, and pranksters began to mock her, [declaring] that she was a male in women's clothing."28

While some of the girl's townspeople dismissed her as a humorous aberration, others began to venerate her as a wonder-worker. One episode

in particular convinced them that Hannah Rochel was infused with the holy spirit: she miraculously detected the presence of unkosher meat in her home. One day Hannah Rochel refused to eat her mother's cooking. Despite his wife's insistence that the meat was fit to eat, Monesh Verbermacher's confidence in his daughter was such that he told his wife to "go to the butcher and discover what kind of meat he has given us today." The mother confronted the butcher, and after a long investigation it was determined that he had substituted a *treyf* ox for kosher meat. A rabbinic court was convened to punish the butcher, and the entire town became aware of the girl's visionary powers. The mother confidence in his point on, Hannah Rochel's parents became very careful, even wary, around her and consented silently to her increasingly long hours of isolation and study.

The episode with the unkosher meat is significant for several reasons. The Maiden of Ludmir is depicted as a visionary even before the heavenly vision that biographers depict as the turning point in her spiritual life. In addition, the particular character of this miracle suggests a connection to hagiographical traditions concerning other Hasidic and pre-Hasidic figures. The motif of detecting unkosher meat appears in tales about the eighteenth-century rabbi Jonathan Eybeschuetz and the Baal Shem Tov. The scholar Gedalyahu Nigal has demonstrated that this hagiographical trope was probably transferred from the earlier tale to the Hasidic work Shivhei Ha-Besht.31 Such a literary transference may have also occurred in the case of the Maiden of Ludmir. Intriguingly, the Hasidic holy woman Hanna Haya of Chernobyl is also depicted as miraculously detecting the presence of unkosher meat, yet in sharp contrast to the independent Maiden, she is said to have declared, "This is the power of my holy father [Mottel of Chernobyl] . . . he has blessed me that I should never succumb to any transgression and his merit supports me."32

Two important theoretical observations should be made at this juncture of the Maiden of Ludmir's story. The first is that the Maiden's participation in traditionally male activities began in early childhood, long before she experienced the vision and incarnation that many accounts stress as the point after which she "became a man in behavior." This event — which I will describe in chapter 7 — should not be viewed as singularly transforming the Maiden from a female into a "false male." Instead, the Maiden's androgenization must be seen as a gradual process that was intensified but not initiated by her visionary experience. The same authors who describe the Maiden as undergoing a gender reversal as a result of her vision also portray her as engaging in male behavior before this episode. Thus a tension exists within the accounts themselves,

one that may reflect the widespread desire of male hagiographers to understand their female subjects as experiencing sudden and radical spiritual and gender transformations.

The second observation is that ethnographic evidence from other patriarchal cultures indicates that the absence of a male child encourages biological females to become socialized as males at a young age. Among the Slavs and Albanians of the Balkan mountains, for example, female children whose family lacked a male child were often raised as boys by their parents. Some females initiated the gender transformation themselves, often because the sole male child had died.<sup>33</sup> Such biological females but social males were known by a variety of names, including osta-jnica (she who stays) and muskobanja (manlike woman). Most of the terms, however, indicate the importance of virginity in the construction of the individual's social identity.<sup>34</sup> Indeed the condition of virginity was so important in maintaining the socially male gender of such individuals that any sexual activity with a man (the impact of sex with a woman is less clear) called for the individual's death by stoning.

Unlike these Balkan peoples, Jews never developed a formal process for transforming biological females into social males. Nevertheless, the story of the Maiden has some striking parallels with these Balkan traditions. As the only child in a highly androcentric culture, the Maiden was allowed and, according to some accounts, even encouraged by her parents to engage in traditionally male religious activities. As we will see shortly, Hannah Rochel, like her Balkan counterparts, eventually made a vow to remain unmarried — essentially becoming a sworn virgin — in order to continue her traditionally male religious behavior into adulthood. Before making that fateful decision, however, she fell in love.

#### CHAPTER 6

## Love and Death

When she entered adolescence, the girl who would become known as Judaism's most famous female ascetic fell passionately in love and was engaged to be married. Some say Hannah Rochel's beloved was a former study partner, others a boy whom she glimpsed while walking along a lake. One author depicts him as a Jewish soldier briefly stationed in Ludmir. All her biographers agree that Hannah Rochel loved the boy with the same intensity that she had up to then devoted to study and prayer. This erotic awakening was accompanied by a second event, one with an equally powerful effect on Hannah Rochel's young psyche: the death of her beloved mother. Although she was only twelve, Hannah Rochel now stood on the threshold of womanhood. Would she find a way to continue on her extraordinary path?

True to the norms of early-nineteenth-century Eastern European Jewish society, the first published account of the Maiden of Ludmir's engagement depicts her father, Monesh, as playing a decisive role in arranging her marriage. In *Evreiskaia Starina*, Horodezky noted that Hannah Rochel's "unusual dignity" and her father's prosperity had attracted the attention of many *shadkhanim* (matchmakers) who proposed "brilliant matches" for her with young men from different cities. Because he was "stingy with a big dowry," however, Monesh Verbermacher declined all these matches, only agreeing when a local

youth proposed to his daughter, perhaps because he requested a smaller dowry. The engagement triggered a powerful response — both spiritual and erotic — in Hannah Rochel:

This event produced an upheaval in her spiritual life. Knowing her betrothed since childhood, the young woman fell in love with him with all the ardor of her passionate spirit; she tried to see him, to speak in private, to pour her heart out before him; but according to the customs of that time it was considered impossible: a rendezvous of a fiancé with his fiancée before marriage was strictly prohibited. From love pangs for this man, the girl became ill. This was not noticed, [for] her father was always occupied with business and her mother, who loved her dearly, died in this period. Then the girl secluded herself from people. She spent whole days in her room, leaving home only in order to sit at the grave of her mother where she cried out her grief.<sup>2</sup>

Horodezky establishes an implicit link between Hannah Rochel's intense religious devotion and her passionate longing for her fiancé. Mordechai Biber makes this connection explicit, writing that Hannah Rochel "poured out the sorrow of her love pangs in prayer and the study of holy books." This image recalls Daniel Boyarin's observation that Torah and eros are dialectically related in traditional Jewish culture, or as he puts it, "The same drive that in the study-house will lead a man to study Torah will in bed lead him to have intercourse with his wife, and this is the very same drive that will lead him into sin when he is alone with a woman to whom he is not married. The passion is one." To trace the roots of this phenomenon, we must turn to the Talmud, which declares, "Everyone who is greater than his fellow [in Torah study], his [erotic] desire is greater also." According to this view, therefore, sexual longing and longing for the text are intimately related.

These traditions address the intimate relationship between men's sexual desire and their desire to study Torah. But what about women? In fact, the Talmud warns against teaching women Torah precisely because it may lead to uncontrolled sexuality: "Rabbi Eliezer declared: Whoever teaches his daughter Torah teaches her licentiousness [tiflut]!" Significantly, while this tradition condemns women's study of Torah, it does so on the grounds that women, like men, are affected by the dialectical link between study and eros. Yet unlike male scholars, who are able to control their sexual desire, women who study Torah are easily overcome by their erotic feelings, for as the Talmud declares, "A woman's passion is greater than that of a man."

Rabbinic sources stress women's powerful sex drive, but they also

make it clear that aggressively pursuing sex is a masculine quality. Rashi's commentary on Genesis 3:16 embodies this view: "And your desire [teshukatekh] shall be for your husband'—for sexual intercourse. Yet you will not have the boldness to demand it with your own words. Rather 'he shall lord over you'—all will come from him and not from you." Despite their strong desire, therefore, women are expected to be sexually passive, unlike Jewish men, who are expected to be both assertive lovers and scholars. In sharp contrast to these cultural expectations, Hannah Rochel is depicted as a passionate scholar and lover, whose desire, from a rabbinic perspective, is doubly intense and doubly problematic.

By portraying the Maiden of Ludmir's intense love for her fiancé, Horodezky implies that she was a sexually "normal" female before she collapsed in the cemetery and experienced her otherworldly vision. This serves to highlight the contrast between her life before and after the vision and helps to create the impression that the Maiden underwent a dramatic gender reversal as a result of her ecstatic experience. Ironically, however, when viewed though the lens of Jewish traditions that portray women as unable to pursue their sexual desires, Hannah Rochel's attempts to be with her fiancé—"to see him, to speak in private, to pour her heart out before him"—appear almost masculine in their aggressiveness.

In contrast to Horodezky, who stresses Monesh Verbermacher's role in his daughter's engagement, David Mekler emphasizes Hannah Rochel's agency in choosing her fiancé. This unusual turn of events occurred, according to Mekler, because Hannah Rochel's dying mother implored Monesh not to marry off their daughter without their daughter's consent:

"I see that my minutes are numbered, I want to request one thing from you: You should not hurry to marry off Hannah Rochel. Don't do anything without her knowledge and without her approval. Before you finalize a match, talk with her alone about it. I will not be there, and she will have to speak for herself."

"But in God's name, where has one heard this, that parents should ask their children concerning such things?" R. Monesh couldn't restrain himself. "What father and mother decide, must be done!"

"But not with Hannah Rochele, she is different from others," the mother said with her last strength. "You must promise to do that which I request from you. It is my last wish." R. Monesh didn't have a choice and promised his wife what she requested.9

After her mother died, "Hannah Rochel, like a good and pious daughter, said kaddish . . . [and] became even more pious and devoted to the

holy books she had always loved." Monesh, meanwhile, began to raise the subject of marriage with his daughter, but Hannah Rochel told him not to bother with a matchmaker because she had already chosen her *beshert* (predestined one). "'What are you saying, my daughter?'" Monesh responded in surprise. "You selected your *beshert* on your own?" Hannah Rochel answered calmly that she had indeed decided on her own and that this was the only boy she would marry. Monesh asked his daughter to tell him the name of her beloved, fully expecting that he would be a well-known *illui* (prodigy).

When Hannah Rochel tersely responded, "Dovidl the son of Fayve," her father "remained seated in shock, not wanting to believe his ears." For instead of a wealthy or brilliant match, Hannah Rochel had chosen an undistinguished boy from a respectable but simple family. Monesh pleaded with his daughter to reconsider, but Hannah Rochel insisted that despite his lack of *yihus*, family connection, Dovidl was the boy whom she loved. This was too much for Monesh to bear. "Whom you love?" he yelled. "Where is it written in the Torah that a Jewish girl should love?" But Monesh's words fell on deaf ears. Hannah Rochel had made up her mind. True to the vow he made to his dying wife, Monesh wrote up the engagement agreement.<sup>10</sup>

By emphasizing the related themes of romantic love, women's emancipation, and intergenerational conflict, Mekler places his account within a modern context, one reflecting the social transformation of Eastern European Jewish society that began to take place when Enlightenment ideas penetrated the shtetlekh through the efforts of nineteenth-century Jewish *maskilim*, or enlighteners, such as Max Lilienthal. One sign that these ideas had entered the Eastern European Jewish imaginary was the appearance of the literary trope of the Jewish girl who studies Torah and falls in love with her study partner. During the nineteenth century, this theme appeared in a number of popular Yiddish stories. <sup>11</sup> Later these tales formed the literary background for Isaac Bashevis Singer's famous work "Yentl the Yeshiva Boy." They also helped to inspire accounts that portray the Maiden of Ludmir's beloved as a fellow heder student, including the following version by the Polish Jewish author, Moshe Feinkind:

In the heder Hannah Rochel became acquainted with a young man, with whom she constantly associated and often met with him in her home, where they pored over ethical works [musar sefoyrim] together. . . . When she was twelve years old, R. Monesh wrote an engagement agreement between his orphaned daughter and the young man from Ludmir, whom she had known from the heder . . . Hannah Rochel loved the youth deeply in her heart. 12

In an unpublished manuscript, Menasheh Unger tells a similar tale. According to his version, several years after her mother died, Hannah Rochel became engaged to a boy who had studied in heder with her and eaten meals in her home, a custom known as *esn teg* (eating days) in Yiddish. After their engagement, rumors spread about nighttime meetings between Hannah Rochel and the boy, whom she loved with all her heart. The town's gossips eventually brought the boy before a rabbinic court in Ludmir and accused him of impropriety. He admitted his guilt and took an oath not to visit her before the marriage, "according to the custom of Israel that forbade the groom to visit the house of a bride." <sup>13</sup>

Charles Raddock offers one of the most detailed and imaginative reconstructions of the Maiden of Ludmir's romance. According to Raddock, her mother died when Hannah Rochel was only nine.14 He suggests that the woman's death was precipitated, perhaps even hastened, by the strained relationship between mother and daughter. For several years, Hannah Rochel had been distancing herself from other people, secluding herself in a room, where she spent most of her time poring over holy books. Out of concern, her "poor" mother "would press an ear against the closed door, listening in to the plaintive Talmudic sing-song of her studious little daughter." Although both parents now "had second thoughts about her education," there was little they could do about Hannah Rochel's single-minded devotion to learning. Frequently, she left the dinner table after "merely nibbling what was put on her plate. . . . Mother would come after her with a glass of milk and cookies, but Hannah would leave it all untouched. Mother heaved a deep sigh and, one day, probably weakened from belated childbirth, a condition further aggravated by worry over her only child, the poor woman took to bed."15

Raddock's reference to milk and cookies recalls the idealized world of 1950s American television more than it does the eating habits of Jews in Eastern European shtetlekh. It further illustrates Raddock's attempt to Americanize the story of the Maiden of Ludmir to make it more accessible to his assimilated postwar readership. More significant than this anachronistic detail, however, is Raddock's assertion that Hannah Rochel's unusual behavior (indeed, even her very birth) may have contributed to her mother's illness and early death. Raddock is the only author to suggest such a link. By contrast, as we have already seen, David Mekler emphasizes that Hannah Rochel's mother not only encouraged her daughter's activities but actually used her dying breath to plead with her husband to allow Hannah Rochel to continue on her independent path. It is impossible to say whether either version accurately reflects the

events of the girl's life, though it seems unlikely that worry over a nineyear-olds's behavior could lead to a parent's premature death, except perhaps in the melodramatic world of the Yiddish theater, to which Raddock was undoubtedly indebted.

After his wife's death, according to Raddock, Monesh Verbermacher informed his only child that she was now the woman of the house. From this point on, Hannah Rochel split her time between household chores and studying. When she reached the age of twelve, Monesh decided that his daughter was old enough to marry. When he broached the subject with Hannah Rochel, however, she replied, "Father, I have no wish at all to plan my life as other females do." Distraught, Monesh decided to take his daughter to visit Mottel of Chernobyl, hoping that he would talk some sense into his rebellious daughter.

Raddock presented two different versions of Hannah Rochel's encounter with the Chernobler Rebbe. In the first three accounts he published on the Maiden of Ludmir, Raddock wrote that the girl "reluctantly" accompanied her father to Chernobyl. When the pair finally had their audience with the rebbe, he "upbraided Monesch for having subjected an impressionable little girl to the holy books." At this point, "Hannah herself boldly interrupted the sage and — on talmudic grounds — proceeded to debate with the distinguished scholar the controversial question of a woman's role in the Jewish faith!" The rebbe's response was to condemn Hannah Rochel in no uncertain terms: "Indignant over such unheard-of effrontery, Rabbi Mordechai harshly reminded the arrogant child that the ancient scholars had expressly forbidden study of the holy books to females, and that no parent had the right 'to interfere with God's intentions.' A woman's fate was matrimony and the bearing of children." 17

Raddock introduced the second version of the encounter in his final account of the Maiden of Ludmir's life, published in 1971. In it he dramatically downplayed the Chernobler Rebbe's anger at the little girl, transforming the indignant and overbearing patriarch into a kindly though disapproving grandfather:

The Chassidic sage gave little Hannah a fatherly smile when as he asked her to name the book she was holding, she not only gave its full title but began quoting from it. From the start, it was clear to the sage that this little girl knew her mind. She sat upright in the tall chair, boldly staring at him with shining, stern gray-blue eyes, her auburn braids respectfully rolled up into a bun covered with a babushka. The wise Chernobyler studied her and, after a while, asked Monesch why he had forced such a big book on a "mere girl." Hannah bristled and unable to contain herself, told the Rebbe in plain words that a woman's place with big

books is as fitting as a man's and no learning should be denied to a "mere girl." The Rebbe stroked his beard calmly, smiled compassionately, and let her talk on. But when he put up a hand at last to interrupt the talkative little scholar, she only went right on with "proof" after "proof" of her views. The Rebbe then cut her off, saying sternly that it was never God's intent to confuse the feminine mind with deep studies that would never help them as wives or mothers. Hannah now reminded the Rebbe about B'ruriah the wife of the Tanna Rabbi Meir, and Yalta, the wife of the Amora Rabbi Nachman, both were famed for Torah learning. The Rebbe merely smiled at that and politely asked Hannah to leave him alone with her father. <sup>18</sup>

Despite their difference in tone, the two versions share the same conclusion: Hannah Rochel must marry and give up her studies. To persuade the obstinate girl, the Chernobler Rebbe, "a practical psychologist . . . before the term was invented," according to Raddock, devised a stratagem. Czar Nicholas I had just issued a decree drafting Jews into the Russian army. The zaddik told Monesh Verbermacher to seek a match for his daughter among the young Jewish soldiers (known as cantonists) newly stationed in Ludmir. It is likely that Raddock simply invented this scenario out of whole cloth in order to make a dramatic link between the Maiden of Ludmir's coming-of-age experience and an event that affected the lives of thousands of other Eastern European Jewish youths. Following Horodezky, Raddock had identified Hannah Rochel's year of birth as 1815. Therefore, he thought that she had turned twelve in the same year (1827) when Czar Nicholas I had issued his infamous decree. In fact, according to the likely chronology of her life, Hannah Rochel would have been twenty-one in 1827, a veritable old maid by the standards of the day.

Raddock writes that when father and daughter returned to Ludmir, Monesh Verbermacher went to the barracks where the cantonists were stationed and bribed their commanding officer with "pipe-tobacco, vodka," and other delicacies. Arguing that it was his patriotic duty to support the military, he offered to host a boy in his home on weekends. When the "dark-haired, dark-eyed" teenager arrived, Hannah Rochel immediately declared that it was her religious duty to prepare him a Sabbath meal and to "instruct the boy in matters of piety since he was undoubtedly being indoctrinated by the 'baptizers.'" For the next several weeks, "boy and girl spent the Sabbath day in 'talmudic conversation.' Hannah was particularly gratified that the personable dark-haired youth, some eight years her senior, did not find it necessary, as had the Preacher of Czernobyl, to question her devotion to matters religious and intellectual."

In addition to providing him with Talmudic instruction and Sabbath

meals, the girl also knit the guest a *tallis katan*, a skill that her father had never suspected she possessed, and even began to arrange her hair in the mirror, "something she had never done before, for she had always regarded it as an act of sinful vanity." Monesh observed that his daughter was no longer melancholy and "as she cheerfully busied herself tidying up the house, the jubilant parent felt profoundly grateful for the great Preacher's shrewd suggestion." Then, one day, the commanding officer summoned Monesh to the barracks: all the Jewish recruits, including Hannah Rochel's beloved, had been shipped off to Omsk. With a heavy heart, Monesh returned home and broke the terrible news to his daughter. Although she refused to cry, Hannah Rochel was heartbroken. From this point on, she began to isolate herself in her room and only went out to mourn at her mother's grave.<sup>19</sup>

According to Raddock, therefore, Hannah Rochel briefly enjoyed an ideal romantic relationship that allowed her both to continue with her studies and religious devotion and to engage in traditionally feminine activities such as knitting, cooking, and fixing her hair. This halcyon period was tragically cut short by the loss of her beloved, a blow that severed her psychological connection to the world. Raddock's account implies that if the cantonist had remained in Ludmir, Hannah Rochel eventually would have married him and become a wife and mother. Perhaps she would have continued to pray and study "like a man" or, more likely, given the demands of married life, she would have gradually given up these activities. In short, she would not have become the religious leader known as the Maiden of Ludmir.

Unger provides a very different version of the Maiden of Ludmir's coming-of-age. According to him, Hannah Rochel took frequent walks in the countryside surrounding Ludmir, where she liked to visit a lake nestled in a grove of poplars and birches. One day as she strolled around the lake, Hannah Rochel noticed a handsome, noble-looking boy staring at her. When she asked him who he was and what he wanted, the boy answered, "You don't know me? I am Meir, who learned *humash* [Pentateuch] and Rashi with you in the heder. I heard about your holiness and I just came to take a look at you."<sup>20</sup> And with these words, the boy disappeared.

Hannah Rochel returned home, and although it was already evening, she did not go to the shul to *daven minhah-maariv* (pray the evening service), as was her habit. Instead she locked herself in her room and prayed in private. For the first time in her life, Hannah Rochel was unable to concentrate on her devotion. Strange thoughts *(mahshavot zarot)* kept enter-

ing her head, her heart raced, and blood rushed to her face as Hannah Rochel struggled with the new feelings welling up inside her. Quickly finishing her prayers, Hannah Rochel began to read Yiddish *musar* books in the hope that they would extinguish her sinful thoughts, but no matter how much she tried to focus on their warnings against sexual licentiousness, Meir's handsome form appeared before her eyes.

Among the musar works available to Hannah Rochel may have been Pokeah Ivrim, written by the Lubavitcher leader Dov Ber, known as the Mitteler Rebbe to his followers. Published in 1817, Pokeah Ivrim was one of the few theoretical Hasidic tracts written in Yiddish. For this reason, the scholar Naftali Loewenthal has wondered whether the text constitutes "evidence of the desire to involve women in the hasidic path."<sup>21</sup> In his text, Dov Ber warns his readers that women, as well as men, may suffer from "bad dreams" about sex if they have long conversations with or stare at handsome men.<sup>22</sup> Apparently, however, even the dire warnings of musar literature were not enough to take Hannah Rochel's mind off sinful matters. In desperation, she started reciting Psalms until she collapsed from exhaustion. When she came to, Hannah Rochel was lying in front of her worried parents, whose bewilderment only increased when their daughter asked, "Has Meir already gone?" After a doctor was called in and gave her some medicine, however, Hannah Rochel recovered her strength and returned to her old ways, once again praying in a tallis, tefillin, and gartel.

Several years passed, and matchmakers began to suggest prospective grooms for Hannah Rochel, including child prodigies and boys from wealthy families. Monesh Verbermacher turned down some of these matches himself, but when he approached his daughter with what he considered to be acceptable candidates, she rejected all of them without explanation. At this point in his narrative, Unger relates what he calls "a Hasidic tale." Not knowing what to do with his stubborn daughter, Monesh decided to seek advice from the zaddik Hershel Zidichiver, a disciple of the Seer of Lublin. Monesh wrote Hannah Rochel's name on a *kvittl* (request) and gave it to the rebbe. When he saw the name on the piece of paper, Zidichiver let out a groan and declared, "Pity, pity, a misguided soul. . . . Do not arrange a match for her without her explicit agreement." Monesh returned home in a state of dejection, wondering how he would ever find a match that would be agreeable to his daughter

Sitting alone in her room for hours at a stretch, Hannah Rochel began to hear voices. According to Unger, "She became deluded that the boy 'Meir' was speaking to her. . . . And although Hannah Rochel had not seen Meir since her childhood years, she would hold entire conver-

sations with him, getting angry and then making up." In one of these "conversations," Hannah Rochel declared that she would not become his wife unless she could be at the same level as a man. Meir responded with a quote from the Torah: "And he shall rule over her" (Gen. 3:16) and stated that a man must dominate his wife. Hannah Rochel angrily stated that she did not want to be "a helpmate for him" (Gen. 2:20), but an equal and the other half of his soul. When Meir reiterated that a woman's role was to have children and obey her husband, Hannah Rochel let out a scream and declared that she never wanted to see him again.

Hearing her yell, Monesh Verbermacher entered his daughter's room and found Hannah Rochel lying on her bed drenched in sweat. When he asked her what was going on, Hannah Rochel responded as if in a dream: "Let him go, I don't want to have anything more to do with him!" Confused, Monesh asked his daughter to whom she was referring. "Meir," she answered. "Again with Meir? Which Meir?" Monesh responded impatiently. "Meir, who was just here," she said. "No one was just here," her father answered. "We were in the other room and we didn't see anyone go out." After this, Hannah Rochel become silent, closed her eyes, and fell into a deep sleep.<sup>23</sup>

After she woke up, Hannah Rochel's imaginary encounters with Meir ceased. Around this time, a matchmaker approached Monesh with a prospective match from a local family. Recalling the Zidichiver Rebbe's words, Monesh went to seek his daughter's approval, fully expecting that she would reject the proposal. To his great surprise, however, she agreed to marry the boy, a simple townsman named Zalman. Hannah Rochel's parents were ecstatic about the engagement, but two days later, the girl's mother became ill and passed away. The death had a powerful impact on Hannah Rochel because "she greatly loved her mother," who had always believed in her and looked out for her welfare.

Unger based his account on oral Hasidic traditions as well as published and unpublished written sources. Probably the most important influence on Unger's version of these events was a Hebrew article on the Maiden of Ludmir by Mordechai Biber. The article appeared in an Israeli journal devoted to Jewish ethnography called *Reshumot*, edited for a time by Yohanan Twersky, author of *Ha-Betulah mi Ludmir* (The virgin from Ludmir), a Hebrew novel about the Maiden of Ludmir. Biber describes Hannah Rochel's lakeside encounter as follows:

She [Hannah Rochel] would often go for walks outside the city on the banks of a lake, a place carpeted with grass and the shade of pine and cypress trees. She would walk there every day, right before sundown, to practice seclusion [hitbodedut] and mystical communion [hitpahdut].... One time, around evening, she stood by the shore of the lake.... She raised her eyes, and before her was a gentle, tender, and good-looking young man, and he opened his mouth and told her that he had heard of her and her holiness and his heart was drawn to her and his single desire was to look into her eyes. He said this and disappeared. Hannah Rochel's heart moved in her breast at the words of the youth; the woman within her awakened and a new spirit [ruah hadash] was in her. She devoted herself with greater strength to prayer and her soul, full of love pangs, emptied itself by means of singing and mystical union [devekut] until the level [madregah] of stripping away corporeality [hitpashtut ha-gashmiyut]."24

In this rich passage, Biber combines traditional Hasidic themes and terminology with more modern motifs. On the one hand, Biber's account reflects the social and literary shift toward romantic love that took place in Eastern European Jewish society during the nineteenth century. Part of this phenomenon involved a focus on nature as the site of romantic liaisons, as David Biale has written: "walks in the fields and forest, beyond the boundaries of the shtetl, became increasingly popular and provided an unsupervised opportunity for intercourse (of all kinds). . . . A new interest in nature can be found in this custom, an interest that went hand in hand with romantic values between the sexes." 25 On the other hand, Biber's vivid description of Hannah Rochel's walks in nature also recall tales about the Baal Shem Tov's wanderings in the forests and fields of the Carpathian Mountains.

Biber employs a number of technical Hasidic terms in his account, including *hitbodedut* (meditative seclusion), *hityahdut, devekut, madregah*, and *hitpashtut ha-gashmiyut*. <sup>26</sup> The idea that physical desire is a necessary step on the path to union with the divine reflects the dialectical teachings of the Baal Shem Tov, who taught that "[e]very mitsvah or act of holiness starts with thoughts of physical pleasure" and "it is proper for a man to have physical desires and out of them he will come to desire the Torah and worship of God."<sup>27</sup> Yet Biber's depiction also alludes to another more dualistic tendency within Hasidic thought. Ultimately physical desire and materiality must be stripped away or annihilated in order to create a space for complete devotion to God. As we will see below, this view informs the various tellings of Hannah Rochel's ecstatic vision and spiritual incarnation.

Biber's use of technical Hasidic expressions raises an important question. Could Hannah Rochel have understood herself in these terms? Hasidism essentially perpetuated older Jewish attitudes toward women,

including the highly androcentric views espoused by the Kabbalah. In the kabbalistic system that Hasidism inherited, women were identified with corporeality and men with spirituality. The highest spiritual goal for Hasidic men was union with the female aspect (sefirah) of God known as Malkhut or Shekhinah. In depicting Hannah Rochel as achieving devekut and hitpashtut ha-gashmiyut, Biber attributes experiences to her that kabbalistic and Hasidic sources limited to Jewish men. Although it is still possible that Hannah Rochel understood herself in the terms employed by Biber, we possess no writings of hers to confirm this. Nor do we possess evidence to support the view that other Hasidic women developed a gender-inclusive model of kabbalistic spirituality. As Chava Weissler has written, "Evidence suggests that, insofar as women made use of kabbalistic symbolism, they did not significantly transform its gender representations."28 Thus if the Maiden of Ludmir did see herself in the spiritual terms attributed to her by Biber, she would represent a unique case in the recorded history of Jewish mysticism.

Although Unger draws heavily on Biber's account, he also introduces two significant changes. First, he omits the Hasidic terminology that Biber employs, thereby avoiding the question of whether Hannah Rochel could have understood herself in light of these androcentric Hasidic doctrines. Second, he portrays Hannah Rochel as undergoing a psychological transformation in the wake of her encounter with Meir. An important implication of Unger's account is that Hannah Rochel never actually fell in love with a flesh-and-blood boy but instead with a figment of her imagination. Perhaps drawing on oral traditions originating in her community that claimed the Maiden of Ludmir was "a bit crazy," Unger depicts her as experiencing psychotic episodes akin to those ascribed to victims of dybbuk possession in nineteenth-century century Eastern European Jewish society: hearing voices, carrying on imaginary conversations, screaming, falling unconscious. In so doing, Unger introduces an element of psychological instability, even pathology, into his portrait of the Maiden of Ludmir. Instead of undergoing a spiritual purification as a result of her erotic awakening (à la Biber), according to Unger, Hannah Rochel experienced a psychological breakdown, which was worsened by the death of her mother.

Despite their differences, all the Maiden of Ludmir's biographers agree that at the height of her romantic longing she began to seclude herself and spend most of her time at her mother's grave. Perhaps Hannah Rochel felt that only her mother understood what that she was experi-

encing, or perhaps she imagined that her erotic awakening had something to do with her mother's death and was torn by guilt. Mordechai Biber writes that she "spent long hours [in the cemetery] in the belief that her mother listened to her *tkhinot*."<sup>29</sup> Unger even reconstructs the text of one of these laments: "Mama, you are now in Gan Eden. Ask the Mothers [Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel] if I have the right to possess all of the [spiritual] levels that men possess. Ask the Mothers whether I have the right to possess the Holy Spirit. If I hear voices from heaven that tell me what will be in the world, shouldn't I listen?"<sup>30</sup>

Unlike the typically male religious activities for which she became famous, the Maiden of Ludmir's visits to her mother's grave should be seen within the context of Jewish women's religiosity. The cemetery was laden with great significance for Eastern European Jews in general and for Jewish women in particular. Death did not sever the ties between an individual and her loved ones. Instead, at important moments, such as before a wedding or during an illness, people would go to the cemetery to consult their dead ancestors for advice, entreat them for positive intervention, or, in the case of a joyous occasion, invite them to participate in a celebration.

The great significance of the cemetery in Eastern European Jewish women's lives may be seen in the many tkhines, including Sarah bas Tovim's popular Shloyshe Sheorim (The three gates), which were composed for use in the cemetery. In the holy month of Elul, during periods of illness and in other times of need, Jewish women visited their town's cemetery, where they recited tkhines while using a candlewick to measure either the entire cemetery or individual graves, a ritual known as kneytlakh legn (laying wicks) in Yiddish. After the measuring was completed, other women made the wicks into candles for use on Yom Kippur.<sup>31</sup> Each Eastern European Jewish community also had at least one woman who functioned as a professional mourner, known in Yiddish as a klogmuter or bavaynerin.32 These women typically composed their own theires on the spot in return for a small fee from a mourner, as Abraham Rechtman observed during Ansky's expedition: "The professional wailers used to only ask the name and the mother's name of the dead person and suddenly, without special preparations, abruptly break out in a mournful wail, beat their heads violently, strike their hearts — improvising their own particular tkhines."33

Like Hannah Rochel, the "professional" women mourners recorded by Rechtman and other ethnographers such as Gisela Suliteanu and Yehoychin Stuchevski frequently asked the biblical foremothers to intercede on their behalf, a common motif of published *tkhines* as well. As one such mourner from Romania declared,

Peace to you my dear mother. . . . Through your hands I began to go to school. You made me follow the road towards the learning of God. . . . And if I am in difficulties, if I see obstacles in my way, I tell myself, do not let go, for this your dear mother has striven. . . . Her soul is above (in the sky) all the time. And I say: Peace to you and peace to your rest and quietness to your soul. And be your soul blessed. With the grace which has blessed the Mothers Sarah, Rivka, Rahel, Lea. . . . From your daughter, from all your children. They are not getting on so well. Let your heart have pity. 34

Although her biographers were undoubtedly aware of the central role that cemeteries played in Jewish women's spiritual lives, they did not stress the specifically female character of the Maiden of Ludmir's frequent visits to the cemetery.<sup>35</sup> It is likely, however, that Menasheh Unger drew on observations of women mourners from his own Galician shtetl when he composed the text of Hannah Rochel's graveside plea to her mother. This lacuna reflects the general tendency of her biographers to stress the masculine character of the Maiden of Ludmir's behavior, when in fact their own accounts suggest a more complicated situation in which the Maiden of Ludmir, from childhood on, embraced an androgynous religious persona combining traditionally male *and* female activities

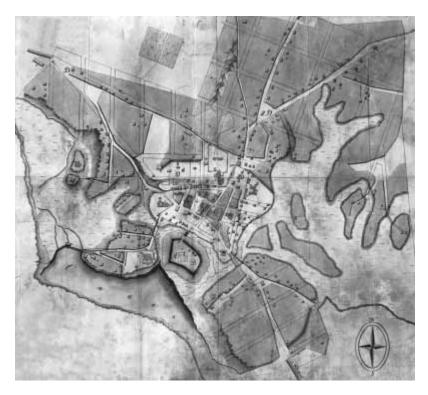
The Maiden of Ludmir's close relationship to her mother and her daily visits to the cemetery are important for another reason: they constitute the first example of her powerful, lifelong connection to other women. In subsequent chapters, we will see indications that the Maiden of Ludmir devoted special attention to her female followers, both in Ukraine and later, in Palestine, where she appears to have assumed the role of a professional woman mourner and prayer leader on behalf of other women during visits to Rachel's Tomb. These traditions further undermine the popular view that the Maiden of Ludmir completely rejected her identity as a woman in favor of an exclusively male social and religious status.



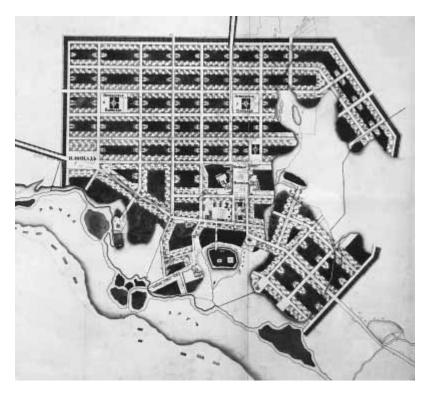
Rezyl Limonek, a hundred-year-old resident of Ludmir at the turn of the century who knew the Maiden of Ludmir. Reproduced from *Pinkas Ludmir*, 298. Courtesy Ezra Nir.



The interior of the *gornshtibl*, the Maiden of Ludmir's study house, at the beginning of the twentieth century. Reproduced from *Pinkas Ludmir*, 231. Courtesy Ezra Nir.



A Russian government map of Ludmir from 1807; the Maiden of Ludmir was probably born in 1806. The map shows the Uniate women's monastery that the Maiden is said to have visited. Original in Russian State Historical Archives, St. Petersburg.



A Russian government map of Ludmir from 1840. The map lists a building belonging to Haya Rochel Rabinovna, probably the Maiden of Ludmir. Original in Russian State Historical Archives, St. Petersburg.

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The Montefiore census list of widows, Volhynian Hasidic community, Jerusalem, 1875. A woman named Hannah Rochel from Ludmir (probably the Maiden) appears third from the top. Printed with the permission of the Montefiore Endowment and the London School of Jewish Studies, London (Esra Kahn, head librarian).



Two stylish Jewish women in Ludmir between the world wars — a far cry from  $\it Fiddler on the Roof.$  Courtesy of Janusz Bardach.



The author and Nechama Singer Ariel, planning the journey to Ludmir. Courtesy of Miriam Greenberg.



A goat in what was formerly Ludmir's Jewish cemetery, where the Maiden collapsed, now a park named in honor of Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin. Photograph by Nathaniel Deutsch.



The street where Mrs. Zusman, the woman whom Ansky lampooned in his memoir, lived. This street is now paved with broken tombstones from Ludmir's Jewish cemetery. Photograph by Nathaniel Deutsch.



A broken tombstone from Ludmir's cemetery. Photograph by Nathaniel Deutsch.



The memorial to the martyred Jews of Ludmir at Piyatidne. Photograph by Nathaniel Deutsch.



Yankl Kipershtein, the last Jewish man in Ludmir. Photograph by Nathaniel Deutsch.



Rosa Goldman, the last Jewish woman in Ludmir. Photograph by Nathaniel Deutsch.

## CHAPTER 7

## The Maiden Possessed

One day, exhausted from crying at her mother's grave, Hannah Rochel fell asleep in the cemetery. Upon waking in the evening, the girl looked around and saw that she was alone. In terror, she started to run home, zigzagging through the tombstones of the "holy men of old," until she tripped and collapsed on one of the graves. Hearing her cry, the caretaker of the cemetery ran to see what had happened. After helping Hannah Rochel to her feet, the caretaker accompanied her home, where she fell into a coma. For several weeks, Monesh Verbermacher kept a vigil at his daughter's side. He brought in expert doctors and ba'ale shem, but no one could help the girl.

Eventually everyone except for Monesh gave up hope in her recovery. In desperation, Monesh prayed at his wife's grave for merciful intercession, but even this brought no change in his comatose daughter. Finally Monesh decided to travel to Mordechai of Chernobyl, since "he who gave the blessing to his wife to give birth to his daughter — will also give one for her recovery." The zaddik of Chernobyl received Monesh, and after hearing his story responded, "Return home, your daughter will recover and you will receive from her great comfort but also great sorrow." Monesh returned to Ludmir and resumed his vigil. A few days later, Hannah Rochel suddenly opened her eyes and spoke the following words to her father, sending a chill down his spine: "Just now I was in

heaven, in a meeting of the supreme *bet din*, and there they gave me a new, very lofty soul."<sup>3</sup>

There was good reason for Monesh Verbermacher to be both amazed and troubled by his daughter's simple sentence. As a pious Jew, Monesh had probably heard tales of rabbis whose souls had ascended to heaven and observed the heavenly court while their bodies remained on earth. Indeed, the Baal Shem Tov himself had described ascending to heaven in a letter written to his brother-in-law, Gershon of Kutów, which the Besht's disciple, Jacob Joseph of Polonne, had first published in 1781.4 The hagiographical collection Shivhei Ha-Besht also related how during a Yom Kippur service the Besht's soul had ascended to heaven while his body underwent horrible convulsions in the synagogue.<sup>5</sup> Although a rich precedent existed for Hannah Rochel's heavenly ascent and vision, the people who accomplished such ascents were famous rabbis and mystics, like Rabbi Ishmael and the Baal Shem Tov, while Hannah Rochel was a thirteen-year-old girl. To confuse matters even further, Hannah Rochel also claimed that she had received a new, sublime soul. Monesh Verbermacher may have known that pious Jewish men could receive new and higher souls according to the Kabbalah, but he was undoubtedly aware that young Jewish women on the verge of marriage, like his own daughter, were the typical victims of dybbuk possession.

In Horodezky's work, Hannah Rochel's description of her vision constitutes a single — albeit highly provocative — sentence. Indeed the words quoted above are the only ones Horodezky attributes to the Maiden of Ludmir. While some authors basically repeat this concise version of the heavenly vision, others provide a much more detailed description of the event. David Mekler and, following him, Mordechai Biber both portray the vision as at once an internal struggle within Hannah Rochel and a heavenly trial conducted by opposing sets of angels. Hannah Rochel and the heavenly jurists are troubled by the same thing: the tension between her "male" religious behavior — Torah study and prayer — and her "female" romantic longing.

The prosecuting and defending angels in Hannah Rochel's trial function like two sections of a Greek chorus, each offering a different evaluation of the girl's life. In this debate, the angels may represent rabbinic authority, a phenomenon with a precedent in the early Jewish mystical texts known as Merkabah or Hekhalot literature. David Halperin has argued that in this literature, the angels who oppose the heavenly ascent of the Merkabah mystics represent their earthly rabbinic opponents.

Halperin identifies the mystics themselves as members of the nonrabbinic group called the 'am ha-aretz, or "people of the land." In both cases, social conflict on earth has been transposed into a heavenly setting, where a disenfranchised individual (the Maiden of Ludmir) or group (the Merkabah mystics) is portrayed as ascending to heaven and triumphing over their elitist angelic/rabbinic opponents.

Although the Maiden of Ludmir's trial occurs in the heavenly court (bet din), God does not serve as the judge (interestingly, God is likewise absent from most of the Hekhalot texts). Instead, the angels call on Mordechai of Chernobyl to decide the fate of the girl, since his blessing was responsible for her birth. As we will see in chapter 9, the heavenly trial foreshadows the future struggle between the Maiden's opponents and defenders in Ludmir, a struggle in which the Chernobler Rebbe will also play a decisive role. In contrast to this later episode, however, in the heavenly trial the Chernobler Rebbe abdicates his authority in favor of the Maiden herself. Thus the Maiden is both defendant and judge in her own trial, a detail suggesting that, on one level at least, her vision reflects an internal psychological conflict. Consequently both God and the Chernobler Rebbe are relieved of responsibility for the trial's provocative — and, from a number of perspectives, problematic — outcome.

Let us now turn to Mekler's description of Hannah Rochel's heavenly trial:

I was just now in heaven and was taken in front of the heavenly family [familia shel ma'alah]. It was having a trial about whether I should remain alive or die. Defenders came for me and declared my merits. They declared what a good and pious Jewish daughter I had been, how [I] had done more than the law had required from a woman, had learned and prayed. And how I had been pure in my thoughts as in my actions. But accusers also came and declared my wrongdoing. I was not a woman like other women, they argued, and it is not according to the way of nature [ke-derekh ha-teva'] that I should do things which only men must do. Learning Torah and devoting myself to worship is not women's business. My love for Dovidl, they said, indicated that I was still no more than a woman, with a woman's heart and soul [neshamah], and it is a desecration of God's Torah that there should be a constant struggle in my heart between the female and the male: there must be a clash between the higher duties, which I alone had taken upon myself, as if I were a man, and the duties of a wife, whose task is only to do the will of her husband.<sup>7</sup>

The angelic defenders and accusers struggled back and forth, with the former arguing that the Maiden should return to life, marry, and have children, while the latter argued that the Maiden must die:

Long were the claims argued by both sides, and I can barely relay that which was said about me. I only knew and felt that both sides spoke the truth. On the one hand my heart inclined me to a higher life — to a life for men, given over to Torah and worship. However, on the other hand I am no more than a sinful woman, whose heart bursts from a man's glance, whose entire desire expresses itself in wanting to speak a few words with her beloved. Apparently the heavenly court was in great perplexity and didn't know how to judge. It occurred to one of the court that they must ask the Chernobler Magid. By his merit was my soul sent to this world, that one said. He must declare what they must do with me now. The Chernobler was asked in a dream what his decision was. The Chernobler did not want to be depended on [in this matter]. He did, however, give a suggestion that strongly pleased the heavenly family. His advice was that they must ask me alone. . . . They called me before the heavenly family and posed the question to me, namely, what do I want to be done with me - whether I should return to health or die. I did not think for long and shortly gave my answer: I began with a biblical verse from King David: "I will not die but will live and declare the work of God." I also cited the biblical verse "The dead do not praise God." I want to live, I said, not to enjoy idle pleasures of the sinful world. I won't even enjoy that which is usual for flesh and blood to enjoy, I said. If I live it is only to be able to continue learning God's Torah, to delve more deeply into the secrets of the Yotser (Creator) and the Yetsirah (Creation) and I will fully renounce all pleasures of the world. I am punished, however, in that I have the soul of a woman. I cannot elevate myself. I am limited. I would like to be given a new soul, a lofty soul, a soul that must be able to raise itself higher than its surroundings and must be able to tear out from my heart all the sinful and worthless thoughts. I want a soul that must thirst for God's word, that must only find pleasure [ta'anug] in God's Torah and that must forget the material world and its pettiness . . .

From the beginning my words had a strange effect. It was evident that I had confused the heavenly judges. Perhaps they had never heard such a thing.

That will be against the way of nature, they said. It will mean going against the order of the world [seder ha-olam], and that cannot and must not be permitted . . .

However, I already felt my power. The ruling was still left over to me; I could decide as I wanted, I thought. But to be fair, I said I would take a lofty and great soul, but would tear out from my own heart all the things that a woman feels: that with my own powers I would raise myself over everything and would only live in the world of emanation [olam ha-atsilut] (in a spiritual world) . . .

My judgment was enacted. It was decided that I must receive altogether a lofty soul. And with this I woke up.<sup>8</sup>

Although Mekler's detailed account shares the basic conclusion of Horodezky's more succinct version—Hannah Rochel receives a new, higher soul—the "transcript" of the trial introduces a number of important elements. Significantly, Hannah Rochel agrees with the charges lev-

eled by the prosecuting angels: she has embraced the religious lifestyle of a Jewish man, while still possessing the erotic longings of a woman. In short, she is guilty of leading an androgynous existence. The charges leveled by the angels reflect a number of cultural assumptions concerning the relationship of sexuality and spirituality. The first assumption, which Hasidism inherited from earlier traditions, identified women with the body and sexuality and men with the spirit. The second assumption, that physical desire was an obstacle to spiritual perfection, emerged in certain Hasidic circles under the influence of kabbalistic and *musar* literature.

It is easy to see how these assumptions could be combined into an ascetic, dualistic doctrine in which women — as embodiments of sexuality and materiality — were identified as the chief barrier to men's spiritual relationship with God, while remaining incapable of attaining spiritual heights themselves. Nahman of Bratslav, a rebbe best known for his profound tales, represents the apex of this tendency within Hasidic thought. Nahman argued that for the "true zaddik," sexual intercourse with a woman should be an incredibly painful experience. Nahman thus went beyond ascetic figures such as Menahem Mendel of Kotsk and the Magid of Mezeritch, who merely argued against feeling physical pleasure during sexual intercourse.

This dualistic tendency may be contrasted with the more dialectical position of Hasidic figures such as the Baal Shem Tov, who, drawing on another tendency within the Kabbalah, argued that physical pleasure was the first step on the path to love of Torah and God.<sup>9</sup> Even those who espoused the dialectical position, however, asserted that physical desire ultimately had to be abandoned or transcended. As David Biale has written, "the only legitimate function of the physical is as a vehicle for its own elimination." As I have argued above, the dialectical view underlies depictions of the Maiden's romantic awakening in which desire for her fiancé inspired her to more intense study and religious devotion, even to the point of achieving *devekut*, according to one author. By contrast, in Mekler's account of the heavenly trial, Hannah Rochel's erotic desire for her fiancé is not portrayed as a stepping-stone to heightened spirituality but as an obstacle.

Because physical desire was not considered an integral part of being male, Hasidic men could successfully transcend or transform it, as in a famous Hasidic parable in which a prince dismisses a girl of flesh and blood in order to unite with the Shekhinah, the supernal feminine aspect of God. In social practice, this took the form of long periods of sexual abstinence, combined with attempts to transcend physical pleasure dur-

ing sexual intercourse or even to feel pain during the act. By contrast, the Hasidic identification of women with physical desire was inherent and seemingly inescapable. Unlike the prince in the parable, a Hasidic woman could not dismiss the girl who stood in the way of *devekut* with God, because she *was* the girl.

The same Hasidic sources that condemned pleasure during sexual intercourse depicted *devekut* in highly erotic, even sexual terms. Calling this phenomenon a "displacement of desire," David Biale has argued, "Instead of human sexuality serving as the hand-maiden of the *bieros gamos*, one senses a kind of competition in Hasidism between the sexual demands of the divine and the sexual demands of one's wife." Within this system, Hasidic women were marginalized in two ways. First, they competed with the divine for the erotic attention of men. Second, because *devekut* was conceptualized as the heteroerotic union between a male Hasid and the female Shekhinah, women were theoretically excluded from *devekut* because of their gender. As mentioned above, there is no literary evidence that Hasidic women or men developed an alternate understanding of *devekut* in which women could unite with one of the male *sefirot* (divine aspects) or with the Shekhinah itself.

With these observations in mind, let us return to Mekler's description of Hannah Rochel's heavenly trial. Rather than reject the traditional Hasidic link between women and physical desire, the girl explicitly affirmed this view, according to Mekler. Her own "female" desire, she confessed, was at odds with her "male" desire to live a life devoted to Torah and God. By acknowledging the incompatibility of these impulses, the girl implicitly rejected the view that women as women could hope to transcend physical desire. Beyond her spiritual limitations as a woman, the girl also referred to another, more practical problem: "There must be a clash between the higher duties which I alone had taken upon myself, as if I were a man, and the duties of a wife, whose task is only to do the will of her husband."

Married Hasidic women were responsible for taking care of their husbands, children, and, often, older relatives as well. In a large number of Hasidic families, women were also the chief breadwinners, since many men spent long periods at their rebbe's court or engaged in study. This left most women with precious little time to devote to prayer, learning, or the fulfillment of other commandments. By contrast, Hasidic men were encouraged to devote themselves as much as possible to prayer and learning. This social reality was justified by rabbinic teachings that exempted women from "positive time-bound" commandments, such as

thrice daily prayer, because it might interfere with their duties to their husbands, as the following quote by David ben Joseph Abudarham, a fourteenth-century Spanish rabbi, indicates:

The reason women are exempt from time-bound positive *mitzvot* is that a woman is bound to her husband to fulfill his needs. Were she obligated in time-bound positive *mitzvot*, it could happen that while she is performing a *mitzvah*, her husband would order her to do his commandment. If she would perform the commandment of the Creator and leave aside his commandment, woe to her from her husband! If she does her husband's commandment and leaves aside the Creator's, woe to her from her Maker! Therefore, the Creator has exempted her from his commandments, so that she may have peace with her husband.<sup>12</sup>

In Mekler's account of the vision, therefore, Hannah Rochel does not challenge the traditional position of women within the spiritual and social hierarchy of Hasidism. Indeed, her words essentially reinscribe Hasidic views on gender, sexuality, and spirituality. Instead of claiming the right as a woman to devote herself to God, the girl argues that she should be allowed to receive a new and lofty soul, "which must thirst for God's word, which must only find pleasure [ta'anug] in God's Torah and which must forget the material world and its pettiness." With such a soul, the Maiden would be able to eliminate "all the things that a woman feels" and "would only live in the world of emanation (olam ha-atsilut)," a kabbalistic reference to the realm of divine potencies, or sefirot.

According to Mekler's account, Hannah Rochel sought to transcend her spiritual limitations as a woman by receiving a "new and lofty" soul, but it is not obvious whether she became a spiritual male (that is, possessing only a male soul), a spiritual androgyne (that is, possessing a male and a female soul), or whether she transcended gender altogether. Later in this chapter, I will examine the Maiden's incarnational claim in light of kabbalistic theories of reincarnation and spirit possession. For the present, however, it is important to note that in none of the accounts—from the most conservative to the most dramatized—does the Maiden explicitly describe her new soul as male. This is a significant omission, since, as we will see below, souls are always gendered according to Jewish tradition.

In Mekler's view, therefore, Hannah Rochel did not consciously reject traditional gender roles, at least at this stage of her life. Nor did she view herself as exempt from the spiritual limitations of being a woman. Instead the girl sought a way to transcend these limitations by undergoing a spiritual transformation, or more precisely, an incarnation. The void left by the death of her mother may have shown Hannah Rochel how much

work a typical Hasidic woman performed in the household. Unwilling to give up the intense piety she had engaged in since childhood, the Maiden, according to Mekler, chose to receive a new soul, one that allowed her to reject marriage and embrace a lifestyle completely devoted to God and Torah.

Readers with even a passing awareness of what has become known as "women's religion" will be struck by the parallels between descriptions of the Maiden of Ludmir's visionary experience and those of women from other traditions. Scholars have noted the importance of visions in the lives of many holy women — from the Catholic saints of the Middle Ages and the Quaker prophetesses of seventeenth-century England to the Vodoun priestesses of contemporary Haiti. It is tempting to understand these experiences as examples of a shared women's religiosity, one transcending historical and geographical borders. Yet this approach ignores significant differences between the visionary women of various cultures. Many men have also experienced religious visions, suggesting that visions may not be a defining feature of women's spirituality per se, but of ecstatic religious experience in general.

Without arguing for a single model of women's visionary experience, it is nevertheless important to stress that visions have often played a similar role in the spiritual and social lives of women from different cultures. Perhaps most important, visions have frequently empowered women with an authority that they would have otherwise lacked in male-dominated societies. After experiencing visions, many women claimed the right, even the duty, to assume a public religious role.<sup>13</sup> While visions may have played a similarly empowering role for men from lower social strata, they often functioned as a sine qua non for women in patriarchal societies to achieve a public religious voice. Ironically, however, the voices that these women assumed were often attributed to external spiritual forces that had entered their bodies during their visions. The frequent connection between visions and incarnation complicates any attempt to describe visions as empowering for women as women, since holy women (and/or their followers) often claimed that by virtue of such visionary incarnations they had transcended womanhood.

In a number of important respects, the circumstances of the Maiden of Ludmir's childhood vision and its consequences resemble accounts of visionary women from other religious traditions. This does not mean, however, that the Maiden's story should simply be understood as a Jewish version of a cross-cultural phenomenon. There are profound differences between the Maiden's visionary experience as a Jewish woman

and those of women from other cultural backgrounds. For example, medieval Christian women's visions typically involved union with Christ, a critically important and culturally specific feature of their religiosity that is completely absent from the Maiden's experience. By contrast, since she was a Jew the Maiden's vision of the heavenly court is linked by her biographers to a desire to follow all the commandments, or mitzvot, a detail that reflects the nomocentric focus of Jewish mysticism. This striking difference supports Gershom Scholem's assertion: "There is no mysticism as such, there is only the mysticism of a particular religious system. . . . We cannot, therefore, expect the physiognomy of Jewish mysticism to be the same as that of Catholic mysticism, Anabaptism or Moslem Sufism." 14

Significantly, none of her biographers suggest that the Maiden's visionary experience resulted in an erotic union with God, though Mekler does mention the "pleasure" which she sought in God's Torah. This stands in sharp contrast to the hagiographical accounts of medieval Christian women visionaries. Concerning these women, Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff has written, "The process of visions taught women not to sacrifice their desire but to transform it, to strengthen it by purifying it, so that finally all their most conscious desire might be directed toward union with the divine." Whereas the theological structure of Christianity allowed women visionaries to heteroeotically unite with Christ, descriptions of the Maiden of Ludmir's visionary experience were apparently conditioned and constrained by the androcentric Hasidic model of *devekut*, in which only men could unite with the female Shekhinah.

It is also important to point out the ways in which accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir's vision resemble hagiographical accounts devoted to male Hasidic figures. For example, the experience attributed to the Maiden of Ludmir closely resembles the coma, spiritual ascent, heavenly trial, and physical recovery of the son of Michel of Zlotchov:

The youngest son of the holy ran, Rabbi Michal of Zlotchov, Joseph by name, was once taken seriously ill . . . the sick boy fainted, fell into a deep sleep . . . and seemed dead. Three days later perspiration appeared, and his soul returned to his body. When he had recovered somewhat, he recounted all that had happened. "As soon as my soul departed [he said], an angel took it and brought it to a chamber which he himself could not enter, but into which I was permitted. I stood near the door watching the heavenly court in session. I also saw two messengers bringing a book which weighed heavily upon them and in which were inscribed my transgressions. Another angel soon appeared with the book of my good deeds. The good deeds were not equal to the transgressions, so a third book was brought in which were the sufferings I had undergone, and many of my trans-

gressions then disappeared. Nevertheless, because the remaining transgressions still outweighed my good deeds, they wanted to condemn me to death to write out the decree. . . . Then the sound of a great roaring was heard, as the roaring of all the worlds, proclaiming, 'Make way, the Besht is approaching!' The Besht entered, saw me standing near the door, and asked, 'Joseph, what business have you here?' I answered him . . . 'I begged my father and the rabbi of the holy community of Polnoy to intercede in my behalf, but they forgot about me. So I ask your most holy honor to do so.'" The Besht requested the court to let me go in peace, and they ordered me to return home. <sup>16</sup>

The many parallels between this Hasidic tale and Mekler's account of the Maiden's vision suggest that no matter how closely depictions of the Maiden of Ludmir may resemble hagiographical accounts of non-Jewish holy women, the specifically Jewish context of her life and literary *after-lives* cannot be ignored. Thus any attempt to force the Maiden of Ludmir into a preexisting category of visionary women — no matter how extensive the parallels — will inevitably fail to account for the unique and the stereotypically Jewish elements of her story.

Despite this important caveat, the rich body of literature on women visionaries from other traditions can still help to illuminate important features of the Maiden of Ludmir's biography. Most strikingly, many medieval Christian holy women are also depicted as experiencing loss, illness, and symbolic death as a prelude to the transformative visions that empowered them. Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff has noted that a "surprising number of biographies and autobiographies tell of an apparent dying, often when a teenager, of being taken for dead and perhaps even put in a coffin, but then miraculously coming back to life, often with an explicitly visionary message for the world." In such cases, Petroff writes, visions "gave an individual woman a voice and a belief in herself as chosen to speak and also gave her an experience of inner transformation that she felt compelled to communicate to others."

Two of the non-Jewish holy women whose lives most closely resemble the story of the Maiden of Ludmir were Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) and Christina of Saint Trond, called Mirabilis (1150–1224). Born into a devout Spanish family, Teresa of Avila suffered the loss of her mother when she was twelve years old. Later she became seriously ill and entered a coma for three days. After being given up for dead, Teresa miraculously revived. This experience was a turning point in Teresa's spiritual life and a prelude to the visions that inspired her to assume a public religious role. Like the Maiden of Ludmir and Teresa of Avila, Christina Mirabilis also experienced great loss as a child—in her case, both parents died.

Christina's hagiographer, Thomas de Cantimpré, wrote that "after these events she grew sick in body by virtue of the exercise of inward contemplation and she died." While a requiem mass was being recited over Christina's body, she suddenly sprang back to life. After returning home from church, Christina declared that her soul had ascended to "Paradise, to the throne of the Divine Majesty," where she was offered two choices: either remain with God or return to her body and through her sufferings and pious life, redeem the souls of others, only then returning to God "having accumulated . . . a reward of such great profit." Without hesitation, Christina chose the second option and her soul was restored to her body.<sup>20</sup>

Why do these and other Christian hagiographies share so many parallels with accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir? Did all these women actually experience a similar set of events? Or were these episodes invented by male hagiographers, constituting a standard set of tropes that could be drawn on by different authors? While the second possibility may explain why so many Christian accounts resemble one another, it does not adequately explain the striking similarities between them and the story of the Maiden of Ludmir, whose Jewish authors were almost certainly unaware of these medieval Christian traditions. Moreover, some of the medieval women's lives are autobiographical in character. Although these women authors may have employed hagiographical tropes in writing their own life stories, we must take seriously the possibility that their accounts accurately depict the events of their lives. It is even possible that some women actually experienced certain events under the influence of existing hagiographical traditions. In other words, some women may have experienced illness, comatose states, and visions because they considered these part of the accepted narrative of a holy woman's life.

We cannot definitively say what details a hagiographer invented and what actually occurred in the life of a particular holy woman. Yet this fact should not prevent us from trying to understand why the existing narratives of so many holy women resemble one another. Instead of asking whether these women actually experienced similar events, however, we may rephrase the question as follows: Why did this particular narrative resonate with so many individuals (holy women and hagiographers alike), and what are its underlying issues?

I would like to argue that these women's stories — including that of the Maiden of Ludmir — reflect the conflict between a desire to lead a pious life devoted to God on the one hand and the spiritual limitations traditionally placed on women by their families and societies on the other. The

sudden death of a loved one encouraged women to focus on the world beyond and frequently destabilized their surviving this-worldly relationships. Such a loss practically and symbolically severed a critical link between a woman and her family, while opening the door to a closer relationship with God.

An even more common motif than the death of a loved one in the lives of these holy women was the experience of intense and transformative illness. <sup>21</sup> In some cases, such as with the Maiden of Ludmir and Christina Mirabilis, the death of a parent (or parents) preceded, intensified, or even precipitated a period of illness. Illness may be understood as a somatic response to the emotional and spiritual conflict that holy women experienced at the beginning of their lives. Often, through deprivation and even self-mortification, women appear to have induced the conditions for illness themselves, perhaps as a form of punishment or purification.

If illness functioned as a physical sign of an internal conflict, then a coma represented the inability to continue in such a conflicted state, a shutting down of the body. Women who entered comas transcended the struggle between social expectations and religious devotion, but only at the expense of consciousness. In discussing the comatose state of the Maiden with me, one former Ludmir resident employed the phrase "near-death experience." Her interpretation highlights the symbolic connection between comas and death in the lives of many holy women. In the Maiden of Ludmir's story, this link is further suggested by her collapse in the cemetery. Since comas approximate death so closely, they are an ideal context for the spiritual ascents more typically associated with postmortem experiences. This combination of events occurs in the Maiden of Ludmir's story as well as in the lives of Teresa of Avila, Christina Mirabilis, Julian of Norwich, and other holy women. The sudden recovery from a coma was frequently taken as a sign of physical and spiritual rebirth.

Women who experienced visions while in a coma not only gained new confidence in themselves, but they also achieved the respect and devotion of others, since visions were perceived as links to the world beyond. Because they signified contact with a higher authority, visions empowered women to challenge this-worldly norms and structures and, at the same time, it encouraged others to interpret potentially deviant behavior as ordained by God. For many holy women, therefore, visions functioned as a critically important turning point in their spiritual lives, one with a dramatic impact on their self-perception and the perception of others. As the preceding discussion has revealed, however, visions should not be viewed in isolation, but as part of a longer process of spiritual develop-

ment. While visions often signaled the beginning of a holy woman's public career, they generally represented the culmination of many years of private devotion, often punctuated by loss and illness. This is certainly the case with the Maiden of Ludmir, who is described as intensely praying, studying, and even practicing some form of seclusion while still a child.

We have seen that accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir's vision recall hagiographical descriptions of non-Jewish holy women and Jewish holy men alike. But were any other Jewish women described as visionaries, or is the Maiden of Ludmir unique in this respect? Despite the common stereotype that women were completely absent from the history of Jewish mysticism—a view inscribed in Gershom Scholem's voluminous writings—a variety of literary sources depict Jewish women as experiencing mystical visions.

The sages of the Talmud wrote that after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem we "pay no attention to heavenly voices," but in typical rabbinic fashion they also declared that prophecy had been taken from the prophets and given to the sages or, according to yet another rabbinic tradition, to fools and children.<sup>22</sup> In the following centuries, ecstatic visions and speech were cultivated within certain Jewish circles. Among the individuals described as visionaries, we find a number of women. One of the best documented (because of Inquisition transcripts) and most poignant cases involves a girl named Inés of Herrara del Duque, popularly known as the prophetess of Extremadura.<sup>23</sup> Born in 1488 to a *converso* (crypto-Jewish) family in western Castile, Inés's prophetic ability soon became apparent. Like those of the Maiden of Ludmir, Inés's visions were, in the words of the scholar Haim Beinart, "intimately connected with her mother's death," which occurred when she was still a young child.

Between 1499 and her arrest by the Inquisition in 1500, Inés experienced a series of visions exhorting her and her fellow *conversos* "to believe in the Law of Moses" and promising the imminent arrival of the messiah. According to Inquisition transcripts, in one of these visions Inés described ascending to heaven with the help of her mother. Inés's prophetic mission was confirmed by another *conversa* named Mari Gómez Chillón, who also declared that she had ascended to heaven, where she saw Inés along with several biblical figures, including the Patriarch Jacob's granddaughter.<sup>24</sup> In response to these visions, many *conversos* became devoted followers of the young prophetess and, like her, began to carefully observe the Sabbath and other Jewish rituals, fully expecting the advent of the messianic age. Tragically, as Beinart writes, "The girl who instilled hope in the hearts of the *conversos* did not see that hope

fulfilled. A marginal note made by the court's notary on the trial documents of Juan González, date August 3, 1500, states that by that time Juan Esteban's daughter, the child prophetess of Herrera, had been burned."<sup>25</sup>

Women visionaries also appeared among the Jews who chose to leave the Iberian Peninsula rather than become conversos. Literary accounts from sixteenth-century Palestine refer to numerous Jewish women who experienced ecstatic visions. The richest source on these women is the Book of Visions, an autobiographical work by Hayim Vital, the most prominent disciple of Isaac Luria Ha-Ashkenazi (Ha-Ari), the founder of Lurianic Kabbalah. In its pages, Vital writes that in the same year (1565) he met his teacher, "I saw a woman who was an expert in divining by dropping oil into water and she said to me: I was very frightened by what I saw in this oil - you will undoubtedly rule over all of Israel in the future." A few years later, in 1570, Vital mentions visiting "a wise woman who foretold the future and was also expert in oil-drop divination. She was called Soniadora ["female dreamer" in Judeo-Spanish]. I asked her to cast a spell over the oil as was customary, concerning my comprehension of kabbalistic wisdom. She did not know what to answer me until she assumed a 'spirit of jealousy' [Num. 5:30], and strengthened her incantations. . . . I again asked through an incantation over the oil about the wondrous dream that I dreamed on Friday night, 8 Tevet 5326 [1566]. She said to me: Am I Daniel to explain your dream? Nonetheless, I will explain it to you. And she told me most of the dream."26

Later in his memoir, Vital mentions Francisa Sarah, a "pious woman" living in the kabbalistic center of Sefad, "who saw visions in a waking dream and heard a voice speaking to her, and most of her words were true." Francisa Sarah's existence is confirmed by the seventeenth-century author Joseph Sambari, who describes her as "wise and great in deeds" possessing a "magid who spoke to her and informed her of what would be in the world. The sages of Safed tested her on several occasions to discover if there was substance to her words and everything that she said came to pass."27 Vital also devotes several pages of his diary to the unnamed daughter of Raphael Anav, a resident of Damascus, who fell into a coma and thereafter "returned to complete health, but she said that she sometimes has visions, both while awake and dreaming, of souls and angels . . . what amazed me was that all her words were only about repentance, fear of God, and words of moral rebuke."28 According to Vital, other women in his circle experienced visions while awake, including his own wife, Hannah, and "Simha, the sister of Zabda, the wife of Cuencas,"

or had prophetic dreams, such as a woman named Sa'adat in Damascus, as well as his second wife, Jamilla, and her aunt.

In one of the decisive pronouncements for which he became famous, Gershom Scholem declared, "There have been no women Kabbalists. . . . The long history of Jewish mysticism shows no trace of feminine influence."29 But what of the many women described by Vital? The Kabbalist frequently testifies to the veracity of these women's visions and mentions that he sought out a woman diviner to help his "comprehension of kabbalistic wisdom." Doesn't the very fact that Vital describes these women undermine Scholem's claim that not even a "trace of feminine influence" may be found in the history of Jewish mysticism? Indeed, should some of these women be considered Kabbalists in their own right? Or should we simply dismiss this possibility because of what Scholem referred to as the "demonization of the feminine" in the Kabbalah on the one hand and the fact that none of these women produced any writings of their own on the other? These complicated questions deserve a lengthy study of their own, something beyond the scope of this book. Nevertheless, it is important to interrogate Scholem's dismissal of women's involvement in Jewish mysticism. As we will see below, accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir's life in Palestine further destabilize this claim.

In the wake of the Lurianic Kabbalah, both Sabbateanism and Frankism, its eighteenth-century Eastern European offshoot, valorized the role of women visionaries, or as they were known in these heretical circles, "prophetesses." I will discuss these pneumatic women in chapter 9, including their possible relationship to the Maiden of Ludmir. For the present, let us turn to the Hasidic movement. To some extent, Hasidism resulted in the democratization of the *ruah ha-qodesh*. Exemplifying this phenomenon was the Magid of Mezertich's claim that prophesy was more accessible in his day than it was in the time of the Temple. The view within certain Hasidic circles that prophetic revelation and, in particular, possession by the *ruah ha-qodesh* was attainable by more than a select few opened the door to the possibility of women pneumatics within Hasidism.<sup>31</sup>

A small number of Hasidic holy women are described as possessing prophetic vision and speech. This group includes Edel, the daughter of the Baal Shem Tov, Gittel, the wife of Abraham the Angel, and Hannah Hayah of Chernobyl, about whom her father, Mordechai of Chernobyl, is said to have declared, "She has the holy spirit 'from the womb and from birth.'" Edel's daughter Feige, the granddaughter of the Baal Shem Tov

and mother of Nahman of Bratslav, is described as possessing *ruah ha-qodesh*, which allowed her mystically to see the Baal Shem Tov at the wedding celebration of her own granddaughter (Nahman's daughter).<sup>33</sup> And as we saw in chapter 3, several sources mention anonymous Hasidic women visionaries, for example, the "kosher woman in the town of Ludmir who foretold the future" and "a young woman who was a wonder-worker, whom people considered to be a prophetess" — references that may or may not be to the Maiden of Ludmir.

The most famous Hasidic woman visionary was known as Yente the Prophetess (Yente di Neviehte), a woman from a humble Galician background whom tradition depicts as living during the lifetime of the Baal Shem Tov. While many details of Yente's story are clearly apocryphal, its basic outlines probably refer to a historical figure. Whether or not the stories concerning Yente are historically accurate, however, their transmission — as well as the transmission of the traditions concerning the other women mentioned above - suggests a certain openness within Hasidic circles to women visionaries. As in the case of women leaders, the existence of a handful of women visionaries does not indicate an egalitarian Hasidic attitude toward women in general. Instead, it seems more likely that individual women benefited from the democratization of the holy spirit, just as a relatively small number of women benefited from the development of the dynastic principle. Indeed the Hasidic women described as visionaries were almost invariably related to important male figures.

On the basis of her vision alone, therefore, the Maiden of Ludmir should not be seen as an isolated case in the history of Judaism. Indeed, any attempt to understand the Maiden's story must acknowledge her place within a long chain of Jewish women pneumatics. What makes the Maiden of Ludmir a unique figure, however, is that her visionary experience appears within literary accounts devoted exclusively to her life story, whereas other Jewish women visionaries are only briefly mentioned in other accounts. Let us now turn to another aspect of her vision: Hannah Rochel's claim that she received a new and higher soul as a result of her heavenly ascent.

One of the most striking features of the Maiden of Ludmir's story is the wide range of claims that she was possessed. Hannah Rochel herself declared that she had received a "new and lofty soul" during her ecstatic vision. Later, after she became a public figure, the girl's supporters viewed her as a vessel for the holy spirit (*ruah ha-qodesh*), while her opponents accused her of being possessed by a malevolent soul or dybbuk. According to Jewish tradition, positive spiritual incarnation did not eliminate the agency of the possessed individual. Instead such a person retained a sense of self. By contrast, dybbuk possession resulted in the complete silencing of the individual's voice. Thus, underlying the competing claims concerning the Maiden of Ludmir's spiritual possession is the question of how much agency she retained. Was she merely a puppet, whose behavior was orchestrated by a male dybbuk, or was she a holy woman who had merited special spiritual guidance?

Once again, it is tempting to view this feature of the Maiden of Ludmir's biography through the lens of non-Jewish religious traditions. Some scholars consider spiritual possession — like the frequently related phenomenon of ecstatic visions — to be a defining feature of women's religiosity. While possession has indeed played an important role in the spirituality of women from a variety of religious traditions, there are also significant cross-cultural differences that cannot be ignored. In her study of ecstatic prophesy in seventeenth-century England, Phyllis Mack has argued that men frequently envied women for their "natural" predisposition to possession: "The characterization of the female visionary as an empty vessel reflected an attitude that was far more complicated than simple misogyny, for the defects of rationality and the attuned intuition of visionary women were actually viewed with respect even envy, by those philosophers who felt alienated from God by their compulsive, prideful reliance on the power of their own reason." <sup>35</sup>

We might expect a similar attitude on the part of Jewish men, with knowledge of Torah taking the place of reason, yet Jewish sources reveal a very different perspective on spiritual possession. While women were far more likely to become victims of negative (that is, dybbuk) possession, men had the potential to experience a wide range of positive forms of possession from which women appear to have been largely or even completely excluded. Studying Torah did not make it more difficult for Jewish men to become spiritually possessed, as did exercising reason for seventeenth-century English men. On the contrary, it actually facilitated certain forms of possession. Indeed, the very fact that women were traditionally excluded from studying Torah meant that they were de facto eliminated from positive forms of spiritual possession. In chapter 9, I will examine the accusations of dybbuk possession made about the Maiden by her opponents in Ludmir. In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore the matrix of Jewish mystical traditions concerning positive possession that may have influenced the Maiden of Ludmir's self-conception, the perception of her devotees, and the writings of her biographers.

In the second half of the thirteenth century, Kabbalists developed a doctrine known as "the secret of impregnation," sod ha-ibbur or ibbur, for short. Whereas in reincarnation (gilgul ha-neshamot) a soul entered the body at birth, in *ibbur* a soul entered an individual later in life. This new soul did not replace the soul the person already possessed but instead inhabited the body alongside the original soul.<sup>36</sup> The doctrine of *ibbur* became popular in the circle of Isaac Luria, the leader of the sixteenthcentury kabbalistic revival in Sefad that later had a powerful impact on the Hasidic movement. Hayim Vital described the two reasons for ibbur in his work Shaar ha-Gilgulim (The gate of transmigrations). In the first scenario, the soul of a dead zaddik entered a living man's body in order to help him fulfill the commandments. Vital describes this form of ibbur as occurring for the sake of the living individual. In the second scenario, the soul of a dead zaddik entered the body of a living man in order to fulfill a commandment that it had been unable to perform in its own body. According to Vital, this form of ibbur occurred for the sake of the zaddik's soul.37

Almost without exception, cases of positive *ibbur* involved a righteous male soul entering a male body. When male souls entered female bodies, as they frequently did, they were malevolent dybbukim, not righteous souls. Very rarely a female soul entered a female body through positive *ibbur*. This occurred in the complicated case of a woman who was barren because she possessed the reincarnated soul of a man who had engaged in homosexual acts during a previous incarnation. To help her conceive, such a woman also received a female soul.<sup>38</sup>

The doctrine of *ibbur* reveals how Jewish men were willing to appropriate certain biologically female characteristics, in this case pregnancy, if they viewed them as positive (another example from Hasidic sources is the zaddik who "nurses" his disciples with the "milk" of his wisdom). From one perspective, these biologically female activities appear to have been transposed onto a spiritual plane, where they are performed by men. Yet it is also possible that the stridently androcentric Kabbalists who employed these images actually viewed nursing and pregnancy as spiritually male activities that were only secondarily, that is, biologically, performed by women. Phrased differently, it is not men who are feminized when they spiritually nurse their disciples or are spiritually impregnated, but women who are masculinized when they engage in physical versions of these functions.

Despite the apparent lack of precedent in kabbalistic and folk traditions, the Maiden of Ludmir and/or her biographers may have under-

stood her experience of spiritual incarnation as a case of positive *ibbur*. In Mekler's account, for example, the Maiden explicitly declares that her new and lofty soul will allow her to fulfill more of the commandments, a claim that resonates with Vital's first reason for *ibbur*. If she did see herself as undergoing *ibbur*, then it is also likely that the Maiden thought of her new soul as male, although it should be recalled that none of the accounts mention this detail. Since spiritual impregnation resulted in the new soul occupying the individual's body alongside the old soul, this process would have transformed the Maiden of Ludmir into a spiritual androgyne. Consequently the Maiden may have felt that it was spiritually unnecessary or even wrong for her to marry, since according to the Kabbalah, marriage was viewed as the reunion of two soul halves that had previously constituted an androgynous whole before being divided and placed in male and female bodies, respectively.

During the same period in which *ibbur* was emerging as a popular doctrine, Kabbalists began to cultivate a practice known as *yihudim*, or the "communion of souls." The goal of *yihudim* was to join one's soul with the soul of a dead zaddik. For this reason, holy graves in Palestine became particularly popular sites for the ritual. Kabbalists would prostate themselves on a zaddik's grave and concentrate on "arousing" the soul of the zaddik. If successful, both souls would simultaneously ascend to the upper realms. The Kabbalist Moses Cordovero describes this process as follows: "This is the meaning of 'soul bound up with soul' — this is when he 'pours' his soul upon the grave of the *zaddiq*, cleaving soul to soul, and speaks with the soul of the *zaddiq*."<sup>39</sup>

Intriguingly, in an oral tradition attributed to Horodezky by Mordechai Biber, the Maiden of Ludmir is explicitly described as engaging in *yihudim* after immigrating to Palestine. There are also a number of parallels between the Maiden of Ludmir's experience in the cemetery and the practice of *yihudim*. First, she is depicted as collapsing on a "holy grave." Second, in the wake of this incident, she is described as experiencing a heavenly ascent and spiritual incarnation. Perhaps Hannah Rochel believed that her intense devotion in the cemetery had approximated the "contemplative intention" experienced during *yihudim*, thereby arousing the soul of a zaddik that cleaved to her.

The third kabbalistic doctrine that may shed light on the Maiden's incarnational experience is known by the Hebrew acronym *NaRaN*, signifying the division of the soul into three parts — *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshama*. This doctrine was first introduced into Judaism by medieval Jewish philosophers such as Abraham ibn Ezra and Abraham bar Hiyya,

under the influence of older Greek traditions.<sup>40</sup> Although its first formulation was philosophical, the doctrine underwent a mystical reinterpretation among thirteenth-century Kabbalists. The Zohar explains the hierarchical relationship of the soul parts as follows:

"Soul" [nefesh] and "spirit" [ruah] are not two separate grades, but one grade with two aspects. There is still a third aspect which should dominate these two and cleave to them as they to it, and which is called "higher spirit" [neshama] . . . "Soul" [nefesh] is the lowest stirring, it supports and feeds the body and is closely connected with it. When it sufficiently qualifies itself, it becomes the throne on which rests the lower spirit [ruah], as it is written, "until the spirit be poured on us from on high" (Isaiah 32:15). When both have prepared themselves sufficiently, they are qualified to receive the higher spirit [neshamah], to which the lower spirit [ruah] becomes a throne, and which is undiscoverable, supreme over all. Thus there is throne resting on throne, and a throne for the highest. 41

Only after an individual possessed all three soul parts was he "called holy, perfect, completely devoted to God" by the Zohar.<sup>42</sup> In the later kabbalistic work *Shaar ha-Gilgulim* Vital wrote that most people never came close to attaining this exalted spiritual state.<sup>43</sup> Instead they lived their entire lives with a *nefesh*, which all human beings receive at birth and were unable to receive the higher soul parts of *ruah* and *neshamah*. Nevertheless, some individuals were able to progress from one level to the other, typically achieving the levels of *ruah* and *neshamah* at the ages of thirteen and twenty, respectively:

When a person is born and goes out into the world, his *nefesh* enters him, and if his actions are sanctified, he is deemed righteous and the *ruah* enters him at the completion of his thirteenth year. And from then on, he is called a complete man as is known. And if his actions are further sanctified from that point on, the *neshamah* enters him at the completion of his twentieth year . . . but if he does not rectify his *ruah* completely, then his *neshamah* does not enter him, and there will only be a *nefesh* and *ruah* within him, and if he doesn't rectify his *nefesh* completely, he only possesses a *nefesh*, and he remains without a *ruah* and *neshamah*.<sup>44</sup>

Although kabbalistic texts imply that the tripartite structure of *NaRaN* applied to all members of Israel, the means by which an individual received the levels of *ruah* and *neshamah* appears to have excluded women, since one had to perform all of the mitzvot, study the written and oral Torah, and, finally, immerse oneself in the secrets of the Kabbalah. <sup>45</sup> Kabbalistic sources do not explicitly reject the possibility of women achieving these higher souls, but their silence on the topic indicates that they do not take this possibility seriously.

With this important caveat in mind, we may consider the prospect that the doctrine of NaRaN may nevertheless have informed the Maiden's selfconception and/or the understanding of her biographers. Most strikingly, the view that an individual received a new soul at the culmination of one stage of spiritual development and the beginning of another echoes descriptions of the Maiden of Ludmir's experience. Hannah Rochel claimed that she had received her new soul when she was approximately thirteen, that is, precisely the age when the Kabbalah states that pious individuals typically receive their second, loftier soul part. As we will see in the next chapter, biographers also depict the Maiden as undergoing a further spiritual transformation when she was approximately twenty (building her own beys medresh, for example), the age when a worthy individual typically received the third soul part, according to the Kabbalah. Like ibbur and yihudim, therefore, the doctrine of NaRaN provides a theoretical framework for understanding the Maiden of Ludmir's incarnational experience. All three doctrines are limited, however, in that they do not explicitly address the possibility of a woman receiving a new soul. Thus we are left guessing whether the Maiden or her biographers, who do not mention ibbur, yihudim, or NaRaN, understood her in light of any of these kabbalistic traditions.

Unlike the doctrines that I have discussed thus far, the final mystical phenomenon that I will explore in this chapter was explicitly applied to the Maiden of Ludmir. Writing in the *Pinkas Ludmir*, two former residents of the town, Yehoshua Melzer and Rabbi Ephraim Fishel Mamet, both described the Maiden as the reincarnation of a male soul. According to Melzer, "she was the reincarnation of a great zaddik," while Mamet writes that "they said that she was the reincarnation of some great soul, concerning which it had been decreed that it should repair the sins that it had committed in its first incarnation [by transmigrating] into the body of this female virgin." This view also appears in Horodezky's account, in which Mordechai of Chernobyl himself speculates that the soul of a dead zaddik has transmigrated into the body of the Maiden of Ludmir, a situation that he considers to be a source of great pain for the male soul.

These claims are based on a theory of reincarnation that first appeared in early kabbalistic circles, but like the other doctrines that we have already examined, it was more fully developed within the Lurianic Kabbalah. While *ibbur* and *NaRaN* took place later in life and resulted from learning and good deeds, *gilgul* occurred at birth. According to kabbalistic sources, there were two common reasons for reincarnation. The first was the soul's failure to fulfill a particular commandment in a previous life,

one that had to be performed in a new incarnation. The second was a transgression in a previous life that had to be punished and rectified. According to Vital, the bodies of men, women, animals, and even inanimate objects such as water and stones served as hosts for reincarnated souls.

Except in rare cases, however, only male souls actually transmigrated from one body to another — whether human, animal, or inanimate. As Vital writes in *Shaar ha-Gilgulim*, "Know that the measure of reincarnation applies to males and not to females."<sup>47</sup> The souls of Jewish men participated in the cycle of transmigration because they could not atone for their sins in Gehennom (a place akin to Purgatory), for as Vital writes, "Since men fulfill the commandments and study Torah, they cannot enter Gehennom, for the light of Gehennom does not rule over them. . . . And therefore they are required to transmigrate, to cleanse their sins in place of Gehennom."<sup>48</sup> By contrast, "Women, who do not involve themselves with Torah, are able to enter Gehennom to cleanse their sins and do not need to transmigrate."<sup>49</sup>

According to the Kabbalah, one sin in particular caused a male soul to transmigrate into the body of a biological female: *mishkav zakhar*, or homosexual relations. <sup>50</sup> This belief, which goes back to the writings of the thirteenth-century Kabbalist Ezra of Gerona, was fully developed by Vital, who offers the following explanation: "Also know that sometimes the man reincarnates in a female body, due to a certain sin, for instance homosexual relations *[mishkav zakhar]* and the like." <sup>51</sup> By engaging in homosexuality in its previous incarnation, the male soul was forced to inhabit a woman's body, a severe punishment for the intensely androcentric Kabbalists. <sup>52</sup> Male homosexuality, therefore, resulted in a type of androgyne — a male soul in a biologically female body.

Struggling to find accurate language for this phenomenon, Vital refers to such a figure as "female" (nekavah) or "woman" ('isha) but also states that such a "woman is male like her husband" (ha-'isha hi zakhar ke-ba'ala) and describes her as barren, unable to conceive because of the male soul that occupies her body. As will be discussed more extensively in the next chapter, the standard contrast between biologically determined sex and socially constructed gender must be amended in the case of the Kabbalah, since alongside these categories there also existed what may be termed spiritual gender. In some individuals, biological sex and spiritual gender were not identical.

Although there is no evidence that the Maiden of Ludmir was barren, her adamant refusal to marry combined with her masculine religious behavior convinced some observers that she possessed the reincarnated soul of a male zaddik. Presumably, the soul of this zaddik had committed a serious transgression in its previous incarnation, most likely the sin of homosexual relations. To atone for this sin, the zaddik's soul had transmigrated into the body of a woman, thereby producing an individual—the Maiden of Ludmir—who was biologically female but spiritually male.

Unlike other Hasidic holy women, the Maiden of Ludmir was not related to a powerful male leader. In the absence of a biological link, the doctrine of reincarnation established a spiritual connection between the Maiden of Ludmir and a male zaddik. Yet this connection was problematic, since it had probably resulted from the male soul's transgression in a previous life. In a way that was subtler than the accusation of dybbuk possession, therefore, the claim of reincarnation also treated the Maiden of Ludmir as the passive receptacle for a deviant male soul.

Although a few Jewish women are described as channeling the *ruah ha-qodesh*, they appear to have been excluded from other positive incarnational experiences and were typically involved in negative forms of possession, in which they constituted the majority of cases. In this respect, premodern Eastern European Jews differed from their Christian counterparts, who viewed women as more likely to be possessed by holy as well as unholy spirits. While witches were accused of demonic possession, female saints were described as vessels for the holy spirit. In such an atmosphere, determining whether an individual woman was a victim of Satan or an instrument of God became an important task, particularly since similar phenomena — visions, prophetic speech, unusual behavior — could be attributed to either cause. As we will see in the following chapters, a similar phenomenon emerged in the case of the Maiden of Ludmir.

## CHAPTER 8

## False Male and Woman Rebbe?

"From this point on, she became like a man in her conduct." With this simple but provocative sentence, S. A. Horodezky described the dramatic impact of Hannah Rochel's ecstatic vision on her subsequent behavior. Over the years, other biographers have basically reiterated Horodezky's view that the Maiden of Ludmir underwent a gender reversal in the wake of her illness and incarnation. Most recently Ada Rapoport-Albert has argued that she became a "false male" in response to the limited opportunities for women within Judaism. Ultimately, her biographers agree, this process of masculinization culminated in the Maiden of Ludmir embracing the role of a rebbe, achieving fame as a charismatic healer, teacher, and prayer leader.

This critically important phase of the Maiden of Ludmir's life may be divided into two stages. During the first stage, which lasted from when she was twelve, the age at which she is said to have experienced her ecstatic vision, to when she was nineteen, when sources say her father died, Hannah Rochel led a basically private existence. Although she engaged in traditionally male religious activities and had also begun to perform healings for a handful of supplicants, the girl had yet to become a truly public figure. This changed with the death of Monesh Verbermacher. From this point on, Hannah Rochel assumed the role of a charismatic religious leader with a considerable following, particularly

among the working-class women and men of Ludmir. It is during this second stage that she became widely known as the Maiden of Ludmir, a title indicating her independent status. Although this stage of the Maiden's life placed her on the Hasidic map, I will demonstrate below that it apparently only lasted for a brief period, from approximately 1825, when she probably built her own *beys medresh*, to circa 1831, the probable year of her marriage. While this event did not completely eliminate the Maiden of Ludmir's following, it did considerably reduce her authority, according to her biographers.

The Maiden of Ludmir clearly sought to overcome the traditional constraints on Jewish women, but it does not necessarily follow that she completely "renounced her identity as a woman" or that she simply became "a man in her conduct," as has been claimed. These assertions are problematic because they assume that the Maiden of Ludmir could not have behaved as she did without understanding herself solely in male terms. They also preclude the possibility that she was influenced by female in addition to male role models. In this chapter I will explore the possibility that instead of merely imitating male behavior, in constructing her social and religious identity the Maiden of Ludmir drew on male *and* female influences alike and in so doing went beyond dichotomous constructions of gender.

The argument that the Maiden became a false male after her vision rests on four factors: her "new, lofty soul"; her involvement in traditionally male religious rituals; her refusal to get married; and her striking resemblance to a Hasidic rebbe. Several authors depict the Maiden of Ludmir as explicitly declaring her desire to "reach the spiritual level of a man" after her vision and devote herself to a life of Torah "like a man."5 Menasheh Unger even writes that the girl "began to speak with a man's voice in order to show her father that she had received a new soul."6 It is difficult to say what value, if any, these reconstructed scenes have in determining the Maiden of Ludmir's self-conception. Yet they do provide invaluable insight into the attitudes of her biographers, who consistently sought to portray the Maiden of Ludmir as consciously embracing a male identity.7 Thus it is important to distinguish between how the Maiden of Ludmir may have seen herself and how she was seen by those around her and by later observers. It is clear that many of her contemporaries and biographers alike focused on the Maiden's "male" behavior, while her selfconception remains more elusive.

With these observations in mind, let us turn to the first piece of evidence for the Maiden of Ludmir's gender reversal: her claim that she

received a new soul. The difference between sex and gender is generally framed as the difference between nature and culture, between biology and social conditioning. To understand fully the Maiden of Ludmir's story, however, we must incorporate another dimension of gender, one that transcends both biology and culture. According to Jewish mystical tradition, the soul itself possesses a gender. In most cases, an individual's biological sex, socially constructed gender, and spiritual gender are all identical, although as we saw in the previous chapter, under certain circumstances a male soul could transmigrate into a female body, thereby producing a biological female who was spiritually male.

The idea of souls possessing gender dates back to Plato's *Symposium*, in which the idea is attributed to Aristophanes. In the Middle Ages, this concept made its way into the Kabbalah, where, echoing Plato's myth, male and female souls were described as the separated halves of an originally androgynous whole.<sup>8</sup> After being separated, each male soul typically descended into a male body and each female soul descended into a female body. The goal of marriage was to reconstitute the originally androgynous state by reuniting the two soul halves, a process the Zohar describes as follows: "Come and see that all souls in the world include both male and female, and when they go out, they go out male and female and afterward are separated according to their way. And afterward, if a man is worthy they unite together. And lo, they are one pair, united completely, in soul and in body."

In light of these mystical traditions, we might expect the Maiden of Ludmir's biographers to identify explicitly the gender of her "new and lofty" soul, yet none of them does so. This omission is particularly striking, given the importance of gender in the Maiden of Ludmir's story. Perhaps her biographers simply assumed that a lofty soul was by definition male and therefore saw no need to spell it out. Yet what if Horodezky and those who followed in his footsteps were loyally transmitting the Maiden's actual testimony concerning her vision? What if she chose not to mention her new soul's gender because it was female like her original soul or, despite the lack of kabbalistic precedent, without gender? What if she viewed her new soul as male but saw herself as a spiritual androgyne, possessing both a female and a male soul? Unfortunately, we lack the evidence to answer these questions, but they do raise doubts about whether the Maiden of Ludmir conceived of herself as a spiritual male, even though this is clearly how some of her contemporaries, such as those who claimed that she possessed the reincarnated soul of a fallen male zaddik, saw her.

Although none of her biographers identifies the Maiden of Ludmir's new soul as male, they all suggest a causal link between her incarnational experience and her subsequent performance of traditionally male religious rituals. As Horodezky puts it, "At this point the woman changed completely. She felt the great, new spiritual power that had been granted her from heaven and began to act like a man, laying tefillin, wrapping herself in a tallis and immersing herself in Torah and prayer all day long." Other authors mention that the Maiden began wearing the four-cornered garment known as a tallis katan and that — following a Hasidic custom — she layed two pairs of tefillin (a pair made according to the specifications of the medieval rabbi Rashi and another according to those of his grandson, Rabbenu Tam).11 Unger states that the Maiden wore a gartel as well. This is particularly significant, since Jewish men wear a gartel to separate the upper, spiritual halves of their bodies from the lower, material halves during prayer. By wearing a gartel, the Maiden indicated her desire and ability to achieve the same separation, despite the cultural presumption that women were inherently material, sexual beings.

Ironically, these authors' assertion that the Maiden of Ludmir abruptly adopted traditionally male religious rituals following her vision directly contradicts their own accounts of her childhood, when, they say, she had *already* begun to pray three times a day "like a man," study Torah, and even, according to some sources, wear tefillin and a tallis. This parallels the tendency of medieval male hagiographers to portray Christian women saints as experiencing dramatic gender reversals. Evidence suggests, however, that the lives of these women were more likely to be characterized by earlier vocations, greater continuity, and less dramatic actions than the lives of male saints, who frequently underwent abrupt adolescent conversions, involving renunciation of wealth, power, and sexuality. While the life of the Maiden of Ludmir need not conform to this pattern, it is significant that her biographers also emphasize a dramatic moment of gender reversal during adolescence, even though their own accounts suggest a more complicated and lengthier process beginning in childhood.

This observation notwithstanding, the question still remains: Did the Maiden of Ludmir see herself as acting like a man when she performed traditionally male religious rituals? Answering this question takes us into the realm of the Halakhah. All the traditionally male religious activities attributed to the Maiden of Ludmir fall under the legal category of *mitzvot aseh she-ha-zeman geraman*, or positive time-bound commandments. According to Halakhic sources, women are legally exempt from performing these commandments.<sup>13</sup> The relevant question in the case of

the Maiden of Ludmir, however, is whether women are *permitted* to observe positive time-bound commandments. If women as women are Halakhically allowed to perform these mitzvot, then depictions of the Maiden of Ludmir as a false male for doing so rest not on Jewish legal tradition but on social convention. Concomitantly, even if her contemporary critics condemned her for transgressing socially defined gender boundaries, the Maiden of Ludmir may have understood herself as fulfilling her Halakhic potential as a woman when she performed these ritual activities.

Halakhic authorities offer three views on whether women may perform positive time- bound commandments. The most conservative position is exemplified by the medieval jurist known as the Ravad (1120–1198), who argued that women may not perform commandments from which they are exempt since "women are not to be relied on." His fellow sages, Rashi and Maimonides, stated that women were allowed to perform these mitzvot but could not recite the blessings while doing so. As Maimonides writes, "Women, slaves and minors are exempt by the law of the Torah from tsitsit. . . . Women and slaves who wish to enwrap themselves in tsitsit [fringed garment] may do so without reciting the blessing. And similarly, all other positive commandments from which women are exempt may be performed by them, without blessings, and they should not be prevented from doing them." The third, most liberal position was taken by Rashi's grandson, Rabbenu Tam (c. 1100-1171), the Rashba (1235-1310), and others who permitted women to perform the commandments and to recite the blessings. As the contemporary scholar Joel Roth has pointed out, Sephardim (including Joseph Karo, the author of the Shulhan Arukh), generally followed the approach of Maimonides on this issue, while Ashkenazim accepted Rabbenu Tam's position. Thus, for example, Moshe Isserles, the most important Ashkenazi legal authority, wrote, "The custom is for women to recite the blessings on positive timebound commandments. In this case, too, they may recite blessings for themselves,"14

Essentially there is no legal reason why, as a woman, the Maiden of Ludmir could not have engaged in the positive time-bound commandments attributed to her with one possible exception: the laying of tefillin. The debate over whether women are permitted to lay tefillin goes back to the rabbinic period, with most early authorities allowing them to do so. In the medieval period, however, Meir of Rothenburg an important Ashkenazic sage, declared that although it belonged to the category of positive time-bound commandments that women were generally allowed

to perform, laying tefillin was legally forbidden to women because they could not be trusted to maintain the *guf naki* (clean body) required by rabbinic sources to perform the commandment. Although contemporary scholars such as Aliza Berger and David Golinkin have shown that this position directly contradicts the Halakhic position of the Babylonian Talmud and most of the Rishonim (medieval sages), over the centuries a majority of jurists have accepted its authority, including Moshe Isserles.<sup>15</sup>

Despite this legal proscription, over the centuries a number of women have been depicted as laying tefillin. In addition to the biblical figure of Michal, the daughter of King Saul, Rashi's daughters and other Jewish women in medieval France are also said to have performed this commandment. In the early-modern period, Fatsunia, the first wife of Hayim ben Attar, is described as "wrapping herself in a tallis and wearing tefillin like Michal the daughter of the first king of Israel." Twentieth-century works on the status of women in Hasidism depict at least one contemporary of the Maiden of Ludmir, Perele, the daughter of the Magid of Kozhnitz, not only as laying tefillin but also as wearing a tallis, tsitsit, and gartel during prayer. While it is impossible to verify these traditions, their existence raises the question of whether some Jewish women — including, perhaps, the Maiden of Ludmir — viewed it as their legal right to lay tefillin despite certain Halakhic opinions to the contrary.

Having said this, it is important to point out that even if Jewish women were theoretically permitted to perform positive time-bound commandments, their responsibilities as wives and mothers typically precluded this practice. Furthermore, while it might be expected that women who did manage to perform time-bound commandments would be praised for going beyond the call of duty, this was not the typical attitude of male religious authorities. Indeed, the dominant tradition was precisely the opposite, as the Talmud declared in several places: "One who is commanded and fulfils the command is greater than one who fulfils it without being commanded." This attitude limited the psychological incentive of Jewish women to perform the commandments and reified their inferior legal and social status. As Nehemiah Polen has noted in a recent essay on women in Hasidism, "a major determinant of women's lack of standing in certain areas of Jewish law is their status as persons 'not commanded." <sup>20</sup>

In conclusion, therefore, the question of whether the Maiden of Ludmir was "acting like a man" when she layed tefillin, wore a tallis, and performed other positive time-bound commandments is more complicated than it might first appear. On the one hand, there was ample legal justification for the Maiden, as a woman, to perform most if not all the religious rituals attributed to her. On the other, there was tremendous social pressure for women to avoid performing these commandments, since this behavior challenged the hegemony of Jewish men and also interfered, at least potentially, with their duties as wives and mothers. Thus the disparity between Jewish legal and social realities may have allowed the Maiden of Ludmir to view herself as a woman fulfilling her Halakhic potential, even as others saw her as a "false male" dangerously subverting the proper place of women within the Jewish social order.

In a recently published Hebrew essay on the role of women in Jewish mysticism, Moshe Idel has asked whether—given the opportunity—Jewish women would have sacrificed marriage and children in order to have access to the mystical experiences achieved by celibate Christian holy women: "Would they have been prepared to pay the price (if I may use this expression) of giving up the possibility of having children and living within a family framework?" <sup>21</sup> In the case of the Maiden of Ludmir, at least, the answer to this question was a definite yes.

After her ecstatic vision, Hannah Rochel returned the engagement agreement to her fiancé and adamantly refused to marry either him or anyone else. In his account, David Mekler even includes a letter in which Hannah Rochel explained to her fiancé that he was totally blameless for her decision. Instead, she wrote him, the heavenly court had empowered her to reject the life of a typical woman, one devoted primarily to her family and only secondarily to the commandments.<sup>22</sup> Whether or not her vision had convinced Hannah Rochel that she was now a spiritual male, it had clearly convinced her that for a Jewish woman, marriage and a life of piety and learning were incompatible. Something had to give, and with the spiritual confidence instilled in her by her vision of the heavenly court, Hannah Rochel decided that it would be marriage and children.

Until this point, Hannah Rochel's unusual behavior was a private matter that had little if any impact on her family's relations with the community at large. This changed when she rejected her fiancé. Immediately voices rose up in Ludmir condemning Hannah Rochel for "shaming a Jewish boy in public" and calling for "a fine to be levied against her." Some blamed Monesh Verbermacher as well, declaring that "Monesh should not be allowed to enter the *beys medresh*, nor should he be called up to the Torah." Others were less certain about Monesh's guilt but were convinced that Hannah Rochel should be isolated from other women and forced to pray in private: "He has a sick daughter, she must not be allowed to enter the women's section of the synagogue, and must pray by herself at home

in her tallis and tefillin. She must not cross the threshold of the beys medresh."

According to Unger, the dispute over Hannah Rochel's behavior fell along class lines. After her miraculous recovery, working-class women and men had begun to petition the girl to heal their ailments. One artisan (bal melokhe) declared that Hannah Rochel was "a master of the holy spirit," and a cobbler testified that "she layed her hand on my sick daughter and she soon recovered." Yet the town's property owners, the balebatim, were uninterested in the strange girl's healing powers and insisted that Monesh Verbermacher be fined for reneging on the engagement. Within several days, as their critics had hoped, Monesh stopped going to the beys medresh, and Hannah Rochel avoided the women's section of the shul, praying at home instead. A short while later, the jilted boy's father brought a complaint before a rabbinic judge, who ordered Monesh to pay a fine, return all the presents Hannah Rochel had received, and relinquish any claim to the gifts Monesh had given to the boy's family including a "gold pocket watch and a silver cigarette box."

Ephraim Taubenhaus also notes the girl's special attraction to workingclass Jews: "She appealed in particular to the ba'ale ha-melakhah, and would keep the wealthy at a distance, not receiving them at all."26 While Ludmir's poor and working-class Jews were chiefly interested in the girl's pneumatic abilities, the community's property owners were outraged by the fact that she had broken a contract and feared that her presence in public would influence other women to abandon their traditional responsibilities. We should keep in mind that Monesh and Hannah Rochel Verbermacher belonged to the same socioeconomic class as their critics. The fact that one of their own was setting a bad example was probably more threatening to the balebatim of Ludmir than if the girl had been the daughter of a poor bal melokhe. Furthermore, in early-modern Eastern European Jewish society, breaking the conditions (tnaim) of an engagement signaled a serious legal and cultural breach. Indeed, only a few years before Hannah Rochel was born, the famous Gaon of Vilna had decreed that it was better to grant a divorce than to break an engagement agreement.<sup>27</sup> Written into most tnaim were heavy forfeits (typically half the dowry) and a herem, or decree of excommunication, for any party who cancelled the agreement.28

As long as they thought she would become a wife and mother, her middle-class neighbors tolerated Hannah Rochel's unusual behavior as part of a childhood phase, one that marriage would eventually "cure." After Hannah Rochel rejected her fiancé, however, they realized that the

girl had no intention of abandoning her pious lifestyle or of submitting to the authority of a husband. Like a carrier of a virus who had to be isolated from the rest of the community, and in particular its young women, Hannah Rochel could not be allowed into the women's section of the synagogue or even to cross its threshold, lest she infect others. Since Judaism had never transformed celibacy into a religious virtue, her critics could not place Hannah Rochel into a preexisting socially acceptable category. Instead, the guardians of Ludmir's social norms interpreted this strange girl's decision as a dangerous act of defiance, one with a potentially negative impact on the other young women in the community.

It is important to view Hannah Rochel's decision within its broader cultural and religious context. By the first few decades of the nineteenth century, the Eastern European Jewish practice of child marriages had come under attack, particularly by members of the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah). David Biale and other scholars have demonstrated that such early marriages frequently generated severe, even crippling anxiety among the young participants. Indeed, Biale has shown that one of the major appeals of the Hasidic movement was that it "seemed to address the anxieties of early marriage" by providing "a legitimate place to which to escape," (that is, the rebbe's court), as well as an ideology "that justified such an escape." Biale adds, however, "We cannot say how the girl responded," for while traditional Jewish culture "offered men organized alternatives to the pressures of family life, whether in the court of the Hasidic zaddik or in the study hall of the yeshiva; it had less to offer women."<sup>29</sup>

One way in which adolescent Jewish girls may have responded to the anxiety of early marriage was to engage in the socially disruptive behavior typically associated with dybbuk possession. Some of the girls suspected of dybbuk possession may have sublimated their fear into strange behavior that precluded, or at least, delayed, marriage and sexual relations. By attributing this behavior to a supernatural cause, meanwhile, male religious authorities were able to ignore the trauma brought on by cultural practices such as early marriage. In effect, these authorities rejected any causal link between these girls' aberrant behavior and the social conditions that may have triggered it, instead, attributing their emotional disturbance to a malevolent spiritual force.

Although Hannah Rochel herself would later be accused of dybbuk possession, her calm refusal to marry was not typical of such cases. Nor was her socioeconomic status, since most of the adolescent girls accused of dybbuk possession were from working-class backgrounds. Since she

did not neatly fit into this standard category of female victims, Hannah Rochel's firm decision to remain celibate represented a greater threat to those who sought to preserve the status quo, including the practice of childhood marriages, which was increasingly coming under attack by Enlightenment-influenced critics.

Although Judaism traditionally rejected celibacy as an option for women and men alike, Hannah Rochel's refusal to marry did not take place in a religious or social vacuum. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Maiden was born, the Hasidic movement had already begun to destabilize the Jewish valorization of marriage and procreation. Beginning with the Baal Shem Tov himself, a number of Hasidic leaders had embraced what David Biale has called "celibate marriages."30 The Besht, Abraham the Angel (the son of the Maggid of Mezeritch), Israel of Ruzhin, and Menahem Mendel of Kotzk are all said to have abstained from sexual relations during long periods of their marriages. As Biale has argued, this sexual asceticism reflected a displacement of erotic desire from human sexual relations to the hieros gamos between the male Hasid and the female aspect of the divine known as the Shekhinah. The practice of celibate marriages drew sharp criticism from the movement's opponents as well as from some of its own members, who reminded their fellow Hasidim of the Halakhic requirement to "be fruitful and multiply."

The emerging Hasidic tradition of sexual asceticism must have had some influence on the Maiden of Ludmir's decision to remain celibate. Whether this fact should be interpreted as evidence that she embraced a male identity is open to debate, however. First, it should be noted that the girl's behavior actually differed from that of her male contemporaries in a highly significant way. Unlike any of the ascetic male figures who may have served as her role models, the Maiden of Ludmir refused even to get married. In this respect, she also differed from the female Hasidic figure of Yente the Prophetess, whose adoption of celibacy after marriage more closely resembled the limited form of sexual asceticism practiced by married Hasidic men than it did the complete sexual renunciation of the Maiden of Ludmir.

Ironically, the Maiden of Ludmir actually enjoyed a Halakhic advantage over her ascetically inclined male contemporaries with regard to celibacy. Although both men and women were encouraged to be "fruitful and multiply," only Jewish men were actually required by the Halakhah to marry and procreate. In practice, this technical exemption rarely if ever affected the lives of Jewish women, since their communities and families expected them to marry and have children regardless of the

Halakhic ruling. Nor was this ruling intended to empower women. Instead, according to a number of Jewish legal sources, women did not need to be commanded to marry and procreate, since it was their natural inclination to do so. By contrast, the same sources reasoned, some men would choose celibacy if given the opportunity.

If she had been aware of this legal tradition, the Maiden of Ludmir could have rejected marriage without rejecting the Halakhah, an option unavailable to male Hasidic ascetics such as Nahman of Bratslav and Menahem Mendel of Kotsk, who were forced to struggle between an acute desire to remain celibate and an explicit Halakhic requirement to procreate. Even though Hasidic men were legally compelled to marry and father children, however, they could still devote most of their time to spiritual pursuits, a luxury that few if any married women enjoyed. Unlike their male counterparts, Hasidic women were bound by their domestic duties, at least until their children were grown and their husbands dead. Faced with such a future, Hannah Rochel had little choice but to avoid marriage altogether if she wanted to lead a life committed to study and prayer.<sup>31</sup>

Hannah Rochel's decision not to marry caused her father great heartache. Even her growing reputation as a healer did little to assuage Monesh Verbermacher's concern that his daughter was making a terrible mistake. Seeking help, Unger writes, the girl's father traveled to Mottel of Chernobyl, who declared, "Monesh, your daughter goes in a new path. Leave her alone. Since she has decided on her own to be different from all other women, she alone must decide whether she will be married. Go home and leave her alone!" Whether or not the Chernobler Rebbe initially tolerated the girl's decision not to marry — as Unger rather implausibly suggests — he soon changed his mind.

As he watched his only child get older, Monesh Verbermacher grew more and more despondent. Then, according to Ephraim Taubenhaus, when Hannah Rochel was nineteen years old, her father died.<sup>33</sup> The fact that Monesh Verbermacher does not appear in a list of Jewish merchants living in Ludmir in 1827 also indicates that he had passed away by the time his daughter reached her twentieth birthday. Following her father's death, Hannah Rochel recited the traditional Jewish mourner's prayer known as kaddish. Although Jewish women were not expected to perform this ritual, there was precedent for daughters to do so if there were no sons in the family.<sup>34</sup>

Monesh Verbermacher's death was a critically important turning point in Hannah Rochel's life. First and foremost, she was now completely unattached to any male authority figure. According to most of her biographers, it was at this point that people in Ludmir began calling the young woman Di Heilege Besulah (the Holy Virgin) and Di Ludmirer Moid (the Maiden of Ludmir), titles that signified her unmarried and therefore, independent, status. 35 Second, Monesh Verbermacher left his daughter a substantial inheritance. As much as any other factor, her financial stability enabled the Maiden of Ludmir to become a religious leader. Without money, the Maiden would have been forced to devote considerable physical and mental energies to supporting herself. Perhaps the financial pressure would have compelled her to marry or to become a ward of the community. Instead, she was able to use her new largess to build a study house of her own, literally cementing her place in Hasidic history.

Unfortunately, we lack a description dating from her lifetime of the Maiden's study house. According to former residents of Ludmir, however, the two-story building that housed the Maiden's beys medresh was constructed from red brick manufactured in the town itself. This seemingly mundane architectural detail indicates the Maiden's considerable wealth, since the vast majority of structures built in Ludmir during the early nineteenth century were made of inexpensive lumber taken from the nearby forests rather than the more expensive brick. The Maiden's building was on the corner of Kovel and Farna Streets, not far from the shtadt (town) market. Jack Zawid, Morris Goldstein, and David Goldfarb all prayed in the study house as children and told me that by the beginning of the twentieth century, at least, its wooden interior, long benches, and simple ark resembled the rest of the shtiblekh in town. As I have already noted, however, the Maiden's study house possessed one architectural detail that differentiated it from all the others in Ludmir: it was located on the second floor. The study house's unusual location must have initially attracted attention in the town, yet its distance from the street meant greater privacy and protection for the Maiden and her followers.

The *gornshtibl* provided the Maiden of Ludmir with a room of her own, a refuge for her private devotion, and a forum for her public teaching. In addition to the larger room where her followers gathered, the Maiden built a small annex where she lived, studied, and prayed. According to Moshe Feinkind, she gave a woman "a few groschen to provide her with a little food and to do her wash."<sup>36</sup> Others write that she had a female or even a male assistant, who maintained the study house, took written requests (*kvittlekh*) from her supplicants, and passed out amulets with her blessings. Feinkind stresses that the Maiden refused to accept any monetary donations from her followers in return for her blessings.<sup>37</sup> This

sharply differentiated her behavior from the growing trend in Ukrainian Hasidism — exemplified by Mottel of Chernobyl — to subsidize elaborate courts and luxurious lifestyles with donations, a practice condemned by both contemporary critics and later historians of the movement such as Horodezky.

The degree of direct contact between the Maiden of Ludmir and her followers during this period is unclear. While several accounts suggest that the Maiden only refused to allow men into her presence, David Mekler explicitly states that both men and women were prevented from seeing her.38 The Maiden of Ludmir's desire to isolate herself was not without precedent in the history of Hasidism. Many male leaders also practiced some form of seclusion, beginning with the Baal Shem Tov, who lived alone in a hut for long periods. The Besht's spiritual successors, such as Nahman of Bratslav and Menahem Mendel of Kotsk, struggled with their own conflicting desires to be public religious leaders on the one hand and hidden holy men on the other.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, many zaddikim built special rooms adjoining their study houses where they periodically isolated themselves from their followers. In his four-volume magnum opus on Hasidism, Horodezky describes this phenomenon as follows: "The zaddik is not seen during prayer: next to the synagogue is a special room - 'the holy of holies' - and there he is hidden from the eyes of everyone and prays in isolation at the same time that the public prays in the synagogue."40

Like her better-known contemporary Menahem Mendel of Kotsk, who went far beyond the limited seclusion practiced by a typical zaddik by locking himself in a room for several decades, the Maiden of Ludmir is said to have spoken to her followers through a slightly open door. Interestingly, this practice also recalls the case of a twelfth-century Jewish woman in Baghdad — the educated only child of a community leader — who reportedly gave "instruction in Scripture to young men through a window. She herself is within the building, whilst the disciples are below outside and do not see her." <sup>41</sup>

During the relatively brief period (c. 1825–1831) that the Maiden of Ludmir appears to have attracted a large following in her hometown, she is described as a healer, visionary, exorcist, teacher, prayer leader, and judge.<sup>42</sup> According to her biographers, the *gornshtibl* became the setting for a veritable Hasidic court (in Yiddish, *hoyf*) and the people who gathered there became known as Di Ludmirer Moids Hasidim, "Hasidim of the Maiden of Ludmir." <sup>43</sup> While the Maiden's most loyal followers remained working-class women and men from Ludmir, she

also began to attract individuals from other socioeconomic classes and communities.

In his Russian account, Horodezky writes, "The fame of the 'Maiden of Ludmir' spread throughout the neighboring towns and villages, and many people, both women and men, came to pay her homage, as to a holy man; even learned men and rabbis went to her." According to Horodezky, the Maiden was miraculously able to name all these visitors, even if they were complete strangers, a skill that Solomon Maimon (1754–1800), one of the first critics of the Hasidic movement, had earlier attributed to the Magid of Mezeritch. Maimon cynically conjectured that the charismatic leader accomplished this "by means of correspondence and spies and a certain knowledge of men, by observing a man's physiognomy and by skillful questioning," not unlike the spiritualists later debunked by Harry Houdini. 45

In another work, Horodezky adds, "Elderly Hasidim who had already traveled to the old zaddikim, came to Ludmir to see this wonder and admitted that the 'Maiden of Ludmir' was a 'true zaddik.' . . . Some came because they wanted to see a miracle, others just wanted to see her, and still others wanted to hear her *toyre*."46 Other authors confirm this picture, writing that "scholars were drawn to hear the secret of her *toyre* and wisdom," and "rabbis and zaddikim began to follow her."47 These sources describe the Maiden of Ludmir as a "true female rabbi," a "zaddik," and as "imitating the famous rabbis."48 One writer in the *Pinkas Ludmir* even refers to the Maiden of Ludmir by the Hebrew acronym *ADMO"R*, standing for the phrase "my lord, teacher, and rabbi" traditionally applied to male zaddikim by their followers.

A clear indication that the Maiden of Ludmir patterned much of her behavior during this period on the figure of the Hasidic rebbe may be seen in her adoption of the *seudah shelishit* (third meal) ritual. On Sabbath afternoons, Hasidim traditionally gather around a table, or *tish*, to hear their rebbe deliver a homiletic teaching. The *seudah shelishit* was and continues to be an important part of Hasidic life. Like her male counterparts throughout Eastern Europe, the Maiden of Ludmir delivered public teachings to her followers each Sabbath afternoon.<sup>50</sup> Yet unlike her contemporaries, she did so while sitting alone in another room. In his Russian account, Horodezky describes the scene as follows: "They prayed in her 'beys ha-medresh' and on Saturday, during the time of the third meal, they gathered to listen to her sermon: the words preached to the listeners in the prayer house from the neighboring room, where the holy maid had secluded herself."<sup>51</sup>

Without a doubt, the model of the Hasidic rebbe and his court had an enormous impact on the Maiden of Ludmir, her followers, and just as significant, on those who later transmitted and recorded her story. In the remaining pages of this chapter, however, I will argue that the Hasidic rebbe was not the only role model available to the Maiden of Ludmir, although it was probably the most influential. Several categories of charismatic women and men who served their communities in unofficial but important religious and cultural capacities may also have inspired the Maiden. Three figures in particular may have helped to shape the Maiden of Ludmir's behavior as well as the attitudes of her contemporaries: the male itinerant preacher (magid), the female prayer leader or "foresayer" (firzogerin), and the woman exorcist (vaybersher opshprecherke).

Two years after Horodezky published his first account of the Maiden of Ludmir's life in the Russian-language journal *Evreiskaia Starina*, the following note by Mark Klaczko appeared in the same publication:

In the article "The Maiden of Ludmir" (*Evreiskaia Starina* 1909, Number 4) the author did not mention one interesting legend. Namely, the Maiden of Ludmir did not only receive petitioners, but she herself traveled to neighboring cities and towns, where she usually delivered a sermon in the synagogue. In fact it is certain that she once came to Starokonstantinov (rather far from Vladimir), where on Saturday she gathered local women and read to them a religious-moral sermon in one of the synagogues. Old people in Starokonstantinov until this day tell tales about her visit there.<sup>52</sup>

This account is extremely significant for a number of reasons. First, it explicitly states that the Maiden of Ludmir devoted special attention to her female followers, even leading them in single-sex gatherings. By contrast, accounts of her gatherings in Ludmir indicate that both women and men attended, but they do not mention whether or, more likely, how they were segregated. Second, Klaczko is the only author who describes the Maiden of Ludmir as traveling to other towns during this period. Not only does this detail suggest that the Maiden actively sought to increase her influence beyond the borders of Ludmir, but it undermines the dominant image of her as a recluse. Perhaps, like some zaddikim (for example, Nahman of Bratslav), she was torn between a desire to remain in one place and an equally powerful desire to wander.

In addition to the figure of the Hasidic rebbe, this description of the Maiden of Ludmir suggests another potential influence: the itinerant preacher, or *magid*. Although some zaddikim were known as *magidim* (like the Magid of Mezeritch), most charismatic preachers did not serve

as Hasidic rebbes. Instead they scratched out a living by wandering from town to town, where they delivered moralizing (*musar*) sermons in local synagogues. Yekhiel Shtern, a resident of Tishevits (Tyszowce), described these preachers as follows:

Between afternoon and evening prayers one often heard a passing preacher deliver a sermon . . . This type of preacher would stay for *shabes* and would deliver his sermon on Saturday afternoon. . . . In summer the women would come to hear him and fill up the women's balcony. During the winter some would stand, wrapped in shawls, along the walls of the *besmedresh*. Other women would fill up the entrance to the *besmedresh*, and older women — whose piety was unquestionable — would bravely make their way into the room itself and stand behind the oven to hear the sermon.<sup>53</sup>

The parallels between Klaczko's description of the Maiden of Ludmir and accounts of these itinerant male preachers are striking. Perhaps because they offered a charismatic alternative to the resident religious authorities, whose main constituency consisted of male property owners and scholars, these itinerant preachers attracted large numbers of women and working-class men to their sermons. Despite this cross-gender appeal, the women who came to listen to the *magidim* in Tishevits and elsewhere were still required to sit in the balcony of the synagogue or stand in the back of the *beys medresh*. By contrast, those who gathered in Starokonstantinov (in Yiddish, Alt-Konstantin) appear to have had the entire synagogue to themselves during the Maiden of Ludmir's sermon. This unique event clearly made a powerful impression on those who attended it, since the story was still being told nearly a century later in Starokonstantinov when Mark Klaczko visited the town.

In addition to functioning as a charismatic preacher, the Maiden of Ludmir became famous for her role as a prayer leader. According to Moshe Feinkind, the Maiden prayed "with great spiritual outpouring and *devekut*...her cries reaching, so men said, to the heart of heaven." Her prayers were so powerful, Feinkind adds, that her followers were "engulfed in a cold sweat" and became convinced that "the holy spirit spoke from within her." and became convinced that the holy spirit spoke from within her." David Mekler remarks that during their gatherings in the *gornshtibl*, the Maiden's voice "was enough to make the Hasidim feel an intense spiritual pleasure and to be carried away to another world."

The importance of ecstatic prayer in the Hasidic movement cannot be overestimated. As the zaddik Kalonymus Kalman wrote, the only way for a Hasid to "attain to real fear and love of God, to the longing for the wor-

ship of God, and to comprehension of His divinity, is through prayer offered with self-sacrifice and burning enthusiasm."<sup>57</sup> Without a doubt, this Hasidic tradition influenced the Maiden of Ludmir and her followers. Yet another possible influence was the figure of the woman prayer leader or, as she was known in Yiddish, the *firzogerin*.

Though little known today, the foresayer was a fixture in communities throughout Eastern Europe well into the twentieth century. Also called by the titles *zogerin*, *zogerke* (both mean "sayer") or *woilkenivdicke* ("well-knowing one"), her job was to read prayers in Hebrew for other Jewish women. Some foresayers also wrote their own *tkhines* that they recited for the benefit of their largely female audiences.<sup>58</sup> Despite the widespread popularity and importance of such women throughout Eastern Europe, they are only briefly mentioned in a small number of standard histories.<sup>59</sup> For example, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, Solomon Schechter devoted only a few sentences to foresayers, but he noted, "In Poland and in Russia, even at the present time, such a woman-reader is to be found in every synagogue."

The following description of a foresayer named Esther Haya indicates the powerful impact that these women had on their communities: "Whenever you come across her, her lips are murmuring a prayer. . . . Women stand waiting for her as if she were the greatest celebrity . . . There have been jokers who've bet that while she 'says' they would stand laughing. But no one has managed to do that. It moves them so that tears pour out of them."

Did women foresayers like Esther Haya influence the Maiden of Ludmir? There is no way of knowing. Yet we should take this possibility seriously, particularly since — as we will see in chapter II — descriptions of the Maiden of Ludmir's activities in Palestine suggest even closer parallels between her and these women. Despite their similarities, there is one striking difference between the Maiden of Ludmir and a typical foresayer: the Maiden is depicted as leading both women *and* men in prayer.

This raises a number of Halakhic questions. The first falls under the rubric known as *kol isha* (literally, "a woman's voice"). According to the rabbinic principle of *kol be-isha erva* ("a woman's voice is a sexual provocation"), women are prohibited from singing in the presence of men lest they entice them sexually. Perhaps the Maiden of Ludmir and her followers believed that she did not sing with a woman's voice and was therefore exempt from this proscription, or perhaps they chose to ignore the Halakhic implications of her behavior. Either way, the sound of the Maiden of Ludmir's voice coming from the *gornshtibl* must have dis-

turbed some of her neighbors. The second Halakhic issue raised by descriptions of the Maiden as a prayer leader is whether she, as a woman, could serve as a *sheliah tsibbur*, or public agent. Traditionally only one who is legally obligated (*mehuyyav*) can fulfill the obligations of others (*lehotzi aherim yedai hovatam*), such as leading them in public prayer as a *sheliah tsibbur*.<sup>62</sup> Since women are not Halakhically "obligated" to pray, they were traditionally prohibited from serving as communal prayer leaders. Once again, it is impossible to know how the Maiden of Ludmir and those in her circle resolved the apparent conflict between her behavior and the legal tradition, but seeing her function as a *sheliah tsibbur* must have shocked many in her community.

Let us now turn to the third figure who may have had an impact on the Maiden of Ludmir's public persona: the woman healer. Practically all the Maiden of Ludmir's biographers mention her considerable reputation as a healer and exorcist. Ephraim Taubenhaus writes, "Invalids from all corners of Poland began to stream [to her], knocking on the door of her house, in order to request healing for their maladies." Horodezky notes that the Maiden of Ludmir treated her patients with different herbs (in Russian, *lechila raznimi travami*). Menasheh Unger provides the most detailed description of her methods: "Whoever had a sick wife, a sick child, would come crying for Hannah Rochel, requesting a charm, a coin, a bit of wax left over from her *shabbes* candles . . . and Jews believed that when Hannah Rochel gave a blessing or a charm, the sick person would recover."

Like the Maiden of Ludmir, many Hasidic rebbes also served as healers. For example, in his four-volume work on Hasidism, Horodezky describes the medicine chest of the typical male zaddik: "'The Book of Cures,' is found with every zaddik and in it are listed different 'charms' for all sorts of illnesses. These 'charms' are in addition to various healing herbs and vegetables."<sup>66</sup> Yet other equally important models for the Maiden of Ludmir's role as a healer existed outside the Hasidic hierarchy.<sup>67</sup> In the Jewish community, both men and women functioned as folk healers. Although Hasidic texts such as *Shivhei ha-Besht* preserve some evidence of these practitioners, the richest sources of information are the recollections of former residents of shtetlekh and the invaluable ethnographic material collected by Ansky, Abraham Rechtman, and other members of their expedition into the Pale of Settlement.

According to Rechtman, the women exorcist or healer—called *vay-bersher opshprecherke* in Yiddish—recited incantations and blessings in Yiddish, Ukrainian, or a combination of the two languages. 68 By contrast,

male folk healers typically employed Hebrew or Aramaic (when they were quoting from the Zohar) and "gained their knowledge from old manuscripts and rare books, which had been handed down from generation to generation."<sup>69</sup> While male healers were frequently happy to share their manuscripts with the ethnographers, the women zealously guarded their techniques. Rechtman's description of how the expedition successfully overcame these obstacles is as fascinating as the rituals themselves: "We employed various strategies to get these old women to tell us their charms. Sometimes one of us would pretend to be ill, take to bed and call for the healer. Approaching the patient, she would pour wax, murmur and call on the good-eye, etc. Another member of the expedition generally sat in a corner, trying to write down everything he heard while the photographer took pictures."<sup>70</sup>

The obstacles encountered by Ansky's expedition are a striking testament to the difficulties in reconstructing the lives of Jewish women in the communities of Eastern Europe. Perhaps to offset the greater cultural prestige available to male competitors (due to their access to Hebrew and Aramaic texts), female healers frequently created a powerful aura of secrecy around their practice of medicine. Unlike male healers, who employed centuries-old written traditions, female healers appear to have drawn more readily on the rituals, incantations, and recipes of non-Jewish healers in the area — reciting a Ukrainian spell when a Yiddish one did not work, for example.

Despite their lack of access to elite literary traditions, Jewish women healers were apparently more popular than their male counterparts, a situation replicated in many non-Jewish communities throughout early-modern Europe. According to Rechtman, "people always seemed to trust the women more than the men and so men were less frequently approached." Nor was this popularity restricted to a handful of towns or villages:

Almost every shtetl in Ukraine had its old women whom people went to for advice in times of crisis. . . . These old ladies had a supply of "proven" charms and spells for each occasion: for acquiring a good-eye, for toothache, a bad foot, an abscess, a "rose" (inflammation of the skin), the bite of a dog, epilepsy and other maladies; these women performed magic with knives, socks and combs; they poured wax and poached eggs and knew hundreds of ways to cure a patient.<sup>72</sup>

References to the Maiden of Ludmir's medicinal use of charms, blessings, and herbs bring to mind the techniques of these traditional women healers at least as much as they do the methods of male Hasidic rebbes.

Indeed Rechtman writes that these women not only healed the sick but also provided charms and spells to ensure their customers' economic success, not unlike the blessings for *parnasah* (income) that followers sought from their rebbes. Whether or not they directly influenced the Maiden of Ludmir, these women helped to pave the way for her success by creating a cultural environment in which women healers were not only trusted but even sought after.

The Maiden of Ludmir clearly participated in a wide range of activities associated with the figure of the Hasidic rebbe. Undoubtedly, she and her followers — who were known, after all, as the "Maiden of Ludmir's Hasidim" — were profoundly influenced by the model of the Hasidic court. And yet simply describing the Maiden of Ludmir as a woman rebbe ignores the significant parallels between her and a number of other figures in the Jewish community, including the itinerant preacher, the woman healer, and the foresayer. These women and men, whose important contributions to their communities are little known today, may have helped to shape the Maiden's behavior, as well as the attitudes of her followers in Ludmir and in other towns such as Starokonstantinov.

Focusing exclusively on the Maiden of Ludmir's resemblance to a Hasidic rebbe may also obscure other biographical details that help to explain how she became a religious leader. For instance, just as her status as an only child enabled her to receive an above-average education, so too did it provide her with a sizable inheritance when her father died. With this money, the Maiden was able to support herself financially and to build her own *beys medresh*, which played a critical role in transforming her into a public figure. Far from passively participating in this process, the Maiden of Ludmir played an active role in constructing her public persona.

I close this chapter with two final points. First, as I will argue more extensively in the next chapters, the Maiden of Ludmir resembled a particular type of rebbe — the ascetic, charismatic zaddik who lacked important relatives — a type that was becoming increasingly rare, as rebbes like Mottel of Chernobyl established luxurious courts based on the principle of dynastic succession. Second, it is important to stress that for some of her followers, the Maiden of Ludmir's appeal must have been located precisely in her *difference* from male Hasidic leaders. Although accounts of the Maiden's life stress her resemblance to a Hasidic rebbe, they also emphasize that many people were drawn to her because she was such a "wonder." The Maiden of Ludmir's strangeness helped to create an aura around her, which attracted devotees as well as opponents.

## CHAPTER 9

## The Witch-hunt in Ludmir

Four hundred years after Joan of Arc's famous trial of 1431, during which "the Maid" (as Joan was called in trial transcripts) was condemned as a witch, enchantress, and false prophet, the town of Ludmir was apparently enveloped in its own witch-hunt. The curiosity that, in the words of Horodezky, had initially attracted "even learned men and rabbis" to the Maiden of Ludmir's *beys medresh* was giving way to suspicion, fear, and, finally, anger among many in the Hasidic establishment. Perhaps her opponents realized that the Maiden's behavior was not merely a youthful phase that she would outgrow, or perhaps they were disturbed by the increasing power that she appears to have attained in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Whatever the reason(s), they began to call for the Maiden of Ludmir to marry and give up her role as a religious leader.

In a tradition preserved by Menasheh Unger, two important rebbes, Isaac of Lentshne and Jacob Areye of Kovel, the one-time head of Ludmir's rabbinic court and the brother of Yitzhak of Neshkhiz, are said to have interceded personally with the Maiden of Ludmir. Both zaddikim traveled to Ludmir and unsuccessfully sought audiences with the holy woman. The irony of this moment is worth noting: while some male zaddikim (notably Yitzhak of Neshkhiz) refused to see female supplicants, here was a woman who refused to see male zaddikim. Through intermediaries, the men requested that the Maiden of Ludmir give up her lifestyle

and get married. From behind the door, the Maiden responded that she "had her own path to follow" and would "neither marry nor emigrate to the land of Israel, as they requested, for the power of the holy spirit [ruah ha-qodesh] has been given to me from heaven and no one can take it away from me." By invoking the holy spirit as the source of her power, the Maiden of Ludmir implicitly rejected the socioreligious structure that determined leadership within the Hasidic community.

The Maiden's adamant refusal to marry and give up her position of leadership began to outrage zaddikim of various backgrounds. Unger notes that rebbes without great *yihus* and little income viewed her as a competitor, one whose popularity among women and the working class threatened their own meager *parnasah* (livelihood). Such zaddikim supported themselves with *pidynonot* (small donations), which followers made when they requested a blessing. By contrast, the Maiden of Ludmir refused all donations from her followers, perhaps in part because she could afford to do so. Meanwhile, the economically secure rebbes with large followings became concerned with the Maiden of Ludmir's symbolic significance, that is, the possible impact of a charismatic female leader without any *yihus* on the emerging dynastic principle that had so benefited them and their families.<sup>3</sup>

Representatives of these rebbes sent letters to the Maiden of Ludmir demanding that she cease her religious activities and embrace the life of a "good daughter of Israel" by marrying and having children. The Maiden defended her way of life by quoting from "the Torah, the Mishnah, and other sources, in order to prove that she was permitted to act as a zaddik." The Maiden of Ludmir's attempt to beat her rabbinic opponents at their own game only infuriated them further, and they threatened to issue a *herem* against her, prohibiting their followers from coming within four ells of her and the "'misguided illiterates'" who flocked to her study house.<sup>5</sup>

Soon rumors began circulating that the Maiden of Ludmir was possessed by a dybbuk. Some cried that she should be dragged out of her *beys medresh* by force and taken to a zaddik to have the evil spirit exorcised.<sup>6</sup> One man warned that the Maiden would end up becoming another "Hava, may her name be blotted out, Jacob Frank's daughter," while others claimed that she had visited a Christian monastery in Ludmir, where "two Pravoslavnaia [Orthodox] nuns had promised her asylum." The Maiden of Ludmir's most ardent enemies "declared a war against the Satan who had taken the form of a rebellious woman," and "one Sabbath this holy war reached an apex, when a group of Hasidim opposed to her

began to throw stones at her building. Her supporters responded in kind and the place turned into a bloody and violent battleground."8

These descriptions of spirit possession and heresy, excommunication and exorcism, powerfully recall European and American outbreaks of the witch craze, when tens of thousands of women (and a smaller number of men) were persecuted as witches. Like the Maiden of Ludmir, many of the accused were venerated as healers and visionaries in their communities before being tried by male authorities. Moreover, as Carol Karlsen has demonstrated in her study of the phenomenon in colonial New England, "women alone [were] more susceptible than married women to witchcraft prosecutions," since they lacked husbands who could help defend them. "In the eyes of her community, the woman alone . . . was an aberration: the fundamental female role of procreation was at best irrelevant to her." 10

Another group of women particularly vulnerable to witchcraft accusations were "daughters of parents who had no sons (or whose sons had died)." This indicates that male anxiety over women inheriting property and gaining financial independence was an important stimulus for charges of witchcraft. This may have also been a motivation for some of the Maiden's opponents; as we will see later, her *beys medresh* was eventually taken over by the very Hasidim who forced her to marry and give up her position of leadership. While suggestive, we must be careful when drawing this parallel since the economic status of women in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe Jewish culture was very different from that of Christian women in premodern Western Europe and colonial New England.

Some of the Maiden's biographers may have drawn on depictions of the witch craze in their own accounts — Horodezky and Raddock explicitly compare her to Joan of Arc, for example — though it is unlikely that all of them were influenced by, or even aware of, these sources. Instead, the Maiden of Ludmir may have inspired parallel accusations from her male opponents because as a woman healer, prophet, and teacher, she posed a similar threat to their authority. From the perspective of the male Jewish establishment, the Maiden was guilty of the same sin that most rankled the witchcraft accusers in New England: pride. As Karlsen writes, "In its most obvious form, pride became manifest through witches' challenges to the authority of ministers, magistrates, and masters." 12

To better understand the witch craze-like atmosphere that may have enveloped Ludmir in the late 1820s and early 1830s, we must examine the specific charges leveled against the Maiden: dybbuk possession, resemblance to the Frankist prophetess Hava Frank, and visits to a woman's monastery in Ludmir. Although we cannot determine their historical veracity, by exploring whether these charges make sense within the geographical, temporal, and cultural context in which they were supposedly leveled, we can at least evaluate their plausibility and significance.

Beginning with Horodezky, nearly every one of the Maiden of Ludmir's biographers has claimed that she was accused of being possessed by a dybbuk. 13 Thanks to the publication of numerous popular pamphlets from Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Palestine concerning dybbuk possession, we possess a wealth of early-modern case studies to compare with the story of the Maiden of Ludmir. The first thing that leaps out from these Hebrew and Yiddish accounts is that twice as many women were possessed as men.<sup>14</sup> One traditional explanation for this disparity was that in the Garden of Eden the serpent had injected Eve with his venom, and thereafter, all women were more vulnerable to being possessed by malevolent spirits (injected with venom). In addition to this explanation, some sources claimed that women were more likely to be possessed by evil spirits because they were unable to perform all the commandments.<sup>15</sup> These views echo the claims made in European Christian works to explain why women were more prone to witchcraft. Thus, for example, in the famous Malleus Maleficarum Heinrich Institorus and Jakob Sprenger argued that women became witches by imitating Eve's sexual licentiousness, while in Tratado de las supersticiones y hechicerias, Fray Martin de Castanega emphasized that "because Christ did not permit women to administer his sacraments" they were more vulnerable to the devil.16

Unlike the righteous souls that participated in positive *ibbur*; the malevolent souls that became dybbukim almost always belonged to sinners. Moreover, most victims of dybbukim had themselves committed a sin that allowed an evil spirit to enter their bodies, although in a small number of cases, the victims were depicted as blameless. The scholar Gedalyahu Nigal has noted that the sins of most male victims of dybbukim are not recorded, while the sins of women are almost always mentioned. Some of the sins committed by women that opened the door to dybbukim included becoming angry and using the name of Satan in a curse, wearing makeup on the Sabbath in communities where it was not socially acceptable, not reciting the blessing after washing the hands, neglecting to perform the commandment of challah, and compelling a husband to give up learning and devote all his attention to making money.

In contrast to the large number of women possessed by malevolent spirits, approximately 90 percent of the dybbukim themselves were male. Nigal counts nineteen cases of male dybbukim entering men, six cases of dybbukim of undetermined sex entering men, four cases of female dybbukim entering women, and a handful of female dybbukim entering men, cases that he describes as "strange and puzzling in other ways." 18 The remainder, or approximately 50 percent, involve male dybbukim entering women. The large number of male dybbukim reflects the sexual connotation of possession, in which a male soul either homoerotically "impregnated" a male body during positive ibbur or, in the case of dybbuk possession, typically entered or penetrated a female body. Some accounts emphasize the subtext of sexual penetration by depicting dybbukim as entering their female victims through the vagina.<sup>19</sup> In addition, many sources explicitly depict the problematic sexual behavior of victims and/or of dybbukim during previous incarnations. This frequently lurid combination of sex and the supernatural played a major role in making pamphlets on dybbukim popular. Like the vampire novels that they anticipate, these pamphlets depict young sexually vulnerable female victims whose bodies are fought over by male villains and heroes-dybbukim and exorcists, respectively.

Most of the victims of dybbuk possession were young women from poor or working-class backgrounds; only rarely did a scholar or economically successful man appear in their ranks. <sup>20</sup> Not coincidentally, poor women were also overrepresented among those accused of witchcraft in Europe and colonial New England. <sup>21</sup> In light of these statistics, dybbuk possession appears to have functioned as an explanation for the aberrant behavior of marginalized individuals — and, in particular, of women — much like charges of witchcraft and Satanic possession functioned in non-Jewish communities. Members of the ruling Jewish elite appear to have directed accusations of dybbuk possession at individuals whom they considered subversive, and especially at women who threatened existing social and moral norms, which explains the large number of women whose sins are listed.

In many respects, the story of the Maiden of Ludmir resembles a typical case of dybbuk possession. Frequently the victim was a girl in puberty, a bride, or a newly married woman.<sup>22</sup> At the time of her collapse in the cemetery and ecstatic vision, the Maiden was an adolescent engaged to be married. This suggests that anxiety over early marriage and sexual relations was a common contributor to the symptoms associated with dybbuk possession. The events leading up to the Maiden's vision evoke par-

allels with published accounts in which dybbukim cast women on the ground, made their limbs grow heavy, and in one case, caused a woman to "lay down like a lifeless stone," an image that closely recalls the Maiden's coma following her visit to the cemetery.<sup>23</sup> Indeed David Mekler even mentions people asking, "Didn't her righteous behavior come upon her suddenly after the incident in the cemetery? Perhaps a dybbuk entered her then—a dybbuk of a 'mocker' or 'apostate' who wishes, God forbid, to lead Jews astray."<sup>24</sup>

Serious illness and epileptic fits often signaled the invasion of a dybbuk, particularly if these episodes were followed by dramatic changes in personality or behavior. Frequently the victim began speaking in a different voice, such as a girl in Sichlin who spoke with the male voice of an apostate who had lived in her town. Other individuals suddenly exhibited new knowledge, as in the case of a twelve-year-old girl who recited entire sections of a Hebrew work on ritual slaughter after she was possessed by the soul of a shokhet.25 If a woman was possessed by a male dybbuk, she often stopped "performing her female chores" or "cohabitating with her husband."26 Both oral and written sources attribute all these phenomena to the Maiden of Ludmir. For instance, according to Janusz Bardach, the Maiden began to recite teachings that were previously unknown to her immediately after emerging from her coma. In his account, Unger writes that the Maiden began speaking in a male voice after she regained consciousness.<sup>27</sup> Finally, all the authors emphasize that the Maiden refused to marry her fiancé after experiencing her coma and vision.

Despite the striking parallels between the Maiden of Ludmir and typical victims of dybbuk possession, there are also some significant differences. First, the Maiden claimed that her new soul was "lofty," and when faced with charges of dybbuk possession, she vehemently denied them. Second, her righteous behavior did not "come upon her suddenly" as her accusers claimed. Instead, although her religious devotion appears to have intensified and taken on a more public character following her ecstatic vision, it nevertheless represented a continuation of the pious behavior that marked her childhood. Third righteous behavior itself was hardly typical for an individual possessed by a dybbuk. Indeed, many sources stress that people possessed by dybbukim could not tolerate any contact with holy books, prayers, or even the sound of Torah study. On occasion, dybbukim were even known to cause their hosts to react violently until *siddurim* (prayer books) or *humashim* (Pentateuchs) were removed from their presence.<sup>28</sup> Finally, although it apparently did not

prevent her from being accused of dybbuk possession, the fact that the Maiden was from a wealthy family did make her an unusual candidate for such a charge.

Despite these problems, I believe that the Maiden of Ludmir's opponents did, in fact, accuse her of dybbuk possession. By placing her within this preexisting and stigmatized cultural category, the Maiden's opponents sought to dismiss her as a powerless victim whose actions were controlled by a malevolent male spirit. At the same time, more sympathetic members of the community placed the Maiden in a different cultural category, one typically reserved for Jewish men — the charismatic visionary. This dynamic recalls Phyllis Mack's description of Lady Eleanor Davies, a seventeenth-century English prophetess. Mack notes "the fluidity of her public identity — the ease and rapidity with which contemporaries changed their perceptions of her from prophet, to witch, to lunatic, to prophet again."<sup>29</sup>

The Maiden of Ludmir's story suggests that, as in the case of many Christian women accused of witchcraft, the decision to view a particular Jewish woman either as the victim of dybbuk possession or as a visionary possessing *ruah ha-qodesh* may have been hotly contested within a community. Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing how many other Jewish women accused of dybbuk possession were also venerated as visionaries, since neither they nor their devotees — if they did exist — left behind written testimony, unlike their accusers and exorcists.<sup>30</sup> This lacuna raises the intriguing possibility that the history of Jewish mysticism contains many more women visionaries than previously imagined.

While nearly all her biographers mention that the Maiden of Ludmir was accused of dybbuk possession, only one — Menasheh Unger — claims that she was likened to Hava Frank by a contemporary. Frankism was an eighteenth-century offshoot of Sabbateanism, the messianic movement that engulfed the Jewish world during the middle of the seventeenth century. Although Sabbateanism drew most of its followers from the Ottoman Empire, its influence extended into Europe, including Poland and Ukraine. During Sabbatai Zevi's lifetime, believers from Poland and Volhynia — including, as we have seen, members of one of Ludmir's most prominent rabbinic families — visited him, leaving written accounts of their impressions.<sup>31</sup> In 1672 a Greek Catholic (Uniate) priest named Johannes Galatowski confirmed the existence of Sabbateans throughout Poland and Ukraine, including the area of Ludmir: "Not long ago, in 1666, the Jewish heresy raised its head in Volhynia, Podolia, in all the

provinces of Little Russia, in the Duchy of Lithuania, in the kingdom of Poland and the neighboring countries."<sup>32</sup>

In the years 1722–1725, Jewish communities in Lvov and other Polish cities issued bans against the Sabbateans, reflecting what the scholar Bernard Weinryb has called "a climate of witch-hunting and suspicion." Women and men were charged with Sabbatean activities, including a group of Jewish women in Brody accused by Franciszek Antony Kobielski, the bishop of Luck—a town only fifty kilometers from Ludmir. Suspicions were fanned by the knowledge that many *ma'aminim*, or "believers," (the term generally employed by Sabbateans to refer to themselves), led an ironically Marrano-like existence—openly living like traditional Jews while secretly engaging in Sabbatean practices. 35

Among the Polish followers of Sabbatai Zevi was one Jacob Frank. Though his life story is shrouded in mystery, Frank appears to have been born in 1726 in the Podolian shtetl of Korolówka to a working-class family (though he claimed on occasion that his father was a rabbi). After working as a servant in Bucharest during his early teens, Frank made his way to Constantinople and eventually to Salonika, where he came under the influence of a group of Sabbateans led by the messianic figure Berachya. In 1755 Frank returned to Korolówka and then after continuing on to Lvov enraged the Jewish community there by engaging in various antinomian acts. During the next two years, Frank gathered a group of devoted male and female followers whom he called "brothers" and "sisters."

In 1756 the Jewish authorities responded by issuing bans against the Frankists in Brody and Starokonstantinov, at a meeting of the Four Land Council. A year later, on June 20, 1757, the first of two disputations occurred between the Frankists and the Jewish community. As the two sides prepared to deliver their arguments, the Jews of Galicia and Volhynia held their breath, expecting the worst, as a letter from this period indicates: "'darkness prevailed in almost all the towns of the [Lvov] region."36 Even before the disputation, the Frankists had flirted with the idea of converting to Catholicism, though only under certain conditions (for example, that they be allowed to keep their beards and side locks, that they not be compelled to eat pork, that they could continue to study kabbalistic texts, and so on).<sup>37</sup> After the disputation, however, the Frankists in Lvov were forced to convert, and their conditions were ignored. During the next year, Frankists converted in a number of cities, including Kamienec and Warsaw, though others, particular those in Moravia, did not convert and continued to live in Jewish communities.

Frank himself appears to have converted twice, first in Lvov and later in Warsaw, after leading a small band of followers through Lublin, where they drew violent protests from the Jewish community.

Despite the Frankists' conversion, their Jewish opponents continued to perceive them as a threat and petitioned the non-Jewish authorities to arrest Jacob Frank. This Jewish pressure dovetailed with the growing suspicion in Christian circles that Frank and his followers were not genuine converts and posed a religious and political threat. On January 7, 1760, this two-pronged attack resulted in the arrest of Jacob Frank and, soon after, his internment in the Polish fortress of Czestochowa. Frank spent more than a decade (1760–1772) in Czestochowa, where, like a mafia don in a federal penitentiary, he managed to retain control of at least part of the movement. When Russian troops captured Czestochowa in 1772, Frank was released and made his way to Warsaw, Brno (in Moravia), and finally to Offenbach (not far from Frankfurt), where he established a court and died in 1791.

Jacob Frank's death did not mark the end of Frankism. From 1791 until her own death in 1816, Frank's daughter Eva (née Hava) headed the court in Offenbach. Branches of the group continued to exist in Poland, where most of the members had converted to Catholicism along with Frank, and in Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where the majority had chosen to remain in the Jewish community.<sup>38</sup> Nor did the Frankists give up on bringing other Jews into the fold. In 1799, for example, the Frankists in Offenbach sent a circular letter known as the "Red Epistle" to Jewish communities throughout the world exhorting them to join the movement.<sup>39</sup>

Frankism and other forms of the Sabbatean heresy survived well into the nineteenth century in both Central and Eastern Europe. For example, in 1847 a Russian official wrote that "the sect created by him [Jacob Frank] has been guarding its existence to this day. In Warsaw its members call themselves *Frankists*." <sup>40</sup> In 1852 the Galician historian Walerjan Kalinka reported that Frankists could still be found in the Polish territory of Galicia, and as late as 1881, the Yiddish poet Abraham Liesen claimed to have met a Sabbatean in White Russia. <sup>41</sup> Among the most prominent Frankists in Prague during this period were the Wehles, whose members included Roesel Eger (d. 1831), a famous prophetess. In Warsaw Elisha Schor's daughter, Haya, was known for her "Cabbalist erudition." <sup>42</sup>

The significant and lasting psychological impact of Frankism on Eastern European Jewish culture was out of proportion to its relatively small size. Even Bernard Weinryb, a scholar who consistently downplays the numerical significance of Frankists and other Sabbateans in Poland, concedes that "Jews and their community organization may have regarded the Frankist group as a threat to their existence. It was the first time in Polish Jewish history that a Jewish group openly opposed not only the Jewish Establishment but also the basic religious beliefs and practices and almost everything for which Jewry stood." As important as the actual presence of Frankists and other Sabbateans in Eastern and Central Europe was the *perception* among many Jews that the Sabbatean movement had infiltrated Jewish society. For generations Jews applied the Yiddish term for Sabbatean, *Shepsel* (pl. *Shepslach*), to any individual or group whom they considered heretical or subversive, much like early and medieval Christians employed the terms Gnostic and Manichean to indicate anyone suspected of heresy.

One of the most important aspects of the Sabbatean phenomenon in Eastern Europe was its complicated (and controversial) relationship to the Hasidic movement. In the decades following Sabbatai Zevi's death, Hasidism and Frankism both emerged in the regions of Poland and Ukraine, where Sabbateanism had already taken hold. Jacob Frank and the Baal Shem Tov were not only contemporaries, they also shared a number of important similarities, including their mysterious origins in the border region between Poland and the Ottoman Empire, their reputations as *ba'ale shem*, and their charismatic styles of leadership. Despite or perhaps because of these parallels, efforts were made to distance the Besht from Jacob Frank. One popular legend — later discredited by historians — even claimed that the Baal Shem Tov participated in the debate against Jacob Frank and his followers in Lvov.

Although the Hasidim vociferously denied any connection to Sabbateanism (including its Frankist form), this did not prevent their opponents, the *mitnagdim*, from linking them to the heretics. Charges of Sabbateanism were even leveled by Hasidim against each other during the internecine conflicts that frequently erupted among members of the movement. In fact, there is evidence that some Hasidim were influenced by Sabbatean and Frankist traditions, even as they condemned the excesses of the heretics themselves.<sup>44</sup>

An accusation of Sabbateanism would not have been out of place in the first half of the nineteenth century, when Sabbateans (including Frankists) could still be found in Eastern and Central Europe. Moreover, there were good reasons to suspect the Maiden of Ludmir of some connection to the Frankist branch of Sabbateanism. A number of Frankist traditions could have easily led to suspicions that the Maiden of Ludmir and

her followers were sympathizers if not actual members of the heretical sect. These traditions included the Frankist attitude to the law, the role of women in the Frankist and broader Sabbatean movement, and, most important, the Frankist figure of the female messiah or "holy virgin," that is, Hava Frank.

Like other radical—to use a term coined by Gershom Scholem—Sabbateans, the Frankists embraced the principle of *bittulah shel torah zehu kiyyumah* ("the violation of the Torah is its fulfillment"). In practice, this involved breaking the commandments in public, while performing rituals prescribed by a higher Torah—known as the Torah of Emanation (*atzilut*)—in secret. The Maiden of Ludmir's behavior, though it generally appears to have conformed to what was Halakhically if not socially permissible to women, clearly struck some observers as antinomian. Likewise the Maiden's gatherings in the *gornshtibl* may have given rise to speculation that she and her followers were engaging in secret activities, perhaps including the sexual rites for which the Frankists were infamous.

Among the most radical changes that Sabbatai Zevi envisioned was what Scholem called "a radical reform of the status of women. . . . A new *Lebensgefühl* and utopian vision of the equality of the sexes." <sup>45</sup> Under Sabbatai Zevi's influence, women were called to the reading of the Torah, served as prophetesses, and broke social conventions by talking to men in private and dancing with them in public. In 1665, at the height of his mission, Sabbatai Zevi promised his female followers that he would liberate them from the curse of Eve and, in the process, make them equal to their husbands. <sup>46</sup>

Although the ideal of emancipation was never realized by the Sabbateans, women continued to play prominent roles in the various branches of the movement that emerged after Sabbatai Zevi's death. The question of women's status within Frankism in particular has always been overshadowed by the charges of sexual deviancy leveled against the group by contemporary observers and later historians alike. These critics have attacked the sexual licentiousness of Frank and his followers but have not explored the links between the group's notorious sexual rituals and the social and religious position of women. Accusations of antinomian sexual behavior have long been leveled against religious sects in which women have played prominent roles, typically in order to attack their morality. In some cases, such as with the Gnostics, charges of sexual libertinism appear to have been greatly exaggerated or completely manufactured; in others, such as with the Frankists, sexual rites were, in fact, an important part of the group's social and religious structure.

According to the *Kronika*, a Polish account written by one of the sect's members, Jacob Frank designated seven of his female followers as "sisters" (in Polish, *siostry*; in Hebrew, *ahiot*) in December 1757.<sup>47</sup> On March 21, 1758, the *Kronica* continues, Frank ordered these women to undergo an initiatory rite, requiring them to "stand on their feet in a circle for three days, that is, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and they stood day and night." Later in the same year, Frank selected an additional seven women, whom he called the "seven maidens," after a verse in the biblical book of Esther. Only then did Frank choose twelve men to serve as "brothers" (in Polish, *braci*; in Hebrew, *ahim*).

Frank's "sisters" and "brothers" engaged in a range of religious rituals. Some of these involved sexual acts, including an elaborate rite (referred to in Polish as a *Czynnosc taiemna* or "secret act") that Frank and his inner circle of disciples performed in the days preceding the disputation in Lvov.<sup>50</sup> Other rites in which both male and female disciples participated involved dancing, standing in formation, eating at the same table, and other behavior of a nonexplicitly—though perhaps symbolically—sexual nature. On several occasions, according to the *Kronika*, Frank selected women to perform important tasks such as traveling to Warsaw to announce that he had been freed from confinement in Czestochowa.<sup>51</sup> On his deathbed, Frank reiterated the special significance of his female disciples by promising them that they would serve as his oracles and messengers when he was gone.<sup>52</sup>

Sabbatai Zevi's ideal of women's emancipation, combined with the important role of women in Sabbatean and Frankist circles outlined above, easily could have encouraged suspicions that the Maiden of Ludmir was a closet heretic. Yet the accusation mentioned by Unger rests on another, even more striking parallel: the resemblance between the Maiden of Ludmir and Jacob Frank's daughter, Hava, also known by her devotees as the "Holy Virgin."

Several streams, both Jewish and non-Jewish, flow into the Frankist figure of the "Holy Virgin," one of the most interesting developments in the history of Jewish sectarianism. Like other Sabbateans, Jacob Frank believed in a kabbalistic divine structure consisting of three hypostases, or *parzufim*: the First Cause, known as the "Holy Ancient One" (atika kadisha), the God of Israel, called the "Holy King" (malka kadisha), and a female aspect called the "Supernal Mother" (matronita elyona), that is, the Shekhinah. Frank also referred to these divine aspects by the more colloquial titles, "the Good God," "the Big Brother," and "the Virgin." By the time Frank inherited this tripartite belief, the Sabbateans in Salonika

had already posited that Sabbatai Zevi was the living incarnation of the "Holy King." Jacob Frank, with his typical zeal, declared that *each* of the divine hypostases was incarnated in a separate messianic figure. Sabbatai Zevi was the "Holy Ancient One," Frank himself was the "Holy King," and Frank's wife, Hannah, and, after her death, his daughter, Hava, were incarnations of the "Supernal Mother."

In developing his concept of a female messiah, Frank appears to have drawn on at least three sources. The first and most important was the Jewish tradition that the Shekhinah was in exile along with the Jews and would only be restored after the messiah had arrived. During Sabbatai Zevi's lifetime, his chief prophet, Nathan of Gaza, had argued that it was no longer necessary for Jews to perform the midnight ritual of mourning for the exiled Shekhinah because "she has already begun to rise from the earth."54 Frank took the traditional link between the arrival of the messiah and the restoration of the Shekhinah one step further by positing that the Shekhinah herself was incarnated in a female messiah.<sup>55</sup> The second source for Frank's doctrine was the Christian cult of the Virgin Mary. Frank was particularly influenced by his experience in Czestochowa, where he witnessed large-scale devotion to a famous icon of the black Madonna.<sup>56</sup> Finally, there is evidence that Frank may have been inspired by the Russian sectarians known as the Philipovcy, whose female leaders, called "Mothers of God," were venerated as living incarnations of the feminine aspect of the divine.57

In his collected sayings — known as *Slowa Panskie* (The sayings of the Lord) — Jacob Frank vehemently defended his belief in a female messiah, returning to the theme over and over again. <sup>58</sup> Frank declared, for example, "You did not understand when I said to you: I will show you God, for first the Matronita must be revealed, because she is before God, she is the gate to God and through her they will come before God." In other statements, Frank explicitly referred to this female messiah as the Virgin: "Come and see that everyone declares: Eternal Virgin [betulat netsah], saying, that she is the Queen of Heaven, and before her everyone bows and pays homage. They say that she brings salvation to man." <sup>59</sup>

The role of the female messiah was initially filled by Jacob Frank's wife, Hannah, whom Frankist sources generally call the Gevirah (Lady).<sup>60</sup> On occasion, Frank referred to Hannah as the Betulah (Virgin), although she engaged in sexual relations with Frank throughout their marriage (including during his imprisonment in Czeschtochowa) and gave birth to several sons in addition to Hava, who was born in 1754.<sup>61</sup> This indicates that for Hannah Frank, at least, the title of virgin signified a spiritual rather

than a physical status. In 1770 Hannah died, and Hava Frank, also known by the diminutives Hawacza and Hawatchunia, became the living incarnation of the Shekhinah. Like her mother, Hava Frank was called Gevirah (in Polish, Panna) and Betulah, as well as Ayalta (Gazelle), Almah (Maiden), Ha-Almah Ha-Kedusha (the Holy Maiden), and Ha-Betulah Ha-Kedusha (the Holy Virgin). Unlike her mother, Hava evidently did not marry, though whether she remained a virgin is unclear, given the rumors that surrounded the group's sexual practices.

During the next two decades, Jacob Frank carefully cultivated the exalted image of his daughter. For long periods Frank kept Hava isolated from the public, which only increased her already considerable mystique.<sup>64</sup> When she did appear, for example in 1775, during a meeting between Jacob and the Austro-Hungarian empress Maria Theresa in Vienna, she acted (and was treated) like a dignitary.<sup>65</sup> In response to a request from devotees in Hamburg and Altonah, Jacob Frank even commissioned three portraits of his daughter in 1777.<sup>66</sup> Eventually copies of these portraits became prized possessions of many Frankist families, passed on from generation to generation after Hava Frank's death.

As early as 1776, while suffering from what he thought was a fatal case of hemorrhoids, Jacob Frank made it explicitly clear that Hava would succeed him. From his sickbed, Frank called to one of his most trusted disciples and instructed him, "When I die, do not abandon my Hawacza. I will come to you in a dream and tell you how you should behave."67 In 1781, according to the Kronika, Hava Frank herself experienced a prophetic vision that further cemented her reputation for holiness. When Jacob Frank died in 1791, his daughter took over as head of the sect's court in Offenbach. Despite growing financial problems, the Gevirah continued to live in grand style, surrounding herself with both male and female disciples, some of whom acted as personal guards, enforcing strict discipline among the devotees. Apparently, the women and men of the court were not allowed to marry, although the rationale behind this prohibition is unclear.<sup>68</sup> Accounts written by Frankists during this period indicate the great devotion that Hava Frank inspired among her followers. Even members of the sect who had remained Jewish and found the Catholic symbolism of the court in Offenbach disturbing revered Hava as the living incarnation of the Shekhinah<sup>69</sup>

After Hava Frank died in 1816, Frankism began to decline, though as already noted, the movement retained adherents for decades. Significantly, one of the last Frankist traditions to disappear was devotion to Hava Frank, whose portrait was cherished by descendants of Frankist

families well into the twentieth century. According to Gershom Scholem, as late as the 1930s, cousins of the U.S. Supreme Court judge Louis Brandeis (whose ancestors were Frankists in Prague) "still considered Hava Frank, whose picture in miniature was held in the family for more than a hundred and twenty years in great reverence, to have been a saint." Arthur Mandel even claims that Louis Brandeis himself kept a portrait of Hava Frank on his desk. 71 Among the many legends told about Hava Frank by her followers was that she had not died but was merely hidden and would return to redeem her followers in the future. 72

It is easy to see how a contemporary Jewish observer in Ludmir equipped with an average imagination and even a rudimentary knowledge of Frankism — perhaps especially with such a basic awareness — could suspect the Maiden of Ludmir and her followers of Frankist sympathies. First, the various Hebrew and Yiddish names by which Hava Frank was known greatly resembled and, in some cases, were identical to the titles applied to the Maiden of Ludmir. Second, like Hava Frank, the Maiden of Ludmir was known as a prophetess, spent long periods of time isolated from the public in a special room, and was unmarried. Third, even if the Maiden and her followers denied any accusations of heresy, this could be dismissed as mere dissembling for, according to Sabbatean belief, "The 'true faith' cannot be a faith which men publicly profess. On the contrary, the 'true faith' must always be concealed. In fact, it is one's duty to deny it outwardly, for it is like a seed that has been planted in the bed of the soul and it cannot grow unless it is first covered over."<sup>73</sup>

Whether or not Unger invented the accusation that appears in his account, it is still possible that the Maiden of Ludmir and/or her followers were, in fact, influenced by the Frankist movement. Some of the Maiden's devotees may have drawn on the Frankist tradition of the Holy Virgin when they gave Hannah Rochel a parallel set of titles. Perhaps these individuals believed that the Maiden of Ludmir represented the latest incarnation of the Shekhinah. After all, the messianic mantle had already passed from Hannah Frank to her daughter, Hava, and could presumably be inherited by another woman. Several Hasidic groups in the early part of the nineteenth century, including the Bratslavers and Karliners, considered their own rebbes to be messiahs. If the Maiden of Ludmir's Hasidim felt similarly, the one Jewish tradition they could have drawn on — however sectarian — was the Frankist figure of the female messiah, aka the Holy Virgin.

Even if some of the Maiden's followers did draw on Frankist traditions, it does not mean that they were full-blown Frankists. Indeed

Scholem has written that Frankist documents from the beginning of the nineteenth century reveal a belief in "'the Virgin' or 'the Lady,' [but] there is no longer the slightest reference to any ethic of libertinism." As time went on, therefore, some Jews — such as Louis Brandeis's family — appear to have incorporated certain Frankist beliefs, including devotion to the Holy Virgin, into a more orthodox Jewish identity. It is also possible that some of the Maiden of Ludmir's followers were influenced by Frankist views without being aware of their heretical origin. It is not uncommon for orthodox members of a religion to adopt originally heretical beliefs and practices after the threat of the heretical movement itself has been eliminated — as was the case with Frankism after the first few decades of the nineteenth century. Thus some of the Maiden's followers may have been influenced by the Frankist tradition of the Holy Virgin, without having any conscious Frankist sympathies themselves.

What about the Maiden of Ludmir herself? Did the Frankist tradition of the Holy Virgin have an impact on her self-conception? Was she influenced by the Sabbatean ideal of women's emancipation? There are no clear-cut answers to these questions. We know that other Hasidic leaders drew on Sabbatean and Frankist traditions even as they vehemently condemned the sectarians.<sup>77</sup> It is possible, therefore, that the Maiden of Ludmir was inspired by Sabbatean and Frankist traditions without considering herself a member of the movement. On the contrary, she may have absorbed certain sectarian beliefs while believing herself to be an enemy of the heretics, as did Nahman of Bratslav, for example. The case of Nahman of Bratslav is particularly instructive, since it indicates that knowledge of the heresies was still alive among Ukrainian Hasidim during the period of the Maiden's youth and early adulthood.

At this point I would like to turn to a question raised by Chava Weissler in her work on Eastern European Jewish women's spirituality, namely, Could these women "identify with the feminine *sefirot*, Malkhut (Shekhinah) and Binah, as contemporary Jewish feminists sometimes argue?" As we have just seen, the answer in the case of Hannah and Hava Frank was a decided yes, although both women were leading members of a sectarian movement and cannot be considered representative of Jewish women as a whole. Nevertheless, their identification with the Shekhinah may have provided a model for the Maiden of Ludmir to emulate. Conversely, the Maiden of Ludmir may have arrived at an identification with the Shekhinah independently—inspired by her own study of the Zohar and the traditional identification of male zaddikim with the phallic *sefirah* Yesod—rather than knowledge of Frankist beliefs.

If so, then the various titles by which the Maiden of Ludmir was known may signify her self-identification with the Shekhinah, just as the same titles signified Hava Frank's identification with the Shekhinah among the Frankists.

The final accusation left to explore — that the Maiden visited a women's monastery in Ludmir-would probably have been the most explosive within the context of early-nineteenth-century Eastern European Jewish life. Unfortunately, we possess very little information concerning relations between Ludmir's Christian and Jewish communities during the first half of the nineteenth century, when the Maiden resided in the town. Ukrainian- and Russian-language works devoted to the millennium of Ludmir's rich Christian history omit any significant discussion of Jews, even though they formed the majority of the town's inhabitants by at least the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>79</sup> Likewise, save for a few passing remarks in the Pinkas Ludmir, Jewish sources are silent about how the town's Christian and Jewish residents interacted before the twentieth century.80 Archival sources and local newspapers are also of little help, although both mention economic ties between Jews and non-Jews in Ludmir during the nineteenth century, a common phenomenon throughout the Russian Empire.

Despite this lack of information concerning Ludmir, evidence from other communities suggests that contact between Jews and Christians in shtetlekh took place more frequently in the nineteenth century than is commonly assumed. Nor was this contact restricted to the pogroms and other negative incidents that dominate people's perceptions today. While official representatives of different religious groups typically maintained distant relations at best and openly hostile relations at worst, the common people frequently interacted on a more intimate level. Some of the most striking examples of cultural exchange occurred between the Hasidim and their Christian neighbors. Many Hasidic masters are known to have adopted and transformed tales, melodies, dances, and other traditions from non-Jews. Perhaps less known but equally significant are the many cases in which Christians venerated Hasidic holy men or adapted Jewish rituals for their own use. For example, writing in 1934, Chaim Chajes noted,

In many towns in Volhynia the country women [that is, non-Jews] brought candles to the synagogue on Saturday. They regarded this as a protection against all illnesses. Sometimes the Christians came to the synagogue and asked the Jewish God for vengeance or a curse on an enemy. . . . The peasants know and can distinguish all the places connected with Besht. For example, the spring near

Jesieniow in Volhynia in which Besht bathed is regarded as miraculous and a cure for infertility.<sup>81</sup>

During the period in which the Maiden lived in Ludmir, the region of Volhynia was home to a rich variety of Christian groups, including Uniates, Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Armenians, Lutherans, and even pockets of the Christian sects known collectively in Russian as Raskolniki (schismatics), as well as small communities of Muslim Tatars and Karaites (in Lutsk). 82 Ludmir itself had Orthodox, Uniate, Catholic, and Lutheran congregations. To evaluate the specific accusation made against the Maiden of Ludmir, we must first determine whether a Christian women's monastery actually existed in Ludmir during the period in question. If so, then the rumor may have originated in Ludmir; if not, then it must have been invented by someone who was not acquainted with the situation in Ludmir during the first few decades of the nineteenth century.

In fact, examination of Church records reveals that on April 14, 1772, the Uniate metropolitan Felician Volodkovyc officially founded a Basilian (Uniate) women's monastery in Ludmir: "Monasteriolum S. Eliae, quo sit anno erectum."83 The actual document of erection (as it was known) of St. Elias was given in 1794. After 1795 Russian Orthodox Church officials began exerting pressure to "reunite" (as they put it) the two Churches. In practice, this meant converting or simply closing down Uniate institutions, including monasteries. As part of this broader campaign, in 1804 a report to the Senate in St. Petersburg recommended that the St. Elias women's monastery in Ludmir be closed, though this did not actually occur for several decades.84 Like other Uniate women's monasteries in Volhynia (there were four at the turn of the nineteenth century), St. Elias was small and poor, with only five nuns in 1803.85 The monastery was severely damaged in a fire that devastated Ludmir in 1833 and was officially closed a few years later when the campaign to stamp out the Uniate Church reached its apex.86

Like other women's (and men's) monasteries in the Russian Empire during the first few decades of the nineteenth century, the St. Elias monastery in Ludmir was noncommunal (in Russian, neobshchezhitel'nye) or idiorhythmic, rather than communal (in Russian, obshchezhitel'nye), or cenobitic, as were most of the monasteries elsewhere in Europe. Instead of living together in a communal space and sharing food and tasks, nuns and novices lived in private cells that they typically purchased upon entering the monastery. Within this largely unstructured setting, spiritual

devotion tended to be individualistic. Moreover, because each woman supported herself materially, most nuns could not remain cloistered as they did in communal monasteries and were compelled to enter public spaces such as the market to sell handicrafts, beg for alms, and purchase food. In the absence of a centralized monastic authority and communal rule, many nuns wandered from place to place.<sup>87</sup>

The Maiden of Ludmir resembled the women in St. Elias and other idiorhythmic monasteries in several important ways: she led an ascetic and pious life, she was celibate, she lived in a private room of her own, and she supported herself financially. Given these similarities, it is easy to see how a rumor linking the Maiden to the monastery in Ludmir could have started. Perhaps some of the town's Jews came into contact with nuns from St. Elias or other monasteries while they were in the market-place. From these interactions and through other avenues, they may have gained enough knowledge of the nuns' lifestyle to inspire the rumor. Of course, it is also possible that in the years before she secluded herself in the *gornshtibl* the Maiden of Ludmir herself encountered nuns from St. Elias or from one of the other women's monasteries in the region and that these meetings had an impact on her emerging religiosity.

Nuns were not the only Christian holy women with whom the Jews of Ludmir-including the Maiden-may have come into contact or about whom they may have heard stories. Although Volhynia was not a center for Raskolniki in Ukraine, they could be found there in small numbers. In any case, they were infamous throughout the Russian Empire. As mentioned above, evidence exists that some of these groups may have influenced Jacob Frank; the question of their possible impact on the development of Hasidism is a complex and controversial one that I intend to take up in a separate work.88 For the present discussion, it is worthwhile noting that prophetesses played prominent roles in several of these groups. Luker'ia Vasil'evna Gubanova, for example, became the spiritual leader of the Doukhobors in 1856 after the holy spirit took possession of her.<sup>89</sup> As late as 1935 a woman named Olga Kiriltchuk became the prophetess and leader of a Judaizing sect called the "Messengers of Elijah" in the pripet marshes of Polesia directly north of Ludmir. According to a contemporary account of the group published in an American Jewish newspaper, Olga Kiriltchuk, a simple peasant woman, "used to fast a lot. At one time she fasted three times forty days and seven times seven days. Until one day Elijah the Prophet appeared to her in the little village and taught her his message of love and brotherhood . . .

crowds come every day to the little hut of Olga whom we call the 'Mother of Zion' to hear her preach."90

Another category of non-Jewish holy women consisted of individuals who desired a life of celibate austerity and piety but either could not or did not want to enter a monastery. These women were known by a variety of titles, including *chernichki* (derived from the Russian word for black, as they generally wore black clothes), *keleinitsy* (cell or hut dwellers, because they often dwelt in a hut on the margins of a village), and *spasenitsy* (because they were saving themselves). <sup>91</sup> This is how a nineteenth-century ethnographer described these permanent virgins:

Frequently girls reject marriage and express the wish to "save themselves," to "leave the world." No matter how unpleasant for the parents, in most cases they do not feel they have the right to refuse her. In earlier times such *spasenmitsy* went into monasteries; now since state monasteries have seriously diminished . . . these *spasenmitsy* rarely enter monasteries. More often, they set themselves up in their own village or in the nearest village to be close to the church. Parents are obliged to build her a hut on the outskirts of the village.<sup>92</sup>

A smaller number of Russian Christian women attained the status of staritsa, or spiritual elder, and achieved authority and acclaim within their communities. Although the male figure of the starets has received more attention in both scholarly and fictional literature (Dostoevsky's Father Zosima, for example), a number of important female spiritual elders appear in Russian hagiographical sources. One of the most famous is Anastasiia Semenovna Logacheva (1809–1875), a contemporary of the Maiden of Ludmir, whose biography bears a striking resemblance to that of the Jewish holy woman. Like the Maiden, Anastasiia lost her parents at an early age and began to isolate herself from other people. On a pilgrimage, Anastasiia experienced an ecstatic vision in which two angelic beings led her first to the holy altar of a church (a place off-limits to women) and then upward, into an angelic choir. Descriptions of this vision — like that of the Maiden's — emphasize its masculinizing effect on Anastasiia, as the scholar Brenda Meehan-Waters has noted: "This vision can be thought of as a preview of her monastic life . . . Anastasiia took on many qualities traditionally associated with the masculine . . . (the Russians used the word *muzhestvo* in describing her, which means both courage and manliness)."93

Upon her return from this pilgrimage, Anastasiia devoted her life to prayer and devotion, attracting people from surrounding settlements who came to her for counsel and religious instruction. Ultimately, Anastasiia aroused the ire of the civil authorities and of some villagers, who condemned her as mad. After a time, Anastasiia decided to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where she remained for nearly a year. Returning to Russia, she tried to take up the life of a hermit again but was forced to abandon it. In response, Anastasiia entered the Ardatov monastery, where she remained until 1863, when she was appointed head of the new Nikolaevskii women's community in Siberia.<sup>94</sup>

Clearly, many aspects of Anastasiia's life resemble biographical accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir. Both figures combined a desire for isolation and celibate asceticism with an impulse to counsel and lead followers. Both experienced transformative visions, crossed traditional gender boundaries, had their own dwellings where followers could gather, and even made journeys to the Holy Land. Finally, Anastasiia and the Maiden both provoked intense veneration and condemnation on the part of their contemporaries. Despite these similarities, there are also significant differences between the two women. The Maiden's biographers consistently emphasize her excellent childhood education, and some mention her involvement in the most esoteric field of Jewish religious learning, the Kabbalah. By contrast, Anastasiia was illiterate as a youth and only learned to read when she was nearly twenty. Unlike the Maiden of Ludmir, who was apparently condemned by the prominent zaddikim of her day, Anastasiia received encouragement from some of the leading male and female Orthodox religious figures of her time - the starets Serafim of Sarov (1759-1833) and the staritsa Pelagiia. Most significant, when opposition forced her to give up her hermetic existence, Anastasiia was able to enter a monastic environment dedicated specifically to the spiritual life of women, an option unavailable to Jewish women such as the Maiden of Ludmir. Ultimately, Anastasiia even became the mother superior of a monastic community.

The parallels between the Maiden of Ludmir and the non-Jewish holy women discussed above raise the question of whether she was, in fact, influenced either directly or indirectly by Christian women in the region. Even into the twentieth century, Jews and Gentiles visited each other's healers in the small towns and villages of Eastern Europe. <sup>95</sup> If Christian holy women in the area of Ludmir had also functioned as healers — which was often the case — then the Maiden could have easily encountered or at least heard of them. By contrast, it was extremely uncommon for any Jew in Eastern European towns to visit a church, let along a monastery. Indeed the only evidence of this phenomenon that I have been able to

locate from this period are records from the district of Mahilev indicating that Jewish women desiring baptism were sent to the Epiphany women's monastery and perhaps to other monasteries in the eparchy. Interestingly, this practice recalls the claim that when the Maiden visited the monastery in Ludmir she was offered sanctuary by the nuns. Unlike the women in Mahilev, however, there is no evidence that the Maiden of Ludmir was ever interested in converting to Christianity. Quite the contrary, all the evidence suggests that she remained an exceptionally pious Jew throughout her life, one whose chief desire was to perform the commandments.

When I asked former residents of Ludmir whether they thought that the Maiden would have visited a woman's monastery in the town, they all adamantly rejected the possibility. Not only did Jews in Ludmir refuse even to set foot in a church, but with one exception, they could not remember any Jews who had converted to Christianity. That exception was a young man named Mottel Litvak, who had converted to Catholicism in order to marry a Polish girl, whom some former residents remembered (imagined?) as a *hurba*, or prostitute. The scandalous wedding took place in the Polish Cathedral on Farna Street, not far from the Maiden of Ludmir's *gornshtibl*. Practically all the town's Jews showed up to watch the spectacle. Even those who were not particularly religious recall being shocked and upset by the sight of their friend walking out of the cathedral. After the wedding, a humorous ditty made the rounds in Ludmir's Jewish community that began: "*Mottel, Mottel hat geshmaden*" (Mottel, Mottel has converted.)

While we should be careful not to project these early-twentieth-century attitudes back onto the preceding century, it is safe to say that any Jew in Ludmir who visited a monastery during the first few decades of the nineteenth century would have been severely ostracized and probably excommunicated by the community. It is highly unlikely, therefore, that the Maiden could have acquired a following among her fellow Jews had she actually been guilty of this accusation. Instead, it seems probable that her opponents invented this rumor to discredit the Maiden of Ludmir once and for all. Of course the rumor itself indicates an awareness that the Maiden did resemble a Christian nun in several important respects. This resemblance would have given the rumor its bite, since it created the suspicion that perhaps the Maiden of Ludmir *had* been influenced by Christian holy women.

None of the Maiden's biographers provide any historical context for the witch craze-like atmosphere that they claim enveloped Ludmir. It is to this context that we now turn. The Maiden of Ludmir became a religious leader at a time when the dominant Hasidic figure in her community was Shlomo Karliner's eldest son, Moshe Gottlieb, or, as he was known in the Hasidic world, Moshe of Ludmir. In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, Hasidic holy men and their followers frequently clashed with their competitors and opponents — sometimes violently. Although there is no direct evidence that the Maiden came into conflict with Moshe of Ludmir, it is reasonable to assume that as the town's resident zaddik, Moshe would have seen the Maiden as an upstart and a potential competitor.

To understand the particular threat that the Maiden posed to Moshe of Ludmir and, therefore, to the Hasidic establishment of the community, it is necessary to appreciate the role that Moshe played and, just as important, *did not play*, in the town's religious life. According to Wolf (Ze'ev) Rabinowitsch, the foremost scholar of Lithuanian Hasidism, including the Karlin-Stolin dynasty, "The inheritor of R. Shlomo's throne in Ludmir was his son R. Moshe. In the literature of Hasidism and in its world, neither he, nor apparently his son R. Shlomo, nor his grandson R. Gedaliahu, occupied a special place. These descendants served principally by virtue of their link to their ancestor R. Shlomo of Karlin, as zaddikim to a small community of Jews in Ludmir and its environs." Thus, unlike his illustrious father, Moshe of Ludmir was not considered a great zaddik in his own right, but instead managed to gather followers because of his noble *yihus*.

Moshe of Ludmir's leadership style was becoming increasingly common as the patrilineal dynastic principle took hold throughout the Hasidic world, yet it was also directly at odds with the path that the Maiden of Ludmir—a female charismatic leader without a prestigious background—had followed. Ironically it was the Maiden, rather than Moshe of Ludmir, who more closely resembled the first generation of Hasidic leaders, including Moshe's own father, Shlomo Karliner. On this basis alone, the Maiden of Ludmir would have represented an implicit ideological challenge to Moshe of Ludmir's authority, particularly among those members of the community who continued to revere the earlier paradigm.

Although Moshe of Ludmir did not merit his own hagiographical work (a sign of his insignificance in the Hasidic world), he does appear in several texts devoted to his father, Shlomo Karliner. These works depict Moshe of Ludmir as a reluctant zaddik who struggled with the traditional role of a Hasidic holy man that his *yihus* had thrust upon him. At a

famous gathering of zaddikim in the nearby town of Ustila or Ustilug (known popularly as the "Wedding at Ustila"), Moshe of Ludmir's colleagues greeted him as "Rabbi Moshe the Great." Moshe of Ludmir responded ironically that he should really be called "the Great, the Great," thereby poking fun at his own status as a zaddik as well as his contemporaries' tendency to venerate an ever-increasing number of individuals (most of them relatives of other zaddikim) as holy men. Since the Wedding of Ustila (an attempt to unite in marriage two important Hasidic families) was one of the most important gatherings of Hasidic power brokers during the first half of the nineteenth century, Moshe of Ludmir's behavior indicated his refusal to become a major player in the movement.

Although one Hasidic tradition describes Moshe of Ludmir as a "wonder-worker," who possessed a special ability to heal people suffering from fever, another recounts how he rejected his father's offer to teach him "how [miraculously] to hear what people were saying in their houses," since this "knowledge would not help him serve the Creator." This story indicates Moshe of Ludmir's reluctance to embrace the thaumaturgical powers possessed by Shlomo Karliner and by the Maiden of Ludmir alike. Indeed the contrast between this episode and the story told by Nechama Ariel, in which the Maiden overhead the conversation of two boys outside her study house by means of *ruah neviyah* (the power of prophesy), could not be more striking.

Perhaps the clearest sign that Moshe of Ludmir was uncomfortable with his role as a zaddik comes from the following Hasidic tradition:

I heard concerning Moshe from Ludmir the son of R. Shlomo of Karlin that it was his practice not to recite Torah in public. Once they strongly requested and urged him to recite Torah. But he recited [the biblical verse] "these are the things that you should say to the children of Israel" and the interpretation of Rashi, "not less and not more." That is to say, to each and every one according to his ability and level, and he who is able, may recite Torah and he who is not, should not. And because of his great humility he declared, I am unable to do this. 99

Not surprisingly, the Hasidic author attributes Moshe of Ludmir's refusal to teach in public to his great humility, but it is also possible that the zaddik simply lacked confidence or ability in this area. Perhaps to compensate for a lack of self-confidence in the public sphere, Moshe of Ludmir is said to have always "traveled with a big group, a quorum of men [that is, ten] and this was his typical way of conducting himself on the streets." Once, according to a Hasidic account, Moshe of Ludmir

and his followers visited a town in Lithuania. When the son of the *mitnaged* owner of the inn came to greet them, Moshe of Ludmir ordered his disciples to examine the boy's *tsisit* to see if it was kosher. When the boy refused, the Hasidim violently grabbed the boy and examined his *tsitsit* by force. <sup>101</sup> While there is no way of verifying the historical accuracy of these traditions, the image that they convey is of a zaddik who rules the streets if not the study house, one who is not adverse to employing his followers as a kind of posse to enforce his will. If true, they shed light on the scenes of violent opposition to the Maiden of Ludmir that I have described above and perhaps on Stella Klein's recollection that young people (including Moshe of Ludmir's followers?) would hound the Maiden whenever she walked on the town's streets.

Moshe of Ludmir's ambivalent relationship to his own status as a zaddik must have created a power vacuum in the community of Ludmir. Residents used to Shlomo Karliner's charismatic style of leadership must have been struck by and, perhaps, disappointed with his son's more limited role. Conditions were ripe for the rise of another spiritual leader in Ludmir, therefore, one who would perform the functions that the town's resident zaddik rejected. Of course, no one could have predicted that this leader would appear in the form of a young woman. It is possible, however, that Moshe of Ludmir and his small phalanx of male followers had alienated and even intimidated some in the town. If so, then these disenfranchised residents of Ludmir may have been particularly receptive to any leader who addressed their otherwise ignored concerns. Indeed the very fact that the Maiden of Ludmir was a woman may have appealed to those who were put off by Moshe of Ludmir's aggressive and public displays of power.

It is hard to imagine two more radically opposed hagiographical images than those of Moshe of Ludmir and the Maiden. While he is depicted as rejecting at least some of the pneumatic powers possessed by his father, she is portrayed as embracing her role as a prophetess and wonder-worker. While several accounts state that he refused to teach in public and surrounded himself with male disciples whenever he went out; she was famous for her Saturday-afternoon discourses and rarely left her *beys medresh*, perhaps in part because she was afraid of being harassed on the street. Intriguingly, Hasidic tradition even offers an economic motivation for Moshe of Ludmir's likely opposition to the Maiden of Ludmir. Although "his father's disciple, the holy rabbi from Lekhovitz, used to send him a large sum of money every year," Moshe of Ludmir was constantly in need of funds because of his generosity to the circle of follow-

ers who always accompanied him.<sup>102</sup> One Hasidic story even depicts Moshe of Ludmir as praying at his father's grave for financial help because he was "very strapped for cash."<sup>103</sup> Thus, in addition to threatening Moshe of Ludmir's status as the dominant religious leader in the community, the Maiden of Ludmir may have also threatened his economic well-being, particularly since in contrast to her male counterpart, the Maiden was financially independent and therefore able to refuse donations from her followers.

Despite the Maiden of Ludmir's personal wealth, charisma, and reputation as a teacher, healer, and wonder-worker, she was at a considerable political disadvantage vis-à-vis Moshe of Ludmir because she was a woman in a male-dominated society - though this may have actually helped her to attract certain followers - and because she lacked familial connections to a Hasidic dynasty. By contrast, Moshe of Ludmir was not only the eldest son of a famous and powerful zaddik, but he was also related by marriage to other important Hasidic leaders, including Baruch of Medzibozh (the grandson of the Besht) and the Magid of Mezeritch. 104 In addition to these familial links, Moshe of Ludmir enjoyed the support of his father's former disciples and powerful members of the Karlin-Stolin dynasty, such as Aaron (the Second) of Karlin (1802-1872), who made frequent pilgrimages to Shlomo Karliner's holy grave in Ludmir's cemetery. These factors help to explain the opposition that the Maiden of Ludmir's biographers say she encountered from Hasidic leaders outside Ludmir. While these zaddikim may have been able to dismiss the Maiden as an anomaly who did not pose a major threat to the male Hasidic establishment as a whole, it would have been harder for them to ignore the specific challenge that she posed to their colleague and relative in Ludmir.

Moshe of Ludmir died in 1829 during a visit to Lithuania. The final years of his life coincided with one of the stormiest periods in Eastern European Jewish history. In 1827 Czar Nicholas I issued an *ukaze*, or decree, that required each Jewish community to send a quota of individuals to the Russian army. <sup>105</sup> These recruits, known as cantonists, or *nikolaevskii soldati* (Nikolai's soldiers), were expected to serve twenty-five years. Jewish communities throughout the Empire erupted in mourning. In Vilna, "[t]he very walls of the synagogues seemed to tremble from the wailing and moaning of the people." <sup>106</sup> Although young children were not specifically targeted as is commonly assumed, they were frequently drafted because most Jewish men over the age of eighteen already had families and were typically excluded from the draft. Groups that were explicitly exempted by the decree included rabbis, students, guild mer-

chants, and certain skilled workers, in other words, many members of the upper classes.

The governing body of each Jewish community, known in Hebrew as the Kahal, was given the responsibility to fill the quota of draftees. Provisions in the act gave them the right to "draft by verdict any Jew who is guilty of irregularity in the payment of his taxes, or of vagrancy, or of any offense not tolerated in the community" but prohibited them from drafting "the poor people of good conduct for offenses that are in conflict merely with the superstitions and abuses of the Jews." <sup>107</sup> It did not take long for most Kahals to begin abusing their power. Afraid that they would be drafted themselves if they did not fill their quotas, Kahal elders typically targeted the most vulnerable members of Jewish society: poor children. <sup>108</sup> As a folk song from the period recorded:

Rich Mr. Rockover has seven sons, Not a one a uniform dons; But poor widow Leah has an only child, And they hunt him down as if he were wild.

It is right to draft the hard-working masses; Shoemakers or tailors — they're only asses! But the children of the idle rich Must carry on, without a hitch.<sup>109</sup>

Communities erupted in class warfare as the Kahal enlisted thugs known in Yiddish as *khappers* (catchers) to seize violently the children of the poor, whose relatives took up arms to defend them or even attacked the homes of Kahal elders and other powerful members of the Jewish community, as occurred in the Volhynian town of Starokonstantinov and elsewhere. Within this struggle, Hasidic leaders frequently sided with the Kahal, for by the first few decades of the nineteenth century, they were well represented among the hegemonic classes of most communities.<sup>110</sup> Although the precise impact of this struggle on the future politicization of Jews within the Russian Empire is impossible to gauge, we should not underestimate the negative feelings engendered by the Kahal's predatory behavior during this period.

Like their counterparts in neighboring communities, Ludmir's poor must have suffered disproportionately from the draft. Although we do not possess explicit evidence that class conflict erupted in Ludmir as a result of the czar's decree, we may assume that tensions between rich and poor in the town increased at the end of the 1820s because of its effects. Moshe of Ludmir's death in 1829, therefore, would have further destabi-

lized an already volatile situation. During the next several years, things took a turn for the worse in Ludmir as the town was devastated by a series of natural and manmade disasters.

From 1830 to 1831, a cholera epidemic raged in Ludmir. According to archival statistics, in a two-month period alone two hundred and thirteen men and one hundred and forty women contracted cholera; of these, only thirty-six men and twenty women recovered. While the epidemic was still taking its toll, the Polish Rebellion of 1831 broke out in the western reaches of the Russian Empire, and a group of guerillas led by a Polish nobleman named Count Stetsky occupied Ludmir until they were expelled by Russian forces under the command of a Colonel Davidov. 112 Just when the town was beginning to recover from the effects of the epidemic and rebellion, a terrible fire broke out on June 24, 1833, that nearly wiped out all of Ludmir's buildings.

Later that year, the leaders of Ludmir's Jewish community sent a letter to the Russian government requesting tax relief and permission to begin rebuilding. In their letter, the distraught authors complained that Russian troops had looted Jewish businesses and caused extensive property damage when they recaptured Ludmir from the Polish lord who had occupied it. The fire of 1833, they lamented further, had left only fifteen small buildings standing—including, presumably, the *gornshtibl*—and more than one thousand families homeless. <sup>113</sup> Probably in response to the many deaths of the previous three years, another letter from 1833 mentions the community's efforts to raise money to expand the town's Jewish cemetery. <sup>114</sup>

To make matters worse, a struggle for control of Ludmir's Jewish community in the aftermath of these disasters appears to have broken out. One group sent a letter in 1834 to the government complaining that a man named Leibko Leytses had been prevented from serving on the town's magistrate — the local council that seated a small number of Jewish representatives — even though he had fairly won two elections. Although Leytses enjoyed the support of the community at large, the letter pointed out, the Kahal opposed his election and had run a competing candidate named Tetelboym, whom the letter accused of corruption and stealing from the community's coffers. By contrast, the letter praised Leytses for his honorable service during the Polish Rebellion, his work as the head of Ludmir's commission on building from 1829 to 1832, his legal knowledge, and his fluency in Polish and Russian. Leytses's opponents in Ludmir accused him of leading a "sekretnoe evreiskoe obshestvo protiv magistrata i

*kagali,*" or a "secret Jewish society against the magistrate and Kahal." The letter added that Ludmir's chief of police had become involved in the affair and that the group consisted of thirty people whose goal was to "help poor Jews." <sup>116</sup>

There is no way of knowing whether Leytses led a secret society on behalf of Ludmir's poor or whether the Kahal merely made this accusation to undermine him. Whatever the case, the correspondence sent to the Russian government by these opposing parties indicates that Ludmir's Jewish community was riven by internal strife during the early 1830s. Not coincidentally, I would argue, it was precisely during this period of intense social and economic upheaval that the Maiden of Ludmir appears to have achieved her apex of influence. With the community in disarray, the conditions were ripe for a charismatic leader like the Maiden to attract people alienated from the traditional power structure and in need of spiritual and moral support. At the same time, Ludmir's religious and civil authorities may have begun to view the Maiden as part of a broader challenge to their authority — whether or not she actually had any connection to Leytses's group-rather than as an anomalous individual with a largely powerless following. In response, the Kahal and its powerful supporters may have condoned or even participated in efforts to end the Maiden's activities.

## CHAPTER 10

## The Wedding and Its Aftermath

By the early 1830s, relations between the Maiden and her opponents appear to have reached a dangerous impasse that threatened to destabilize an already volatile situation in Ludmir. In a last-ditch effort to assert control, the Maiden's opponents decided to appeal to the most powerful Hasidic leader in the region — Mordechai (Mottel) of Chernobyl. According to the Maiden's biographers, a letter was sent to Chernobyl, begging the famous zaddik to come to Ludmir and convince the town's errant daughter to marry. Once she was safely under the authority of a husband, the Maiden's opponents hoped, she would cease to act as a rebbe and become a "normal woman." As we will see, things did not turn out exactly as they expected.

The encounter between the Maiden of Ludmir and Mordechai of Chernobyl may be interpreted as a clash between two models of Hasidic leadership. Mordechai of Chernobyl represented a new and increasingly popular trend within Hasidism: the establishment of magnificent courts supported by followers' monetary donations. This model, which eventually became the norm in Ukraine and elsewhere, was a dramatic departure from the humble lifestyle of Hasidic masters such as Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, Mordechai's own father. When Menahem Nahum was a young man and traveled to Medzhibozh to meet the Baal Shem Toy, his piety so impressed the Besht that the latter figure said to his wife,

"Hannah, look at this man, he is a thief. . . . He wants paradise all to himself." Menahem Nahum devoted himself to a life of asceticism, wandering from town to town collecting money for charity and the redemption of imprisoned Jews. His humility and poverty were legendary: "I like poverty,' he said. It is God's gift to man, a treasure."

Menahem Nahum's son and successor fell far from the proverbial tree. Mordechai built a lavish house and court in Chernobyl, where his many followers came to make donations and receive blessings. He introduced a requirement that each Hasid make monetary payments (ma'amadot) for the court's upkeep and sent emissaries (meshulahim) to communities throughout Ukraine to collect these payments. Horodezky writes that his ancestor was an undistinguished scholar who introduced no new ideas in his interpretation of Hasidism and "lacked the purity and humility, the religious devotion and ardor that we find in his father." Mordechai impressed his thousands of followers with the spectacle of his court and his power, rather than with his humility or learning. As we saw in chapter 1, Horodezky viewed the opulent courts established by Mordechai and his contemporaries such as Barukh of Medzibozh as "contributing greatly to the decline of Hasidism in Ukraine. . . . [A] period of materialism emerged. . . . the building of the fathers was destroyed by the sons." 5

When Mordechai left his court in Chernobyl he always traveled in a glorious coach pulled by four white horses. This, we may imagine, is how the zaddik would have made his way to the town of Ludmir sometime before 1837, when he died.6 After a journey of several hundred miles, Mordechai would have encountered a learned, ascetic, and highly charismatic woman, whose "court" was held in a simple beys medresh, a holy woman with a reputation for refusing to accept donations in return for her blessings, who delivered public teachings to groups largely made up of working-class women and men. Moreover, this woman was not the daughter, mother, sister, or even the wife of a famous zaddik. Indeed, she was not married and never had been, a striking contrast to Mordechai, who, as a father of eight sons and three daughters, embodied the patriarchal, dynastic principle emerging in the Hasidic movement. Even the woman's titles - the "Holy Virgin" and "Maiden of Ludmir" - emphasized her lack of connection to any male authority figure and, therefore, her independent status. Like some of the Hasidic movement's early leaders (including Mordechai's father), she had acquired a following without the benefit of a lavish court or a noble pedigree. In short, the Maiden of Ludmir embodied everything Mordechai of Chernobyl did not: humility, learning, asceticism, celibacy, and a lack of yihus.

We will never know whether Mordechai of Chernobyl actually traveled to Ludmir to convince the Maiden to marry, though later in this chapter I will demonstrate that he apparently did visit the town in the early 1830s. Even if only legend, however, Mordechai's involvement at this critical juncture in the Maiden of Ludmir's story is loaded with meaning. The fact that Mordechai of Chernobyl's own daughter (Hannah Havah) and granddaughter (Malkah the Triskern) were famous holy women adds an ironic twist to his efforts to subdue the Maiden of Ludmir. Mordechai of Chernobyl was evidently open to women achieving a measure of religious authority, as long as they followed the rules, namely that they belonged to a prestigious Hasidic family — preferably his own — and were married.

The Maiden's biographers tell different versions of what happened once Mordechai of Chernobyl arrived in Ludmir. Ephraim Taubenhaus writes that when she learned of the zaddik's visit, the Maiden "ordered that he be admitted to her immediately. Mordechai was the first male allowed to enter the holy of holies of the Virgin of Ludmir."7 This description highlights the sexual subtext of the Maiden's encounter with the male zaddik. Taubenhaus actually introduces a potential difficulty into his text, however, since according to Jewish tradition, Mordechai and the Maiden should not have been alone together unless they were married. Intriguingly, this step is actually taken in Maria Horodezky-Magasanik's English version of S. A. Horodezky's Russian account.8 In an apparent error in translation, she writes, "But finally she [the Maiden] yielded, and became the wife of the celebrated Tzaddik, Rabbi Mordechai of Czernobyl, who prevailed upon her."9 This mistake makes explicit the erotic dimension of the episode. The rebbe who has come to Ludmir as a surrogate father to convince the Maiden to marry now assumes the position of her bridegroom. In this (mis)translation, therefore, the chief figures of male Jewish authority - father, husband, and rabbi - are symbolically united in the single person of the zaddik from Chernobyl.

According to Taubenhaus, Mordechai spent days arguing with the Maiden over the "role of the woman within Judaism," a marked contrast to her local opponents, who, as we saw in the previous chapter, refused to engage the Maiden in scholarly debate. The latent erotic tension in traditional Jewish discourse comes to the surface as Taubenhaus's description moves from seduction to conquest: "The dispute was stormy. From time to time the excitement reached a height of climax; eventually the rabbi succeeded in his mission. The woman surrendered to the higher authority of the rabbi. She even agreed to marry like every Jewish woman, and to establish a kosher house." Ironically, the Maiden's debate with the

famous Chernobler Rebbe represents the height of her career in Ludmir and the catalyst for her downfall. She has merited the undivided attention of the most important Hasidic leader in the region, yet by accepting him into her private room, her "holy of holies," the Maiden of Ludmir has also symbolically ceded authority to a male figure.

In contrast to Taubenhaus, other authors stress the Maiden of Ludmir's reluctance even to meet with Mordechai of Chernobyl after he arrived in Ludmir. <sup>12</sup> According to them, the Maiden and Mordechai initially negotiated with each other through intermediaries and thereafter were never left alone together. Rather than hinting at an erotic subtext to their encounter, writers such as David Mekler and Menasheh Unger emphasize the ideological conflict between the Maiden of Ludmir and Mordechai of Chernobyl. Drawing on their knowledge of Mordechai's published homilies, these writers depict him as arguing with the Maiden that every individual must engage in a constant struggle with the "evil inclination" (yetser ha-ra) rather than attempt to transcend it completely through asceticism. <sup>13</sup> In response, the Maiden is said to have claimed that by virtue of her "new and lofty soul" she had already transcended the desires of this world and only sought to worship God and perform his commandments.

These positions reflect two opposing schools of thought in early Hasidism concerning the status of the zaddik. According to the first, the zaddik is always in a state of flux between greatness (gadlut) and smallness (katnut), ascent (aliyah) and descent (yeridah); according to the second, the zaddik can achieve a spiritual level that essentially allows him to separate from the world of physicality (gashmiyut) entirely.14 Yet there was an important difference between the Maiden of Ludmir and the typical zaddik – her gender. Male zaddikim were not forced to choose between marriage and a spiritual path. By contrast, when Mordechai of Chernobyl exhorted the Maiden to marry and have children, he was essentially relegating her to the world of gashmiyut completely. Horodezky makes this clear in his Russian account when he depicts the Cherlobler Rebbe as declaring, "We don't know which soul of a famous zaddik has transmigrated into this woman, but it is difficult all the same for a soul of a zaddik to find peace in the body of a woman." To rectify this situation, Mordechai "wanted to lead the soul of this woman to a lower, more normal state by means of marriage, of the stimulation of female feelings and sensations."15

These authors depict Mordechai of Chernobyl as both an inquisitor and a confidant of the Maiden of Ludmir, much like the male Catholic priests who were sent by the Church to monitor, guide, and, if need be, condemn medieval holy women.<sup>16</sup> Here Sigmund Freud's important observation that the relationship between the inquisitor/exorcist and the possessed women is analogous to the relationship between the psychoanalyst and patient rings true for Horodezky's account. 17 By encouraging the Maiden to have erotic feelings for her new husband, the Chernobler Rebbe hoped to "cure" the Maiden and make her "normal." The Chernobler Rebbe's desire may also be understood through the lens of what Elizabeth Petroff, in her study of medieval holy women, has called unmasking: "I use the term unmasking to refer to a certain social and psychological pattern in which a male figure attempts to expose the true nature of a particular woman by stripping off her mask and eliminating her usual appearance, with the end of getting her to admit her true nature."18 Petroff links the desire to unmask holy women to the threat they pose to male authority figures, a relevant dynamic in the case of the Maiden of Ludmir and Mordechai of Chernobyl: "The woman who needs unmasking is obviously someone important to the would-be unmasker. He must be vulnerable to her in some way . . . the need to unmask is at base a reassertion of male power, power that seems to be in the hands of a female . . . in a world that knows that women ought not to wield power."19

All the Maiden of Ludmir's biographers agree that she ultimately caved in to Mordechai of Chernobyl's pressure and consented to marry. Some emphasize that her decision was influenced by the critical role that the zaddik had played in her birth and heavenly vision. Others imply that the sheer weight of the Chernobler Rebbe's great authority was simply too much for her to withstand. Not surprisingly, the wedding announcement appears to have created a great stir in Ludmir. Ephraim Taubenhaus, for example, writes, "The entire city rejoiced and celebrated, and loud cheers of mazel tov were heard." In light of subsequent events, however, we should view this unanimous expression of joy with some skepticism.

According to Taubenhaus, the Maiden of Ludmir agreed to marry her own *gabbai*, a bitter sign that she was relinquishing her position of leadership, for her assistant would now become her husband/master (*baal*). Mordechai of Chernobyl happily facilitated this transfer of authority: "R. Mordechai himself agreed to honor the *huppah* [marital canopy] and consecrate the couple entering the covenant of marriage. According to custom, Hannah gave her husband her small house, and on the advice of R. Mordechai she also gave him the tallis and tefillin, in which henceforth her husband would wrap himself. Through this she stopped performing

the commandment that applied to males alone." <sup>21</sup> Although she had agreed to the demeaning conditions imposed by Mordechai of Chernobyl, the Maiden of Ludmir could not tolerate them for long: "On the day following the wedding night she expelled her husband and demanded a divorce. She claimed that she had not intended a real marriage and had no desire to be like other women. She wanted to return to her mission to help the downtrodden and wretched who needed heavenly mercy." <sup>22</sup>

Although Charles Raddock's version of the events generally resembles Taubenhaus's account, there are a few significant differences. Rather than marrying her *gabbai*, Raddock writes that the Maiden agreed to marry a "pallid long-face scribe, her senior by many years." After their wedding, he continues, "the bride drove her husband out of the green hut and demanded a writ of divorcement," on the grounds that "nobody could ever force her 'to live as other women." In reponse, her husband "loudly protested" and "spat on the floor and left." Thus it is unclear from Raddock's version whether the Maiden ever received a divorce or whether she remained an *agunah* (literally, "anchor") for the rest of her life, a status she may have actually appreciated, since it meant she could not be compelled to remarry.

As with other elements of the Maiden's story, Menasheh Unger offers a much more detailed description of the events surrounding her marriage. Before she agreed to the wedding, the Maiden fasted and refused to accept any requests from her followers. After she finally acquiesced to Mordechai of Chernobyl's demand, the Maiden's followers bought her an outfit and started to plan a fancy wedding, but she insisted that the affair be simple. While waiting in her beys medresh surrounded by female devotees, the Maiden received requests from people who had arrived for the wedding. She pointed out to one supplicant that in his request for a blessing he had neglected to mention that he owed someone else one hundred rubles. He responded by declaring to the gathering that "this must be purely from the ruah ha-qodesh, because no one else knew" that he was still in debt. To a woman who requested that she heal her terminally ill child, the Maiden answered, "Go home, because your child has already recovered." When the woman returned home, she found the child sitting up in bed playing. These incidents suggest that the marriage announcement itself diminished neither the Maiden's following nor her miraculous powers.

Before the wedding ceremony, the Maiden sat with a few female disciples while her groom, a scribe named Moshe David, sat in another room

with his male friends and relatives. As was the custom, a *badhan*, or comedian, entertained the guests. When he told the Maiden that the souls of her beloved parents were present at the wedding, the entire *beys medresh* shook with wails. The couple was led to the *huppah*, where the seven blessings were recited. After the ceremony, the Maiden of Ludmir and her new husband were left alone together for the first time in a *yihud* (seclusion) room and then they rejoined their guests for the wedding feast.

By the next morning, people in Ludmir were already debating what had happened on the Maiden's wedding night. As Unger writes, "What occurred on the wedding night, no one knows. And although the Maiden of Ludmir's Hasidim said that she had remained pure and her husband, the scribe, had not touched her, other Hasidim declared that the scribe had indeed performed the commandment that a man must perform and that the Maiden of Ludmir was already no longer a virgin, and thereby she had lost her powers." Within a few days, however, the Maiden had stopped attending the seven blessing (sheva brochos) gatherings traditionally held for newlyweds and had locked herself up in her beys medresh, where she refused to see anyone except her female assistant. Soon town mockers (leytsim) were snickering that "the bride has returned to being a maiden."

After a while people began to visit the Maiden's *beys medresh* as they had before the marriage. Although she accepted their written requests, the Maiden "felt that things were not as they had been." In the past, when someone had asked her what to do, the Maiden would receive instruction from a heavenly voice *(bat kol)*. Now, however, she no longer heard any voices from heaven, and she ordered her assistant to direct her followers to a rebbe for advice. Although she was struggling to obey Mordechai of Chernobyl's command to "wage war with the evil inclination," Unger notes, the Maiden felt that she had "descended" completely and had therefore "lost her powers."

Unwilling to accept this situation, the Maiden decided to send messengers to her husband requesting a divorce on the grounds that "the entire wedding had been a costly mistake, which she had only agreed to in order to fulfill the decree of R. Mottele, but now that his words had been fulfilled by having the wedding, she wanted a divorce and would never marry again." Some residents of Ludmir suggested to Moshe David that he require the Maiden to pay a large sum in return for the divorce, but he replied, "I married because that is what the rebbe Mottele wanted, but if it is not a union from heaven, then I do not want a woman to become an *agunah* on account of me."<sup>25</sup> And so, without any

exchange of money, Moshe David the scribe granted the Maiden of Ludmir a divorce.

While Taubenhaus, Unger, and Raddock stress that the Maiden requested a divorce from her husband, Horodezky offers a different, more provocative explanation. After the wedding, Horodezky writes, the Maiden's husband demanded a divorce, because he was "too terrified to sleep with her." Afterward a second marriage was arranged, but this too ended in divorce. Thus the Maiden "remained a virgin until her death." In one of his Hebrew accounts, Horodezky adds yet another interesting detail: "Under the influence of R. Mordechai of Chernobyl, the Maiden of Ludmir eventually married a man, a rabbi, but he was too afraid to approach her. The Shekhinah, the Hasidim said, was a wall separating him from her." Typically a male zaddik's *devekut* with the Shekhinah displaced his desire for his wife, yet here we find an intriguing counterexample — a woman's relationship with the Shekhinah has displaced her sexual relationship with her husband.

At first glance, Mordechai of Chernobyl's visit to Ludmir seems like the stuff of legend. Would the most powerful zaddik in Ukraine really undertake an arduous journey for the sole purpose of compelling a holy woman to get married? Perhaps the Maiden of Ludmir's threat to the Hasidic establishment or to the local zaddik, Moshe of Ludmir, was great enough to inspire the Chernobler Rebbe's journey. Yet there was another reason why Mordechai of Chernobyl appears to have traveled to Ludmir sometime during the early 1830s. In this period, Haya Sura, the daughter of Aaron of Chernobyl (Mordechai's son), married Shlomo Gottlieb, the son of Moshe of Ludmir. Among the guests at the wedding in Ludmir, according to Hasidic tradition, was Mordechai of Chernobyl, the grandfather of the bride. Hasidic sources do not mention the zaddik's intervention with the Maiden of Ludmir, but if such an event actually occurred, it is likely that it took place during Mordechai's wedding visit. If so, then the Chernobler Rebbe's biological granddaughter and the child who, according to legend, resulted from his blessing were both married within days of one another in the presence of the paterfamilias.

Although the precise date of Haya Sura's wedding to Shlomo Gottlieb does not appear either in Hasidic or Russian archival sources, the wedding must have occurred before the twentieth of Iyar, 1837, since this is when Mordechai of Chernobyl died, and almost certainly after 1829, when Moshe of Ludmir passed away, since Hasidic accounts would have mentioned a meeting between the two zaddikim. Thanks to the Russian government census of Ludmir taken in 1858, it is possible to approximate

the year of the wedding with even more accuracy. According to this list, the merchant Shlomo Moshkovich Gottlieb and his wife, Haya Sura, were sixty-six and forty-nine, respectively, in 1858.<sup>28</sup> In the early 1830s, therefore, Haya Sura would have been in her early twenties and her husband, Shlomo, in his late thirties. Although the couple would have been old by the standards of the day, Hasidic sources state that it was the second marriage for both of them. The 1858 census lists the age of the couple's eldest child, Nahum, as twenty-four, meaning that he was born in 1834. This places the wedding no later than 1833. Finally, Hasidic sources note that soon after the wedding, nearly the entire town of Ludmir was destroyed in a fire. Since we know that such a fire occurred in 1833, this, along with the other information presented above, indicates that the wedding probably took place sometime between 1830 and 1833, in short, precisely when tensions in Ludmir appear to have been at their highest.

According to Hasidic sources, while in Ludmir, Mordechai of Chernobyl stayed with a prominent fur merchant — perhaps one of the Bardachs — who invited the rebbe to his store. While there, the furrier complained that the town's many rodents were destroying his precious merchandise. The zaddik blessed the man, declaring, "May it be God's will that this curse be cancelled."<sup>29</sup> At this point in the narrative, Hasidic sources reiterate the three-part curse that Yom-Tov Lippman Heller placed on Ludmir when he was chased out of the town. Seeing that the rebbe had annulled one of the curses, the merchant requested that he cancel the remaining two. Mordechai of Chernobyl demurred that it was beyond his powers to undo completely what the Tosfot Yom-Tov had decreed.

Soon after Shlomo Gottlieb's wedding, the community of Ludmir decided to grant him the sole right to sell certain items (such as paper and silk) in the town. Within a short while, however, the decree began to lose its force, and Shlomo's income decreased. When this matter became known to Mordechai of Chernobyl, the elderly zaddik wrote a letter to Ludmir's leaders telling them that if they enforced the decree, there would be no fires in the town for a certain period. Things went so well for a while that the town's notables asked Mordechai to annul the curses forever, to which he responded that it was not within his power to cancel the decree of an earlier zaddik for perpetuity. Not long after this exchange, a terrible fire nearly burned down the entire town.

Instead of the rebbe's encounter with the Maiden of Ludmir, this is the version of Mordechai of Chernobyl's visit that Hasidic authors saw fit to memorialize in their hagiographical accounts. In so doing, they accomplished two important goals: reifying both the power of the zaddik and

the dynastic principle that united the ruling families of the Hasidic world. By contrast, the story of the Chernobler Rebbe's involvement with the Maiden was far more ambiguous. Although the zaddik had successfully convinced the holy woman to marry, the "blessed union" had fallen apart after only a few days, thereby reestablishing the Maiden of Ludmir's independence. This version of the zaddik's visit to Ludmir indicated the limits of his authority and of the dynastic model of leadership. Not surprisingly, therefore, it circulated solely as an oral tradition until non-Hasidic authors recorded it in writing during the first few decades of the twentieth century.

The Hasidic version of Mordechai's visit to Ludmir teaches us other things as well. First, it demonstrates that even into their third generation, the Gottliebs were still considered members of the Hasidic aristocracy. Any threat to their hegemony in the town of Ludmir could be perceived as a threat to the Hasidic establishment as a whole. The Chernobler Rebbe's willingness to intervene on his grand son-in-law's behalf indicates that he took an active role in preserving the power of the Gottlieb family in Ludmir. These factors suggest that Mordechai of Chernobyl had a personal motivation for viewing the Maiden of Ludmir as a threat and a strong incentive to eliminate her as a spiritual leader.

It also appears that Shlomo Gottlieb could little afford any challenge to his authority. Although Hasidic sources describe him as the leader of a small circle of Hasidim in Ludmir, it is clear from these accounts and from Russian archival records that list him as a merchant that Shlomo Gottlieb was unable to support himself as a zaddik from his followers' donations. Nor, even, was his own standing in the community sufficient to ensure his monopoly of the sale of certain goods. Despite his noble lineage and familial connections to important Hasidic dynasties, therefore, Shlomo lacked the charisma, learning, and/or pneumatic powers to succeed as a rebbe in his own right. Thus we may assume that the power vacuum that existed under his father, Moshe of Ludmir, was only exacerbated during Shlomo Gottlieb's time as the town's most prominent male Hasidic figure. This helps to explain how the Maiden of Ludmir could have gained a substantial following in the community and why she could have been perceived as a threat by its male establishment.

Ada Rapoport-Albert depicts the aftermath of the Maiden of Ludmir's marriage(s) as follows:

It is not surprising that the device to which R. Mordechai of Chernobyl is said to have resorted in attempting to rectify the situation was to force the Maid back

into her female role by contracting a marriage. This was perfectly effective: from the moment that she resumed her natural role and social function, however reluctantly or inadequately, her claim to special spiritual powers was invalidated and her Hasidic following abandoned her.<sup>30</sup>

Rapoport-Albert's negative appraisal confirms that "the story of the Maid exposes as false the claim for which it has so often been cited as proof, that the Hasidic movement pioneered the equality of men and women in Judaism."31 Other scholars have adopted Rapoport-Albert's perspective, writing, for example, "When she was finally persuaded to marry . . . she lost her following, even though she refused to consummate the marriage and was soon divorced . . . Once it became clear that she really was a woman, she could not be perceived as holy," and "as soon as she engaged in marriage . . . her religious power disappeared, because she had revealed that she really was a woman and not a man in a woman's body."32 Two questions should be asked at this juncture. First, What evidence supports these authors' views? Second, Is it possible to understand the aftermath of the Maiden's marriage(s) as more complicated than Rapoport-Albert has presented it, while still accepting her overall position that the story of the Maiden of Ludmir does not prove that Hasidism established gender equality?

Horodezky's accounts are a good place to begin answering these questions.<sup>33</sup> In his original Russian version, Horodezky writes that "the attraction of the Maiden of Ludmir had already diminished after the first 'marriage,' even though it was fictitious. People stopped going to her for 'miracles,' and considered her merely a holy women (zaddekes) possessing to some extent the 'holy spirit' (ruah ha-qodesh) — as one of the people who knew her expressed it."<sup>34</sup> Horodezky basically repeated this brief description in all his other accounts except the 1937 Yiddish version, in which he added, "The masses declared: she is in the end a person like all people, and has also married a husband like everyone else. However, the aforementioned Ludmirer Hasid told me that she still possessed a bit of ruah ha-qodesh and until her death she remained a great zaddekes." Earlier in the account, Horodezky had described this informant as "a Hasid of the Maiden of Ludmir, an old, pious Jew, who told me with great excitement about her great righteousness and Torah sayings."<sup>35</sup>

Horodezky therefore presents a complicated picture of what happened after the Maiden's marriage(s). While she was no longer considered a wonder-worker, she still possessed the "holy spirit" to some degree and was also viewed as a *zaddekes*. This suggests that the Maiden's authority

declined considerably, but that she did not completely lose her status as a spiritual figure after her marriage(s). The importance of this shift should not be ignored, however. Instead of being seen as a kind of female rebbe, the Maiden was now viewed as a more typical holy woman, according to Horodezky, one gifted to some extent with the holy spirit but not with the miraculous powers traditionally associated with a male zaddik.

To understand Horodezky's claims, we need to appreciate that within the religious taxonomy of Eastern European Jewish culture there existed a category of married or widowed holy women to which the Maiden of Ludmir was now relegated. Once she married, the Maiden of Ludmir was effectively demoted from the status of woman rebbe to that of this more typical type of holy woman. Yet Horodezky's Yiddish account complicates matters even further, since there he cites a former follower of the Maiden of Ludmir who clearly continued to venerate her long after she supposedly lost most of her powers; we may assume that he was not alone in retaining his devotion.

Despite these qualifications, Horodezky's work implies that the Maiden's male opponents succeeded in eliminating her as a threat to their authority, even if they did not completely eliminate her ability to function as a holy woman. This lends support to Rapoport-Albert's assertion that the Hasidic movement, or at least its male-led establishment, did not endorse gender equality. Other authors confirm this picture and, indeed, are even more negative than Horodezky concerning the aftermath of the Maiden's marriage(s). Both Raddock and Taubenhaus, for example, write that after Mordechai of Chernobyl "washed his hands of the entire affair," a council of rabbis voted to excommunicate the Maiden of Ludmir and her followers. After this, she was "quickly abandoned by friends and followers" and became a "lone and brooding figure in the *'Grüne Stübel,'* except for several kindly old crones who visited her secretly from time to time, she was ignored by everyone."<sup>36</sup>

Significantly, these authors imply that the real reason for the Maiden's loss of authority was not the fact that she had married and therefore revealed herself to be a "mere" woman, but that she and her followers had been excommunicated from the community. Thus, in their view, it was not so much that marriage had revealed the Maiden to be a woman, but that any association with her could lead to being socially ostracized, which compelled people to abandon her. This scenario challenges the view that for the Maiden's followers, at least, her ability to function as a holy woman was dependent on her never having married.

Joseph Gross and Menasheh Unger offer yet a third scenario. Both authors write that the Maiden of Ludmir suffered a crisis of confidence following her marriage and divorce. Rather than immediately losing her followers because they now viewed her as a woman, Gross suggests that the Maiden's authority eroded over time because she no longer demonstrated the necessary self-confidence to be a leader. Gross notes that the Maiden continued to teach and preach in public after her marriage, but to no avail, since she had already lost her charisma:

[S]he was gradually eliminated as a competitor to the other Hasidic rabbis. She could not overcome the feeling she had been duped and lost much of her confidence in her supernatural powers. Her adherents could not but notice the change in her, and while a few remained loyal, her influence dwindled. She continued studying in her room and preaching in the synagogue, but the crowds no longer came to hear her. Only now and then someone came for comfort and consolation.<sup>37</sup>

Unger writes that after she received her get (divorce), the Maiden resumed her activities as a rebbe and once again attracted a group of women and working-class men who believed that she still possessed the "holy spirit." In contrast to this devoted circle of followers, many residents of Ludmir and nearby communities now viewed the Maiden as a "simple woman" who had lost her madreyges (powers). Citing her marriage as proof, rebbes who had sought to rein in the Maiden began to tell their followers that she was no longer holy. Over time, this situation began to eat away at the Maiden's psyche. Like before, she prayed in a tallis and tefillin every day, wore a gartel during the minha-maariv service, and led Sabbath "third meal" gatherings in which she recited Torah to women and to men who sat in the "women's section" of the beys medresh. But something was different. The Maiden of Ludmir was now overcome by terrible sadness and a lack of self-confidence. Previously the Maiden had believed that her new soul had granted her the ability to behave "like a man." Yet since her marriage, she felt that her teachings were no longer inspired, and people now claimed that she "babbled aimlessly."38

There is no reason to choose between the different versions presented by the Maiden's biographers. All agree that although the Maiden's authority declined following her marriage(s), she retained at least some of her supporters. It seems likely that a combination of the factors they mention—the unmasking of the Maiden as a "mere" woman, the threat of social censure imposed by the rabbis, and the breaking of the Maiden's spirit—resulted in her marginalization. For some, the fact of the marriage

may have been sufficient to remove the Maiden's aura of holiness; for others, the marriage may have made no difference and only the fear of being socially ostracized themselves finally kept them from the Maiden's *beys medresh*; finally, those who did venture to hear the Maiden's teachings may have felt that this was not the confident, charismatic figure who had initially attracted them. In short, the Maiden's opponents appear to have succeeded in their goal. She was no longer viewed as a woman rebbe and, therefore, would no longer threaten their hegemony.

If we accept the early 1830s as the likely period for the Maiden's marriage(s), then the decline in authority that I have described above would have occurred when the Maiden was still in her late twenties (assuming she was born in 1806). This means that the height of the Maiden's power in Ludmir lasted for less than ten years before her opponents eliminated her as a competitor. As we will see in the next chapter, the Maiden of Ludmir probably arrived in Palestine sometime around 1859. This indicates that the Maiden continued to live in Ludmir for nearly three decades after her marriage(s). None of her biographers address this period, except to say that the Maiden's increasing feelings of alienation played a major role in her decision to emigrate. We can only imagine how lonely and frustrated the Maiden may have felt during these years.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the clearest indication that she was unsatisfied comes from the fact that she eventually decided to undertake the arduous journey to Palestine, not an easy task in the middle of the nineteenth century, particularly for a fifty-year-old woman on her own.

Russian government archival sources and newspaper accounts shed some light on Ludmir during the period of 1833 to 1859. Though none of these documents explicitly mentions the Maiden of Ludmir, they help us to get a better grasp of her life. For example, a report from the Office of the Military Affairs Bureau in Kiev for the administration of the Podolia-Volhynia region documents the efforts of the Jewish community in Ludmir to collect money for the construction of a synagogue in Jerusalem. <sup>40</sup> This fund-raising drive probably had some connection to the establishment of a *kolel* (community) for Volhynian Jews in Jerusalem. As we will see shortly, records kept by the Kolel Volin in Jerusalem indicate that the Maiden of Ludmir had an ongoing connection to this community after she arrived in Palestine.

Perhaps the most illuminating official document from this period is a Russian government map of Ludmir dating from 1840. The map, currently in the Russian State Historical Archives in St. Petersburg, gives an impression of a municipal order whose existence probably owes as much to the collective imagination of government officials as it does to the actual situation in Ludmir. While earlier maps of the town provide only vague outlines of its streets, the 1840 map lays out all the streets according to a grid that forms city blocks composed of numbered lots. Accompanying the map is a key that explicitly reveals its imaginary dimension. For not only does the key list existing structures, but it also includes buildings and other sites that are to be built in the future. Thus the map is best described as depicting a combination of how Ludmir really looked in 1840 and how Russian government officials imagined that it *should* look.

The wishful rationalization of space that we find in this map of Ludmir reflects a broader phenomenon, which Benedict Anderson and Timothy Mitchell have explored in their writings on colonialism.<sup>41</sup> As Russia sought to modernize and remake itself in the image of Western European powers, it imposed what Mitchell has called "an appearance of order" on places such as the Jewish Pale of Settlement (itself a colonized space), which did not yet conform to Enlightenment notions of organization. It would be an exaggeration to call the 1840 map of Ludmir a kind of cartographer's Potemkin village, but it is important to appreciate the gap between the town's lived spaces — its loud and hectic market, the muddy alleyways of Kilchizne, and its many unofficial shtiblekh — and the orderly spaces imagined by the government. Despite this caveat, the map of Ludmir indicates that by 1840 the town was exposed to modernizing currents that were affecting Europe as a whole. Therefore, although Ludmir was far less modern than Russian government officials would have liked, it was not the timeless shtetl of popular nostalgia, even during the middle of the nineteenth century.

The 1840 map of Ludmir is important for another more specific reason. The map's key lists twenty "public and private buildings" that belong to individual Jews. It is unclear what the functions of these buildings were, but all are located in the center of town, and most were probably used for communal purposes, for example, as *shtiblekh*, stores, and so on. Only two of the buildings are listed as belonging to Jewish women, including the *dom* (Russian for "house" or "building") of the "Jewess Haya Rochel Rabinovna." While not identical to the one given in biographical accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir, this name is highly suggestive. First of all, "Haya Rochel" so closely resembles "Hannah Rochel" that the discrepancy may reflect a scribal mistake on the part of the cartographer. Second, the name Rabinovna may indicate an attempt to Russify the Hebrew title *rabbanit*, which generally refers to the wife of a

rabbi but in this case may signify a woman who functioned as a rabbi herself, such as the Maiden of Ludmir. Supporting this interpretation is the fact that Rabinovna does not conform to standard Russian orthographic patterns — typically, we would expect the form Rabinova (without the letter n). Finally, on the map of Ludmir, Haya Rochel Rabinovna's building appears in precisely the same place where former residents of the town have located the *gornshtibl*. While none of these elements constitutes a "smoking gun" in itself, taken together they make a strong case for the identification of Haya Rochel Rabinovna and the Maiden of Ludmir. If this identification is correct, then it indicates that the Maiden of Ludmir still owned the *gornshtibl* as late as 1840 and that she did not give up the title to her property when she married.

Archival records reveal that in 1845 there were 3,991 Jews in Ludmir, one rabbi, one synagogue, and six molitvennyi shkoli (that is, shtiblekh), though others must have existed in the town. By 1850 the Jewish population had decreased to 3,502, a population comparable to that of the nearby community of Lutsk (3,948 Jews) but nearly three times smaller than that of Zhitomir (10,587 Jews), the regional capital.<sup>43</sup> Russian newspaper reports from the 1840s and 1850s describe court cases, economic transactions, and travels abroad involving Jewish men and women from Ludmir as well as other towns in Volhynia.44 These accounts suggest a high level of commercial interaction between the Jewish and non-Jewish residents of the region as well as the intense involvement of Jewish women in different aspects of its economic life. The degree to which Jews dominated trade in Ludmir itself is indicated by statistics from 1861.<sup>45</sup> Of the 174 officially recognized merchants in the town, 166 were Jews, and only eight were Christians. In 1853, responding to the growing social crisis affecting Jewish communities throughout the Russian Empire, Jewish bal melokhes (workers) in Ludmir requested permission to select a councilman who would represent their interests.46 They also asked that nonlocal hand workers be sent away from Ludmir, because they were creating too much competition for native artisans.<sup>47</sup>

Although the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) began to make serious inroads into Russian Jewish life in the 1840s and 1850s, there is little evidence of its impact on Ludmir prior to the final decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>48</sup> The Russian-language newspaper from Volhynia, *Volynskie gubernskie vedomosti*, which began publication in 1838, mentions the cultural assimilation of Jews in Zhitomir, but its pages are silent concerning this phenomenon in Ludmir. In the 1840s *maskilim* such as the German Jew Max Lilienthal worked with the Russian government to

establish Jewish schools with a modern curriculum. By 1855 there were at least seventy-one state-sponsored schools for Jews throughout the Pale, including Volhynia, but none in the town of Ludmir. 49 Because of this lack of evidence, it is impossible to say to what extent the Maiden would have been exposed to Enlightenment influences and ideas — including the emancipation of women — during her final years in Ludmir.

## CHAPTER II

## In the Holy Land

By the time the Maiden reached her fiftieth birthday in 1856 (if we accept 1806 as her likely year of birth), her glory days as a religious leader in Ludmir were long behind her. In an era when fifty-year-olds were seen as elderly, the Maiden of Ludmir decided to undertake the arduous and dangerous journey to Palestine. The Maiden's subsequent experiences in the Holy Land constitute the final phase of her long and rich life. Some say that she successfully reestablished herself as a woman rebbe in Jerusalem, others that she lived and died in complete obscurity. Before exploring these competing and even contradictory claims, however, let us address the question of why the Maiden decided to emigrate in the first place.

In her biographical essay on the Maiden of Ludmir, Ada Rapoport-Albert has written, "Her final dispatch to the Holy Land, whether factual or not, amounted to her relegation to a safely remote corner of the nineteenth-century Hasidic world — the method by which the movement is known to have disposed of some of its other embarrassments." Official documents and eyewitness accounts alike appear to confirm the Maiden of Ludmir's presence in Palestine. But what of the suggestion that the Hasidic establishment sent the Maiden to the Holy Land to get rid of her?

As we saw in the beginning of chapter 9, Menasheh Unger writes that at the height of her power in Ludmir, the Maiden's Hasidic critics gave her an ultimatum: either marry or emigrate to Palestine. In response, the Maiden declared that she would "neither marry nor emigrate to the land of Israel, as they requested." This episode supposedly occurred before Mordechai of Chernobyl compelled her to marry, that is, decades before she actually left Ludmir. Among her biographers, only Ephraim Taubenhaus indicates that the Maiden left Ludmir because she was driven out by her critics, although even he stops short of explicitly stating that she was exiled to Palestine, writing that "because she could no longer tolerate the persecution directed against her, she left for the land of Israel."

Although the Maiden of Ludmir's opponents may have "disposed of" her by sending her to Palestine, a number of factors mitigate this explanation. First, the Maiden of Ludmir apparently owned the building in which she lived and was financially independent. Under these circumstances, it is unclear whether her opponents could have compelled her to emigrate even if they had wanted to. Second, by the late 1850s it is unlikely that the Maiden of Ludmir still posed a serious enough threat to the Hasidic establishment that its members would have taken the extreme step of exiling her from Eastern Europe. On the contrary, as we saw in the previous chapter, her biographers indicate that by the time she decided to emigrate, the Maiden of Ludmir's authority had already declined. Finally, we must take seriously the possibility that instead of being "dispatched," the Maiden of Ludmir chose to leave for her own reasons. It is to these reasons that we now turn.

Rather than being driven by persecution, Charles Raddock claims that the Maiden left because she could no longer bear the "indifference of one-time friends and admirers." She had become a lonely figure in Ludmir and thought that in Palestine her fortunes would change for the better. Joseph Gross states that the Maiden immigrated "chiefly in the hope that settling in the land of Israel would restore her powers," a theme further developed by Unger, who provides the most detailed account of the Maiden's motivation for abandoning the town of her birth. According to Unger, the Maiden realized that she could no longer "function as a rebbe" in Ludmir and began to believe that "only in the land of Israel would she regain the *ruah ha-qodesh*." He quotes her as declaring, "I must leave the *goles* (Exile), where the air is impure. I will travel to the land of Israel and will live in the holy city of Jerusalem. I will pray at the Mother Rachel's tomb and at the Western Wall. And there I will surely regain my powers; there the *ruah ha-qodesh* will once again rest upon me." 6

These authors portray the Maiden as emigrating because she was tired of her diminished status in Ludmir and wanted to benefit from the holiness of the land of Israel. They give no indication that her opponents forced her to leave. Indeed, they imply that her critics had so successfully marginalized her in Ludmir that she was all but forgotten. But the Maiden apparently refused to spend her final years in a virtual straitjacket. To regain her spiritual powers and reestablish herself as a rebbe, she chose to journey to Palestine. Instead of portraying her as playing a passive role in the process of emigration, therefore, most biographers depict the Maiden of Ludmir as actively seeking to restore her former status by settling in the Holy Land.

Whether she was dispatched or decided to go herself—and we will never know for sure — once the Maiden arrived in Palestine, she evidently took advantage of the opportunity to reinvent herself. In this respect, the Maiden of Ludmir resembled contemporary male Hasidic figures such as Abraham Dov of Ovruch (1765-1840), another native of Volhynia who immigrated to Palestine. While still in Volhynia, Abraham Dov was merely a "secondary zaddik" who existed in the orbit of Mordechai of Chernobyl. When the Chernobler Rebbe died, Abraham Dov refused to become subordinate to his sons, understanding that this would further diminish his status. Instead, he traveled to Palestine and settled in Sefad, where his financial independence, charisma, honesty, learning, and connections to important leaders in Ukraine transformed him into a powerful figure in his own right, something he never would have achieved had he remained in Eastern Europe.<sup>7</sup> This example illustrates that ambitious individuals could take advantage of opportunities in Palestine that were unavailable in their homelands.

Unfortunately, there are no descriptions of the Maiden's journey from Ludmir to the Holy Land, though like many travelers from the Russian Empire she probably made her way to Istanbul, and from there took a boat to one of the port cities of Palestine. Before she left, according to Unger, the residents of Ludmir experienced a change of heart. Once they heard that she was going to Palestine, "even those who used to ridicule her began to believe that she was possessed by a great soul." They gave her kvittlekh (requests) to place at the Western Wall, Rachel's Tomb, and the Cave of the Patriarchs. To this she responded, "I will lay the kvittlekh where you requested but I will not read them myself. I have lost my powers. Perhaps der eybershter [God] will help me so that in the land of Israel, in the Holy Land, I will regain my powers and become a wonderworker. Now I travel to the land of Israel as a simple Jewess [pshute yidenne]." Before leaving, the Maiden sold her belongings and "gave the beys medresh to the community on the condition that it remain a prayer house."8 In an ironic twist, the gornshtibl was taken over by a branch of the Chernobler dynasty, which controlled the site until World War II.9 Whatever their role in her departure, therefore, the Maiden's opponents benefited materially when she left, literally occupying the space that she had vacated.

Unlike any other event in her life, the Maiden's arrival in Palestine appears to be recorded in not one but two official documents.<sup>10</sup> Appropriately enough, however, each document tells a different story. During the nineteenth century, Moses Montefiore, the prominent Jewish philanthropist and community advocate, commissioned several censuses of the Jews of Palestine. While incomplete, they constitute the most important demographic source on this population.<sup>11</sup> Separate lists were compiled of men, widows, and orphans living in Jewish communities throughout the land. The names of married women are listed after those of their husbands, but no other information is provided about them. By contrast, the widow lists include a wealth of details concerning their female subjects: name, the name of deceased husband, place of birth (of the widow), age, year of arrival, property, occupation and means of support, number of children, names of children and their ages, ages of male children, special observations, and the number in their families. As such, these lists are an invaluable resource for reconstructing the lives of Jewish women in Palestine during a period in which they constituted the majority of the Jewish population.

The likely references to the Maiden of Ludmir appear in widow lists from the Hasidic Kolel Volin in Jerusalem. In the nineteenth century, Hasidic groups in Palestine organized themselves into separate communities (*kolelim*) based on their places of origin in Eastern Europe. Each *kolel* took care of the spiritual and economic needs of its members, establishing neighborhoods with their own study houses, rituals baths, and synagogues. By the middle of the century, the growing number of Hasidim from Volhynia (Volin) had established such a *kolel* in Jerusalem. The list of widows submitted by the Kolel Volin to the Montefiore census in 1866 includes an entry for "*ha-rabbanit* Rochel Hannah," who was born in the town of Ludmir. The document gives her current age as sixty, states that she arrived in Palestine three years earlier (that is, in 1863), and lists one person in her family. No other details, including the name of any deceased husband, are provided.

More information on what is almost certainly the same individual appears in the Montefiore census from 1875. There we find a reference to "ha-rabbanit ha-zaddeket Hannah Rochel" from Ludmir. The list adds that she is sixty-nine years old, that she arrived in 1859, and that she has

one person in her family. Under the heading "Occupation and Means of Support" we find the phrase "elderly woman from a prestigious [wealthy?] family" (*zekana mishpahat ram*). <sup>13</sup> By contrast, other women in the lists are described as seamstresses, midwives, food vendors, and servants. Several factors suggest that the Maiden arrived in Palestine in 1859 rather than 1863. First and foremost, her name does not appear in the Russian government's census of Ludmir taken in 1858. Second, two authors, Solomon Ashkenazi and Yitzhak Alfasi, state that the Maiden arrived in 1858, apparently on the basis of an oral tradition rather than of the Montefiore records, since they both state her year of birth as 1815. <sup>14</sup>

Despite their differences, both sources appear to refer to the Maiden of Ludmir. <sup>15</sup> The woman is described as a *rabbanit* in both census lists, which, in this case, may signify "woman rabbi" rather than the more typical "wife of a rabbi." The space under the heading "Name of Deceased Husband" is conspicuously empty. <sup>16</sup> Since this information is also missing for other widows in the census lists, it is possible that any elderly, unmarried Jewish woman living in Palestine was considered a widow, even if she was divorced or perhaps had never been married. The description of the woman as coming from a prestigious or wealthy family jibes with biographical accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir that depict her father, Monesh, as a pious and wealthy merchant. It also indicates that in Palestine the Maiden continued to support herself by means of her inheritance and did not have to work or accept charity from the community.

These lists appear to officially confirm the Maiden of Ludmir's existence for the first time. By apparently documenting the Maiden's year of birth and her arrival in Palestine, they enable us more accurately to place her story within an historical context. Just as significant, the census lists may provide us with invaluable information about the Maiden of Ludmir's standing in the Hasidic community in Jerusalem. It is important to remember that the lists were provided by the leaders of the communities themselves. Their apparent description of the Maiden of Ludmir as a *zaddeket* and *rabbanit* indicates that they viewed her with respect and strongly suggests that the Maiden of Ludmir successfully reestablished herself as a holy woman, though not necessarily a woman rebbe, in Palestine.<sup>17</sup>

Since the Maiden of Ludmir was elderly by this time, she more neatly fit into existing categories of healers and foresayers, who tended to be older women. Nor did her celibate lifestyle pose the same threat to normative views concerning marriage and children that it had when she was premenopausal. These factors probably allowed her to resume some of the more controversial religious activities she had previously engaged in without attracting the intense condemnation she had experienced when she was in her twenties and thirties in Ludmir.

In addition to the Montefiore records, we possess a wealth of written accounts concerning the Maiden's life in Palestine. These accounts are based on the memories of Jerusalemites who knew — or at least claimed that they knew — the Maiden of Ludmir during this period. Unger, for example, cites the firsthand testimony of an old Hasid named Yosl Akiba's, whom he met while living in Jerusalem during the years 1925—1930. When Unger interviewed him, Yosl was a resident of the old Jerusalem neighborhood called Even Israel (established in 1874). He recalled the Maiden of Ludmir as "short and very beautiful. On her head she wore a *yamperke*, an old Jerusalem bonnet. She lived on Hebron Street," near the courtyard of Nisan Bak. In an unpublished manuscript, Unger added that the Maiden wore a "white garment like the other old women of Jerusalem." 18

Joseph Gross also states that the Maiden settled on Hebron Street, yet he claims that she lived there with her husband, whom she married after arriving. Nahman Shemen writes that the Maiden married again in Palestine at the age of fifty, a tradition that also appears in one of Unger's unpublished manuscripts. <sup>19</sup> By contrast, in his first account (but not his second), Ephraim Taubenhaus states that she immigrated with her husband from Ludmir. While it is possible that the Maiden married again in Palestine or even arrived there with a husband, it seems that she was no longer married by 1866, when her name probably appears on the census list of widows.

It is more plausible that the Maiden of Ludmir settled on Hebron Street when she arrived in Jerusalem than that she married again. Hebron Street was a major thoroughfare in the Muslim quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. Jews began to settle beyond their own quarter as a result of the great Eastern European immigration to Palestine in the 1860s.<sup>20</sup> For several reasons, they chose to expand into the Muslim quarter rather than the Christian section of the Old City. First, the Muslim quarter was larger and less crowded. Second, houses were owned by private individuals who were willing to rent to Jews, rather than by institutions that were unwilling to rent, as in the Christian quarter. And, perhaps most important, relations between Jews and Muslims in nineteenth-century Jerusalem were better than relations between Jews and Christians. Indeed Jews who even walked in the vicinity of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre could expect

a beating by Christian zealots. The streets to the left of the vegetable market in the Muslim quarter were the first area of Jewish expansion. Of these, Hebron Street quickly gained the largest Jewish population. By World War I, more Jews lived on Hebron Street (1,355), than on Habad Street (781) or on the Street of the Jews (436).<sup>21</sup>

According to a Jewish legend recorded by Unger, Hebron Street owed its name to a secret tunnel that connected it to the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. Another tradition held that the street received its name because its first settlers were Jews from Hebron who began arriving in the 1840s.<sup>22</sup> Unger writes that the Maiden dwelled in the house where the tunnel supposedly began, for "she hoped to find the tunnel, enter the Cave of the Patriarchs, and pray for the redemption of the Jews from Exile."23 The house's location near the courtyard of Nisan Bak placed it in the center of Jerusalem's important Volhynian Hasidic community. Nisan Bak was the son of Yisrael Bak, a Hasid from Volhynia who became the leader of the Kolel Volin after immigrating to Palestine. Under the patronage of the Bak family, the Kolel Volin established itself as the largest in Jerusalem. By the late 1860s, it counted one thousand members, compared to five hundred in the Kolel Galicia and two hundred in the Kolel Habad.<sup>24</sup> As in the Ukraine, the Volhynian Hasidic community in Jerusalem was dominated by two dynasties: Rozhin and Chernobyl.

Although there is no way of verifying precisely where she lived, the census lists appear to confirm the Maiden of Ludmir's relationship to the Kolel Volin in Jerusalem. From the perspective of its leaders, therefore, she apparently belonged to their community. Nevertheless, Unger writes that she did "not take any kolel money like most of the Jews who lived off the kolel in those years. She did not obey any kolel, not Kolel Reisen, Kolel Volin, Kolel Poylen, or Kolel Galicia. Because she did not take any kolel money, the sextons of the various kolelim did not have control over her and could not do anything to her. She lived from her own money, which she had brought from Ludmir, and thereafter from money which she used to receive from Jews from Ludmir and the region around it to go and pray on their behalf at the Western Wall and other holy places."25 This jibes with the census lists' indication that the Maiden was financially independent. We will see below that her wealth appears to have enabled the Maiden to function as a religious leader in Jerusalem, just as it had earlier in Ludmir.

In his account of her life, Moshe Feinkind states that in Palestine, the Maiden of Ludmir attempted to once again "play her 'holy' role and recover the *ruah ha-qodesh*, but she was soon forgotten and abandoned by the greater world."<sup>26</sup> His terse and pessimistic evaluation stands in sharp contrast to the detailed descriptions of other authors, who, unlike Feinkind, claim to have had access to individuals who knew the Maiden in Palestine. These authors all assert that the Maiden of Ludmir reestablished herself as a woman rebbe in Jerusalem. And they stress the largely female character of her following and the attention she paid to other women's spiritual needs, to a greater degree than she had in Ludmir.

As we have seen, Ephraim Taubenhaus based his portrait of the Maiden of Ludmir on the diary of his father, Meir. Apparently, the elder Taubenhaus met the Maiden several times when both were living in Jerusalem. Given that Meir was born in 1865 and left Jerusalem for Sefad in 1884 to marry, it is likely that these meetings took place sometime in the early 1880s. Unlike Unger and Gross, Taubenhaus describes the Maiden as living in Mea Shearim, a Hasidic neighborhood established outside the walls of the Old City in 1874. If we accept both versions of where she lived, it makes sense that the Maiden initially settled on Hebron Street after she arrived in the late 1850s or early 1860s and then moved to Mea Shearim when it was settled by Hasidim in the 1870s.

This is how Ephraim Taubenhaus describes his father's first encounter with the Maiden of Ludmir: "In the middle of the room stretched a big table surrounded by old women, and among them, prominent by virtue of the splendor of her face and dignity, was Hannah from Ludmir, 'the zaddik? She was a short woman with gray hair, but her face emanated a holy glow." Apparently quoting directly from his father's diary, Taubenhaus continues: "On Sabbath afternoons, we would find Hannah from Ludmir sitting at the head of the table, according to the custom of the rebbes from Poland, holding forth at her own 'Shalosh Seudot' [third meal]. . . . From up close I was amazed by the strange image of the 'Virgin Zaddik' who had successfully gathered a large group of Hasidim in the neighborhood of Mea Shearim and established a real 'court' like the rebbes' courts in the Exile."

Charles Raddock also writes that the Maiden of Ludmir settled in Mea Shearim, where, "once again, Hannah Rachel set up a new Chassidic 'court,' presiding over a new coterie of the faithful. Jerusalemites soon became accustomed to seeing the short, gray-eyed spinster." Citing an "old follower" whom he met in Israel in 1951, Raddock adds that "the *bethulah* would hold court in her home for about twenty some devotees, her Shabboth table always decked with twelve little challahs, as customary among Chassidic rebbeyim."<sup>28</sup>

Unger depicts the Maiden of Ludmir's court, but he places it within the Old City rather than in Mea Shearim. Like Taubenhaus and Raddock, he attributes his description to an eyewitness, in this case the elderly Hasid Yosl Akiba's. According to Unger, the Maiden of Ludmir used to pray every day in the Hurba synagogue and would study a daily shiur (lesson) of Taytch-Humash (the Yiddish translation of the Pentateuch) and other "women's books" with a group of elderly women. She "began to lead a 'rebbe's court' in the Old City of Jerusalem. She had a krittl-writer, who used to sit by her in the antechamber and write kvittlekh for the women who used to come to her. In Jerusalem, the 'Maiden of Ludmir' would give out amulets, charms, and remedies for different illnesses. On the Sabbath, Hasidic women used to attend her tish, and elderly male Hasidim would also come, sitting in a second room." Later in his account, Unger adds, "On the Sabbath, the Maiden of Ludmir used to lay out twelve little challahs and eat two tsimesen [stews] including the Baal Shem's tsimes, which is made out of carrots."29

Although there is no way of confirming the details in these accounts, their central assertion that the Maiden of Ludmir reestablished herself as a charismatic religious figure is supported by the Montefiore census lists, which appear to describe her as *ha-rabbanit* and *ha-rabbanit* ha-zad-deket, respectively. Even though their precise significance remains unclear, these titles indicate that the Maiden was officially viewed as a holy woman and, perhaps, as a "woman rebbe" by the Hasidic community in Jerusalem.

In addition to depicting her court in Jerusalem, the Maiden's biographers describe her as leading her followers in a number of religious rituals, including praying at the Western Wall, visiting Rachel's Tomb, and celebrating the holiday known as Simhat Torah, which marks the completion of the annual cycle of reading the Torah. Pious Jews had long venerated the Western Wall, the only surviving remnant of the Second Temple, but they did not transform it into a major site of devotion until the 1840s, when the Jewish population of Jerusalem began to increase dramatically. Unlike the wide plaza of today, only a small space then existed between the Wall and the houses of the Jewish Quarter. Photographs and paintings from the nineteenth century reveal another striking contrast: whereas a mehitsa (partition) now separates the women and men who pray at the Wall, during the nineteenth century women and men prayed in separate groups but were not divided by a physical barrier. Indeed, postcards from this era actually show women and men standing next to one another at the Wall.30

In a memoir of this period, Isaac Yahuda, a prominent member of the Sephardic community in Jerusalem, recalled how Sephardic women and men used to gather in a circle at the Wall to hear sermons delivered in Ladino. He also noted the importance of the Wall for women's devotion: "Until I was five, my mother and grandmother would take me to the Western Wall, and sometimes there would only be women there. No one bothered or insulted the women assembled there in the sacred place." Yahuda's great-grandmother, who arrived in Palestine in 1841, "used to go to the Western Wall every Friday afternoon, winter and summer, and stay there until candle-lighting time, reading the entire Book of Psalms and the Song of Songs . . . she would sit there by herself for hours but was never reproached. On the contrary, the local residents respected her." 31

Like the three generations of women in Yahuda's family, the Maiden of Ludmir is also depicted as worshiping regularly at the Western Wall. In the words of Taubenhaus, "the Maiden of Ludmir used to hurry every day to the Western Wall, dressed like an Arab woman, her hands clutching a tallit and tefillin. Old women and men followed after her, all of them gathered to seek her blessing."<sup>32</sup> The contrast between this peaceful image and the violent attacks on women who have recently attempted to pray at the Western Wall wearing tallit and tefillin cannot be more striking. Ironically, gender segregation and other restrictions on women's worship at the Western Wall actually appear to have increased in the last century. This may be seen as part of a broader reaction on the part of ultra-Orthodox Jews to the threats of modernity, including the emancipation of women.

The single most important site for Jewish women's devotion in nineteenth-century Palestine was Rachel's Tomb, on the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. The site was recognized as holy by Jews, Muslims, and Christians for centuries but was not a major site of Jewish worship until 1841, when it officially passed into Jewish hands. In that year, Moses Montefiore paid for the tomb to be renovated, and a white-domed structure was erected in the style of the Muslim shrines scattered throughout Palestine. Although many men prayed at the tomb, the site was dominated by female worshipers. As Mordechai ben Hillel Ha-Cohen from Mogilev observed in 1889 upon visiting the tomb: "It is a place where women with troubled spirits and bitter souls offer supplications and pleas." At around the same time, the Christian traveler John Fulleylove recorded his impressions of "the tomb of Rachel, where a modern house and dome cover a rough block of stone worn smooth with the kisses of Jewish women. The wailing, as we saw it there, is a memorable custom.

The women were mostly elderly or aged, but they were weeping real tears and wailing bitterly as they kissed the stone."<sup>34</sup>

Jewish women performed a number of rituals at the tomb, including reciting Psalms and *thhines*, crying, praying (while facing the tomb, in contrast to men, who prayed facing Jerusalem), collecting dust from its floor, writing their names on its walls, placing written requests, and kissing the tomb itself. As the scholar Susan Starr Sered has noted in her excellent work on Rachel's Tomb, these devotional practices mirror Jewish women's rituals at other sites, such as the cemetery.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, by the turn of the century, supplicants had begun to measure Rachel's Tomb with red string, which was then given to needy individuals and, in particular, to infertile women. This practice most likely grew out of the Eastern European Jewish women's ritual known as "laying wicks," that is, measuring graves, mentioned in chapter 6.

The three most popular times for visiting Rachel's Tomb were the traditional anniversary of her death on the eleventh day of Heshvan, the month of Elul, and the *erev* (evening) of Rosh Hodesh, the monthly holiday commemorating the new moon.<sup>36</sup> Significantly, Jewish women had long treated Elul and Rosh Hodesh with special reverence. A number of *tkhines* were composed for women to recite on Rosh Hodesh, which came to be seen as a women's festival because of the symbolic connection between the monthly cycle of the moon (*levana*) and the menstrual cycle. During the month of Elul, many women visited the graves of their relatives, and so-called professional women mourners were in great demand for their services. It is not surprising, therefore, that Elul and Rosh Hodesh became particularly important periods for women's worship at Rachel's Tomb.

Miriam Burlah provides a vivid description of the lively scene that unfolded every Elul at Rachel's Tomb:

During every month of Elul the road from the Jaffa Gate in the direction of Hebron was noisy with a great crowd of pilgrims to Rachel's Tomb our mother. Family after family go with small children, the elderly, and the sick traveling in carts or on donkeys, loaded with baskets, sacks, and bundles, mats, and blankets. And the young walk behind them on foot. Group after group pass by in dance and song and the sound of drums and ululations [cries of joy from Middle Eastern women]. From within the building of the Tomb the prayers and heartrending cries of Ashkenazi women are heard all day. They embrace the tombstone, cry loudly, and plead vigorously with "Muter Rochel" to intercede on their behalf in Gan Eden [the Garden of Eden]. . . . Sephardic women lean on the tombstone, their faces in their hands, crying silently and whispering prayers and supplications.

Someone stretches red strings around the tombstones which are tied around painful places, a tested remedy to heal aches. They make bracelets from them for painful arms and legs.<sup>37</sup>

Burlah goes on to describe the eating, drinking, and dancing that would take place around the tomb, as well as the matches that were arranged between young people—a combination of activities found at pilgrimage sites throughout the world. Of special interest are her observations concerning Sephardic and Ashkenazic women, whom she describes as engaging in shared as well as differing practices at the site. Burlah's colorful account is particularly valuable because it represents rare eyewitness testimony from a Jewish woman herself concerning the religious rituals of Jewish women in Palestine.

With this context in mind, let us now turn to descriptions of the Maiden of Ludmir's visits to Rachel's Tomb. Unger states that "every erev Rosh Hodesh she would gather a group of women and lead them to Rachel's Tomb, where she would pray with them and recite tkhines."38 Quoting from his father's diary, Ephraim Taubenhaus writes, "I entered and remained standing by the side. . . . She was relating excitedly the prayer that was held yesterday at Rachel's Tomb. Every Rosh Hodesh, the Maiden of Ludmir would lead her followers to Rachel's Tomb to organize a magnificent prayer service with greatly impressive rituals. On the tomb of Rachel our mother, the Maiden of Ludmir would spread out all the requests that were accumulated during the past four weeks."39 Finally, Raddock cites his informant as telling him that on the eleventh day of Heshvan, the Maiden would lead a "solemn religious procession to Mother Rachel's Tomb on the road to Chevron, where she held a nightlong vigil and chanted Psalms appropriate for the occasion. Thus, as the greybearded Chossid recalled, the Maid of Ludmir continued to the end."40

These accounts situate the Maiden of Ludmir at the geographical center of Jewish women's religiosity in nineteenth-century Palestine. Her behavior at Rachel's Tomb suggests that she saw herself as an intermediary between the biblical Matriarch and her own female followers. Rather than the male figure of the rebbe, the female figures of the *firzogerin* (prayer leader) and the *klogmuter* (professional mourner) may have had a greater impact on the Maiden of Ludmir's devotional practices at the tomb as well as on the perceptions of her devotees. Far from denying her connection to other women, these descriptions suggest that the Maiden of Ludmir cultivated relationships with them while living in Jerusalem.

This is a critically important point. The Maiden of Ludmir was apparently not only a woman leader but *a leader of women*.

Her special commitment to other women can also be seen in the Maiden's celebration of Simhat Torah, when, according to Taubenhaus and Raddock, crowds of pilgrims would arrive from Hebron, Tiberias, and Sefad to receive her blessing. Unger writes,

The old Jew Reb Yosl Akiba's told me that the Maiden of Ludmir herself would make *hakofes* [circumambulations] on Simhat Torah. The order of her *hakofes* was as follows: the Hasidim would take out two Torah scrolls. One scroll would be placed on the *balemer* [reading platform], and the second would be taken by the *meshamesh* [assistant], who would go out in front of the Maiden of Ludmir. The women used to sit below in the *beys medresh* and the men above in the women's section. After the *hakofes*, the Maiden of Ludmir used to distribute *lekekh* [sponge cake] and alcohol. Another one of her customs on Simhat Torah was for women to come all day and kiss the Torah scroll.<sup>41</sup>

What kind of people participated in the Maiden of Ludmir's court in Jerusalem? Her biographers mention male followers — who apparently sat in the "women's section" of her study house — but they do not indicate their backgrounds. By contrast, they explicitly depict her earliest and most numerous followers as elderly women of modest means. This makes sense for a number of reasons. According to the best estimate of demographers, women constituted a majority of the Jewish population of Palestine during this period. A high percentage were older widows whose attention was no longer split between familial duties and religious devotion. They had settled in the Holy Land out of piety and were therefore interested in exploring the wide range of spiritual opportunities available to them. Like a majority of the Jewish population of Palestine, most of these women relied on some form of charity to support themselves.<sup>42</sup>

Initially, according to Unger, elderly women visited the Maiden of Ludmir in Jerusalem because of the charity that she distributed to all who requested it.<sup>43</sup> These women, known as *tsedoke klaperkes* (literally, "charity rattlers") in Yiddish, began to tell stories about the miracles performed by the Maiden. One group of women who gathered in Nisan's Bak's synagogue, officially known as Tiferet Yisrael (established in 1872), the chief house of worship for Volhynian Hasidim in Jerusalem, spread the rumor that the Maiden had exorcised a dybbuk from a young girl. When people rushed to question the Maiden of Ludmir about her supposed feat, she demurred that the girl had talked herself into becoming ill and merely needed someone to talk her out of it. Yet after listening to the

women in the Old City tell one miracle tale after another about her, the Maiden began to believe in her own legend. For the first time since her marriage, she felt that the *ruah ha-qodesh* had finally returned to her and that she was once again in full command of her spiritual powers.

Unger's description reflects the dialectical process involved in the rise of any charismatic religious figure: the interplay between the material and spiritual needs of devotees on the one hand and the self-perception of the holy person on the other. Even if a pious individual does not initially believe in her own holiness, the subtle and not-so-subtle encouragement of those around her may ultimately convince her that she has, in fact, been chosen by God to lead others. A more recent Hasidic example of this phenomenon involves the last Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menahem Mendel Schneerson, who only reluctantly agreed to assume the mantle of leadership when his father-in-law, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, died. Over time, many of Schneerson's followers began to insinuate and, finally, to insist that the Sorbonne-trained engineer was the messiah. It is difficult to gauge the precise impact that years of this veneration had on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's self-image, but it must have been considerable. After all, a man who thought he would spend the rest of his life as an electrical engineer ended up as a messianic figure for tens of thousands of followers. Like Schneerson, the Maiden of Ludmir may have begun to believe her own legend.

Unfortunately, very little attention has been paid to the lives of Jewish women in the Old Yishuv (settlement) in general or the city of Jerusalem in particular.44 Some of the best sources of information are the Montefiore widow lists, the nineteenth-century cemetery inscriptions recorded by Asher Leyb of Brisk in his book Helkat Mehokek, as well as contemporary newspapers, memoirs, and Hevra Qadisha records. 45 Among the working women of Jerusalem described in these sources, we find Breyna Friedman, who ran a store and sold coal to support her family; Golda Zisker, who milled groats, lentils, and salt; Rene Horodner, who ran a heder in her house, where she taught girls to read Hebrew; and Fruma, a forty-five-year-old widow from Ludmir who sold food for a living.<sup>46</sup> Many women are described as midwives or healers, including Haya from Pinsk and Palomba De Ruso from the Balkans.<sup>47</sup> Some are remembered for their charity, such as Hannah Haya, who donated money in memory of her husband; Shlomo Aharon, who helped to establish the beyt ha-midrash ha-elyon (a synagogue) in Mea Shearim; and Zippa Kaminetz and Rivkeh Wolfensohn, who helped support a women's-aid organization in the same neighborhood.48

Still other women are recalled for their learning, piety, and spiritual gifts. In the *pinkas* book of Jerusalem's Hevra Qadisha, we find an intriguing reference to "Joseph, husband of the woman Haya the Prophetess [?]" who died in the month of Tishrei, 1867.<sup>49</sup> Whereas Jewish women were typically identified as the wife of so-and-so, here was a man apparently identified as the husband of a holy woman, of a prophetess no less. Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate more information about Haya or how she acquired what appears to be her title. One Jewish woman from Jerusalem known for her learning was Lipele, whom the memoirist Yitzhak Yaakov Yellin (a member of one of the Old Yishuv's most prominent families) described as follows:

She was not only the "wife of a *haver*," that is to say, the wife of a *talmid hakham* [scholar], she was herself a "*haver*." A *talmid hakham*. And not just a *haver*, but also an author. She composed a book of *tkhinot* for women. A *tkhinah* from Jerusalem for lighting Sabbath candles. A *tkhinah* from Jerusalem for making a living. A *tkhinah* from Jerusalem for becoming pregnant, for ensuring a healthy birth, and the raising of boys and girls for Torah and the fear of heaven. And Lipele, first a woman, second a scholar, and third a daughter of Jerusalem, the holy city . . . knew how to season her *tkhinot* with Torah aphorisms and appropriate rabbinic sayings. <sup>50</sup>

Even this small sample reveals the great range of roles that Jewish women played in nineteenth-century Jerusalem. Despite their numerical, social, and economic significance, however, women were routinely treated as second-class citizens within Jewish religious settings. The following example illustrates this phenomenon: Although, as we saw above, a woman had donated the money for construction of the *beyt ha-midrash ha-elyon* in Mea Shearim, its original structure did not include a permanent women's section. Instead, women had to ascend a ladder to pray in a makeshift space so crowded that during Sabbath prayers one woman actually fainted from the crush of bodies. Finally, in 1885, a full three years after the main structure was built, a decent women's section was completed at a cost of less than one fifth of what had been spent on the men's section. <sup>51</sup>

It is possible that among the Hasidic women who packed into the *beyt ha-midrash ha-elyon* in Mea Shearim during the early 1880s were devotees of the Maiden of Ludmir. Unger indicates that the Maiden's female followers were of Ashkenazic origin, since he portrays them as learning *Taytch-Humash* and women's (that is, Yiddish) literature with her. Of course the Maiden of Ludmir would have had an easier time communi-

cating with Ashkenazi and, in particular, Hasidic women, with whom she shared the same language, religious traditions, and cultural background. Moreover, the Maiden had settled in Hasidic neighborhoods in Jerusalem and was therefore surrounded by other women from Eastern Europe. Despite these factors, Joseph Gross offers a different profile of her followers. According to him, the Maiden had "numerous followers, particularly among the Yemenite women, and even among the Arabs."<sup>52</sup>

As we saw above, Jewish women from a variety of backgrounds worshiped together at Rachel's Tomb. The cross-cultural character of this worship indicates that Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jewish women in Palestine shared devotional spaces with one another, an openness that may also have extended to the cult of the Maiden of Ludmir. It is unclear, however, why Yemenite women in particular would have been attracted to the Maiden. While a number of Jewish women saints existed in Morocco—for example, the famous holy women known as Solica ha Zaddikah and Lalla Miryam ha Zaddikah—the scholar Issachar Ben-Ami has written that "there were no cults of holy women in other Sephardic communities." Perhaps, however, the Muslim practice of venerating female saints had influenced the Yemenite Jewish followers of the Maiden to seek her out.

The widespread Muslim acceptance of holy women also sheds light on Gross's other claim, namely, that Arab women in Jerusalem venerated the Maiden of Ludmir. The current antagonism between Jews and Arabs should not obscure the complex and frequently positive relations between the groups in Ottoman Palestine. In the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem where the Maiden of Ludmir initially settled, Jews and Arabs lived and worked side by side — Jewish gold workers from North Africa and clothes merchants from Eastern Europe next to Arab fruit and vegetable dealers, for example. Though they faced greater linguistic and cultural barriers than did Middle Eastern Jews, Ashkenazim also developed extensive contacts with their Arab neighbors, a fact attested to by the many Arabic loanwords in the "Palestinian Yiddish" dialect spoken by Eastern European Jewish residents of nineteenth-century Jerusalem. We might also recall the close, though in his mind, troubling, relationship that Nahman of Bratslav had with an Arab "youth" when he visited the Holy Land.54 Although much more research needs to be done on how Jewish and Arab women interacted in this period, it is certainly possible that Arab women in need of help sought out the Maiden of Ludmir for a blessing. Indeed, this scenario is supported by an old Jerusalem folk tale about a Jewish woman named Malkah De Parnes:

A certain woman of Jerusalem, Malkah by name, a daughter of one of the oldest and most pedigreed Sephardi families, volunteered to arrange the water, candles, chairs and benches for those who visit the Wall, and she used to store the various articles in one of the buildings near the Wall. She performed this pious deed for many years and no Arab ever harmed her, because everybody respected this saintly woman. The wives of Arab dignitaries, and even Moslem religious leaders, used to send messengers to her in secret to ask her to pray for them and their families at the Wall. 55

Whether the Maiden of Ludmir tried to expand her following to include Middle Eastern Jewish and even Arab women is an intriguing question — perhaps related to Taubenhaus's rather enigmatic remark that she dressed like an Arab woman. In any case, there are signs that the Maiden was not completely satisfied with her original devotees in Jerusalem and may have sought to go beyond her initial circle of Hasidic followers. For example, Unger writes that unlike the "simple and innocent village Jews" who had once followed her in Ludmir, the Maiden suspected that "the Jews and Jewesses of Jerusalem who told miracle tales about her did so with the intention of getting more money." Taubenhaus also portrays the Maiden as ambivalent about her life in Palestine and, in particular, about the way she was perceived or, rather, misperceived by others:

My father [Meir] contemplated the personality of the Maiden of Ludmir; he tried to understand her. He succeeded in seeing her on several occasions, engaging in long and short conversations on a number of subjects. In particular, he yearned to know about her deeds in the past and became convinced that there was no present and no future for her in the land [of Israel]. She lived primarily on memories of the past and greatly missed the good old days when people knew her greatness and appreciated her worth.<sup>57</sup>

On the one hand, therefore, both Unger and Taubenhaus claim that the Maiden of Ludmir successfully reestablished herself as a holy woman, even as a woman rebbe, in Jerusalem. On the other, they portray her as unhappy with her followers and nostalgic for the good old days in Ludmir. Taken together, their testimonies complicate any attempt to portray the Maiden of Ludmir's life in Palestine as an unmitigated success. She was almost certainly viewed as a holy woman by others, but she may have been ambivalent about her own status.

The Maiden of Ludmir arrived in Palestine seeking to recover her former role as a charismatic leader, apparently achieving mixed results, as we have just seen. Like many other Jewish immigrants, she also hoped to benefit from the mystical significance of the Holy Land. Indeed, several biographers describe the Maiden of Ludmir as actively engaging in the Kabbalah during this period. According to Taubenhaus, "Hannah from Ludmir also had a great desire to become involved in the Kabbalah. Her stormy soul longed for esoteric wisdom. She was even interested in knowing what was going on in Sefad and wanted to know about the lives of Jews in the city of the holy Ari."58 Unger writes that "women declared that she [the Maiden] recited portions of the Zohar by heart" while at the Western Wall, a description that jibes with Nahman Shemen's observation that the Maiden of Ludmir's "zeal was so strong that even in old age, when her eyes were failing, she would teach from memory."59

By far the most detailed and compelling tale of the Maiden's kabbalistic activities in Palestine appears in Mordechai Biber's Hebrew account. Biber writes that he heard the following "legendary tale" from Horodezky, who apparently never wrote it down himself:

One day she invited an elderly practitioner of the kabbalah ma'asit [practical Kabbalah] to help her end the exile by means of mystical oaths and permutations. To carry out their mission they decided to isolate themselves in one of the caves outside Jerusalem. They picked out a cave, set a time, and also appointed a third man to serve as a "guard" to prevent them from transgressing the prohibition of yihud [a man and woman being alone together]. After all the "preparations" and mystical permutations [yihudim], the Ludmirer went to the designated place, entered the cave, and waited for the old man. However, a lot of time passed and the old man did not arrive. She continued to wait until she lost her patience, left the cave, and returned home. And this is what happened: just when the old man was setting out for the cave, a white-haired man with a dignified face appeared before him. The old man welcomed him, as was proper. The guest entered and engaged him in conversation for an hour. Meanwhile, the old man forgot about the important matter that was before him. The legend ends like this: the whitehaired man was Elijah the Prophet, who had been sent from heaven to break up what the two intended to do, for the time of the redemption had not yet arrived.60

From one perspective, this story is a rather typical example of an Elijah tale, a popular folk genre in which the biblical prophet Elijah appears in disguise to perform a miracle, frequently one related to his traditional role as the harbinger of the messiah. From another perspective, however, this story is unique in the annals of Jewish mysticism. While other Jewish women (like Francisa Sarah) are depicted as visionaries and soothsayers, the Maiden of Ludmir is the only woman in the history of Judaism to be depicted as a Kabbalist in her own right. I myself am not making any

claims about whether the Maiden actually engaged in the Kabbalah. We will never be able to confirm this possibility. Yet it is important to appreciate the significance of the literary description itself. The people who initially told the tale most likely believed that it was true; they probably believed that the Maiden had, in fact, attempted to bring the messiah by means of the mystical techniques developed by Isaac Luria and his disciples. Whether or not it is grounded in a real event, therefore, this tale testifies to the formidable spiritual reputation of the Maiden of Ludmir. For even if she did not actually engage in the kabbalistic activities attributed to her, the important point is that some people apparently believed that she *could* have done these things, in the same way that people believed in the miracle tales of the Baal Shem Tov and other male Hasidic masters.

Appropriately, the Maiden of Ludmir's death, like her life, has inspired different interpretations. Unlike most of her biographers, Horodezky claims ignorance about the circumstances of her death, writing that "the place of her life and the place of her death in the land of Israel are unknown," though he admits that various legends circulated about these events. <sup>61</sup> Joseph Gross and Charles Raddock both state that the Maiden of Ludmir died in 1905 at the age of ninety. <sup>62</sup> Of course this chronology reflects the apparently incorrect assumption that the Maiden was born in 1815. In his published work, Unger writes that the Maiden was over ninety when she died, while in unpublished manuscripts he cites Yitzhak Evan as giving her age as ninety-three and claims that when she died, five hundred gold rubles were found in her possession, an indication of the substantial wealth she had brought with her from Ludmir. <sup>63</sup>

Nahman Shemen, who gives the Maiden's year of birth as 1805, offers two possible years for her death: 1895 and 1892.<sup>64</sup> The latter year also appears in Ephraim Taubenhaus's first account (published in 1952), which he dedicates to the "sixtieth anniversary of her death."<sup>65</sup> By contrast, Taubenhaus does not cite a year of death in the account he attributes to his father. This omission is striking, since Taubenhaus describes his father, Meir, as "greatly impressed" by the "large funeral procession" that the residents of Jerusalem supposedly organized in honor of the Maiden of Ludmir. Wouldn't Meir Taubenhaus have recorded the date of such a memorable event in his diary?

Moreover, if the Maiden of Ludmir's death had inspired such a large funeral procession, wouldn't it have appeared in contemporary news accounts? *Havatselet*, the weekly Hebrew newspaper that served Jerusalem's Hasidic community from 1870 into the twentieth century, fre-

quently published obituaries of notable people, including, on occasion, women. Yet none of the issues of the newspaper from 1892, 1895, or 1905 mention the Maiden of Ludmir's death. 66 Of course this does not mean that the Maiden did not die in one of these years, but it does strongly suggest that if she did, her death was not considered newsworthy by the members of the male Hasidic establishment of Jerusalem who published *Havatselet*. This would tend to undermine the view that the Maiden of Ludmir achieved a large following in Jerusalem, although it is also possible that by the time she died, her influence had markedly decreased or that because her followers were largely poor and working-class women she was not perceived as an important figure by the male editors of *Havatselet*.

As we have seen, the Maiden of Ludmir was apparently considered part of the Volhynian Hasidic community of Jerusalem as late as 1875, when she was probably sixty-nine years old. If she died in Jerusalem, as her biographers suggest, then we would expect her name to appear in the archives of the city's Hevra Qadisha Hasidim, whose records — including those for women — go back to the mid-nineteenth century. According to these records, six Hasidic women named Hannah Rochel died in Jerusalem around the turn of the twentieth century. Because they are listed as coming from other communities in Eastern Europe and have fathers whose names are not Monesh, however, it is unlikely that any of these women are the Maiden of Ludmir.

A more promising candidate is a woman named Rochel Hannah bat (that is, daughter of) Monesh, who died on June 29 (the twenty second of Tammuz), 1888, and was buried in the Old Volin section of the Mount of Olives cemetery.<sup>67</sup> Although her name is listed as Rochel Hannah rather than Hannah Rochel, we should remember that this is also how the Maiden of Ludmir's name appears to be listed in the Montefiore census list from 1866. Unfortunately, the woman's town of origin is not listed in the Hevra Qadisha records.<sup>68</sup> Nor do issues of *Havatselet* from the summer of 1888 mention the Maiden of Ludmir's death during this period. Nevertheless, it is tempting to identify Rochel Hannah bat Monesh with Hannah Rochel bat Monesh—the Maiden of Ludmir.

Unger writes that the Maiden of Ludmir was buried on the Mount of Olives.<sup>69</sup> In an unpublished manuscript, he claims to have seen the grave himself, but this detail is missing from his published account.<sup>70</sup> On the anniversary (*yartseit*) of her death, Unger adds that candles were lit and prayers offered at the grave. Intriguingly, Joseph Gross writes, "To this day, on the anniversary of her death, a number of women, chiefly from the

Sephardic and Yemenite communities, visit her grave, and pray over it."<sup>71</sup> Since Gross's account appeared in 1936, this suggests that decades after her death the Maiden's grave was still considered a holy site. The custom of visiting saints' graves — known as *hillulah* in Hebrew — is particularly popular among Jews from North Africa. Thus Gross's claim makes sense within the wider context of North African Jewish devotional practices.<sup>72</sup>

A Hasidic tradition currently circulating in Israel locates the Maiden of Ludmir's final resting place not in Jerusalem but in Sefad, where her unmarked gravestone supposedly lies near the tomb of the Kabbalist Isaac Luria. The Maiden finally settled in Sefad, according to this tradition, after unsuccessfully attempting to bring the messiah in Jerusalem and Tiberias.73 Last but not least, in a postwar volume dedicated to the devastated Jewish communities of Volhynia - one of the first such works to be published – a former resident of Ludmir completed his account with the following words: "Among the tombstones [in the town cemetery] was also that of the 'Pious Virgin,' a legendary figure in the collective memory of the people, whose life was dedicated to worshiping the Creator: she used to pray every day - morning, afternoon, and evening - and even used to lay tefillin and set aside time for gemara [the Aramaic section of the Talmud] and pilpul [talmudic disputation]."74 Not only do the author's remarks about the Maiden practicing pilpul contradict those accounts that limit her rabbinic learning to aggadic (nonlegal) material, but his version of the Maiden's final resting place flies in the face of every other tradition, except, of course, the one I began this book with - Ansky's supposed search for the Maiden's tombstone in Ludmir. And so we have come full circle without solving the mystery of the Maiden.

When the Maiden of Ludmir was born at the beginning of the nine-teenth century, Volhynia had only recently become part of the Russian Empire, and Hasidism was in the process of becoming a dynastic movement with courts throughout Eastern Europe. When she died at the century's end, the first Zionists had arrived in Palestine and Hasidism was in decline, though certainly not as precipitously as some observers claimed or hoped. Throughout it all, the Maiden of Ludmir remained committed to the extraordinary piety she had embraced as a young child. This is an important point. The Maiden of Ludmir never appears to have wavered in her religious devotion. Despite the hardship and persecution that she experienced, the Maiden continued on the unique path that she had chosen for herself.

## CONCLUSION

## Tracing the Maiden

For more than five years, I searched for traces of the Maiden of Ludmir in archival material from the Russian Empire and Israel, nineteenth- and twentieth-century newspapers, Hasidic hagiographies, post-Holocaust "memory books," interviews with former and current residents of Ludmir, and my own visits to Eastern Europe and Israel. My principle guides on this journey were the native daughters and sons of Ludmir who shared their memories with me: Ansky, the poet-ethnographer in whose footsteps I attempted to follow, and the Maiden of Ludmir herself who always seemed to be present, yet not quite, while I was writing this book. I have sought to produce a "history from below" about a remarkable woman whose life — like those of her female contemporaries — has largely been ignored by standard works of history. At the same time, my biographical approach has drawn inspiration from the rabbinic style of interpretation called *midrash*, a word derived from a Hebrew root meaning to seek or search. Like a midrash, this book's narrative comprises many voices, some harmonious, some conflicting, some even contradictory, but all revealing a different face of the Maiden of Ludmir.

Throughout the process of writing, the Maiden of Ludmir has remained an elusive subject. Frequently, just when I thought I had finally gotten a handle on who she was, the Maiden would slip away. In retrospect, this helped me to understand why the genre of biography (includ-

ing autobiography) is so rare among premodern Jews.<sup>2</sup> It also helped me to understand something important about my own relatives who had grown up in traditional Jewish communities in Europe before the Holocaust. For them, and I have come to believe, for the Maiden of Ludmir as well, the sense of an individual self, of a subject disconnected from ancestors, traditions, and community fundamentally did not exist. Of course this does not mean that Jews, including the Maiden, lacked selves or that they were not individuals in some sense, but it does mean that these selves were always imbricated in a complex matrix that constituted Jewish cultural identity and that did not lend itself naturally to traditional biography. In this regard, the Maiden of Ludmir is a particularly complex and illuminating figure. On the one hand, she attempted to remain loyal to her community and to traditional Judaism, despite the social forces that threatened to alienate her. On the other, her behavior potentially undermined those same communal structures, and, just as important, reflected an incipient spirit of individuation that hinted at the modern transformation of Eastern European Jews going on around her.

In an essay on Plato's *Symposium*, David Halperin has written critically of "the traditional male strategy of speaking *about* women by speaking *for* women." As a biographer, and in particular, as a male biographer of a female subject, I have struggled not to speak for the Maiden of Ludmir, but I have also struggled to hear her voice in the absence of any writings of her own. By situating her story culturally, historically, and theologically, I have attempted to reconstruct her life as she may have lived it, *without making my voice her voice*.

It is tempting to see the Maiden as a pioneer in the struggle for Jewish women's spiritual empowerment. This is how some religious Jewish feminists have interpreted her life. For example, in a recent essay, Rabbi Leah Novick has speculated that "contemporary Jewish women are emulating the Maid of Ludomir when we pray for the redemption of the planet and a time of justice that will include our full participation in Jewish spiritual life." Insofar as women like Novick have drawn inspiration from her example, it is possible to trace a thread from the Maiden of Ludmir to the growing number of contemporary Jewish women who lead prayer groups, wear tallis and tefillin, and serve as rabbis. As Novick has written, "there can be no doubt that we are anchored in generations of spiritual devotion that links us back to the very first matriarchs."

At the same time, however, it must be recalled that the Maiden of Ludmir has a very different significance in the Hasidic world. Precisely those qualities that appeal to some Jewish feminists — her independence, her practice of rituals traditionally limited to men, and her spiritual leadership of other Jewish women—are viewed as threatening by many Hasidim. Others, if they ever think about her at all, dismiss her as an oddity whose influence on the Hasidic movement, including how it regarded the place of women, was negligible. In this regard, it is worth remembering Nechama Ariel's observation that in Ludmir itself, the Maiden's example had no discernable impact on the lives of subsequent generations of Hasidic women in the community. Even the Lubavitcher Hasidim interviewed by Robin Goldberg who sympathized with the Maiden of Ludmir actually viewed her as a striking example of how women have always enjoyed religious equality within traditional Judaism rather than as an inspiration for radically transforming the roles of women. These examples provide support for Ada Rapoport-Albert's argument that the Maiden of Ludmir's story ultimately serves to reify rather than to undermine the lower status of women within Hasidism.

Would the Maiden of Ludmir have accepted any of these interpretations of her life? Did she seek to inspire other women to challenge the limits placed on them by traditional Jewish society, or did she see herself as a unique figure whose behavior should not be emulated? After asking myself these questions for more than half a decade, I have come to believe that we will never know the answers. Unlike so many of her female Jewish contemporaries, the Maiden of Ludmir was neither written out of history nor lost to memory, but her own voice is missing from the record. I hope that by better understanding the ways in which her story has been told and retold by others, we can at least hear its echoes.

For many scholars, the Maiden of Ludmir's story provides striking evidence of how traditional Eastern European Jewish culture severely restricted women's religious opportunities. Thus Ada Rapoport-Albert, in her groundbreaking essay on the Maiden, described her as a "deviant, whose ultimate failure serves precisely to reinforce the boundaries which she attempts to cross, not to undermine them," while Chava Weissler has called her "a failed *tsaddik*, a deviant who could not play her chosen part." These scholarly views of the Maiden of Ludmir stand in sharp contrast to the standard interpretation of her story in what are best described as apologetic works on the Hasidic movement.

Such works, appealing primarily to an Orthodox Jewish audience, present the Maiden of Ludmir as the most dramatic evidence of women's equality in Hasidism. Examples of this genre may be found in English, Hebrew, Yiddish and other languages. Menachem Brayer, an author of one such work, has written, "As far as the role of the woman in the

Hasidic movement is concerned, we can assert that she enjoyed complete equality of opportunity in religious, spiritual, and traditional life." On the possibility of women leaders in the movement he adds, "Hasidism, the people's movement, did not drive the woman out of its pale, as rabbinism frequently did. Indeed, the woman took full part in the development of Hasidism, leaving her indelible mark upon it, not merely in an ancillary role but even in leadership positions." Finally, he writes that among these women leaders, the "woman Rebbe who achieved the most fame among the masses in Volhynia was 'the Maiden of Ludmir."

Despite their sharp ideological differences, these approaches have something important in common: they treat the Maiden of Ludmir as a powerful symbol of a broader social phenomenon. For some, the Maiden of Ludmir's story proves that Eastern European Jewish women could not function as independent religious leaders, while for others, it confirms that Hasidism empowered women in general and women religious leaders in particular. For the first group, the Maiden of Ludmir was an anomalous figure who ultimately failed in her attempt to live the life of a rebbe. For the second, she occupied a place — albeit a special one — in a continuum of female Hasidic leaders.<sup>8</sup>

Like both groups of interpreters, I agree that the Maiden of Ludmir's life has broader implications for understanding the religious lives of Eastern European Jewish women. On the one hand, accounts of her life dramatically and poignantly reveal the strict spiritual and social limitations imposed on Eastern European Jewish women — including Hasidic women — by the male-dominated religious establishment. On the other, the same accounts shed light — if only elliptically — on the ways in which some Eastern European Jewish women did manage to function as important religious figures in their communities. While some of these women worked within the male-dominated establishment, a greater number achieved a measure of power *even as they were excluded from official arenas of religious authority*. Thus it is important not to reduce the entirety of lived experience within Hasidic communities to the male elites who dominated them officially.

Ultimately I agree with Rapoport-Albert's view that the Maiden was perceived as a "deviant" — with one important caveat. While the Maiden was apparently viewed as a deviant by the male religious authorities in Ludmir, she was respected, even venerated, by her followers, a group that appears to have consisted primarily of poor and working-class women and men. If we deny this level of her significance, then we also deny the concerns and perspectives of the disenfranchised members of her com-

munity. For similar reasons, Rapoport-Albert's depiction of the Maiden of Ludmir as a "failure" tells only part of her story. Although the Maiden of Ludmir did not transform Hasidism into a more egalitarian movement (and it is not clear that this was her goal), she does appear to have succeeded in living as an independent spiritual leader for more than half a century in Eastern Europe and Palestine. Was the Maiden of Ludmir therefore a failure in her own eyes or in the eyes of those who venerated her? Reports of her life in Palestine reveal how difficult it is to answer this question. The male leaders of the Volhynian community in Jerusalem seem to have referred to the Maiden respectfully as ha-rabbanit hazaddeket, and many accounts describe the large following she achieved in Palestine. Yet she is depicted as never having recovered from the loss of her authority in Ludmir.

That the Maiden of Ludmir's story sheds light on the lives of Jewish women in the Pale of Settlement is one of the basic assertions of this book. However, the Maiden should not be reduced to a symbol of her female contemporaries' experience. This is a particularly easy trap to fall into when writing about an individual who belongs to a group that has been largely "written out of history," such as the Jewish women of preand early-modern Eastern Europe. In an attempt to fill in the bigger picture, the historian may de-emphasize or even ignore those features of the individual that she does not consider to be representative of the collective experience. With this danger in mind, I have attempted to uncover and explore the broader implications of the Maiden of Ludmir's story without ignoring its many unique and unrepresentative features.

One of the most striking and, for the biographer, frustrating aspects of the Maiden of Ludmir's life is that she does not appear to have written anything herself. We cannot merely attribute this lacuna to the fact that the Maiden was a Jewish women living in early-modern Eastern Europe. Indeed, as Weissler has shown, many *tkhines* texts were written at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries by other Jewish women from Volhynia. Of course it is possible that, like these women, the Maiden of Ludmir did write, but that her manuscripts were never published.

Seen within the broader context of Jewish mysticism and the early Hasidic movement, however, the apparent lack of writings by the Maiden is not at all surprising. Gershom Scholem has observed that Jewish mystics, unlike their counterparts in other traditions, were "no friends of mystical autobiography." This aversion to writing was inherited by many early Hasidic masters, particularly those known for their charismatic style

of leadership, such as the Baal Shem Tov and Shlomo Karliner.<sup>11</sup> In light of this tendency, the Maiden of Ludmir does not appear exceptional. Yet these and other Hasidic holy men had followers who wrote down their teachings, stories, and miracles. By contrast, none of the Maiden of Ludmir's devotees appear to have written anything about her. Perhaps they lacked the education to write, or perhaps they were too poor or too marginalized by the Hasidic establishment to have their writings published.

Scholars of medieval Christian holy women have emphasized the importance of comparing the works of male hagiographers to the writings produced by their female subjects. Some of these holy women, including Hadewijch of Antwerp and Mechthild of Magdeburg, composed their own accounts, while others, such as Margery Kempe and Hildegard of Bingen, had scribes who wrote for them. Many described the process of writing as a spiritual activity in itself, as Marguerite d'Oingt declared: "I know that she who put these things into writing was so ravished in our Lord one night that it seemed to her that she saw all these things. . . . She thought that if she were to put these things in writing, as Our Lord had sent them to her heart, her heart would be more relieved for it." <sup>12</sup>

Katharina Wilson and Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff have pointed out that medieval Christian holy women who wrote about their experiences tended to fit a common profile: they were educated virgins or widows with a "modicum of scholarly idleness," a measure of financial independence, and an abundance of religious zeal. From this perspective, the Maiden of Ludmir looks like an ideal candidate to write about her experiences. That she apparently did not reveals the complexities — and limits — of cross-cultural comparison.

Was the Maiden of Ludmir a unique figure? To answer this question we must first examine the evidence about women leaders in Hasidism. To do this, we must turn to the same apologetic literature that treats the Maiden of Ludmir as conclusive proof of the equality of women in the Hasidic movement. These accounts mention other Hasidic women known for their lofty spiritual status, devoted followers, ethical teachings, and/or healing powers. Indeed an examination of such literature reveals a standard roll call of Hasidic holy women, typically beginning with Edel, the Baal Shem Tov's daughter. The list of holy women — all relatives of powerful male figures — includes (but is not limited to) Feige, the mother of Nahman of Bratslav and granddaughter of the Besht; Freida, the daughter of Shneur Zalman of Liadi; Hannah Haya, the daughter of

Mottel of Chernobyl; and Malka, the wife of Shalom Rokeach of Belz. We also find the eighteenth-century woman known as Yente the "Seer" or "Prophetess," a legendary contemporary of the Baal Shem Tov, who, unlike the other holy women in this list, did not belong to a prestigious Hasidic family.

Does the existence of these and other women mean that Hasidism encouraged female leaders? In addressing this question, it must first be noted that the vast majority of the holy women championed by apologetic works on the Hasidic movement are never mentioned – and even more rarely described in any detail-by hagiographies produced by Hasidim themselves. This absence of holy women from traditional hagiographical literature suggests that male Hasidic authors were indifferent at best and hostile at worst to such women. By stating this, I am not denying that some holy women exercised considerable influence among female and male Hasidic followers and sympathizers. Indeed if we believe the written accounts about them, it would appear that many holy women received the support and approbation of powerful male members of their own families. I am suggesting, however, that whatever claims are made concerning their status by apologetic authors, and however popular they may have been during their own lifetimes, these women were considered either too problematic or not important enough by male Hasidic hagiographers to warrant literary representation. This nearly universal absence of holy women from traditional Hasidic hagiographies implies that they occupied a much more ambivalent place in the movement than the rosy picture painted by some contemporary authors would imply.<sup>14</sup>

Rather than providing evidence of gender equality, I would argue that the ability of some daughters, mothers, sisters, and, more rarely, wives of male Hasidic leaders to become spiritual leaders primarily reflects the dynastic principle that became increasingly important as Hasidism entered its second and third generations. The concept of merit inherited from one's ancestors (yihus) had long been an element of Jewish culture. For centuries, men and, in a few cases, women (for example, the daughters of Rashi, the medieval Jewish exegete) had gained prestige and a measure of authority from their ties to a powerful male figure. As Hasidic leaders established power bases in particular communities, even becoming identified with them in a titular sense, they and their followers began to institutionalize the concept of yihus. Eventually this resulted in the establishment of dynasties, whose members traced their ancestry to a founding figure. While the vast majority of the people who benefited from the dynastic principle were the sons of male leaders, and more rarely

their favored pupils or sons-in-law, some female relatives also gained authority from their connection to powerful men. From this perspective, the ability of a relatively small number of female relatives of male leaders to attract devotees does not prove that Hasidism empowered women as women, any more than Benazeer Bhutto's achievements may be taken as evidence of the social equality of women in Pakistan. Indeed there are even signs that at least for some male Hasidim, the primary importance of such women was that they confirmed the awesome holiness of male leaders, that is, that even "mere" women could inherit a measure of spiritual authority by being related to a zaddik.

This handful of holy women, therefore, does not justify the claim that Hasidism advocated gender equality, and yet we cannot ignore the potential significance of these women. Most, if not all, Hasidic holy women appear to have played important roles in the spiritual lives of their female followers in particular. This may help to explain their nearly universal absence from male-authored hagiographies. Stories about them, as well as their own teachings, may have circulated orally among women and consequently may have been unknown to male Hasidic authors. There are also indications that holy women focused their teachings on issues important to women. Perhaps this diminished their significance — and their threat? — in the eyes of male members of the movement, further decreasing the likelihood that they would appear in Hasidic hagiographies, whether in a positive or a negative light.

These observations complicate any attempt to characterize the overall significance of holy women within the Hasidic movement. While stories about such women reveal their ability to function as teachers, healers, and spiritual leaders in their own communities and, in particular, among their female followers, they also reveal the strict preconditions and limits of their authority: familial ties to a powerful male figure, marriage and children, and acceptance by the male-dominated Hasidic hierarchy. As Hannah Haya of Chernobyl, the married daughter of a celebrated zaddik, is said to have declared after she miraculously detected the presence of unkosher food: "This is the power of my holy father [Mordechai of Chernobyl]. . . . He has blessed me that I should never fall prey to any transgression, and his merit has stood by me." <sup>16</sup>

Although the strict limits of their authority must be stressed, the Hasidic holy women discussed thus far form part of the complex cultural milieu in which the Maiden of Ludmir emerged as a charismatic religious leader in her own right. Such women almost certainly helped to shape the Maiden of Ludmir's self-conception and the attitudes of her followers and

opponents alike. Yet to understand the unique significance of the Maiden of Ludmir, we must first understand the ways in which she differed from the Hasidic holy women discussed above. First, the Maiden of Ludmir's religious activities were more extensive than those of these other women and more closely paralleled those of male Hasidic leaders. For example, she is said to have had a group of devoted followers called the "Maiden of Ludmir's Hasidim," and a beys medresh of her own, where she prayed and recited toyre during Sabbath seudah shelishit gatherings. Second, unlike other Hasidic holy women, the Maiden of Ludmir did not belong to a powerful family, and she is the only female (or male) Hasidic leader who refused to marry. Finally, the Maiden of Ludmir is the only woman depicted as openly challenging the authority of male Hasidic leaders and inspiring opposition - even violent opposition, according to some accounts - from members of the Hasidic establishment. Together, these elements form the portrait of an independent leader, one who succeeded in gaining a large and devoted following owing solely to her charisma and reputation for holiness.

Because of her striking resemblance to male Hasidic leaders, the Maiden of Ludmir is popularly known as the only "woman rebbe" in history. While this label is convenient and does accurately capture a number of very important aspects of her story, it can also be misleading. First, it fails to acknowledge the definitive importance of maleness to the figure of the rebbe and elides the fact that the term woman rebbe is an oxymoron from the perspective of Hasidic ideology and social convention. Unless we initially appreciate how jarring the juxtaposition of woman and rebbe would be to Hasidic ears, we cannot understand the true significance of the Maiden of Ludmir's story. The androcentric ideal of Hasidic leadership is theologically grounded in a kabbalistic tradition that identifies the human zaddik with the phallic aspect (sefirah) of God, known in Hebrew as Yesod, or "foundation". 17 While all male Hasidim sought to achieve a state of erotic communion (devekut) with the female sefirah known as Shekhinah or Malkhut, the zaddik possessed a special ability to serve as a conduit for devekut, since he literally embodied Yesod. Describing the Maiden of Ludmir as a woman rebbe begs the question of how any Jewish woman could conceive of herself, or be conceived by others, as a zaddik within this intensely androcentric, indeed, phallocentric framework.

In her work on the religious devotion of Eastern European Jewish women, Weissler has asked, "Could women identify with the feminine *seftrot*, Malkhut (Shekhinah) and Binah, as contemporary Jewish feminists sometimes argue? Conversely, could they have a special devotion to the

masculine *sefirot*, Tiferet or Yesod, parallel to the male kabbalists' devotion to Malkhut?" After analyzing the Yiddish supplicatory literature *(tkhines)* written for and sometimes by Eastern European Jewish women, Weissler answers her own questions in the negative: "Either possibility would require reinterpreting the symbol system of the *sefirot*, but the evidence suggests that, insofar as women made use of kabbalistic symbolism, they did not significantly transform its gender representations." <sup>18</sup>

Gershom Scholem, the foremost scholar of Jewish mysticism, has asserted, "There have been no women Kabbalists." Concerning the Maiden of Ludmir, Scholem added in a footnote (his only comments on her in his entire body of work), "The single case of a woman, Hannah Rachel 'the Maiden of Ludomir,' who became the spiritual leader, or Zaddik, of a Hasidic community (in the middle of the nineteenth century), constitutes no convincing evidence to the contrary."19 Yet as we have seen, many sources portray the Maiden of Ludmir as a practical and theosophical Kabbalist who distributed amulets, exorcised spirits, studied the Zohar, performed *yihudim* (mystical permutations), attempted to hasten the arrival of the messiah, and even achieved devekut. These descriptions raise the question of whether the Maiden of Ludmir - unlike the women examined by Weissler - radically reinterpreted the kabbalistic system of the sefirot. Did she identify with the Shekhinah? Is it possible that she saw herself as a spiritual male and therefore identified with Yesod? Or did she view herself as linked to the divine in a way that transcended gender? Just as important, how did the Maiden of Ludmir's followers reconcile her female sex with the androcentric ideology of the Kabbalah? Unfortunately, we will probably never know the answers to these provocative questions.

My second critique of the "woman rebbe" label is that it does not say enough about what *kind* of rebbe the Maiden of Ludmir resembled. During the first few decades of the nineteenth century, the image of the Hasidic holy man underwent a radical transformation. While charisma remained an important element of successful leadership — after all, holy men frequently competed with each other for followers — other features gained in significance. These included being the son of a leader, marrying into the family of another leader, and supporting a regal *hoyf*, or "court," through the monetary donations of followers. Unlike the growing number of male zaddikim who embraced this dynastic model of leadership, the Maiden of Ludmir recalled an earlier paradigm: the charismatic holy man who lacked a prestigious family background and lived frugally, if not ascetically. Within this older paradigm, the Maiden of Ludmir's gender

may have actually intensified her image as a leader whose authority derived solely from her own charisma and piety rather than from any external factors.

On a political level, therefore, the Maiden of Ludmir's story can be read as a powerful metaphor for two contrasting and competing modes of spiritual leadership within the Hasidic movement. The Maiden of Ludmir may have attracted followers precisely because she offered an alternative to zaddikim such as Mordechai of Chernobyl, who instituted the practice of tithing his followers to support his lavish court and fathered eight sons (known as "the eight lights of the menorah") who became leaders in their own right. In turn, members of the Hasidic establishment may have opposed the Maiden of Ludmir not only because she was a woman, but also because her form of independent, charismatic leadership represented a symbolic if not practical threat to the dynastic model that they represented.<sup>20</sup> Just as important, various authors — and, in particular, S. A. Horodezky - appear to have shaped their tellings of the Maiden of Ludmir's story to emphasize this clash of leadership styles, even employing it to critique the rise of the dynastic model, which they saw as robbing the movement of its spiritual vitality.

Related to the question of what kind of rebbe the Maiden of Ludmir most resembled is the question of what kind(s) of people she most attracted. The relationship of the nascent Hasidic movement to the various socioeconomic classes of Eastern European Jewry has been heavily debated. In recent years, the earlier view that Hasidism represented a popular movement of the masses has been challenged from a number of directions. Yet, as Michael Stanislawski has pointed out, we must be careful when attempting to distinguish between "elite" and "folk" or "popular" culture within the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe, since such boundaries were not always clearly defined and, when they did exist, were often permeable. Nor should we expect the organization of these communities to mirror the socioeconomic structures of their non-Jewish neighbors.

It is also important not to draw a simple equation between women's religious experiences and "folk" religion.<sup>21</sup> For example, as we have already seen, the vast majority of Hasidic holy women belonged to prestigious and powerful families, though they almost certainly appealed to women and, probably, to a lesser degree, to men, from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. Should such holy women be described as belonging to the realm of folk and popular religion? Indeed, do male Hasidic leaders belong to this realm? After all, rebbes appealed to followers

across socioeconomic classes, yet by the first few decades of the nineteenth century, at least, most were firmly entrenched in the establishments of their communities.

Even bearing these qualifications in mind, however, it is clear that certain differences, including differences in religious practices, did exist between social and economic classes as well as between men and women in Eastern European Jewish communities. Given such differences, it should not surprise us that many accounts of the Maiden of Ludmir's life offer explicit information concerning the socioeconomic status and gender of her followers. Most stress that the earliest and most devoted followers of the Maiden were poor and working-class women and men and refer to the special attention that the Maiden paid to her female followers.

My third critique of the woman rebbe model is that it forces the Maiden of Ludmir into a single, male paradigm of religious leadership. While its great influence cannot be denied, the Hasidic figure of the rebbe should not be uncritically accepted as the only role model available to the Maiden of Ludmir. One of the most important contributions I hope to have made in this book has been to illuminate the highly significant spiritual and cultural roles played by Jewish women in the shtetlekh of Eastern Europe. Many women served their communities as professional mourners, prayer leaders, and healers. Others did not perform specific functions, but were popularly known as "holy women" in their towns. Unlike the Hasidic holy women whom I have already discussed, the majority of these women did not belong to powerful families, nor were they part of the Hasidic establishment. Their existence is rarely acknowledged in scholarly or popular works on Eastern European Jewish culture. Indeed they have practically disappeared from the historical record, except for a handful of important but underutilized sources that attest to their cultural and religious significance. The richest sources on these women include the thick ethnographic descriptions published by Abraham Rechtman (a member of Ansky's team) and the more personal recollections of former shtetl residents. Instead of focusing exclusively on the male Hasidic figure of the rebbe, therefore, I have widened my interpretive lens to include the different female figures who may have influenced the Maiden of Ludmir and her followers.

My final critique is this: while the Maiden of Ludmir's resemblance to a Hasidic rebbe is an important element of her biography, it is by no means the only one that explains her rise to a position of leadership. Indeed the exclusive focus on her parallels with the figure of the rebbe has drawn attention away from other equally significant factors. Consider the following details, for example. First, as an only child, without any brothers to attract the attention and draw the resources of her parents, the Maiden of Ludmir apparently received the kind of education in both Yiddish and Hebrew literature typically reserved for young boys. This education played a major role in shaping her self-conception and, later, in enabling her to function as a teacher. Second, all the accounts agree that while her father did not belong to a prestigious Hasidic family, he was a successful businessman. Not only did this allow the Maiden of Ludmir to concentrate on her studies as a child – rather than working, as would have been expected in a poorer family — but it also allowed her to inherit a large sum of money when her father died. With this substantial inheritance, the Maiden of Ludmir was able to build a study house of her own and, just as important, she was not forced by economic necessity to get married, to work in menial jobs to support herself, or to depend on the community for charity, all scenarios that would have severely limited her independence and ability to function as a religious leader.

Defining the Maiden of Ludmir as a woman rebbe is part of a more general, and, in my view, problematic, tendency to depict her in exclusively male terms. Even authors whose views are radically different in other respects agree that the Maiden of Ludmir attempted to live as a male. For instance, S. A. Horodezky, in the first work published on the Maiden of Ludmir, wrote that after she received a "new and lofty soul," the Maiden "became like a man in her conduct." Writing nearly seventy years later, Ada Rapoport-Albert rightly criticized Horodezky on many points, but basically affirmed this aspect of his work: "the Maid was forced to renounce her identity as a woman, only to embrace a false identity as a man, emulating the standard discipline of ritual observance, and so also the rigour of ascetic piety traditionally confined to males. As a 'false male' she could only be regarded as an aberration of nature and a social deviation."<sup>23</sup>

We should be careful not simply to assume that the Maiden of Ludmir saw herself as assuming a male identity when she engaged in traditionally male activities, even if this is how at least some of the people around her and, certainly, her biographers, perceived her. By closely comparing the different accounts and sometimes reading texts against themselves, I have argued for a more complex and fluid model of gender, one that integrates social, ritual, and spiritual dimensions. While some biographical details support a "false male" interpretation, others suggest that the Maiden of Ludmir engaged in traditionally male *and* female religious behavior from childhood on. For example, many accounts explicitly characterize the

Maiden of Ludmir as "acting like a man" when she wore tefillin or prayed three times a day, but none points out that her frequent visits to the cemetery — where she recited *tkhines* at her mother's grave — reflected a traditional form of Jewish women's devotion. Thus many authors have chosen to masculinize the Maiden of Ludmir, even when their own evidence suggests that she may have embraced a more androgynous identity.

Up to this point, I have located the story of the Maiden of Ludmir within an Eastern European Jewish context. Another contribution of this book, however, has been to show that the Maiden of Ludmir's story transcends these geographical and cultural boundaries. Even a casual reading of her biography reveals many striking parallels with the lives of holy women from other religious traditions and, in particular, Christian women from a variety of periods and places. Do these similarities mean that the Maiden of Ludmir should simply be viewed as a Jewish example of a cross-cultural religious phenomenon? On the one hand, the Maiden of Ludmir's resemblance to non-Jewish holy women suggests that women living in patriarchal religious cultures — despite their differences — frequently share similar religious experiences. On the other, such a universalizing approach threatens to erase the particularities of the Maiden of Ludmir's identity as an Eastern European Jewish woman and the major differences between her life and the lives of holy women from other traditions. Without forcing her into an ahistorical and uniform model, therefore, I have nevertheless made use of the extensive scholarly research on holy women from other cultures to enrich my analysis of the Maiden of Ludmir's story. This comparative approach reveals not only the parallels and differences between the Maiden of Ludmir's story and the stories of non-Jewish holy women but also the strategic involvement of male hagiographers in the literary construction of these women's lives.

In the case of the Maiden of Ludmir, nowhere is this involvement more striking than in depictions of her supposed "gender reversal." For example, Horodezky, like the majority of his successors, explicitly insisted that the Maiden of Ludmir underwent a sudden gender reversal following her ecstatic vision, even though his own narrative pointed to a more gradual adoption of traditionally male behavior beginning in childhood. This jibes with the following observation by Carol Walker Bynum concerning medieval Christian holy women and their male hagiographers: "[M]en writing about women assumed that women went through sharp crises and conversions and that their liminal moments were accompanied by gender reversal (in this case, of course, elevation)."<sup>24</sup> In contrast,

Bynum argues that "in general, women's saintly vocations grew slowly through childhood and into adolescence." Like the hagiographers studied by Bynum, writers on the Maiden of Ludmir have persistently clung to a "crisis and conversion" model of gender reversal, even as their own accounts present evidence to the contrary.

Besides structural comparisons with holy women from far afield, I have also explored the possibility that the Maiden of Ludmir, as well as those who followed and opposed her, were directly or indirectly influenced by non-Jewish religious traditions closer to home. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Ukrainian region of Volhynia was home to a variety of religious groups. Only a few decades earlier, the Frankists, a branch of the heretical Jewish movement known as Sabbateanism, had attracted followers in Volhynia, and sympathizers could still be found in the region. It is often assumed that contact between members of different religious groups in Eastern Europe was insignificant or, when it did occur, unremittingly hostile. In fact, substantial and varied interactions did take place between individuals from different communities — even when such contact was officially proscribed by the authorities. Women appear to have played an important role in such interactions, even dominating certain realms of cultural and religious exchange, such as the remedies and incantations employed in folk medicine.

As we have seen, in the middle of the nineteenth century the Maiden of Ludmir emigrated to Palestine. By exploring this important phase of the Maiden of Ludmir's life, I have attempted to shed light on a little-examined area of nineteenth-century Palestine—the religious lives of Jewish women. While women constituted a significant percentage of the Jews who emigrated, they have not received the extensive scholarly attention devoted to their male contemporaries. Although certain elements of the Maiden of Ludmir's experience in Palestine appear to be unique—her reputation as a Kabbalist, for example—other details confirm and enrich what we already know about women's lives from other sources.

We will never know precisely how the Maiden of Ludmir felt about her new life in Palestine. Yet even those authors who emphasize the Maiden of Ludmir's success in Palestine agree that she never stopped thinking about the shtetl of her birth. One of the most notable developments of the Hasidic movement was its sanctification of places outside of Israel. As the followers of Menahem Mendel of Kotsk used to sing, "To Kotsk one must walk as does a pilgrim." Perhaps, like the Kotskers, the Maiden viewed Ludmir as a holy place, or perhaps she simply never stopped

thinking of it as home. Whatever the reason(s), it is fitting that this book about the Maiden of Ludmir should also be about the remarkable community whose name will forever be associated with her story. And so, to Morris Goldstein, a former resident of Ludmir who once asked me, "People know about Auschwitz and Treblinka, but how many people know about my Ludmir?" I can finally say, "Now they will know."

#### AFTERWORD

# Journey to Ludmir

In the summer of 1999, more than eighty years after Ansky's last visit to the town, I retraced his steps to Ludmir. I had hoped to make the journey with former residents, yet one by one, people who initially had seemed eager to go bowed out of the trip. Some had sick relatives, others were afraid of being overcome by the July heat, all were troubled by what they would find when they arrived. Who would be living in their childhood homes? In what condition would they find their relatives' graves? The truth is that I was also wary of visiting Ludmir. I was afraid that the reality of the town would shatter the image that I had so carefully constructed out of the memories of former residents. I was afraid that history would eclipse memory. In the end, however, I decided that unless I saw the place where she was born and raised, my understanding of the Maiden of Ludmir's life would lack something crucial. Although I did not realize it at the time, I now see that I was searching for the Maiden's presence, hoping that some intangible part of her would still cleave to the town after nearly a century and a half of absence. Perhaps it was her dybbuk that I was looking for.

Arranging the trip turned out to be easier than I had anticipated. A Pole who had lived in Ludmir before World War II and who had recently visited the town warned me about taking the train over the border from Poland. Strange things happened, he said ominously, when trains crossed

over from relatively affluent Poland to the "Wild West" of Ukraine. I next spoke with a Georgian travel agent (he emphasized his uncanny resemblance to Josef Stalin by hanging a portrait of the dictator in his office), who suggested that I fly to Kiev and then hire a car to take me the several hundred miles west to Ludmir. This, he assured me, was the cheapest way to make the trip. In the days leading up to the journey, former residents had warned me about groups of *banditi* (bandits) who hijacked wayfarers on the roads of Ukraine. With images of these bandits crowding out any economic considerations, I asked the travel agent whether there was another route that involved less driving. For a few hundred dollars more, he answered, I could fly to Warsaw, take a flight to Lviv, and from there drive to Ludmir in less than three hours. Once in Ludmir, he added, I would find a Soviet-era hotel where I could rent a room. Only after making the arrangements did it dawn on me that I would be arriving in Ludmir from Galicia, the same route that Ansky had taken in 1915.

A few days before my flight, Nechama Ariel gave me medicine, money, and greetings for Mikhail (Misha) and Nikolai (Kolya) Vavriseevitch, the Ukrainian brothers who had helped to hide her during the Holocaust. Both men still lived in Ludmir, and Nechama assured me that they would agree to serve as guides during my visit. While none of the Ludmirers could accompany me, I was not traveling alone. Ethan Michaeli, a longtime friend and journalist, was coming along to help me document the visit and, if necessary, fight off bandits. Like me, Ethan comes from a European Jewish family that survived the Holocaust, lived in Israel, and eventually immigrated to America. We are like brothers, connected to each other by what feels like generations of shared experiences. In our conversations, we imagined the journey to Ludmir as a return to a place like the one in which our ancestors had dwelled, a place where some part of us was forged. We weren't wrong.

There were no bandits on the road to Ludmir, just ghosts. About halfway into the trip, we drove past a monumental Soviet statue of a miner, the totem of a plant whose workers had been idle for more than a year. Now they sat along the road, cracking sunflower seeds and watching neighbors drive by on bicycles or horse drawn carts, since none could afford gasoline, let alone a car. Further down the road, we encountered a lonely-looking sign for the town of Belz, once home to an important Hasidic dynasty. After miles of empty roads and green fields, we finally came to a large sign for "Volodimir Volinski," anchored by a giant sword that recalled the town's ancient Ukrainian heritage. We had arrived in Ludmir.

As dusk settled, our car entered the town via Ustilug Street. Within minutes, we were in Ludmir's main square where the hotel stood. I had lived in Russia and traveled extensively in Eastern Europe, but the decrepit condition of Ludmir's Soviet-era hotel still shocked me. It was literally falling apart from shoddy construction and subsequent neglect. Although we were the only guests in the four-story building, it took nearly an hour to check in, since the clerk was understandably suspicious: after all, why would two young Americans visit Ludmir?

While arguing with the hotel clerk over whether we could hold on to our passports, I was reminded of an account written by an earlier visitor to Ludmir: not Ansky, but Isaac Babel, the Russian Jewish writer who visited Ludmir (or, as he called it, Vladimir-Volinski) in September 1920, during his travels with the Red Cavalry. In his diary, Babel described his journey: "To Vladimir, behind the same old nags. . . . We arrive in the night. Hassle over lodgings, a cold room in a widow's house. Jews—storekeepers." Eight decades and almost as many governments later, it was still a hassle to arrange a place to stay in Ludmir, but it had already become clear to me that the last element of Babel's description—Jews—was no longer a noticeable part of the town's landscape. I was anxious to see whether they were still a part of the town at all.

That night, having barricaded the door with a chair and blocked up the rat hole in the bathroom, I lay awake pondering what I had gotten myself into. After finally drifting off to sleep, I was woken by Ethan's agitated voice. "The lights have been going on and off," he said. "Maybe there's a dybbuk in the room," he half joked. I told him that it was probably an electrical problem. It surprised me that Ethan would suggest the possibility of a dybbuk, since he had grown up in a secular Zionist family that did not give much credence to Jewish religious traditions and, in particular, to anything "superstitious." In fact, I was somewhat surprised that he even knew what a dybbuk was. I realized, however, that this was yet another example of the powerful bond between us: the idea of finding a dybbuk in Ludmir had taken hold of my unconscious and now, I discovered, it had possessed Ethan as well. A few hours later, when I woke to find the lights going on and off myself, I began to wonder whether Ethan had been right. This time he suggested that maybe the dybbuk was angry with us. "No," I replied, "the dybbuk is probably happy to have other Jews here to keep it company after so many years of being alone." After that, the lights remained off.

In the morning I arranged a meeting with Misha and Kolya Vavreesevich. Although the day was already hot, they arrived at the hotel

in the wool suits they had acquired during their trip to New York a few years earlier. Misha, the older brother, was practically blind from a degenerative eye disease. He had retired in Ludmir after working as a professor of engineering and now lived in his childhood home overlooking the Luga River. I would later learn that he shared this small dwelling with Yankl Kipershtein, one of the last Jews left in Ludmir. While Misha was heavyset and jovial, his brother, Kolya, was quiet, wiry, and tan from the physical labor he still did outdoors. For decades he had served as the head of the town's tuberculosis hospital, in the same building that the Nazis had used as a prison during the war. It was here that the Germans had killed Nechama Ariel's father, along with thousands of other Jews. Accompanying Kolya was his wife, Maria, a former nurse in the same hospital, who greeted us with a smile full of metal-capped teeth.

After presenting them with the gifts and medicine from Nechama, I mentioned that I was researching a famous Jewish holy woman who had lived in Ludmir during the nineteenth century. They had never heard of her, they responded, but would try to help however they could. We left the hotel and made our way past a stocky woman selling the chalky ice cream (morozhenoe) sold in many parts of the former Soviet Union. Once we were in the square, I asked about the history of the hotel. Sighing, Maria said that while digging the foundation, the Soviets had discovered the body of a Jew murdered by the Nazis. Ethan and I looked at each other: Was the dybbuk from the night before the soul of this poor Jew?

Even a five-minute walk from the hotel revealed that the economic situation of Ludmir was a far cry from how it was in the 1930s, when the stores on Farna Gass were full of merchandise and Ludmir's residents posed for photographs in their stylish clothes as they strolled the avenue. Now Farna Gass was gone, demolished by the Nazis. In its place the Soviets had erected hulking, sterile buildings. The few stores left in Ludmir sold alcohol, cigarettes, sweets, and, if you were lucky, some bottled water from mineral springs in the Caucuses. Except for its clean streets, the town resembled the economically depressed Ludmir of Babel's 1920 diary more than it did the thriving community of the 1930s. As Babel wrote, "The town is dirt-poor, filthy, hungry, you can't buy anything with money, sweets twenty rubles apiece plus cigarettes."2 It was clear that World War II and decades of Sovietization had actually caused Ludmir to devolve economically. Yet the town was still beautiful in a forlorn way. Gazing at the gently flowing Luga River, I could see why Janusz Bardach, Morris Goldstein, and their friends had spent so much time swimming and boating in its waters.

Except for a trip to nearby Lutsk, where I unsuccessfully sought evidence of the Maiden in the town's regional archives, we spent the next several days wandering Ludmir's streets, taking in its sites, and even visiting the disco that an enterprising *biznessman* (mafioso) had opened in what had formerly been a *kinoteater* (cinema). Ludmir suffered from a severe job shortage, and many of its young people went to the disco to get drunk on good Polish beer, dance to bad German techno music, and forget their troubles. Could this be the same town, I asked myself, where a Jewish girl named Hannah Rochel had become famous as the Maiden of Ludmir? Or could a place change so much that it no longer retained even a trace of its former identity?

Although Ludmir's population had grown since the war, the town's streets felt lonely and, when the sun went down, haunted. The Jews who had lived in Ludmir for close to a millennium and who had constituted a large majority of its residents for centuries were gone, murdered by the Nazis and, more painfully, by some of their own neighbors. In vain, I tried to locate any sign of the Jewish Ludmir that had so captivated my imagination. A museum devoted to the town's history had been installed in an annex to the Uspensky Sabor, the oldest and most majestic church in Ludmir. But this history, according to the museum's exhibits, did not include Jews. The official guardians of the town's past did not openly deny that Jews had ever lived there; they simply chose not to mention it. Such avoidance was made easier by the fact that any traces of the Jews had been rubbed out.

As we left the museum and walked toward the area where most of Ludmir's Jews had once lived, the Vavriseevitch brothers lowered their voices and described how the Nazis had herded the Jews into a fenced-in ghetto before killing them. Where the ghetto once stood, they pointed out empty lots, new buildings, and clusters of small houses that had belonged to Jews before the war. From talking with former residents, I already knew that the *gornshtibl* had been destroyed by the Nazis. I now discovered that in its place the Soviets had erected a soulless apartment complex. In 1961 they had also transformed the Jewish cemetery into a park in honor of the cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin.

On an earthen path leading into the park — perhaps the very one the Maiden of Ludmir had taken when she came to visit her mother's grave, I thought — we encountered a goat whose calm gaze seemed to welcome us. Later, when I showed photographs of this goat to former residents of the town, many were overcome by emotion. The goat is a symbol of poverty, said one, while another declared it a symbol of Jewishness. This

gentle and wise-looking goat, it had seemed to me at the time, was a symbol of both. The park was overgrown and, in some places, littered with garbage. Here and there families gathered for picnics. No tombstones remained in the former cemetery, but what looked like a few shards lay half-buried in the grass. At the edge of the park, next to the beautiful wooden skeleton of an abandoned theater called Kosmos, we finally came across a link to the town's rich Jewish history. Several years before, a group of Karlin-Stolin Hasidim had paid to have a new *ohel* (burial monument) erected on the site of Shlomo Karliner's grave. Apparently fearing vandalism, the builders had omitted any elements (such as a Hebrew inscription or a Star of David) that would identify the small structure as Jewish. And so the Marrano-like *ohel* of Ludmir's messiah did not signify Jewish presence but, instead, its painful absence.

After leaving the park, we made our way to Vasiliyavska Street, where Nechama Ariel's and Ansky's stories came together. The night before I left for Ludmir, Nechama had called me. "I just remembered something important," she said excitedly over the phone. "Next door to my grandmother lived a woman named Mrs. Zusman, who was, how shall I say it, a real yenta. Anyway, she used to complain to my grandmother over the backyard fence about how Ansky had libeled her in one of his books. This took place on Vasiliyavska Street, down the road from a little church with the same name. If you want to follow in Ansky's footsteps you need to visit this street." After hanging up, I checked my copy of Ansky's Destruction of Galicia, and I was not surprised to find that it confirmed Nechama's recollections. During the period in which Ansky visited Ludmir, he had stayed with a family named Zusman in the neighboring shtetl of Lokatch. Concerning Mrs. Zusman, Ansky had only unkind words, criticizing her at length and dismissing her as "a small town rich woman with aristocratic pretensions."3 Following World War I, the Zusmans had moved to Ludmir, where Madame Zusman apparently spent much of her free time complaining about Ansky to anyone who would listen.

As in Ansky's day, at one end of Vasiliyavska Street there still stood a small pale blue church, where Kolya Vavriseevitch now stopped to talk with some old friends. Maria, Ethan, and I continued down the curved path, admiring the quaint prewar houses. As I pondered where Mrs. Zusman and Nechama's grandmother had lived, my gaze was drawn downward. There, beneath my feet, I saw the broken tombstones of Ludmir's Jewish cemetery—the only remaining signs of the town's

Jewish past. "Like the shattered tablets of the Law," I thought to myself as I read their Hebrew inscriptions.

Maria noticed what I was looking at and, shaking her head, said that the Soviets had paved the road with tombstones when they made the cemetery into a park. Yet when I returned to the States, some former residents insisted that it had been the Nazis who had paved the streets with tombstones, not the Soviets. Maria had falsely accused the Soviets, they explained, because she was a Ukrainian nationalist whose relatives had been sent to Siberia by Stalin. Another former resident was equally adamant that the Ukrainians and Poles had dismantled the cemetery themselves and used the tombstones for building materials after the war. A Ludmirer in Israel offered yet a fourth version: the Nazis had used some of the tombstones for their gardens and to provide traction for their tanks; the Soviets had taken the rest when they demolished the cemetery. Listening to the competing stories of what had happened, I was reminded of the different tellings of Ansky's visit to Ludmir. Once again, the link between history and memory had proven to be elusive, and I began to wonder anew whether I was visiting the same town that I had heard and read so much about, or whether the place called Ludmir no longer existed except in the memories of its former residents.

Later that afternoon, we had lunch with the Vavriseevitches. When we arrived, Kolya was working in the garden, digging a deep pit. It was an impressive physical feat for someone well over seventy. Before we sat down to eat, Kolya gave us a tour of his simple but comfortable house. While walking around town with Kolya, it had become clear that he was well respected in his community; people continued to visit him for medical advice, bartering goods for his services. Along with the money he received from the States for being a "righteous gentile," this made Kolya and his family relatively well off. Yet like most homes in Ludmir, Kolya's lacked indoor plumbing, and we washed our hands with water from a plastic bucket in the kitchen. In an ironic juxtaposition increasingly common in much of the developing world, Kolya's young grandson sat glued to the television, courtesy of a satellite dish in the backyard not far from the wooden outhouse.

When Babel was in Ludmir, he praised the simple meal he received from his Jewish hosts: "Supper is dumplings with sunflower oil — bliss. This is it — Jewish plenty." Like them, the Vavriseevitches were generous hosts, sharing whatever they had with us, which turned out to be considerably more than dumplings cooked in oil. They had grown all the veg-

etables themselves, Kolya proudly pointed out, since they didn't trust the produce grown by former *kolkhozniki* (collective farmers) who continued to use harmful pesticides left over from the Soviet period. Over a meal of vegetable soup, pancakes, marinated wild mushrooms, homemade wine, and other delicacies, we discussed the war years. Chewing his food methodically, Kolya paused to remember how little they had had to eat when the Germans occupied Ludmir.

Why had his parents risked their lives to save Jews? I asked Kolya. After all, many of the town's Ukrainian residents had actually helped the Nazis murder their Jewish neighbors. Kolya first responded that his father was an educated man, the former head of the town's gymnasium (secondary school) that still stood on a hill not far from the hotel. But, I pointed out, most educated people had refused to help. Next he emphasized that both his parents were devout Christians who believed that Jesus was a Jew. Many regular churchgoers had turned their backs or even participated in the killings, I responded. After a long pause, Kolya's eyes welled up with tears and he said to me, "My parents were humane. What do you do when a mother and child come to you in the middle of the night seeking refuge? This is the reason that my parents helped."

During the war, Kolya and Misha were teenagers. When the tide turned against the Germans, they began to ship Ukrainian men west to work in their factories. The Germans in Ludmir knew that the Vavriseevitches had two sons and demanded that one volunteer to be a laborer. Although both boys could have escaped into the forest, the Germans would have then searched their home and discovered the Jews hiding there. And so Misha turned himself in and was sent to what amounted to slave labor in Silesia. When I asked him about this experience, he replied laconically that what impressed him most was the clock-like punctuality of the Germans.

The next day I asked to go to Piyatidne, the place where the Germans and their Ukrainian helpers had slaughtered more than twenty thousand Jews from Ludmir and the surrounding villages. We walked with Maria and Misha to Ustilug Street, accompanied by two of the mutts that were ubiquitous in Ludmir. When we arrived at the town's taxi stand, we found a handful of drivers sitting around drinking beer, smoking cigarettes, and leering at woman. A relatively sober-looking driver with a bushy mustache agreed to take us. Though it was located only seven kilometers west of Ludmir, he told us that he had never visited the spot, but his expression made it clear that he knew its significance. Misha said he would stay behind, and I asked him how he would get home on his own.

Don't worry, he replied, someone will help me. And sure enough, within seconds, a bystander offered to accompany him home.

On the outskirts of town, we passed a melancholy house with a stork's roost. Did people still believe that the birds brought good luck? I wondered. Beyond this house lay the flat expanse of western Ukraine. As we traveled past fields stretching to the horizon, Maria described how one night when she was a child, she was woken by a deep rumble in the distance. She and her family went outside to investigate and saw what looked like a huge flock of geese in the sky but which they later realized was the Luftwaffe. They went back to sleep and in the morning woke to the site of wounded Soviet soldiers streaming to the East in advance of the German army. "This Ukrainian land. Many poor people suffered on its soil," she said.

When we arrived at Piyatidne, the driver remained with his car, smoking a cheap cigarette and listening to the radio. As we gazed at the golden fields stretching to the horizon, only the slightly sunken earth betrayed the horror that had transpired here. We waded through waist-high grass to a memorial commissioned by Jews living abroad. The sculpture reached for the sky like a totem pole, its surface carved with the tormented faces of martyred Jews of different ages, from old men with beards to babies in their mothers' arms. Half a century before, in August 1942, the Germans had taken Jewish men to Piyatidne to dig three large pits that they claimed would be used as underground storage areas for a planned airfield. In Ludmir's ghetto, however, rumors quickly spread that the Germans had more sinister plans for the pits.<sup>5</sup>

The rumors turned out to be accurate. On September 1, the Germans and Ukrainians began to round up Jews for the first "Aktsion" at Piyatidne. Jack Zawid told me that he saw a Ukrainian policeman violently start to shove an elderly Jew into one of the trucks, when his German commander upbraided him and gently helped the Jew up himself with his white-gloved hands. This, Zawid observed, was an example of the special madness of the Germans who had occupied Ludmir, their combination of civility and cold-bloodedness. Anyone who tried to escape was brought to the town's prison and killed there or transferred to Piyatidne. Those who later saw the inside of the prison would testify that the doomed Jews had covered its walls with graffiti written in their own blood calling for *nekama* (revenge).

As the martyrs walked to the pits at Piyatidne, they defiantly chanted the Shema or sang Hebrew songs. For fifteen days the Germans and their Ukrainian police engaged in an orgy of killing. When it was finally over, approximately eighteen thousand Jews were dead. Four thousand Jews were buried in pits adjoining the prison (where, as the Vavriseevitches pointed out to me, only a rusted-out truck now stood as a "memorial"), and another fourteen thousand were buried in the three pits of Piyatidne.<sup>6</sup> Somehow, Zipporah Veinshtock, then only a young girl, managed to survive the massacre and live to testify about what happened:

They took us by truck to Piyatidne, where they had prepared a pit for us. During the trip we were forbidden to raise our heads and it was impossible to escape. . . . They ordered us to undress and killed all the arrivals with automatic fire — in the pit, one on top of another. Among those being led to the pit were me and my sister, and the only consolation we possessed was that we knew one member of our family remained alive, my brother, . . . As my turn came closer to go to the pit and be shot, I could no longer look at what was being done. . . . Then they shot me. I fell within the pit that was already full of corpses. I remained in the top layer, injured in three places. . . . I fell asleep, and that night I woke and someone in the pit spoke a few words to me. It was a woman. Immediately she stopped [talking]. In the morning, Poles came to cover the pit. Since I didn't want to be buried alive, I raised my head, and they were horrified to find me alive in the mass grave. They told me to escape. The question was, where? I was naked and injured, but they yelled at me to escape. I got up and walked in the field, then hid in a haystack. People from the village came to gather hay and detected me. They brought me clothes and bread, and told me to leave that place.<sup>7</sup>

Several months later, on November 13, 1942, a second Aktsion began in Ludmir in which four thousand more Jews were slaughtered, including two young Jews armed with pistols who attempted to break through the fence of the ghetto. After it was over, the few surviving Jews had to separate the articles of the dead into two piles: the valuables went to the Germans, and the rest went to the Christian population of the area. On Purim 1943, the Germans ordered one hundred Jews to rebury the corpses in Piyatidne that had come to the surface as the earth settled. While the Germans intended it as a punishment, the Jews saw it as a precious opportunity to honor their martyred relatives. Indeed, the problem was not in finding one hundred volunteers, but in deciding who would get the chance to go. Shmuel Shatz, one of the hundred, described the scene as follows:

Shortly before dawn each of us hurried to be one of the hundred men. . . . We lined up with shovels to pass through the city on the way to Piyatidne to our brothers' graves. . . . Something horrible was revealed before our eyes . . . people's bodies were poking out from the great pits that had been settling for half a year. I went up to [the graves] and noticed a woman embracing her tiny child . . . I

began to get dizzy and collapsed. My comrades revived me, and I went from pit to pit. I knew that my parents, who had been killed during the first days, lay in the mass grave containing nine thousand people. We covered the earth, then recited *el male rahamim* [God full of mercy] and prayed *minha*. And our voices were scattered by the wind to the four corners of the world, crying out, Why?<sup>8</sup>

Fifty years later, grass had covered the graves of Piyatidne, but the wind still seemed to carry the voices of Ludmir's Jews. There was nothing left to say as we returned to the car and our now sleeping driver. On the way back to town, I asked Maria whether I could meet Yankl Kipershtein, the elderly Jew who lived with Misha. Since my arrival, I had been unsuccessfully trying to locate any Jews who remained in Ludmir. During one of our conversations, Misha had mentioned that a Jew named Yankl actually lived with him. Kolya and Maria shot him a cross look and explained that Yankl was suffering from Alzheimer's and would be of no help to me. Although I brought it up again on several occasions, there was always a reason why we couldn't visit. This time, however, as we returned from Piyatidne, Maria agreed.

The car dropped us off on Ustilug Street, and we walked up a dirt road past a group of small children playing. At the end of the road I could make out a shirtless man standing next to a wooden fence, who turned out to be Misha, enjoying the afternoon sun. Sitting in a chair not far from him was a small, unshaven man in a cap: Yankl Kipershtein. In the car Maria had warned me that Yankl could barely speak and had completely forgotten his "mother tongue" (Yiddish). Even before he got Alzheimer's, she said, Yankl was known as a *prostok*, a simple man. Originally from the nearby town of Luboml, Yankl was the only one from a poor family of twelve children to survive the war. In its aftermath, he had married a Ukrainian woman and settled in Ludmir. Misha had taken him in after his poor health had made it impossible for him to live on his own.

The strong odor of urine in the air made me understand why Kolya and Maria had been so reluctant to have me meet Yankl. Alzheimer's had not only ravaged his mind, it had made him incontinent, a terrible fate in a place without running water. Yet Yankl gazed benignly, even beatifically, at us with serene eyes and lay down his gnarled cane to shake our hands. After trying to communicate with Yankl, we left him and walked around Misha's house overlooking the Luga River. In practically every window of the house stood jars of fermenting fruit, on their way to becoming homemade wine. Once inside, the sparse and rundown interior was a sharp contrast to Kolya's carpeted home. Indeed it looked like not much

had changed since Nechama and her mother had hidden there during the war. On our way out, we passed by Yankl, who was now being pestered by an overweight woman from across the road — a prostitute, Maria whispered to me. I stopped to say good-bye and, at first, there was no sign of comprehension from Yankl. Then, when my attention had already turned to another person, Yankl suddenly pointed to me and Ethan and asked in Yiddish, "Brider?" I replied, "Yes, we are brothers." Yankl smiled and slipped back into his reverie.

That night, our last in town, I lay awake troubled by the thought that I hadn't done enough to find other Jews left in Ludmir. All the leads provided by former residents had turned out to be dead-ends. We were leaving early in the morning, and there would be no time to continue searching. At dawn, we woke up and quietly packed our things for the journey back to Lviv. It had been the longest week of our lives, and we were both feeling tired and introspective. When we went downstairs, the Vavriseevitches were already standing in the lobby, waiting to say goodbye. Maria handed us a plastic bag full of hardboiled eggs, some salt wrapped in folded newspaper, and ripe tomatoes from her garden. Kolya motioned for us to come outside. Through the window I could see Misha talking with an elderly woman.

Kolya told me he had been trying to get in touch with her since I had arrived and last night had finally succeeded. At the edge of the square the car to take us to Lviv was already idling, but I convinced the driver to give us a few minutes. The woman's name was Rosa Goldman, and she was the last Jewish native left in Ludmir. She had fallen recently, and the makeshift sling on her arm made her look like a bird with a broken wing. Her sad eyes lit up when I explained that we were Jews visiting from America. We talked for a while and took photographs in front of the Soviet war monument. Then, just before leaving, I asked her whether she knew any stories about the Maiden of Ludmir. She smiled wistfully as if recalling something sweet from her past, then replied that she had heard of the Maiden as a child but no longer remembered. Too much had happened since then, she said. After I returned to the States, a former resident named David Goldfarb told me that Rosa had worked for his mother as a seamstress before the war. When the Soviets liberated Ludmir, the surviving Jews gathered in the town square. They were leaving Ludmir, and David invited Rosa to come along. "What can I do," she said. "I married the Ukrainian who saved my life." And so she stayed behind.

The journey home was uneventful. When I arrived home, my answering machine was full of anxious messages from former residents of

Ludmir. Where was I? Shouldn't I be back by now? I called to reassure them of my safe return. After I had described my trip to Janusz, he sighed and said, "It was not enough that they destroyed the Jews of Ludmir. But they tried to destroy the memory of the Jews as well." They hadn't succeeded, I told him. When I spoke with Nechama, she asked me whether I had found what I was looking for. "I think so," I replied and sat down to write this book.

### Notes

# Introduction. Ansky Visits Ludmir

- 1. S. Ansky, *Dos yidishe etnografishe program*, vol. 1, *Man* (Petrograd: Yosef Luria, 1914), 10–11. All translations are mine except where otherwise indicated.
- 2. The quotes from Ansky's visit to Ludmir appear in S. Ansky, *Khurbn Galitsye: Der yidisher khurbn fun Poyln, Galitsye un Bokovine, fun togbukh 1914–1917,* in vol. 5 of his *Gezamlte shriftn* (Vilna, Warsaw, and New York: Ferlag "An-Ski," 1924), 131–54.
  - 3. Ansky, Khurbn Galitsye, 135.
  - 4. Ansky, Khurbn Galitsye, 154.
- 5. *Pinkas Ludmir* (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotse Ludmir be Yisrael, 1962), 121. The town *pinkas* book that Ansky requested should not be confused with the *Pinkas Ludmir* later published by former residents of the town. The term *pinkas* (originally of Greek origin) was employed by Eastern European Jews to refer to community minute books that recorded important events, such as births and marriages. After the Holocaust, some survivors named their "memory books" after these earlier documents.
- 6. *Pinkas Ludmir*; 122; Ansky composed the Bund's hymn, called "The Oath," under the pseudonym Z. Sinnani.
- 7. Pinkas Ludmir, 293–96. This account first appeared more than three decades earlier in *Der Ludmirer*, 27 November 1926, along with photographs of the Maiden of Ludmir's *beys medresh* (the *gornshtibl*), and of a "hundred-year-old woman, Reyzel Limonik, who knew the Maiden of Ludmir." Like the identical version later published in the *Pinkas Ludmir*, this one is attributed to "A Ludmirer," (a resident of Ludmir), though it also includes an additional line: "as the

old people tell it." *Der Ludmirer* was a Yiddish annual published on the Lower East Side of New York by an organization called the "Vladimir Volinskyi Progressive Youth." The magazine was published between 1925 and 1938 and sheds valuable light on interwar relations between residents of Ludmir and those who had emigrated to America.

- 8. See the brief account of Ansky's visit by M. Dvorzhetsky in the *Pinkas Ludmir*, 75.
- 9. On the Council of the Four Lands (*vaad arba aratsot*), see Israel Halpern, ed, *Pinkas Vaad Arba Aratsot* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1945). Ludmir appears many times in the *pinkas*. See, for example, 6, 10, 58, 60, and 61.
- 10. Mendel Lipsker, *Pinkas Ludmir*, 95–96. An earlier version of Lipsker's account appears in *Der Ludmirer*, 2 March 1930. Lipsker's byline indicates that he was writing from Ludmir. Further evidence of Ansky's visit to Ludmir may be found in Abraham Rechtman's account of the expedition, *Yidishe etnografye un folklor: Zikhroynos vegn der etnografisher ekspeditsye, ongefirt fun Sh. An-Ski* (Buenos Aires: YIVO, 1958), 38, where a shul in Ludmir is mentioned.
  - II. Pinkas Ludmir, 296.
- 12. The *Pinkas Ludmir* account lacks a paragraph appearing in Horodezky's work concerning the suspicion that the Maiden was possessed by an "unclean spirit," perhaps in deference to the Maiden or perhaps because Horodezky had another source for this particular tradition. While both accounts mention that the Maiden wore tefillin (phylacteries) while praying, the *Pinkas Ludmir* adds parenthetically that the Maiden wore both the phylacteries prescribed by the medieval rabbi known as Rashi and those by his grandson Rabbenu Tam. This suggests direct access to an oral tradition unavailable to Horodezky. Interestingly, the Hebrew novel of the Maiden's life written by Yohanan Twersky in 1950 (see below) also mentions that the Maiden wore both types of phylacteries.
- 13. Joan Wallach Scott, "The Problem of Invisibility," in *Retrieving Women's History: Changing Perceptions of the Role of Women in Politics and Society*, ed. S. Jay Kleinberg (Oxford and New York: Berg; Paris: UNESCO Press, 1988), 5.
- 14. On the relationship between history and memory, see Patrick Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Burlington: University of Vermont; Hanover, N.H.: New England University Press, 1993).
- 15. See Edith Wyschogrod, An Ethics of Remembering (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148.
- 16. Charles Raddock, "Hannah of Ludmir: The Strange True Story of a Hasidic Maid," *Menorah Journal* 36 (1948): 256.
- 17. Conversation with Morris Goldstein. After our conversation, I looked again at the *Pinkas Ludmir* and realized that I had previously read what I expected to see (*grünshtibl*) rather than what was actually on the page (*gornshtibl*).
- 18. My formulation has been influenced by Jan Assmann's concept of "mnemohistory." See Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 8–9.

#### Chapter 1. A Dybbuk Trilogy

- 1. A year later members of the community, including the young pharmacist Moshe Sheynbaum, founded a *Tarbut* school in which several hundred children studied modern Hebrew. For general overviews of these events, see *Pinkas Ludmir* (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotse Ludmir be Yisrael, 1962), 37–38, 79–80, 165–236. On the Yiddish theater in Ludmir, see 233–36. The last Yiddish plays performed in Ludmir were in 1940–1941 during the Soviet occupation of the town.
  - 2. Pinkas Ludmir, 202.
- 3. *Pinkas Ludmir*, 233. The Chernobler Rebbe visited the *gornshtibl* during the years 1908–1912, according to the source in the *Pinkas*.
- 4. David Roskies, ed., *S. Ansky: The Dybbuk and Other Writings* (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), 25, 46.
- 5. Samuel A. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva (Di Ludmirer Moid)," *Evreiskaia Starina* 1, no. 4 (1909): 221.
  - 6. David Roskies, ed., S. Ansky, xxvi.
  - 7. David Roskies, ed., S. Ansky, xxvi.
- 8. See M. Tshudner, "Vi azoy Ansky hot geshafn zayn Dybbuk (bletlekh zikhroynes)," *Der Moment*, 8 July 1932; Tshudner, "Keytzad yatzar Sh. Ansky et ha Dybbuk," *Baderekh* 4 (1935). On the writing of *The Dybbuk*, see Shmuel Werses, "S. An-Ski's 'Tsvishn tsvey veltn (Der Dybbuk)'/ 'Beyn shney olamot (Ha-Dybbuk)'/ 'Between Two Worlds (The Dybbuk)': A Textual History," in *Studies in Yiddish Literature and Folklore* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1986).
- 9. Samuel L. Zitron, *Dray literarische doyres* (Vilna: S. Sreberk, 1922), 85 ff. On the creation and performance of *The Dybbuk*, also see *S. Ansky* (1863–1929), *His Life and Works: Exhibit Catalog* (New York: YIVO, 1980).
- 10. My thanks to Yohanan Petrovsky, Irina Sergeyeva, Mikhail Krutikov, and Benyamin Lukin, four scholars who generously shared with me their expert knowledge of the Ansky collections in the former Soviet Union, including the Vernadsky Library in Kiev and the Central State Archives for Literature and Art in Moscow, where a small section of Ansky's unpublished diary is located. Marek Webb was also very helpful with the Ansky material in the YIVO archives.
- II. S. Ansky, *Dos yidishe etnografishe program*, vol. 1, *Man*, ed. L. I. Shternberg (Petrograd: Yosef Luria, 1914).
  - 12. As translated in David Roskies, ed., S. Ansky, xxiv.
- 13. Ansky appears to have distributed copies of the questionnaire itself, or at least some version of it, to amateur ethnographers in Jewish communities throughout Eastern Europe. Ansky's priceless collection of Jewish folklore was scattered to the winds in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, and parts of it were lost forever during World War II. Therefore, responses to Ansky's survey must be pieced together from the fragments of his collection that have survived in archives and other sources (for example, the *Pinkas Sokhatshev*). Unfortunate-

- ly, I have been unable to discover any responses to the question concerning the Maiden of Ludmir.
- 14. As translated in Alexander Kantsedikas, "Semyon An-Sky and the Jewish Artistic Heritage," in *The Jewish Artistic Heritage: An Album*, ed. Vasilii Rakitin and Andrei Sarabianov (Moscow: RA, 1994), 27.
- 15. Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1946), 5: 375.
- 16. David Roskies, ed., S. Ansky, xxv, from the minutes of a meeting published in Hebrew translation by Isaiah Trunk in the journal Gal-Ed 6 (1982): 236.
- 17. On this phenomenon, see David Roskies, ed., S. Ansky, xxvii; Sara Zfatman-Biller, "Tale of an Exorcism in Koretz," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 2 (1982): 17–34.
  - 18. Samuel A. Horodezky, Zikhronot (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1957), 12.
  - 19. Horodezky, Zikhronot, 12.
  - 20. Horodezky, Zikhronot, 21.
  - 21. Horodezky, Zikhronot, 23.
  - 22. Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 4 (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 979.
  - 23. Horodezky, Zikhronot, 133-34.
- 24. Horodezky, "Tsu der shalshelet ha-yikhes fun Shimon Dubnov" (On the ancestry of Shimon Dubnow), *Historishe shriftn*, vol. 2 (Vilna: Zydowski Institut Naukowy, 1937), 1–8.
- 25. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva," 219–22. The journal was published under the auspices of the Jewish Historico-Ethnographic Society. For a brief history and complete bibliography of the articles appearing in *Evreiskaia Starina*, see Abraham Duker, "*Evreiskaia Starina*: A Bibliography of the Russian-Jewish Historical Periodical," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 8–9 (1931–32): 525–603; also see Sophie Dubnov-Erlich, *The Life and Work of S.M. Dubnov: Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 150–51.
- 26. The YIVO archive in New York contains a collection of letters between Dubnow and Horodezky in the Elias Tcherikower Archives, Simon Dubnow Papers, Folder #1022. The Hebrew-language letters are from Horodezky to Dubnow and begin with one sent from Berdichev in 1895. Also see the letters from Dubnow to Horodezky published in Simon Rawidowicz, ed., *Simon Dubnow in Memoriam: Essays and Letters* (London and Jerusalem: Ararat Publishing Society, 1954), 347–55.
- 27. See Evelyn Birge Vitz, "From Oral to the Written in Medieval and Renaissance Saints' Lives," in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 98.
- 28. A review essay published anonymously in the Hebrew-language journal *Ha-Tequfah* 12 (1922): 481 lists Hordezky's works on Hasidic figures, including the Maiden of Ludmir, and then adds, "Not all these monographs were published in their Hebrew original many were published in Russian translation in Dubnow's quarterly *Evreiskaia Starina*." In his *Zikhronot*, 132, Horodezky men-

tions that after he married his first cousin Maria (Mirl) Horodezky-Magasanik in 1927, "she helped me in my work and translated my works into Yiddish, Russian, German, French and English." While this concerns a period several decades after the *Evreiskaia Starina* article on the Maiden of Ludmir appeared, it implies that Horodezky originally composed his works in Hebrew and only later had them translated.

- 29. Samuel A. Horodezky, *Ha-Hasidut veha-hasidim* (Berlin and Jerusalem: Devir, 1922), 3: 68.
  - 30. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva," 219.
  - 31. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva," 219.
- 32. Samuel A. Horodezky, *Religiöse Strömungen in Judentum* (Bern and Leipzig: E. Bircher, 1920), 187.
- 33. Samuel A. Horodezky, *Leaders of Hassidism*, trans. Maria Horodezky-Magasanik (London: Hasefer Agency for Literature, 1928), 113–14.
- 34. Samuel A. Horodezky, *Der hasidizm un zayne firer* (Vilna: Farlag "Tomor," 1937), 292.
  - 35. Samuel A. Horodezky, Ole Tsiyon (Tel Aviv: Gazit, 1946), 173, 175.
  - 36. Horodezky, Zikhronot, 119.
- 37. Ada Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism: S. A. Horodezky and the Maid of Ludmir Tradition," in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein (London: P. Halban, 1988), 497.
  - 38. Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism," 503.

# Chapter 2. Writing the Maiden

- 1. "Das Gorn Shtibl: A Legendary Poem in Four Acts" was serialized in the Argentine Yiddish weekly *For Groys un Kleyn* from 9 November 1923 to 29 May 1924.
- 2. On Malakh's involvement in this controversy, see *Leksikon fun yidishn teater* (Warsaw, 1934), 2: 1333–34. See also *Leyb Malakh* (Los Angeles: Leyb Malakh Book Committee, 1949).
- 3. See Yohanan Twersky's Hebrew novel *Ha-Betulah mi-Ludmir* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1950). Twersky (1900–1967), whose mother, Haya, and greataunt, known as "Malkale the Triskern," were both holy women, was raised in the Chernobler courts of Shpikov and Trisk—only twenty miles from Ludmir. Because of his immersion in Chernobler family traditions, Twersky quite likely heard stories about the Maiden of Ludmir while growing up. His romantic novel is of limited value as a biography, however, because Twersky made no effort to distinguish between his own literary inventions and any oral traditions he may have incorporated. On his family's traditions and in particular the strong influence of his mother, Haya, see Yohanan Twersky's memoir, "Ha-Bayit Penimah" (The house within), *Reshumot* 5 (1953): 226–83. On Haya's reputation as a healer, see Abraham Rechtman's *Yidishe etnografye un folklor: Zikhroynos vegn*

der etnografisher ekspeditsye ongefirt fun Sh. An-ski (Buenos Aires: YIVO, 1958), 296. Gershon Winkler's English-language novel, They Called Her Rebbe: The Maiden of Ludomir (New York: Judaica Press, 1991), was harshly criticized by some within the Orthodox Jewish community after it was published. See below for more on this subject.

The two most recent plays were Miriam Hoffman's Yiddish musical *The Maiden of Ludmir*, which premiered in 1996–1997 at the Folksbiene Playhouse in New York, and Yosefa Even-Shoshan's Hebrew play, *The Virgin of Ludmir*, which was first performed at the Khan Theatre in Jerusalem during the 1998–1999 season.

Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel *Shosha* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978) tells the story of a Yiddish writer named Aaron Greidinger (known as Tsutsik to his friends) who lives in pre-Holocaust Warsaw. Tsutsik writes a play about the Maiden of Ludmir, who becomes a symbolic composite of his many lovers.

- 4. Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 20.
- 5. Menashe Unger, *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 28 April 1968, 7, misquotes an important line from Horodezky's Russian account. Whereas in the *Evreiskaia Starina* account, Mordechai of Chernobyl actually declares, "[T]he soul of a zaddik must have transmigrated" into the Maiden, Unger misquotes the rebbe as saying, "I do not believe that the soul of a zaddik has transmigrated into her. A zaddik's soul would not transmigrate into a woman!" Unger also cites the Horodezky account incorrectly, listing the year of publication as 1910 instead of 1909.
- 6. Other authors who apparently wrote accounts about the Maiden of Ludmir but whose work I have thus far been unable to locate include Meir Balaban, Yitshak Evan, Yosef Margoshes, and Shaul Saphir. Balaban's essay on the Maiden appeared in a Polish journal called *Ewa*, which was published from 1928 to 1932. Searches for the journal in libraries in Krakow, Jerusalem, and New York turned up card catalog entries but no physical copies of the journal itself. However, I had access to notes from Balaban's essay taken by Professor Juliusz Bardach, Janusz Bardach's older brother and one of Poland's most eminent historians. The Maiden of Ludmir is also briefly mentioned in too many accounts to list here.
- 7. As reported by Jay and Max Raddock, Charles's brothers, in telephone interviews with the author, 7 December 1999.
- 8. Charles Raddock wrote the following accounts on the Maiden of Ludmir: "Hannah of Ludmir: The Strange True Story of a Hasidic Maid," *Menorah Journal* 36 (1948); "The Virgin of Ludmir: The Stranger-Than-Fiction Story of a Nineteenth-Century Jewess Who Lived and Died as a Chassidic 'Rabbi,'" *National Jewish Monthly*, October 1962; "Once There Was a Female Chassidic Rabbi: The Strange Case of the Virgin of Lodomeria," *Jewish Digest*, December 1967; "The Maid from Ludmir," *Jewish Life*, January/February 1971.
  - 9. Raddock, "Hannah of Ludmir," 252.

- 10. Raddock, "Hannah of Ludmir," 252.
- 11. Samuel A. Horodezky, "Vom Geminschaftsleben der Chassidim," *Der Jude* (1916–1917), 42.
- 12. In his 1948 account, Raddock attributed his knowledge of the Maiden's life in Israel to the testimony of current residents of Jerusalem: "Thus, her Jerusalem survivors testify, the Maid of Ludmir spent the last portion of her life" (258). Unfortunately, Raddock did not identify who these "Jerusalem survivors" were or describe how he had become aware of their stories. Moreover, in his 1962 article, Raddock claimed to have had personal contact with a "Jerusalem informant" (41), or, as he put it in 1971, "an old follower [who] informed me in 1951 on my first visit to Israel" (27). If his first trip to Israel was in 1951, how had Raddock gathered information from sources in Jerusalem as early as 1948?
  - 13. Menasheh Unger, Hasidus un leybn (New York, 1946), introduction.
  - 14. Unger, Hasidus un leybn, 58.
- 15. Menasheh Unger Collection, Rg 509/139, YIVO Archives, New York. Unger begins the manuscript by stating, "The Hasidic movement, as a democratic movement in its foundation, raised women to the same level as men. . . . Yet, the only woman who actually attained the level of a true zaddik was 'the Holy Virgin of Ludmir' [Ha-Betulah ha-Kedushah mi-Ludmir], Hannah Rochel, who was known by the name 'the Maiden of Ludmir' [Di Ludmirer Moid]."
- 16. Even though I examined years of Even's Yiddish newspaper columns as well as all his published books, I was unable to locate his account of the Maiden of Ludmir. Like Raddock, but in contrast to Horodezky, Unger emphasizes the role of the Seer of Lublin in the Maiden's birth. Since Unger's ancestor, Mordechai David of Dumbrova, was a disciple of the Seer, it is possible that Unger drew on an oral tradition for this detail. On this connection, see Menasheh Unger, Sefer kedoyshim: Rebeyem oyf kidesh-hashem (New York: Shulsinger Brothers, 1967), 158.
- 17. The account was serialized in *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 24 March 1968–19 May 1968. Unger briefly mentions the Maiden of Ludmir in *Hasidus un leybn*, 61–62.
- 18. This episode appears in the Menasheh Unger Collection, RG 509/132, YIVO Archives, New York. My thanks to Nechama Singer Ariel for her help in deciphering Unger's unclear handwriting in this passage.
- 19. The 1858 census (in Russian, *revizkie skazki*) records for Ludmir are in Fond 118/14/300 in the State Archives in Zhitomir, Ukraine. These are the only surviving Russian census lists of Ludmir from the nineteenth century.
- 20. Moshe Bardach appears at the head of an 1827 list of merchants belonging to the third guild in Ludmir. The list is in the Russian State Historical Archives in St. Petersburg, Fond 18/336/4.
- 21. Shimon Bar Levi, "Demuta shel eshet me-'ir ha-mekubalim (le-histalkutah shel Bat Sheva Taubenhaus)," *Ha-Posek* (1951).
- 22. Ephraim Taubenhaus, "Ha-Betulah Hanah Rochel mi Ludmir" (The virgin Hannah Rochel from Ludmir), *Ha-Posek* 141 (1952). The Hebrew

acronym *Admor*, signifying "our lord, teacher, and master," is traditionally applied to male Hasidic leaders.

- 23. Taubenhaus, "Ha-Betulah Hanah Rochel mi Ludmir," 191.
- 24. Taubenhaus, "Ha-Betulah Hanah Rochel mi Ludmir," 192.
- 25. See Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur (New York: Alveltlekhn Yidishn Kultur-Kongres, 1956), 1: 46.
- 26. Ephraim Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid (Haifa: Hotsaat Metsudah, 1959), 41.
- 27. For a brief but helpful account of the Biluim, see the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 4 (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 998–1002.
- 28. After Meir Taubenhaus died, Ephraim published many of his father's essays; thus the material on the Maiden of Ludmir is not unique in this respect. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate the personal papers of either Meir or Ephraim Taubenhaus. Neither did Leah Taubenhaus, Ephraim's elderly widow, remember what had become of them when I interviewed her in Israel, 9 May 2000.

#### Chapter 3. Afterlives

- For a complete list of the former and current residents of Ludmir whom I interviewed, see the Acknowledgments.
- 2. Isaac ben Leib Landau, Zikharon Tov (1892; reprint, Jerusalem, 1997), 54, sec. 4. Ada Rapoport-Albert refers to this passage as a "possible allusion to the Maid of Ludmir," commenting that it "appears in the middle of a rather obscure story"; see "On Women in Hasidism: S. A. Horodezky and the Maid of Ludmir Tradition," in Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein (London: P. Halban, 1988), 519 n. 43.
- 3. Neither anecdote is relevant to the Maiden of Ludmir. On Yitzhak of Neshkhiz, see Abraham Bromberg, *Mi-Gedole ha-Torah veha-Hasidut*, vol. 20 (Jerusalem: Ha-Makhon le-Hasidut, 1953), 51 ff.; Aaron Shapira, *Sefer Yeme Zikaron* (Bene Barak, Israel: A. Shapira, 1998), 177.
- 4. Intriguingly, in *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 19 May 1968, 7, Menasheh Unger writes that after she was already living in Jerusalem, the Maiden of Ludmir "wrote a letter to the rebbe Yitzhakl of Neshkhiz, stating that she had seen in a dream that people would begin to take Jews into the military." According to Unger, in his answer to the Maiden, the rebbe confirmed what she had seen. Unger does not cite any source for this tradition, but it seems likely that it is somehow related to the tradition preserved in *Zikharon Tov*.
- 5. See Landau, *Zikharon Tor*, 132, sec. 19. Other letters from Mordechai of Chernobyl and his sons, Aharon of Chernobyl and Abraham of Trisk, suggest a close relationship between Yitzhak of Neshkhiz and the Hasidic dynasty that played such a major role in the Maiden of Ludmir's life. See *Zikharon Tor*, 116, sec. 9; 118, secs. 3–4. On his relationship with the Magid of Trisk, see also 109, sec. 13.

- 6. There is also reason to believe that Yitzhak of Neshkhiz may have been unusually hostile to the idea of women being present in his court. On this issue, see Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism," 514 n. 21.
- 7. Rodkhinssohn's brother was Israel Dov Frumkin, who became the editor of *Havazelet*, the important Hebrew-language newspaper published in Jerusalem during the second half of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century.
- 8. Michael Rodkhinssohn, *Tefillah le-Moshe* (Pressburg [Bratislava, Slovakia]: Löwy & Alcalay, 1883), 48 n. 1. On the issue of women, including the Maiden of Ludmir, wearing tefillin, see chapter 8.
- 9. Robin Goldberg, "Imagining the Feminine: Storying and Re-storying Womanhood Among Lubavitch Hasidic Women," Ph.D. diss. (Northwestern University, 1991), 1: 200.
  - 10. Goldberg, "Imagining the Feminine," 1: 200-201.
- 11. Naftali Loewenthal, "Women and the Dialectic of Spirituality in Hasidism," in *Within Hasidic Circles: Studies in Hasidism in Memory of Mordecai Wilensky*, ed. Immanuel Etkes et al. (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1999), traces the development of the particular Habad approach to women to the late eighteenth century and the earliest writings.
  - 12. Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism," 525 n. 83; 523-24 n. 82.
- 13. Vunderliche mayses be yiddish: Di hoyf fun Chernobyl (Union City, N.J.: Gross Brothers, 1985). While a few other chapters are omitted (probably for a variety of reasons), they do not constitute an extended narrative as do the chapters about the Maiden of Ludmir.
- 14. See David Mekler, *Fun rebbins hoyf: Fun Chernobyl biz Talne*, vol. 1 (New York: Jewish Book Publishing Company, 1931), 10.
- 15. Quotes are from Irene Klass, "The Inside Story of the Maiden of Ludomir," *Jewish Press*, 24 January 1992.
  - 16. Religion and Ethics Newsweekly, PBS television, 25 August 2000.
- 17. These comments appear in Gershon Winkler, *They Called Her Rebbe: The Maiden of Ludomir* (New York: Judaica Press, 1991), xiv–xv.

# Chapter 4. The Curse, the Cossacks, and the Messiah

- 1. On the history of the Jewish community of Ludmir during this early period, see the *Pinkas Ludmir* (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotse Ludmir be Yisrael, 1962), 21–26, 45–54. These accounts are largely based on the description of the town in the *Evreiskaia Entsiklopediia* (St. Petersburg: Izadnie Obschestva dlia nauchnykh evreiskikh, 1906; reprint, Moscow: Terra, 1991), 5: 654–56. For information and a bibliography on the earliest Jewish settlements in what is now Ukraine, see Samuel Ettinger, *Ben Polin le-Rusyah* (On the history of the Jews in Poland and Russia: Collected essays) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1994), 23–29.
  - 2. Pinkas Ludmir, 23.

- 3. On Sigismund Augustus and his reforms, see Bernard Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973), 125, 132–33; on blood libels and similar charges during this period, see the table on 152–53.
- 4. Weinryb, Jews of Poland, 99, describes Luria as "prejudiced against women."
- 5. See Yom Tov Lipmann Heller, *Megilat evah* (Budapest, 1822), 12–13, for his life in Ludmir.
- 6. *Pinkas Ludmir*, 241. Another writer, 28, states that "this dispute [over Heller] . . . remained engraved in the memory of the Jews of Poland in general and the Jews of Ludmir in particular."
- 7. Quoted in B. H. Perlov, *Der kedosh hashem* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Moriah Offset Company, 1995), 172, a Yiddish hagiographical collection about the life and times of Shlomo Karliner. The tradition also appears in Aaron David Twersky, *Sefer ha Yahas mi Chernobyl ve Rozhin* (Lublin, 1938), 105.
- 8. Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, rev. ed. (New York: New Press, 2000), 89. On the relationship of the Cossacks and the peasants during the Ukrainian uprisings of the seventeenth century, see 107–10.
- 9. Abraham ben Shmuel Ashkenazi, *Tsaar Bat Rabim*, ed. Jonas Gurland (Krakow, 1888). For biographical information on Ashkenazi, see 8–9; for the quote above, see 16.
- 10. Evreiskaia Entsiklopediia, 5: 655. Unfortunately, there are no statistics for the number of Jewish buildings in Ludmir prior to Chmielnicki's assault in 1649. The encyclopedia states, however, that "before Chmielnicki's invasion there were more."
- 11. Elijah Judah Schochet, "Taz": Rabbi David Halevi (New York: KTAV Publishing, 1979), 21.
- 12. See Eliahu ben Yaakov, "Haqdamah," to Shabbtai Cohen, *Menahem Cohen* (n.p., 1740), as cited in *Pinkas Ludmir*, 34.
- 13. For this information, see *Pinkas Ludmir*, 33–34 and 68, citing the *Evreiskaia Entsiklopediia*, 5: 655. In the Yiddish section, M. Dvarzhetsky introduces the statistics with a caveat: "One must proceed with a certain reservation concerning the submitted figures for the Jews, because the objective of the census was the head tax of the Jews; and it is to be assumed that it was in the interest of the Jews to not provide accurate figures and that the real numbers exceeded the 'official' statistics."
- 14. On the relationship of Landau and Kosov to Ludmir, as well as Emden's accusations, see Gershon Hundert, "Apta ve reshit ha-Hasidut 'ad 1800," (Apt and the beginnings of Hasidism until 1800), in *Tsadikim ve-anshe ma'aseh: Mehkarim ba-Hasidut Polin*, ed. Rachel Elior, Yisrael Bartal, and Hana Shmeruk (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1994).
- 15. As translated by Elijah Judah Schochet in *The Hasidic Movement and the Gaon of Vilna* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1994), 10–11.
- 16. Yaakov Moshe Kleynbaum, ed., Sefer Shema Shlomo ha Shalem (Jerusalem: Mekhon Zekher Naftali, 1987), 33.

- 17. Wolf Ze'ev Rabinowitsch, "Karlin Hasidism," YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science 5 (1950): 149. On relations between Shneur Zalman and Shlomo Karliner, see also Klevnbaum, Shema Shlomo, 98–99.
  - 18. Kleynbaum, Shema Shlomo, 148.
  - 19. Kleynbaum, Shema Shlomo, 44.
- 20. David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 142.
  - 21. Kleynbaum, Shema Shlomo, 56.
  - 22. Kleynbaum, Shema Shlomo, 125.
  - 23. Kleynbaum, Shema Shlomo, 34-35, 55.
  - 24. Kleynbaum, Shema Shlomo, 34.
  - 25. Kleynbaum, Shema Shlomo, 35-36.
  - 26. Kleynbaum, Shema Shlomo, 55.
  - 27. Kleynbaum, Shema Shlomo, 148-49.
- 28. Perlov, *Der kedosh hashem*, 165. For the other identifications, see Kleynbaum, *Shema Shlomo*, 142, 24, and 39, where Devorah is called "*ha-rabbanit ha-zadkanit*." Her mother, whose name is unrecorded, was Shlomo Karliner's daughter, while her father was Israel Hayim of Ludmir, the son of Abraham the "Malakh" [Angel] and grandson of the Magid of Mezeritch.
- 29. Kleynbaum, *Shema Shlomo*, 144. When Noah told Mordechai of Lekhovitz what happened, his father told him that he should have stuck his head in the ark when Shlomo Karliner removed his.
- 30. Kleynbaum, *Shema Shlomo*, 142-43. On Asher of Stolin's recollection, see 145.
  - 31. Kleynbaum, Shema Shlomo, 149.
- 32. On the figure of Armilus, see David Berger, "Three Typological Themes in Early Jewish Messianism: Messiah Son of Joseph, Rabbinic Calculations, and the Figure of Armilus," *AJS Review* 10 (1985): 141–64.
  - 33. Kleynbaum, Shema Shlomo, 83, 143, 145, 169.
- 34. In his Yiddish hagiographical collection about Shlomo Karliner, *Der kedosh hashem*, 164, the contemporary Hasidic author B. H. Perlov writes with surprise since the name Shlomo Karliner is famous in the Hasidic world about someone who visited Ludmir before World War II to pray at Shlomo Karliner's grave. He went from person to person asking for directions to the tomb of Shlomo Karliner, "and no one knew what he was talking about. Then someone figured out what he meant and asked him, 'Perhaps you mean the grave of Moshiah ben Yosef?' When he responded yes, people immediately pointed out where the grave was!" My own interviews with former residents of Ludmir have confirmed the disappearance of the name Shlomo Karliner from the collective memory of the town's former residents on the one hand and the tenacious survival of the tradition of Mashiah ben Yosef on the other.
  - 35. Pinkas Ludmir, 179, 241.
  - 36. Pinkas Ludmir, 241.

#### Chapter 5. Birth and Childhood

- I. Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times Until the Present Day* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1916), 1: 344.
- 2. Documents dating from 1807 and 1809, respectively, attest to the threat of these decrees for the Jews of Ludmir. See Ru 185(3) and Ru 185(7) in the Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem.
  - 3. Dubnow, History of the Jews, 1: 346.
  - 4. Dubnow, History of the Jews, 1: 365.
- 5. For these statistics, see *Pinkas Ludmir* (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotse Ludmir be Yisrael, 1962), 34, 70, and *Evreiskaia Entsiklopediia* (1906; reprint, Moscow: Terra, 1991), 5: 655.
- An undated map from this period lists twenty-two male and five female Polish Catholic clergy and twelve male and eleven female Greek Orthodox clergy.
- 7. David Mekler, *Fun rebbins hoyf: Fun Chernobyl biz Talne* (New York: Jewish Book Publishing Company, 1931), 1: 210.
- 8. Ephraim Taubenhaus, *Be Netiv ha Yahid* (Haifa: Hotsaat Metsudah, 1959), 38. On 39, Taubenhaus writes, "My father gathered these details about the Maiden from one of her friends, and after careful examination, determined that they were close to the truth."
  - 9. Menasheh Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 24 March 1968, 7.
- 10. Taubenhaus, *Be Netiv ha Yahid*, 38; Charles Raddock, "Once There Was a Female Chassidic Rabbi: The Strange Case of the Virgin of Lodomeria," *Jewish Digest*, December 1967, 20; Moshe Feinkind, *Froyen rebeyyim un barimte perzenlekhkeiten in poylen* (Warsaw: Grafja, 1937), 31. On the structure and social significance of the heder, see Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 159–64.
  - 11. Mordechai Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," Reshumot 2 (1946): 70.
- 12. Chava Weissler, Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 91, 95.
- 13. Paula Hyman, Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representations of Women (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1995), 65–66.
  - 14. Mekler, Fun rebbins hoyf, 1: 211.
- 15. On the educational opportunities of Jewish women and men, see Shaul Stampfer, "Gender Differentiation and Education of the Jewish Woman in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe," *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Relations* 7 (1992): 63–87.
- 16. Hayyim of Volozhin complained about Hasidim who "made their entire study revolve only around books of piety and mussar. . . . I myself saw in one particular district that this had become so widespread that in most of the study halls there were only mussar books, and there was not even one complete set of Talmud." From the introduction to *Mirkevet Ha-Mishnah*, Commentary on Mai-

- monides (Frankfurt on the Oder, 1751); R. Hayyim of Volozhin, *Nefesh Hayyim*, pt. 4, ch. 1, as cited in Benzion Dinur, "The Origins of Hasidism," in *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present*, ed. Gershon Hundert (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 165.
- 17. Nahman Shemen, *Batsiung tsu der froy* (Buenos Aires: YIVO, 1968), 2: 329.
- 18. Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 29b; Palestinian Talmud Berakhot 2:3, 3:3, and Eruvin 10:1, for the midrashic statement, "You shall teach your sons sons and not daughters."
- 19. See, for example, the different views in Babylonian Talmud Sotah 20a. A good discussion of the attitudes of Halakhah regarding women's Torah education may be found in Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women's Issues in Halakhic Sources* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 29 ff. For a perusal of the sources from a different perspective (the author is a professor at Yeshiva University), see Menachem Brayer, *The Jewish Woman in Rabbinic Literature*, vol. 2 (Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV, 1986).
  - 20. See Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah, Hilkhot Talmud Torah 246:6.
  - 21. Stampfer, "Gender Differentiation," 71.
  - 22. Stampfer, "Gender Differentiation," 65.
- 23. Ephraim Taubenhaus, "Ha-Betulah Hanah Rochel mi Ludmir" (The virgin Hannah Rochel from Ludmir), *Ha Posek* 141 (1952): 191.
- 24. Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," 70. See also Menasheh Unger, *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 31 March 1968, 7.
- 25. Hyman, Gender and Assimilation, 67; on this issue also see Susan Glenn, Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), 8–49.
- 26. On this phenomenon see Stampfer, "Gender Differentiation," 65, and P. Sharagrodska, "Der Shura Gruss," *Filologische Shriften fun Yivo* (1926), 67–72.
- 27. Samuel A. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva (Di Ludmirer Moid)," *Evreiskaia Starina* 1 (1909): 219; Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," 70.
  - 28. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 31 March 1968, 7.
  - 29. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 31 March 1968, 7.
  - 30. Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," 71.
- 31. On the tale concerning Eybeschuetz, see Jacob Emden, *Bet Yehonatan ha-Sofer* (Altona, 1663), 9b; on the episode involving the Besht, see Samuel A. Horodezky, ed., *Shivhei ha-Besht* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1957), 127–28. On Nigal's analysis, see Gedalyah Nigal, *Magic, Mysticism, and Hasidism: The Supernatural in Jewish Thought* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1994), 21–23.
  - 32. Mekler, Fun rebbins hoyf, 1: 282-83.
- 33. See René Grémaux, "Woman Becomes Man in the Balkans," in *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*, ed. Gilbert Herdt (New York: Zone Books, 1994). According to Qefli Neziri, a friend of the author and native of Macedonia, this practice still occurs among the mountain peoples although apparently with less frequency than in the past.
  - 34. Thus, they are known as zavjetovana djevojka, in the local Slavic dialect,

and as *vajzë e betuar*, in Albanian, both of which mean "sworn virgin." Even more frequently, these individuals were called *tobelija* ("person bound by a vow") or *virgjinéshë* ("female dedicated to virginity").

#### Chapter 6. Love and Death

- 1. Quotes are from Samuel A. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva (Di Ludmirer Moid)," *Evreiskaia Starina* 1 (1909): 220.
- 2. In a later Hebrew account, *Ole Tsiyon* (Tel Aviv: Gazit, 1946), 173, Horodezky offered a different version, which stressed Hannah Rochel's volition in choosing her beloved rather than her father's role. Thus he writes, "People say that when she was young she cast her eyes on a young man in Ludmir and fell deeply in love with him, but no one knew about this." Unable to express her passionate longing for the boy, Hannah Rochel "fell ill with the illness known as *moreshkhoyre*" (melancholy), in Yiddish. Frustrated by the restrictive social norms of her day, therefore, she began to suffer from a severe case of *la maladie d'amour* (lovesickness).
  - 3. Mordecai Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," Reshumot 2 (1946): 72.
- 4. Daniel Boyarin, Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 65, 136.
  - 5. Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 52a.
  - 6. BT Sotah 20a.
- 7. BT Baba Metzi'a 84a. See also BT Yevamot 113a; BT Sotah 20a. Rachel Biale, Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women's Issues in Halakhic Sources (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 202, offers this explanation for why women are not commanded to procreate. David Biale, in Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 54, writes, "Women were thus considered to be highly sexual but incapable of asking for sexual satisfaction."
- 8. Also see BT Kiddushin 2b. "Why did the Torah state 'When a man will take a wife' [Deut. 22:13] and why did it not state the reverse? Because it is in the nature of a man to actively pursue the woman and it is not the nature of the woman to actively pursue the man."
- 9. David Mekler, *Fun rebbins hoyf: Fun Chernobyl biz Talne* (New York: Jewish Book Publishing Company, 1931), 1: 217.
  - 10. Mekler, *Fun rebbins hoyf*, 218–19.
  - 11. On this phenomenon, see D. Biale, Eros and the Jews, 166.
- 12. Moshe Feinkind, Froyen rebeyyim un barimte perzenlekhkeiten in Poylen (Warsaw: Grafja, 1937), 31-32.
- 13. Menasheh Unger Collection, YIVO Archives RG509/139. An almost identical version is told by Joseph Gross in his work "The Maid of Ludmir: The Interesting Story of a Young Girl Who Became a Chassidic Leader," *Jewish Ledger*, 4 December 1936, 11, 56.
  - 14. Charles Raddock, "Hannah of Ludmir: The Strange True Story of a

Hasidic Maid," *Menorah Journal* 36 (1948): 253. Ephraim Taubenhaus, *Be Netiv ha Yahid* (Haifa: Hotsaat Metsudah), 39, preserves the same tradition but lacks the rest of Raddock's version of the subsequent events.

- 15. Charles Raddock, "The Maid from Ludmir," *Jewish Life*, January/February 1971, 19–20.
  - 16. Raddock, "Maid from Ludmir," 20.
  - 17. Raddock, "Hannah of Ludmir," 254.
  - 18. Raddock, "Maid from Ludmir," 21.
  - 19. Raddock, "Hannah of Ludmir," 255.
  - 20. Menasheh Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 31 March 1968, 7.
- 21. Naftali Loewenthal, "Women and the Dialectic of Spirituality in Hasidism," in *Within Hasidic Circles: Studies in Hasidism in Memory of Mordecai Wilensky*, ed. Immanuel Etkes et al. (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1999), 22.
- 22. Loewenthal, "Women and the Dialectic," 23; Dov Ber, *Pokeah Ivrim* (Lemberg, 1849), chap. 9, p. 38; chap. 17, p. 42. Dov Ber's text differs from most *musar* works, such as the *Brantshpigl*, which assume that women rarely experience disturbing sexual desires. This tendency contrasts with the common rabbinic view that women have powerful sex drives. On the ethical literature and its view of women's sexuality, see Chava Weissler, "The Religion of Traditional Ashkenazic Women: Some Methodological Issues," *AJS Review* 12 (1987): 89; Loewenthal, "Women and the Dialectic," 22. On 23, Loewenthal writes that Dov Ber's view "may seem a rather dubious level of female emancipation. Yet within the pietistic context of the hasidic community it means that women were no longer regarded as passive objects . . . [but] as autonomous individuals who had to grapple with their thoughts and feelings."
  - 23. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 7 April 1968, 7.
  - 24. Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," 71.
- 25. D. Biale, *Eros and the Jews*, 165, writes, "In particular, walks in the fields and forest, beyond the boundaries of the shtetl, became increasingly popular and provided an unsupervised opportunity for intercourse (of all kinds). . . . A new interest in nature can be found in this custom, an interest that went hand in hand with romantic values between the sexes."
- 26. For a discussion of the term *madregah* in the Hasidic context, see Samuel Dresner, *The Zaddik: The Doctrine of the Zaddik According to the Writings of Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoy* (New York: Schocken Books, 1960), 168 ff. For a thorough discussion of the term *devekut* that has greatly influenced later treatments of the subject, see Gershom Scholem, "Devekut, or Communion with God," in *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present*, ed. Gershon Hundert (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 275 ff. On *hitpashtut ha-gashmiyut*, see Louis Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 93 ff.
  - 27. As cited in D. Biale, Eros and the Jews, 131.
  - 28. Weissler, "Religion of Traditional Ashkenazic Women," 92.
  - 29. Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," 72.
- 30. Unger, *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 7 April 1968, 7. He also writes that the Maiden of Ludmir visited the grave of the famous zaddik Leyb Sarah's. Accord-

- ing to a Hasidic tradition, Leyb Sarah's was buried in Ludmir's cemetery (according to another tradition, he was buried in Yaltishav). At his grave, the Maiden asked him whether it was possible for a woman to be one of the *lamed vavnikim*, the thirty-six righteous people whose merit sustained the world.
- 31. For an excellent discussion of this ritual and its connection to the *tkhines*, see Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 126 ff.
- 32. As in the case of Greek and Russian Orthodox women, whose mourning rituals are rooted in the women's laments of classical Greece, the tradition of such women in Judaism is extremely ancient. See Jeremiah 6:26 and the Mishnah Moed Katan 3:9, which mentions three classes of women mourners: the mekonena (the chief wailer), the me'annot (who repeated the dirge), and the metappehot (who performed accompanying gestures). On Jewish women mourners in Eastern Europe, see Abraham Rechtman, Yidishe etnografye un folklor: Zikhroynos vegn der etnografisher ekspeditsye ongefirt fun Sh. An-ski (Buenos Aires: YIVO, 1958), 306–7; Gisela Suliteanu, "The Traditional System of Melopeic Prose of the Funeral Songs Recited by the Jewish Women of the Socialist Republic of Rumania," Folklore Research Center Studies 3 (1972): 291–351; Yehoychin Stuchevski, "Rochele ha-Mekonenet," Reshumot 3 (1947); Yitshak Rivkind, "Vaybershe Parnoses" (Women's occupations) Yiddishe Shprakh 18 (1958): 55–56.
  - 33. Rechtman, Yidishe etnografye un folklor, 306-7.
  - 34. Suliteanu, "Traditional System," 306-7.
- 35. As Loewenthal, "Women and the Dialectic," 33, writes, "Gravesitting was an authentic fact of the spirituality of Ashkenazi women." Lowenthal also notes that Shara Schenierer, the founder of the Orthodox Beis Yaakov schools, instituted among her students the practice of visiting the graves of zaddikim.

#### Chapter 7. The Maiden Possessed

- 1. Samuel A. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva (Di Ludmirer Moid)," *Evreiskaia Starina* 1 (1909): 220.
- 2. Details are from Mordecai Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," *Reshumot* 2 (1946): 72; David Mekler, *Fun rebbins hoyf: Fun Chernobyl biz Tulne* (New York: Jewish Book Publishing Company, 1931), 1: 230.
- 3. This quote appears in all Horodezky's accounts. In the Russian version, Horodezky uses the Russian term *dusha* for "soul"; in the Hebrew and Yiddish accounts, he uses the term *neshama*.
- 4. This letter, known by Hasidim as the "Holy Epistle," first appeared in *Ben Porat Yosef* (Korets, 1781). See Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 97 ff.
- 5. See Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz, trans. and eds., *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 54–58, 103–4, 114–16.

- 6. See David Halperin, "Ascension or Invasion: Implications of the Heavenly Journey in Ancient Judaism," *Religion* 18 (1988): 56.
  - 7. Mekler, Fun rebbins hoyf, 231.
- 8. Mekler, *Fun rebbins hoyf*, 231–33. For Biber's shorter, derivative account, see "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," 72–73.
- 9. See, for example, the parable attributed to the Besht, which ends, "It is befitting for a man to learn from his desire for physical things how to desire the service of God and his love." Aaron of Opatow, *Keter Shem Tov* (Korets, 1797), 14–15. For the original formulation of the parable, see Jacob Joseph of Polonnye, *Ben Porat Yoseph* (Korets, 1781), 66b. On the parable's significance, see Ada Rapoport-Albert, "God and the Zaddik as the Two Focal Points of Hasidic Worship," in *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present*, ed. Gershon Hundert (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 302–3, and David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).
  - 10. D. Biale, Eros and the Jews, 143.
  - 11. D. Biale, Eros and the Jews, 142.
- 12. David ben Joseph Abudarham, Sefer Aburdarham, part 2, "The Blessing over (Fulfilling) the Commandments," as cited in Rachel Biale, Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women's Issues in Halakhic Sources (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 13.
- 13. Elisabeth Avilda Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 5-6.
- 14. Gershom Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (New York: Schocken Books, 1954), 6, 10.
  - 15. Petroff, Medieval Women's Visionary Literature, 18.
- 16. As cited in Samuel Dresner, *The Zaddik: The Doctrine of the Zaddik according to the Writings of Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoy* (New York: Schocken Books, 1960), 69–70.
  - 17. Petroff, Medieval Women's Visionary Literature, 40, 6.
- 18. Other Christian holy women whose stories share many of the same motifs include Magdalena Beutler, Julian of Norwich, and Catherine of Siena.
- 19. Kieren Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, trans. and eds., *Teresa of Avila: The Interior Castle* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 1–4.
- 20. Thomas De Cantimpré, *The Life of Christina Mirabilis* (Toronto: Peregrina Publishing, 1997), 11–13.
- 21. On the link between visions and illness in holy women's lives, see Phyllis Mack, Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 34; Michael MacDonald, Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Susan Starr Sered, Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister: Religions Dominated by Women (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 103.
- 22. Babylonian Talmud Baba Batra, 12a; 'Eruvin 7a. See Ephraim Urbach, "Matai Paskah ha Nevuah?" (When did prophecy cease?), *Tarbiz* 17 (1946): 1–11;

Nahum Glatzer, "A Study of the Talmudic-Midrashic Interpretation of Prophecy," in *Essays in Jewish Thought* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1978), 16–35.

- 23. See Haim Beinart, "Inés of Herrera del Duque: The Prophetess of Extremadura," in *Women in the Inquisition: Spain and the New World*, ed. Mary Giles (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
  - 24. Beinart, "Inés of Herrera," 47.
  - 25. Beinart, "Inés of Herrera," 52.
- 26. Quotes are from Hayim Vital, Sefer Ha-Hizyonot [Book of Visions], in Jewish Mystical Autobiographies: Book of Visions and Book of Secrets, trans. and ed. Morris Faierstein (New York: Paulist Press, 1999). On these women oil diviners, see 44–45. On this practice, see Samuel Daiches, Babylonian Oil Magic in the Talmud and in Later Jewish Literature (London: Oxford University Press, 1913).
- 27. Joseph Sambari, *Sefer Divre Yosef* (1672; reprint, Jerusalem: Mekhon Ben Tsevi, 1994), 364 ff. Francisa Sarah appears to be the only woman who possessed her own *magid*. On this phenomenon, see Yoram Bilu, "Dybbuk and Maggid: Two Cultural Patterned *[sic]* of Altered Consciousness in Judaism," *AJS Review* 21 (1996). On Francisa Sarah's magid, see 362 n. 72.
- 28. On Francisa Sarah, see Faierstein, trans. and ed., *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 50; on the daughter of Raphael Anav of Damascus, see 57 ff. The case of Raphael Anav's visionary daughter is complicated by the fact that she was possessed, at least for a time, by the soul of a male scholar named Piso. Yet it appears that she continued to experience visions even after this soul had abandoned her. On this story's connection to the later development of the dybbuk tradition, see Meir Beneyahu, *Sefer Toldot ha-Ari* (Jerusalem: Mekhon Ben-Tsevi be-Universitah ha-Ivrit, 1967), 292 n. 1.
  - 29. Scholem, Major Trends, 37.
- 30. On this issue see Arthur Green, "Typologies of Leadership and the Hasidic Zaddiq," in *Jewish Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Green, vol. 2 (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 129–30.
- 31. It must have helped that the Bible describes two women, Miriam and Deborah, as "prophets." See also Maimonides's intriguing reference to Miriam in *Guide to the Perplexed* 3:51.
- 32. On Edel and *ruah ha-qodesh*, see Nahman Shemen, *Batsiung tsu der froy*, vol. 2 (Buenos Aires: YIVO, 1969), 328; on Hannah Hayah of Chernobyl, 330.
- 33. Feige's mother was the Baal Shem Tov's daughter, Edel, who was also described as a holy woman in Hasidic sources (see, for example, Ben-Amos and Minsk, trans. and eds., *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, tale 114, 37, although here Edel actually interrupts the Besht's own visionary activity). On Feige, see Samuel A. Horodezky, *Ha-Hasidut veha-hasidim* (Berlin and Jerusalem: Devir, 1922), 3: 69; Moshe Feinkind, *Froyen rebeyim un barimte perzenlekhkeiten in Poylen* (Warsaw: Grafja, 1937), 20.
  - 34. For a good discussion of this issue see Sered, Priestess, 182 ff.
  - 35. Mack, Visionary Women, 33.
  - 36. For an exception, see Hayim Vital, Shaar ha-Gilgulim (1684; reprint,

Jerusalem: Keren Hotsaat Sifre Rabbane Bavel, 1980), *Haqdamah* 5: "Sometimes it happens that although a person possesses a pure and lofty soul . . . the individual suffers a serious illness, and then his soul is exchanged with another soul, or it happens that someone suffers an epileptic fit, and his soul is exchanged with the soul of someone else, and another soul enters him. And this is the secret of a person who is a zaddik all his life, and in the end he becomes evil or the opposite."

- 37. Vital, Shaar ha-Gilgulim, Haqdamah 2.
- 38. Vital, Shaar ha-Gilgulim, Haqdamah 9.
- 39. Cordovero's Zohar commentary in Abraham Azulai's 'Or ha-Hammah, 3:56a, as translated by Lawrence Fine in "The Contemplative Practice of Yihudim in Lurianic Kabbalah," in *Jewish Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Green, vol. 2 (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 82.
- 40. In a number of kabbalistic sources, two higher parts of the soul were added, *hayyah* and *yehidah*. They are not relevant to the current discussion.
  - 41. Zohar i, 83b.
  - 42. Zohar i, 83b.
  - 43. Vital, Shaar ha-Gilgulim, Haqdamah 1.
- 44. Vital, *Shaar ha-Gilgulim*, *Haqdamah* 2. On the Zoharic concept of the soul and its sefirotic origins, see the section on *naran* in Isaiah Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1971); Lea Hovav-Machboob, "Torat ha-Gilgulim shel ha-Ari Zal" (The Ari's doctrine of reincarnation) (Ph.D. diss., Jewish Theological Seminary, 1983), 26 ff.
  - 45. Hovav-Machboob, "Torat ha-Gilgulim," 32 ff.
  - 46. Pinkas Ludmir, 246, 241, respectively.
  - 47. Vital, Shaar ha-Gilgulim, Haqdamah 9.
  - 48. Vital, Shaar ha-Gilgulim, Haqdamah 9.
- 49. See, Vital, *Shaar ha-Gilgulim, Haqdamah* 20 and chap. 13. The one exception to this rule occurred when a man did not marry his soul mate during his first incarnation. In such cases, both the man's soul and his future wife's soul would reincarnate so that they could unite in marriage, as Vital states: "The woman, however, also transmigrates when she is required [for the *gilgul*] of her husband."
- 50. See Ada Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism: S. A. Horodezky and the Maid of Ludmir Tradition," in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein (London: P. Halban, 1988), 508: "In traditional terms she was understood as having acquired the soul of a man, albeit a Zaddik (but probably a 'fallen' Zaddik who had committed a serious transgression, most likely a sexual one, and who was being punished by transmigrating into her female body)."
  - 51. Vital, Shaar ha-Gilgulim, Haqdamah 9.
- 52. As an anonymous reader of my manuscript pointed out, this may be because "the Bible describes such [that is, male homosexual] relations as having intercourse with a man as one would with a woman." In nineteenth-century Germany, lawyer-cum-author Karl Heinrich Ulrichs began calling male homo-

sexuals "Uranians" and referred to them as members of a "third sex" (das dritte Geschlecht). According to Ulrichs, the Uranian was an "anima muliebris in corpore virili inclusa'— a female soul enclosed in a male body." The theories of Vital and Ulrichs may be read as mirror images of each other. For Vital, a biological female with a male soul results from male homosexuality; for Ulrichs, a biological male with a female soul results in male homosexuality. See Gert Hekma, "A Female Soul in a Male Body': Sexual Inversion as Gender Inversion in Nineteenth-Century Sexology," in Third Sex Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History, ed. Gilbert Herdt (New York: Zone Books, 1994), 218–19. Only in his later writings did Ulrichs devote any attention to the lesbian, whom he called Urninde.

## Chapter 8. False Male and Woman Rebbe?

- 1. Samuel A. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva (Di Ludmirer Moid)," *Evreiskaia Starina* 1 (1909): 220.
  - 2. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva," 220.
- 3. Ada Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism: S. A. Horodezky and the Maid of Ludmir Tradition," in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein (London: P. Halban, 1988), 508.
- 4. Caroline Walker Bynum, Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 166-67, has noticed a similar tendency among the male biographers of women saints. For a good discussion of this issue in late antique sources, see Elizabeth Castelli, "'I will Make Mary Male': Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation of Christian Women in Late Antiquity," in Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York and London: Routledge, 1991); Marvin Meyer, "Making Mary Male: The Categories of 'Male' and 'Female' in the Gospel of Thomas,' New Testament Studies 3 (1985): 554-70. Other examples include Perpetua's transformation in "The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas" in The Acts of the Christian Martyrs (a third-century text) and the abbess Olympias, concerning whom the fourth-century bishop of Antioch John Chrysostom declared, "Don't say 'woman' but 'what a man!' because this is a man, despite her physical appearance." Virginia Burrus, "Word and Flesh: The Bodies and Sexuality of Ascetic Women in Christian Antiquity," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 10 (1994): 41, analyzes some of the Church Father Jerome's famous sayings on the topic.
- 5. For the first quote, see David Mekler, Fun rebbins hoyf: Fun Chernobyl biz Talne (New York: Jewish Book Publishing Company, 1931), 1: 234; for the second, see Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva," 220.
  - 6. Menasheh Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 7 April 1968, 7.
- 7. Bynum, Fragmentation and Redemption, 37, notes, "Men writing about women assumed that women went through sharp crises and conversions and

that their liminal moments were accompanied by gender reversal (in this case, of course, elevation)."

- 8. The belief in spiritual androgyny goes back to Plato's *Symposium* 189D. See John Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe* (New York: Villard Books 1994), 369, for a discussion of relevant Jewish traditions.
- 9. Zohar iii, 43a. See also Zohar i, 91b, for another formulation of the same idea.
  - 10. Samuel A. Horodezky, Ole Tsiyon (Tel Aviv: Gazit, 1946), 174.
- 11. *Pinkas Ludmir* (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotse Ludmir be Yisrael, 1962), 295; Nahman Shemen, *Batsiung tsu der froy* (Buenos Aires: YIVO, 1969), 2: 329; Menasheh Unger, *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 7 April 1968, 7.
- 12. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 37; Donald Weinstein and Rudolph Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom*, 1000–1700 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 220–38.
- 13. In fact, women are obligated to perform some positive time-bound commandments (for example, eating matzo at the Passover seder) and not others (for example, studying Torah). I am indebted to Joel Roth's excellent discussion in "Ordination of Women: An Halakhic Analysis," *Judaism* 33 (1984): 70–78, for this example and for many of the finer points in my own analysis of women and the Halakhah.
- 14. Translations of these Halakhic statements are taken from Roth, "Ordination of Women," 71. For the relevant works of all the Halakhic authorities cited above, see Roth, 70–71 nn. 2–4. For other discussions of these issues see David Golinkin, "Ha-im Mutar le Nashim Lehaniah Tefillin?" (Are women permitted to lay tefillin?), *Asufot* 11 (1995): 187–88; Haviva Ner-David, "Tzitzit and Tefillin for Women," in *Li-heyot ishah Yehudiyah*, ed. Margalit Shilo (Jerusalem: Kolekh; Urim, 1999), 20–28.
- 15. On the complicated concept of *guf naki* and the Halakhic statements concerning women and tefillin in general, see Aliza Berger, "Wrapped Attention: May Women Wear Tefillin?" in *Jewish Legal Writings by Women*, ed. Micah Halpern and Chana Safrai (Jerusalem: Urim Publications; Brooklyn, NY: Lambda Publishers, 1998), 75–118, and Golinkin, "Are Women Permitted to Wear Tefillin?" For a review of this literature, see Moshe Benovitz, "Micah D. Halpern and Chana Safrai (eds.): *Jewish Legal Writings by Women*, a Response by Moshe Benovitz," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues* 2 (1999): 146–60.
  - 16. Golinkin, "Ha-im Mutar le Nashim Lehaniah Tefillin?" 194.
- 17. Abraham Ha-Levi Even Shosan, *Maaseh ha-Zaddikim* (Jerusalem, 1889), 1, folio 2. Yet, as Golinkin has noted in "Are Women Permitted to Lay Tefillin?" 194–95, the accuracy of this account is open to question, since it first appears in print in 1889, more than 145 years after the death of Hayim ben Atar, in a work containing obviously fictionalized tales.
- 18. See, for example, Menachem Brayer, *The Jewish Woman in Rabbinic Literature* (Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV, 1986), 2: 43.
  - 19. Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 31a; Baba Kamma 38a.

- 20. Nehemiah Polen, "Miriam's Dance: Radical Egalitarianism in Hasidic Thought," *Modern Judaism* 12 (1992): 9–10. Polen, however, refers to a divergent view espoused in writing by the Hasidic zaddik Kalonymous Kalmish Shapiro (1889–1943) during the Holocaust; see "Miriam's Dance," 7.
- 21. Moshe Idel, "The Wife and the Concubine: The Women in Jewish Mysticism," in *Barukh she-asani ishah? Ha-Ishah ba-Yahadut: Meha-Tanakh ve-ad yamenu* (Blessed is he who made me a woman? The woman in Judaism from the Tanakh until today), ed. David Yoel Ariel, Mayah Libovits, and Yoram Mazor (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 1999), 142.
  - 22. Mekler, Fun rebbins hoyf, 1: 235-36.
  - 23. All quotes are from Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 21 April 1968, 7.
  - 24. On this history, see Pinkas Ludmir, 563-65.
  - 25. Pinkas Ludmir, 563-65.
- 26. Ephraim Taubenhaus, "Ha-Betulah Hanah Rochel mi Ludmir" (The virgin Hannah Rochel from Ludmir), *Ha Posek* (1952), 191.
  - 27. Gaon of Vilna, Shaare Rahamim (Vilna: A. Y. Dvorzets, 1871).
- 28. Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 115.
- 29. David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 129.
  - 30. D. Biale, Eros and the Jews, 137 ff.
- 31. Judith Baskin, "Jewish Women in the Middle Ages," in *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, ed. Judith Baskin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 101.
- 32. Unger, *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 21 April 1968, 7; Mordechai Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," *Reshumot* 2 (1946): 74.
- 33. Ephraim Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid (Haifa: Hotsaat Metsudah, 1959), 39.
- 34. On this practice, see Solomon Schechter, "Woman in Temple and Synagogue," in *Studies in Judaism*, 1st ser. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1917), 325: "According to R. Ch. J. Bachrach women used also to say the 'Magnified' *[kaddish]* prayer in the synagogue when their parents left no male posterity." See also Shlomo Ashkenazi, *Dor Dor u Minhagav* (Tel Aviv: Don, 1977), 249 n. 24.
  - 35. Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," 74; Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 39.
- 36. Moshe Feinkind, Froyen rebeyyim un barimte perzenlekhkeiten in Poylen (Warsaw: Grafja, 1937), 33–34. Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 40, describes R. Mordechai of Chernobyl as the "first man allowed to enter the holy of holies of the Maiden of Ludmir." Charles Raddock, "Once There Was a Female Chassidic Rabbi: The Strange Case of the Virgin of Lodomeria," Jewish Digest, December 1967, 23, refers to a rabbinical court that meets with the Maiden in her room as "the first males ever to be admitted there."
  - 37. Feinkind, Froyen rebeyyim, 33.
  - 38. Mekler, Fun rebbins hoyf, 1: 238.

- 39. In 1839, following an incident that has never been precisely identified, Menahem Mendel of Kotsk withdrew into a room and for the next twenty years communicated through a door with those Hasidim who remained loyal. The most eloquent depiction of Menahem Mendel of Kotzk may be found in Elie Wiesel's meditation on Hasidism, *Souls on Fire: Portraits and Legends of Hasidic Masters* (New York: Random House, 1972), 228–54.
- 40. Samuel A. Horodezky, *Ha-Hasidut veha-hasidim* (Berlin and Jerusalem: Devir, 1922), 4: 81.
- 41. Travels of Rabbi Petachia of Ratisbon, trans. and ed. A. Benisch (London: Trubner, 1856), 19. On this tradition, see Baskin, "Jewish Women in the Middle Ages," 111 n. 26. Also see Sandra Henry and Emily Taitz, Written Out of History: Our Jewish Foremothers (Fresh Meadows, N.Y.: Biblio Press, 1983), 86–87, and 275 n. 4 for a list of sources that discuss this figure. On the Maiden's practice, see Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva," 221.
- 42. Morris Goldstein and Moshe Weisgarden told me that the Maiden of Ludmir served as a *dayan*. This tradition does not appear in any of the written sources. On *dayanim* in Ludmir, see *Pinkas Ludmir*, 241.
- 43. For example, Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," 74; Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva," 221: "Little by little a special group of Hasidim formed around her, and were called the 'Hasidim of the Maiden of Ludmir."
  - 44. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva," 221.
- 45. Moses Hadas, ed., *Solomon Maimon: An Autobiography* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 54–55.
- 46. Samuel A. Horodezky, *Der hasidizm un zayne firer* (Vilna: Farlag "Tomor," 1937), 291; Unger, *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 28 April 1968, 7, appears to be paraphrasing Horodezky's Yiddish account when he writes, "Old Hasidim, who had already traveled to great zaddikim, came to Ludmir to see the wonder, how a girl had become a rabbi."
  - 47. Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 39; Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," 74.
  - 48. Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 39; Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," 74.
  - 49. Pinkas Ludmir, 241.
  - 50. Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," 74. Feinkind, Froyen rebbeyim, 32.
  - 51. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva," 221.
- 52. Mark Klaczko, "Esho o Ludmirskoi Deve" (More about the Maiden of Ludmir), *Evreiskaia Starina* 3, no. 4 (1911): 391–92.
- 53. Yekhiel Shtern, *Kheder un besmedresh* (New York: Yivo, 1950), as cited in Diane Roskies and David Roskies, *The Shtetl Book: An Introduction to East European Life and Lore* (New York: KTAV, 1979), 200–201.
  - 54. Feinkind, Froyen rebbeyim, 33.
  - 55. Feinkind, Froyen rebbeyim, 34.
  - 56. Mekler, Fun rebbins hoyf, 1: 239.
  - 57. Louis Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer* (New York: Schodken Books, 1973), 20.
  - 58. See Henry and Taitz, Written Out of History, 87.
  - 59. For example, Israel Zinberg, A History of Jewish Literature, vol. 7, trans.

- and ed. Bernard Martin (Cleveland: Case Western University Press, 1975), 23, 29. For a Yiddish story about a zogerin written by a woman writer, see Rokhl Brokhes, "The Zogerin," in Found Treasures: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers, ed. Frieda Forman et al. (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1994), 85–90. In one passage, Brokhes describes Gnesye the zogerin as "the madwoman behind the mechitse."
  - 60. Schechter, "Woman in Temple and Synagogue," 324-25.
- 61. See Shmuel Lifshits, "Esther-Khaye the Zogerin ['Sayer']," Zabludove (Zabludow) yizker-bukh, in From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry, trans. and ed. Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), 76.
- 62. For an illuminating discussion of the Halakhic issues involved in whether a woman can serve as a *sheliah tsibbur*, see Ezra Kopelowitz, "Three Subcultures of Conservative Judaism and the Issue of Ordaining Women," *Nashim:* A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues 1 (1998): 141–49.
- 63. Taubenhaus, *Be Netiv ha Yahid*, 39. Raddock, "Once There Was," 22–23, writes, "After a while her fame spread beyond the Lug River. From remote areas of Volhynia, Podolia and Galicia, the lame, the halt, and the blind began to set out for the 'green hut,' seeking benediction and divine intercession."
- 64. Mekler, *Fun rebbins hoyf*, 1: 238; Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," 74; Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva," 221; Unger, *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 28 April 1968, 7.
  - 65. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 28 April 1968, 7.
  - 66. Horodezky, Ha-Hasidut veha-hasidim, 4: 81.
- 67. Tatar healers were particularly popular among Jews. For a description of a Jew visiting a Tatar healer, see Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz, trans. and eds., *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov (Shivhei ha-Besht)* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 77.
- 68. See also Roskies and Roskies, *Shtetl Book*, 122. Berl Rabach, "Female Occupations in Sanok [in Galicia]," *Yiddishe Shprakh* 18 (1964–65): 26–27, refers to "a *royfete* [a female doctor] who applied cupping glasses and healed with old wives' cures," and "an exorcist who occupied herself with exorcising the evil eyes."
- 69. Abraham Rechtman, "Healers, Magicians, and Fortune-Tellers," in *Tracing An-Sky: Jewish Collections from the State Ethnographic Museum in St. Petersburg (Gosudarstvenny'i muze'i 'etnografii narodov SSSR)* (Amsterdam and St. Petersburg: Zwolle, 1992), 112; selections translated into English from Rechtman, *Yidishe etnografye un folklor: Zikhroynos vegn der etnografisher ekspeditsye ongefirt fun Sh. An-ski* (Buenos Aires: YIVO, 1958), 293 ff. Where good English translations of passages from Rechtman's work are available I have quoted them; otherwise the translations of Rechtman's work are mine.
  - 70. Tracing An-Sky, 111.
  - 71. *Tracing An-Sky*, 112.
  - 72. Tracing An-Sky, 111.

#### Chapter 9. The Witch-hunt in Ludmir

- 1. W. P. Barrett, trans., *The Trial of Joan of Arc* (New York: Gotham Press, 1932), 147.
  - 2. Menasheh Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 28 April 1968, 7.
  - 3. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 5 May 1968, 7.
- 4. Ephraim Taubenhaus, *Be Netiv ha Yahid* (Haifa: Hotsaat Metsudah, 1959), 39. He does not mention what prooftexts she cited.
- 5. On this description of the Maiden's followers, see Charles Raddock, "Hannah of Ludmir: The Strange True Story of a Hasidic Maid," *Menorah Journal* 36 (1948): 257. A parallel description appears in Taubenhaus, *Be Netiv ha Yahid*, 40.
- 6. Unger, *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 28 April 1968, 7; David Mekler, *Fun rebbins hoyf: Fun Chernobyl biz Talne* (New York: Jewish Book Publishing Company, 1931), 1: 242.
- 7. On the Frankist charge, see Unger, *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 28 April 1968, 7; on the woman's monastery rumor, see Taubenhaus, *Be Netiv ha Yahid*, 40; Raddock, "Hannah of Ludmir," 257.
- 8. Taubenhaus, *Be Netiv ha Yahid*, 40; Raddock, "Hannah of Ludmir," 257; Mordechai Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," *Reshumot* 2 (1946): 41.
- 9. Carol Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: Norton, 1987), 144. On witches in Ukraine, see Sergei Tokarev, *Religioznye verovaniia vostochnoslavianskikh narodov XIX–nachala XX veka* (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1957), 28–29. The author writes that in Ukraine there were two or three female witches in every village, a fact he attributes to the influence of Western Europe, as compared to the higher percentage of male witches in Russia itself.
- 10. Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 75. Karlsen adds, "The greater vulnerability of women without husbands can easily be overstated, however."
- 11. Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 101. On 83–84, Karlsen writes, "[W]omen who stood to benefit economically also assumed a position of unusual vulnerability. They, and in many instances their daughters, became prime targets for witchcraft accusations."
  - 12. Karlsen, Devil in the Shape of a Woman, 149.
- 13. On the origin of the term *dybbuk*, see G. Scholem, "Golem' ve 'Dybbuk' ba Milon ha Ivri" (Golem and dybbuk in the Hebrew lexicon), *Leshonenu* 6 (1934): 40–41. Scholem attributes the first literary appearance of the term *dybbuk* to Jacob Emden, who employed it in reference to a Sabbatean in his work *Torat ha Kenaot* (Amsterdam, 1752), 56. For the definitive work on dybbukim to date, see Gedalyah Nigal, *Sipure "Dibuk" be-sifrut Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Reuven Mas, 1994). Nigal excerpts episodes from many of the pamphlets and books that recorded cases of dybbukim. The last of these pamphlets was published in Jerusalem in 1904, though cases of dybbukim continue to be reported.
- 14. Nigal, *Sipure "Dibuk,*" 35, notes, "[O]ut of eighty documented cases [there are] forty-nine female victims and twenty-six male victims [the sex of the other victims is not noted]."

- 15. Gedalyah Nigal, Magic, Mysticism, and Hasidism: The Supernatural in Jewish Thought (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1994), 100.
- 16. Heinrich Institoris and Jakob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. and ed. Montague Summers (1487; reprint: London: Arrow Books, 1928), 41–66; Fray Martin de Castanega, *Tratado de las supersticiones y hechicerías* (Madrid: Sociedad de Bibliofilos Españoles, 1946), chap. 5. See also Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 155–56.
  - 17. Nigal, Sipure "Dibuk," 34.
  - 18. Nigal, Sipure "Dibuk," 36.
- 19. For examples of this phenomenon, see Nigal, *Magic, Mysticism, and Hasidism*, 89. In other cases, the spirit enters the victim through the throat, foot, hand, or other body part.
- 20. Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 227, has noted that during the New England witch craze, "[l]ike other young possessed females, just about all of these women, even those who lived with relatives, were servants."
  - 21. Karlsen, Devil in the Shape of a Woman, 77 ff.
  - 22. Nigal, Magic, Mysticism, and Hasidism, 100.
  - 23. Nigal, Magic, Mysticism, and Hasidism, 76.
  - 24. Mekler, Fun rebbins hoyf, 1: 241.
  - 25. Nigal, Magic, Mysticism, and Hasidism, 81.
  - 26. Nigal, Magic, Mysticism, and Hasidism, 101.
  - 27. Menasheh Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 7 April 1968, 7.
  - 28. See Nigal, Sipure "Dibuk," 39, for a list of such incidents.
- 29. Phyllis Mack, Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 17.
- 30. A few notable examples do survive. Perhaps the best known is a "madwoman who revealed to everyone his virtues and vices"; see "The Besht Exorcises a Madwoman," in Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz, trans. and eds., *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 34–35.
- 31. Gershom Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 132-33.
- 32. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 594, citing Johannes Galatowski, *Messias prawdziwy* (1672). Interestingly, Galatowski also writes, "Even some fools among the Christian masses acted and thought like them."
- 33. Bernard Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973), 239.
  - 34. Weinryb, Jews of Poland, 240.
- 35. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 109.
  - 36. Cited in Weinryb, Jews of Poland, 251.
  - 37. For a complete list, see Weinryb, Jews of Poland, 249.
  - 38. See Scholem, Messianic Idea, 134-35.
  - 39. Scholem, Messianic Idea, 138; see also the Hebrew texts (with French

translations) in Moses Porgès (the grandson of the Frankist Joseph Hirsch Porgès), "Texte de la Lettre Adressée par les Frankistes auxs Communautés Juives de Bohéme," *Revue des Études Juives* 29 (1894): 282–88.

- 40. For a list of sources and quotations, see Abraham Duker, "Polish Frankism's Duration," *Jewish Social Studies* 25 (1963): 287–333.
  - 41. Duker, "Polish Frankism's Duration," 296.
  - 42. Scholem, Messianic Idea, 168.
  - 43. Weinryb, Jews of Poland, 251.
- 44. On this issue, see Yehuda Liebes, *Sod ha-Emunah ha-Shabtait: Kovets Maamarim* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1995), 252 ff.; on Nahman of Bratslav and Frankism, 262 ff.
- 45. On prophetesses in the Sabbatean movement, see Weinryb, *Jews of Poland*, 214. On the other phenomena, see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 404. Despite the changes that he says Sabbatai Zevi introduced, Scholem writes that in general the Sabbatean ideal of the "emancipation of women . . . remained vague and ephemeral." After I had already completed the manuscript for this book, I was informed of Ada Rapoport-Albert's work "Al Maamad ha Nashim be Shabtaut" (On the position of women in Sabbateanism), *Mehkare Yerushalayim be Mahshevet Yisrael* 16 (2001): 143–327.
- 46. See Thomas Coenen, Ydele verwachtinge der joden getoont in den persoon van Sabethai Zevi (Amsterdam, 1669), 33.
- 47. Hillel Levine, ed., *Keronikah: Teudah le-toldot Yaakov Frank u-tenuato* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1984), 84–85.
  - 48. Levine, ed., *Keronikah*, 50-51.
  - 49. Levine, ed., Keronikah, 50-51.
- 50. Levine, ed., *Keronikah*, 54–55. During this rite, Frank, his wife, and his followers stripped naked, lit candles, and then employed a cross to sanctify the gathering. The text states that "only then did the act of love begin as he commanded."
  - 51. Levine, ed., Keronikah, 76-77.
  - 52. Levine, ed., *Keronikah*, 102-5.
- 53. Meir Balaban, *Le-toldot ha-tenuah ha-Frankit* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1934), 1: 154–55, emphasizes that despite the resemblance of this doctrine to the Christian Trinity, it developed out of Jewish sources. On these titles, also see Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 125, 128.
  - 54. As cited in Scholem, Messianic Idea, 103.
- 55. Balaban, *Le-toldot*, 156, notes that the doctrine of an incarnated Shekhinah is also postulated by the Sabbatean Nehemia Hayun. On this figure and his views, see Gershom Scholem, *Mehkere Shabtaut*, ed. Yehuda Liebes (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1991), 478–88; Weinryb, *Jews of Poland*, 238–39.
  - 56. Levine, ed., Keronikah, 62-63 n. 137.
- 57. On Mothers of God among the Khlysty (a Philipovcy sect), see Frederick Conybeare, *Russian Dissenters* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1921), 344–347. Not only did Frank mention the Philipovcy on several occasions, but also one of their former leaders (Malivda, aka Antoni Kossakowsky)

became a spokesman and Polish translator for the Frankists; Jacob Emden also mentions contact between the groups. On the connections between the Frankists and Philipovcy, see Weinryb, *Jews of Poland*, 237–38; 243; 374 n. 4; 376 nn. 15, 17; 377 n. 30.

- 58. Scholem describes this text as no different in structure from the sayings of the Hasidic zaddikim. See Scholem, *Mehkarim u-mekorot le-toldot ha-Shabataut ve-gilguleha* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1974), 125.
- 59. "Sayings of the Lord," quoted in Alexander Kraushar, *Frank i frankisci polscy, 1726–1816*, vol. 1 (Kracow: Skl. gl. u G. Gebethnera i spolki, 1895), 620, 916. See also 127.
  - 60. In Polish, "Jeymosc."
  - 61. See Levine, ed., Keronikah, 50-51.
- 62. Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 125. For the title, *Ha-Almah Ha-Kedusha*, see Levine, ed., *Keronikah*, 104–5. On the existence of these titles in earlier groups of Sabbateans, see Scholem, *Mehkere Shabtaut*, 379–80. Some of the titles (for example, "gazelle") were taken from the Zohar, where they referred to the Shekhinah.
- 63. Heinrich Graetz, Frank und die Frankisten (Breslau: Schlettersche Buchhandlung, 1868), 73; Scholem, Mehkarim, 167 n. 82.
- 64. For more on Hava Frank, see Paul Arnsberg, *Von Podolien nach Offenbach: Die jüdische Heilsarmee des Jakob Frank* (Offenbach am Main: Stadtarchiv, 1965), 8, 16, 40–41, 45–46, 48.
  - 65. Levine, ed., Keronikah, 80-81.
- 66. Levine, ed., Keronikah, 84–85; Kraushar, Frank i frankisci polscy, 2: 34; Scholem, Mehkare Shabtaut, 673.
  - 67. Levine, ed., Keronikah, 82-83.
- 68. On this prohibition, see Scholem, *Mehkare Shabtaut*, 379. Perhaps related to this custom is a text written by a Frankist in Prague at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which states that "in Israel one must remain a virgin"; see Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 118. Scholem comments, "The cryptic Frankist allusions at the end of this passage to Christianity and to 'remaining a virgin' are rather obscure."
- 69. In a letter written around 1802, Moses Porgès (1781–1870) declared "the Messiah . . . the Virgin that is the Lady, she will redeem!" Porgès, another Frankist who remained faithful to Judaism, described his "surprise" at encountering Catholic iconography in Offenbach side by side with the kabbalistic symbols familiar to him from his youth. From the memoirs of Moses Porgès, in N. Gelber, *Historische Schriften fun YIVO* 1 (1929), cols. 253–96. On Porgès, see Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 68.
- 70. Scholem, Messianic Idea, 68. Also see Josephine Goldmark, Pilgrims of '48 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930); Alpheus Thomas Mason, Brandeis, a Free Man's Life (New York: Viking Press, 1946), 441.
- 71. Arthur Mandel, *The Militant Messiah* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1979), 101.
  - 72. Arnsberg, Von Podolien nach Offenbach, 48. Some Frankists also believed

that Jacob Frank had not died but was hidden. See Scholem, *Mehkare Shabtaut*, 644.

- 73. Scholem, Messianic Idea, 109-10.
- 74. Mekler, *Fun rebbins hoyf*, 1: 241. Mekler states that some rabbis thought she was possessed by "a *dibbuk* from a trickster or an apostate" who sought to "seduce" (*furfirin*) other Jews. Perhaps he is referring to suspicions of Frankism.
  - 75. Scholem, Messianic Idea, 136.
- 76. One example from the history of religions involves the influence of the Cathar or Albigensian heresy on the development of Catholic orders during the Middle Ages.
- 77. On the relationship between the Besht and Sabbateanism and Frankism, see Simon Dubnow, "The Beginnings: The Baal Shem Tov (Besht) and the Center in Podolia," in *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present*, ed. Gershon Hundert (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 42–44; Yehuda Liebes, "Ha Tikkun ha Kelali shel R. Nahman mi Bratslav ve Yahaso la Shabtaut" (R. Nachman and his attitude toward Sabbateanism), *Zion* 45 (1980): 201–45, discusses R. Nahman's relationship with and borrowing from Sabbateanism.
- 78. Chava Weissler, "Woman as High Priest: A Kabbalistic *Thhine* for Lighting Sabbath Candles," *Jewish History* 5 (1991): 11.
- 79. See, for example, Nikolai Teodorovich, *Gorod Vladimir Volinskoi gubernii v sviazi s istoriei Volynskoi ieparkhii* (Pochaev: Tip. Pochaeavo-Uspenskoi Lavry, 1893); Iaroslav Isaiaevych, *Volodymir-Volynskyi: Istoryko-kraieznavchyi narys* (Lviv: Kameniar, 1988); Maksym Boiko, *Volodymir: Stolychnyi hrad Volyni* (Bloomington, Ind.: Koshtamy Marii Krotiuk, 1988).
- 80. For an account of the tensions between the Jewish community and a church in Ludmir, see *Pinkas Ludmir* (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotse Ludmir be Yisrael, 1962), 253 ff.
- 81. Chaim Chajes, "Baal Szem Tow u chrzescijan," *Miesiecznik Zydowski* (1934), 444, 449, as translated by Alina Cala. Also see Helena Grochowska, "Srul Rabi Bal Szim," *Lud* 10 (1904): 517, who mentions a Volhynian spring associated with the Baal Shem Tov that attracted Christian peasants; Alina Cala, *The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1995), 140.
- 82. On the religious situation in Volhynia during this period, see, for example, Frank Sysyn, "Ukrainian Social Tensions," in *Religion and Culture in Early Modern Russian and Ukraine*, ed. Samuel Baron and Nancy Shields Kollmann (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), 62–63. As in Judaism, there were strict menstrual taboos, and women who gave birth were required to wait a period of time and undergo ritual purification. See Christine Worobec, "Temptress or Virgin? The Precarious Position of Women in Postemancipation Ukrainian Peasant Society," in *Russian Peasant Women*, ed. Beatrice Farnsworth and Lynne Viola (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 44; Worobec, "Accommodation and Resistance," in *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, ed. Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel, and

Christine Worobec (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 21.

- 83. Sophia Senyk, *Women's Monasteries in Ukraine and Belorussia to the Period of the Suppressions*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 222 (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1983), 48. It should be noted that there were other women's monasteries in the region of Ludmir, though not in the town itself. For example, a monastery for women was established at the end of the nineteenth century that is, after the Maiden had already left Ludmir in the nearby hamlet of Zimne.
  - 84. Senyk, Women's Monasteries, 48.
- 85. Senyk, *Women's Monasteries*, 141; J. Wolniak, "Z przeszlosci Zakonu Bazylianskiego na Litwie i Rusi," *Przewodnik naukowy i literacki* 32 (1904): 252. See also Teodorovich, *Gorod Vladimir Volinskoi*, 166, 180, 202–3. In 1839 the Russian Orthodox Church declared itself reunited with the Uniate Church, and by 1845 there were no longer any Uniate monasteries in the Russian Empire.
- 86. Pompei Batiushkov, *Volin: Istorichiskia sudbi yugo-zapadnovo kraya* (St. Petersburg, 1888), 278, states that the women's monastery in Ludmir was closed in 1836, but other sources give 1834.
- 87. On idiorhythmic monasteries in the Russian Empire, see Brenda Meehan-Waters, "Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) and the Reform of Russian Women's Monastic Communities," *Russian Review* 50 (1991): 311–14; Meehan-Waters, *Holy Women of Russia: The Lives of Five Orthodox Women Offer Spiritual Guidance for Today* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), 113, 162 n. 19; Senyk, *Women's Monasteries*, 156–64.
- 88. On the possibility that the Besht himself may have had contact with *startzy* while wandering in the Carpathian mountains, see Gershom Scholem, "Demuto ha-historit shel R. Yisrael Baal Shem Toy," *Molad* 18 (1960): 339.
- 89. George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic, *The Doukhobors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 69–70.
- 90. J. Cang, "Polesian Peasants Form Jewish Sect: Calling Themselves 'Messengers of Elijah' Prophetess and Her Apostles Proclaim Love for Jews and Seek Adherents to New Hebrew Religion," *American Hebrew*, 1 March 1935, 327. I have been unable to track down any more information on this fascinating group and its fate.
  - 91. Meehan-Waters, Holy Women of Russia, 45.
  - 92. As translated by Meehan-Waters in Holy Women of Russia, 45.
  - 93. Meehan-Waters, Holy Women of Russia, 59-60.
  - 94. Meehan-Waters, Holy Women of Russia, 49-53.
- 95. For example, Abraham Rechtman in *Tracing An-sky: Jewish Collections* from the State Ethnographic Museum in St. Petersburg (Gosudarstvenny'i muze'i 'etnografii narodov SSSR) (Amsterdam and St. Petersburg: Zwolle, 1992), 112: "Jews often went to gentile healers and might even take sick people to faraway places to see such a healer. In some cases, a messenger would be sent to the healer to receive a blessing, or the healer might bless the sick person's shirt or a child's blanket."

- 96. Senyk, Women's Monasteries, 144. On the topic of Jewish conversion to Christianity in the Russian Empire, see Michael Stanislawski, "Jewish Apostasy in Russia: A Tentative Typology," in Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World, ed. Todd Endelman (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1987); Stanislawski, Tsar Nicholas and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), 13–34; Shmuel Leib Tsitron, Meshumadim, 4 vols. (Warsaw: Farlag Tsentral, 1923–1928); Shaul Ginzburg, Meshumadim in tsarishn Rusland (New York: Tsikobikher Farlag, 1946).
- 97. Wolf Ze'ev Rabinowitsch, *Ha-Hasidut ha-litait me-reshitah ve-ad yamenu* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1961), 43.
- 98. Yaakov Moshe Kleynbaum, ed., Sefer Shema Shlomo ha-Shalem (Jerusalem: Makhon Zekher Naftali, 1987), 153–54.
- 99. Originally in Sefer Divre Shalom, parsha, va-yekahel, as cited in Kleynbaum, Sefer Shema Shlomo, 54–55; Aaron Shapira, Sefer Yeme Zikharon, hodesh shevet (Bene Barak, Israel: A. Shapira, 1999), 158.
- 100. Kleynbaum, *Sefer Shema Shlomo*, 155; B. H. Perlov, *Der kedosh hashem* (Brooklyn: Moriah Offset Company, 1995), 167–68.
  - 101. Kleynbaum, Sefer Shema Shlomo, 155; Perlov, Der kedosh hashem, 167–68.
  - 102. Perlov, Der kedosh hashem, 166.
  - 103. Perlov, Der kedosh hashem, 161.
- 104. For example, Moshe of Ludmir's sister, Yuta, was married to Israel Hayim of Ludmir, a son of Abraham the Malakh, the son of the Magid of Mezeritch. At the age of nine, Israel Hayim's father died and he was adopted by Shlomo Karliner. Moshe of Ludmir's younger brother, Dov Ber, was married to the daughter of Baruch of Medzibozh, the grandson of the Besht.
- 105. On this decree, see Louis Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia: The Struggle for Emancipation* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 10; Isaac Levitats, *The Jewish Community in Russia*, 1772–1884 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 60–68, also gives a bibliography of Hebrew and Yiddish accounts from the nineteenth century.
  - 106. S. I. Fin, "Dor ve Doreshav," Ha-Karmel 4 (1879): 194.
  - 107. For these clauses, see Levitats, Jewish Community, 60-61.
- 108. On this issue see Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas and the Jews*, 13–34, and "Jewish Apostasy in Russia," 189–205.
  - 109. Levitats, Jewish Community, 65.
  - 110. Levitats, Jewish Community, 163.
- 111. Centralnyi Derzhavnyi Istorichiskyi Arxiv Kiev, 533/2/1220 = Central Archives of the Jewish People Jerusalem, HM2/7959.2. The regionwide epidemic was so severe that fifteen years later a Volhynian newspaper was still mentioning its impact; see *Volynskie gubernskie vedomosti*, 1847 no. 37, pp. 126–28. Discussions of cholera appear in many volumes of this Russian-language newspaper, which began publication in 1838.
  - 112. Batiushkov, Volin, 275.
- 113. TsDIA, 1423/1/29 = Central Archives of the Jewish People Jerusalem, HM2/8006.1. My thanks to Benyamin Lukin for his invaluable help and

patience in helping me to decipher the difficult handwriting in the letters preserved in the Central Archives of the Jewish People.

- 114. TsGIA Kiev, 442/1/1462 = Central Archives of the Jewish People Jerusalem, HM2/8924.7. The letter is dated 23 April 1833.
- 115. TsGIA 442/1/1416 = Central Archives of the Jewish People Jerusalem, HM2/8924.3. Apparently Leytses continued to be involved in controversy since in another letter from the early 1850s, he complained about "ungrounded persecution" on the part of Ludmir's authorities. See TsGIA-USSR 442/1/9094 = Central Archives of the Jewish People Jerusalem, HM2/8972.3.
- 116. TsGIA 442/1/1692 = Central Archives of the Jewish People Jerusalem, HM2/8923.2. The letter lists the names of the thirty people suspected of involvement and names Leibko Leytses and Leibko Urmacher as the society's ringleaders.

## Chapter 10. The Wedding and Its Aftermath

- I. On leadership within the Hasidic movement, see Arthur Green, "Typologies of Leadership and the Hasidic Zaddiq," in *Jewish Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Green, vol. 2 (New York: Crossroad, 1987).
- 2. This version of the meeting is told by Elie Wiesel in *Souls on Fire: Portraits* and Legends of Hasidic Masters (New York: Random House, 1972), 48.
  - 3. Wiesel, Souls on Fire, 49.
- 4. Samuel A. Horodezky, *Ha-Hasidut veha-hasidim* (Berlin and Jerusalem: Devir, 1922), 3: 87.
  - 5. Horodezky, Ha-Hasidut veha-hasidim, 3: 88.
- 6. David Mekler, *Fun rebbins hoyf: Fun Chernobyl biz Talne* (New York: Jewish Book Publishing Company, 1931), 1: 242, explicitly mentions that the zaddik "commanded his coach to be harnessed" before setting out for Ludmir.
- 7. Ephraim Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid (Haifa: Hotsaat Metsudah, 1959), 40.
- 8. Samuel A. Horodezky, *Leaders of Hasidism*, trans. Maria Horodezky-Magasanik (London: Hasefer Agency for Literature, 1928), 113–17. Maria Horodezky's translation appears to draw on both the Russian and Hebrew versions of her husband's work on the Maiden.
  - 9. Horodezky, Leaders of Hasidism, 116.
  - 10. Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 40.
  - 11. Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 40.
- 12. Mekler, *Fun rebbins hoyf*, 243. Biber's description of the encounter between the Maiden and R. Mordechai is basically a Hebrew paraphrase of Mekler's Yiddish account: Mordechai Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," *Reshumot* 2 (1946): 69–76.
- 13. Mordechai of Chernobyl, *Sefer Likute Torah* (Pieterkov: Faivel Belkhotovski, 1889).

- 14. On this difference, see Israel Klapholz, *Admore Chernobyl* (Bene Barak, Israel: Shapira, 1971), 104.
- 15. Samuel A. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva (Di Ludmirer Moid)," Evreiskaia Starina 1 (1909): 221. The Chernobler's attempt to stimulate the Maiden's "female feelings and sensations," thereby unmasking her, recalls Rashi's commentary on the talmudic story of the "woman rabbi" Beruriah. Like the Maiden, Beruriah was famous for her erudition and piety. In both cases, a male figure decides to bring the threatening woman to a "lower, more normal state" by attempting to awaken her sexual desire: "Once Beruria made fun of the rabbinic dictum, 'Women are light-headed' [that is, lewd]. He [her husband, R. Meir] said, 'On your life! You will end up admitting that they are right.' He commanded one of his students to tempt her into [sexual] transgression. The student importuned her for many days, until in the end she agreed. When the matter became known to her, she strangled herself, and R. Meir ran away because of the shame." Rashi ad Babylonian Talmud Avoda Zara 18b, as cited in Daniel Boyarin, Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 184. Boyarin provides an interesting discussion of this tradition.
- 16. See, for example, John Coakley, "Friars as Confidents of Holy Women in Medieval Dominican Hagiography," in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 237.
- 17. Sigmund Freud, "On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953–1974), 14: 41–43. See also the comments of Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 244
- 18. Elisabeth Avilda Petroff, "Unmasking Women: Medieval Responses to the Unknowability of the Lady," in *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism*, ed. Elisabeth Avilda Petroff (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 27–28.
  - 19. Petroff, "Unmasking Women," 27-28.
  - 20. Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 40.
  - 21. Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 40.
  - 22. Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 40.
- 23. Charles Raddock, "Hannah of Ludmir: The Strange True Story of a Hasidic Maid," *Menorah Journal* 36 (1948): 257. In "The Maid from Ludmir," *Jewish Life*, January/February 1971, 26, published thirty years later, Raddock tried to harmonize his earlier work with Taubenhaus's account by describing the scribe as the Maiden's "Hebrew secretary when crowds were big."
  - 24. Raddock, "Maid from Ludmir," 26.
  - 25. Menasheh Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 12 May 1968, 7.
- 26. For example, Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva," 221; Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," 75.

- 27. Samuel A. Horodezky, Ole Tsiyon (Tel Aviv: Gazit, 1946), 175.
- 28. This story appears in several Hasidic works; for example, see B. H. Perlov, *Der Kedosh hashem* (Brooklyn: Moriach Offset Company, 1995), 171–73.
- 29. From the census reports of 27 May 1858, Volhynia Gubernia City of Vladimir Jewish Community Merchants and Petty Townsmen, Fond 118/14/300 in the State Archives in Zhitomir, Ukraine.
- 30. Ada Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism: S. A. Horodezky and the Maid of Ludmir Tradition," in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein (London: P. Halban, 1988), 508.
  - 31. Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism," 508.
- 32. The first quote is from David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 137, and the second from Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 167. Both authors write that the Maiden got married when she was forty; Biale lists her year of birth as 1815. This chronology would make it impossible for Mordechai of Chernobyl (d. 1837) to have participated in her wedding, and, indeed, neither author mentions his involvement. The tradition that the Maiden got married at forty appears in several places, including Shlomo Askhenazi, *Dor Dor u Minhagav* (Tel Aviv: Don, 1977), 250. Since he lists the Maiden's year of birth as 1815, Ashkenazi substitutes Aaron of Chernobyl (1788–1872) for his father, Mordechai of Chernobyl. According to Ashkenazi's information, the wedding would have taken place in 1855, only three years before Ashkenazi states that the Maiden went to Palestine. Interestingly, the Montefiore census from 1875 strongly suggests that the Maiden did, in fact, arrive in Palestine in 1859.
- 33. Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism," 503, employed Horodezky's Russian article as the basis for her analysis, even going so far as to claim, "All subsequent accounts . . . are derived from this original version."
  - 34. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva," 222.
- 35. Samuel A. Horodezky, *Der hasidizm un zayne firer* (Vilna: Farlag "Tomor," 1937), 292.
  - 36. Raddock, "Hannah of Ludmir," 258.
- 37. Joseph Gross, "The Maid of Ludmir: The Interesting Story of a Young Girl Who Became a Chassidic Leader," *Jewish Ledger*, 4 December 1936, 56.
  - 38. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 12 May 1968, 7.
- 39. None of her biographers describe the Maiden as suicidal. According to the regional Russian newspaper *Volynskie gubernskie vedomosti*, no. 5, 2 February 1846, women and Jews were both heavily underrepresented among cases of suicide in Volhynia.
- 40. TsGIA-Kiev, 442/I/2446 = HM2/8004.1 in the Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem.
- 41. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

- 42. There are two copies of this map in the Russian State Historical Archives in St. Petersburg: Fond 1293/166/18 and Fond 1293/166/19.
- 43. TsGIA USSR 442/I/623I = HM2/8004.8; TsGIA Kiev 442/I/8884 = HM2/8004.7 in the Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem.
- 44. See, for example, *Volynskie gubernskie vedomosti*, no. 22, 5 June 1848; no. 17, 26 April 1858.
- 45. These are taken from A. Bratchikov, *Materialyi dlia izsliedovaniia Volynskoi gubernii*, vol. 2 (Zhitomir, 1869), 130–31. According to this work, in 1861 there were 6,305 people in Ludmir, including 3,194 men and 3,111 women. The author provides a brief historical introduction to the town, as well as important economic, demographic, and, in the first volume of his work, topographical and ecological information.
- 46. On the contentious relationship between the Jewish bourgeoisie and the working class in this period, see Michael Stanislawski, "Russian Jewry, the Russian State, and the Dynamics of Jewish Emancipation," in *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship,* ed. Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 273.
- 47. Sh. Rombakh, "Di yidishe balmelokhes in Rusland in der ershter helft fun 19tn y"h," *Tsaytshrift* 1 (1926): 29.
- 48. On the beginnings of the Jewish enlightenment in Russia before the 1840s, see Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia*, 1825–1855 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983), 49 ff.; on the later period, see 97 ff.
  - 49. See Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I*, 98–100, for a list of these schools.

# Chapter 11. In the Holy Land

- I. Ada Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism: S. A. Horodezky and the Maid of Ludmir Tradition," in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein (London: P. Halban, 1988), 508. Most notably, Shneur Zalman of Lyadi's son, Moshe, who was exiled to Palestine after he apparently converted to Christianity. For a bibliography on this incident, see Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism," 522 n. 79.
  - 2. Menasheh Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 28 April 1968, 7.
- 3. Ephraim Taubenhaus, *Be Netiv ha Yahid* (Haifa: Hotsaat Metsudah, 1959), 40.
- 4. Charles Raddock, "The Maid from Ludmir," *Jewish Life*, January/February 1971, 27.
- 5. Joseph Gross, "The Maid of Ludmir: The Interesting Story of a Young Girl Who Became a Chassidic Leader," *Jewish Ledger*, 4 December 1936, 56.
  - 6. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 12 May 1968, 7.
- 7. See David Assaf, "Mi Volin li Tsfat" (From Volhynia to Safed), *Shalem* 6 (1992): 223-73.

- 8. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 12 May 1968, 7.
- 9. The *gornshtibl* was initially taken over by followers of Yohanan of Ratmistrovka (1802–1895), one of Mordechai of Chernobyl's sons. By the interwar period, it had become a prayer house for Zlatopol Hasidim, a branch of the Ratmistrovka line.
- 10. The Montefiore census lists from 1866 and 1875. The original documents from the Montefiore census lists are in the London School of Jewish Studies (formerly Jews' College). I initially examined the microfilms of the census lists in the manuscript room of the National Library in Jerusalem. The lists that interest us are found under the heading Mifqad Kolel Volin be-Yerushalayim: F06159 (537) = 1866 census; F06175 (553) = 1875 census. A number of months after I had discovered these references to the Maiden of Ludmir while conducting research in Jerusalem, Patricia Madsen, a graduate student at the University of Denver, made a parallel discovery in the archives in London. Ada Rapoport-Albert, who heard about the discovery from Madsen, discusses these sources in a revised Hebrew version of her essay "Al ha Nashim be Hasidut: Sh. A. Horodezky u Masoret ha Betulah mi Ludmir" ("On Women in Hasidism"), in Tsadik ve-edah, ed. David Assaf (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2001), 525-27. Rapoport-Albert writes that according to the 1866 census, the Maiden arrived in 1861, though my examination of the microfilm indicated 1863 as the year of arrival. I came across Assaf's volume after I had already completed the manuscript for this book, save for the notes. I also discuss these sources in my article "New Archival Sources on the Maiden of Ludmir," Jewish Social Studies 9 (2002): 164-72.
- 11. For a discussion of the difficulties involved in conducting the census as well as their importance, see Tudor Parfitt, *The Jews in Palestine*, 1800–1882 (Wolfeboro, N.H., and Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: Boydell Press, 1987), 3–7.
- 12. On the Hasidic communities in nineteenth-century Palestine, including the establishment of the *kolelim*, see Meir Yizreeli, *Ha-Hasidim ha-rishonim beyishuv Erets-Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Reuven Mas, 1995), 108, 159 n. 12.
- 13. Under the heading "Occupation and Means of Support," we find a range of entries for the other women in the widow lists, including: seamstress, servant, bread seller, teacher, and midwife. Both the phrase *mishpahat ram* and the title *ha-rabbanit ha-zaddeket* appear in the nineteenth-century tombstone inscriptions from the Mount of Olives recorded by Asher Leyb of Brisk, *Helkat Mehokek* (Jerusalem: Shmuel Halevi Zuckerman, 1904).
- 14. Solomon Ashkenazi, *Dor Dor u Minhagav* (Tel Aviv: Don, 1977), 248–50, and Yitzhak Alfasi, *Entsyklopediyah le Hasidut*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha Rav Kook, 1986), 1868, both state that the Maiden of Ludmir was born in 1815, emigrated to Palestine in 1858, and died in 1892. Nahman Shemen, *Batsiung tsu der froy*, vol. 2 (Buenos Aires: YIVO, 1969), 329–30, states that the Maiden of Ludmir was born in 1805, came to Israel when she was over fifty years old (where he claims she married for a second time), and died in 1895.
  - 15. Given the well-attested difficulties in collecting accurate census data from

the Jews of Palestine, finding some discrepancies in the data from one year to another is not surprising. In general, the Kolel Volin census lists from 1875 are more complete than those from 1866. The 1859 date of arrival provided by the 1875 census is supported by the fact that the Maiden of Ludmir does not appear in the Russian Empire's census of Ludmir (Vladimir Volinski) from 1858. The 1858 census (in Russian, *reviskie skazki*) records for Ludmir are in Fond 118/14/300 in the State Archives in Zhitomir, Ukraine. These are the only surviving Russian census lists of Ludmir from the nineteenth century.

- 16. This raises a broader issue concerning the widow lists in the census: some of the women may not have been widows at all. Many if not most of the entries are missing the names of a deceased husband. While this may reflect the vagaries of data gathering, it is also possible that all older unmarried women were considered widows (almanot), whether or not they had ever been married.
- 17. Women with similar titles appear in the tombstone inscriptions from the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem recorded by Asher Leyb of Brisk in *Helkat Mehokek*. Unfortunately, the author, despite his Herculean labors, did not fully catalog all the tombstone inscriptions on the Mount of Olives, including the section where the Maiden of Ludmir was most likely buried. The book is organized (or should I say unorganized) in a confusing manner. Relevant inscriptions include: book 7, 3, "ha zaddkanit ha rabbanit marat Feyge Zelde"; book 7, workbook 2, 15, "ha-isha ha-hashuva ha-zaddkanit ha-mefursemet . . . Haya Liba"; Book 7, workbook 2, 19, "ha-zaddeket ha-rabbanit . . . Rochel Hindel"; book 7, workbook 2, 23, "ha-rabbanit ha-zaddeket marat Shundel Sarah."
  - 18. Menasheh Unger Collection, YIVO Archives RG509/139.
- 19. In *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 19 May 1968, 7, Unger mistakenly claims that in his Yiddish account of the Maiden of Ludmir (*Der hasidizm un zayne leben*) Horodezky wrote that she "married again in Jerusalem with a rabbi, but she soon got a divorce." Unger adds that "he is unaware of this." However, this tradition does not appear anywhere in Horodezky's work.
- 20. This places her in the middle of what the scholar Meir Yizreeli has called the "fourth *aliya*" or the "Lithuanian Russian immigration" (1840–1881), during which ten thousand Jews arrived in Palestine. See Yizreeli, *Ha-Hasidim*, 96.
- 21. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, Jerusalem in the Nineteenth Century: The Old City (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 387.
- 22. Shabtai Zekharyah, *Batim u-mosadot Yehudiyim ba-rova ha-Muslemi bi-Yerushalayim ha-atikah* (Jerusalem: Ha-Agudah Ami, 1985), 7.
  - 23. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 19 May 1968, 7.
- 24. Ben-Arieh, *Jerusalem*, 294. On 357, Ben-Arieh notes that by 1870, there were fifty-five hundred Sephardim and fifty-five hundred Ashkenazim in Jerusalem for a total Jewish population of eleven thousand. At the same time, there were sixty-five hundred Muslims and forty-five hundred Christians. By 1880, there were eight thousand Sephardim, nine thousand Ashkenazim, eight thousand Muslims, and six thousand Christians. All figures should be viewed as estimates, given the rather limited accuracy of censuses from nineteenth-century Palestine.

- 25. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 12 May 1968, 7.
- 26. Feinkind, Froyen rebbeyim un barimte perzenlekhkeiten in Poylen (Warsaw, 1937), 36.
  - 27. Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 37.
  - 28. Raddock, "Maid from Ludmir," 27.
  - 29. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 12 May 1968, 7.
- 30. For these images, see Meir Ben-Dov, Mordekhai Naor, and Zeev Aner, *The Western Wall*, trans. Raphael Posner (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 1983), 98–99, 110–11; Isaac Avigdor Urnstein, introduction to *Yoman ha-Kotel ha-Ma'aravi* (Jerusalem: Bet Ornshtayn, 1968), 66.
- 31. Isaac Yahuda, *Ha-Kotel ha-Ma'aravi* (Jerusalem: Hotsaat Mishpahat Yehudah, 1968), 68.
  - 32. Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 37.
- 33. Abraham Yaari, *Masot Erets Yisrael: Shel olim Yehudim* (Tel Aviv: Gazit, 1946), 690–91.
- 34. John Fulleylove and John Kilman, *The Holy Land* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1912), 230.
- 35. Susan Starr Sered has published a number of illuminating works on Rachel's Tomb, including "Rachel's Tomb and the Milk Grotto of the Virgin Mary: Two Women's Shrines in Bethlehem," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2 (1986).
- 36. Sephardic women also visited on Lag Ba-Omer and Hol Ha-Moed Pesah. See Eli Schiller, *Kever Rachel* (Jerusalem: Ariel Press, 1977), 16.
- 37. Miriam Burla, "Ha Zirah be Kever Rachel Imenu" (The scene at Rachel's tomb), *Maarakha* 175 (1975): 14–15, as cited in Schiller, *Kever Rachel*, 42.
  - 38. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 12 May 1968, 7.
  - 39. Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 38.
  - 40. Raddock, "Maid from Ludmir," 27.
- 41. Unger, *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 12 May 1968, 7. On women's celebration of Simhat Torah, see Annette Vigoda, "Simhat Torah Hag shel Gevarim?" In *Li-heyot ishah Yehudiyah*, ed. Margalit Shilo (Jerusalem: Kolekh, Urim, 1999), 198–206.
- 42. Women in need turned to their *kolelim*, individual donors, and charity organizations, including those funded by other women, such as the *hevrat nashim be mea shearim le ezrat holim*, *yetumim*, *haklmasat kalah*, *ve yoldot*. On this organization, see Yosef Rivlin, *Mea Shearim* (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha Rav Kook, 1947), 159.
- 43. Nineteenth-century Hebrew sources from both Palestine and Eastern European "memory books" contain descriptions of women remarkable for their generosity. Indeed, some of these women are actually called *zaddeket*, which may help to explain how the Maiden of Ludmir received this title in the census lists. For example, see Rivlin, *Mea Shearim*, 81. Also see the Hebrew newspaper *Havatselet*, 10 July 1890.
- 44. Some exceptions include Mikhal ben-Yaakov, "Aliyatan shel Nashim le Erets Yisrael," in *Li-heyot ishah Yehudiyah*, ed. Shilo, 301–7; Yael Levine Katz,

"Nashim Lamdanyot bi Yerushalayim," *Mabu'a* 26 (1994), including 103–4, on the Maiden of Ludmir. By contrast, a larger number of works have been written on the Jewish women who participated in the earliest Zionist *aliyot* (immigrations) to Palestine that began in the 1880s. See, for example, Yaffa Berlowitz, "Literature by Women of the First Aliya: The Aspiration for Women's Renaissance in Eretz Yisrael," in *Pioneers and Homemakers: Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel*, ed. Deborah S. Bernstein (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 49–74; Margalit Shilo, "The Transformation of the Role of Women in the First Aliah, 1882–1903," *Jewish Social Studies* 2 (1996).

- 45. Among the ways in which deceased women are referred to in the hevra qadisha records, we find betulah (virgin), almah (girl), meyaledet (midwife), yoledet (woman giving birth), zekanah (elderly), hasidah (pious), hashuvah (important), rabbanit (wife of rabbi), zaddeket (holy woman), and ha-isha hamebulbelet (the crazy woman).
- 46. On the first three women, all early residents of Mea Shearim, see Rivlin, *Mea Shearim*, 165–66. On Feyge from Ludmir, see the 1875 Montefiore widow list from the Jerusalem Volhnynian community.
- 47. On Haya from Pinsk, see Asher Leyb of Brisk, *Helkat Mehokek*, Shura 7, 8. On Palomba De Ruso, see Yaakov Yehoshuah, *Ha Bayit ve-ha Rahov Be Yerushalayim ha Yeshana* (Jerusalem: Reuven Mas, 1966), 127.
  - 48. Rivlin, Mea Shearim, 159.
  - 49. Asher Leyb of Brisk, Helkat Mehokek, book 6, 16.
- 50. Yitzhak Yaakov Yellin, *Avotaynu* (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha Rav Kook, 1966), 72.
  - 51. Rivlin, Mea Shearim, 84.
  - 52. Gross, "Maid of Ludmir," 56.
- 53. Issachar Ben-Ami, *Saint Veneration Among the Jews in Morocco* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 307. Ben-Ami counted a total of twenty-five Jewish women venerated as saints in Morocco, or 4 percent of the total number of Jewish saints.
- 54. On this episode, see Arthur Green, *Tormented Master: The Life and Spiritual Quest of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1978), 71–72.
  - 55. Ben-Dov et al., Western Wall, 113.
  - 56. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 12 May 1968, 7.
  - 57. Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 40.
  - 58. Taubenhaus, Be Netiv ha Yahid, 41.
- 59. In a manuscript in the YIVO Archives (RG 509/132), Unger attributes this tradition to Yitzhak Even; Shemen, *Batsiung tsu der froy*, 2: 330.
  - 60. Mordechai Biber, "Ha-Almah mi Ludmir," Reshumot 2 (1946): 75 n. 7.
  - 61. Samuel Horodezky, Ole Tsiyon (Tel Aviv: Gazit, 1946), 175.
  - 62. Raddock, "Maid from Ludmir," 27; Gross, "Maid of Ludmir," 56.
  - 63. Menasheh Unger Collection, YIVO Archives RG509/139.
- 64. Shemen, *Batsiung tsu der frvy*, 2: 330, lists her year of death as 1895. On 338 n. 5a, however, Shemen mentions that 1892 is also a possibility.

- 65. Ephraim Taubenhaus, "Ha-Betulah Hanah Rochel mi Ludmir" (The virgin Hannah Rochel), *Ha Posek* (1952), 191.
- 66. Ada Rapoport-Albert has informed me that in her own searches through issues of *Ha-Havatselet* and *Ha-Levanon* (another newspaper) from the 1880s and 1890s, she was unable to find any mention of the Maiden of Ludmir or her death.
- 67. According to the records of the Jerusalem Hevra Qadisha Hasidim, she was buried in the Old Volin (Volin Yashan) section, Helkah Beyt, Shura 29, Kever 75.
- 68. Unfortunately, I have been unable to visit the gravesite to determine whether the tombstone is still standing, because the Intifada has severely limited the ability of non-Hevra Qadisha workers to visit the Mount of Olives cemetery. It is likely, however, that the tombstone was among the thirty-eight thousand (70 to 80 percent of the total) that were destroyed by the Jordanians when they controlled the Mount of Olives from 1948 to 1967. See Seker ha-Va'ada livedikat hilul bate ha-almin be-har ha-Zetim uve-Hevron (Jerusalem, 1967), 23. On the state of the cemetery today, see Rami Yizreel, Madrikh Karta le-Har ha-Zetim (Jerusalem: Karta, 1999).
  - 69. Unger, Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal, 19 May 1968, 7.
  - 70. Menasheh Unger Collection, YIVO Archives 509/132.
  - 71. Gross, "Maid of Ludmir," 56.
- 72. See Issachar Ben-Ami, Saint Veneration Among the Jews in Morocco (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 307.
- 73. My thanks to Yaffa Eliach, who communicated this tradition to me in a conversation. A Bratslaver Hasid told Eliach the story and showed her the grave in 1980.
  - 74. Z. Nidriker, "Ludmir," Yalkut Volin 3 (1946): 4.

## Conclusion. Tracing the Maiden

1. For the category of "history from below," see E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London: V. Gollancz, 1963). Historians whose work has influenced me in this respect include Honda Katsuichi, Harukor: An Ainu Woman's Tale (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000); Mala Sen, India's Bandit Queen: The True Story of Phoolan Devi (London: Pandora, 1991); Leo Spitzer, Lives in Between: Assimilation and Marginality in Austria, Brazil, West Africa, 1780–1945 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Natalie Zemon Davis, Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); Daniel Boyarin, Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997); Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and Politics of History (New York: Columbia, 1988); Jean Franco, Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); and Carlo Ginzburg, The Cheese and the Worms: The Cos-

mos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), as well as Paula Hyman, Chava Weissler, and Ada Rapoport-Albert, whose pioneering works on the history of Eastern European Jewish women I have cited in earlier notes.

- 2. The important roles that both philosophy and Christianity played in the development of the Western notion of self, as well as their relationship to the genre of biography, remain beyond the scope of this book.
- 3. David Halperin, "Why Is Diotima a Woman? Platonic *Eros* and the Figuration of Gender," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David Halperin, John Winkler, and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 295.
- 4. Leah Novick, "The History of Rosh Chodesh and Its Evolution as a Woman's Holiday," in *Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology*, ed. Susan Berrin (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1996), 21.
- 5. See for example, David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 137: "Rather than proving that Hasidism provided a spiritual place for women, as certain sentimental admirers of Hasidism have claimed, her [the Maiden of Ludmir's] case suggests exactly the opposite."
- 6. Ada Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism: S. A. Horodezky and the Maid of Ludmir Tradition," in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein (London: P. Halban, 1988), 506; Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 90.
- 7. Menachem Brayer, *The Jewish Woman in Rabbinic Literature*, vol. 2 (Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV, 1986), 42, 46. Although frequently apologetic in character, Brayer's treatment of the role of women in Hasidism draws on an impressive range of sources.
- 8. These contrasting approaches to the Maiden of Ludmir recall the taxonomy developed by Soha Abdel Kader in her analysis of scholarship on Muslim women. Such works, according to Abdel Kader, can be divided into two types: a "critical posture," which blames "Islam for the 'low' status of women," and a "defensive posture," which holds that "Islam sustains rather than undermines women's rights." See Soha Abdel Kader, "The Role of Women in the History of the Arab States," in *Retrieving Women's History: Changing Perceptions of the Role of Women in Politics and Society*, ed. S. Jay Kleinberg (Oxford and New York: Berg; Paris: UNESCO Press, 1988), 82.
- 9. See Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs*, 90, 95. On 221 n. 6, Weissler lists the towns in Volhynia where women authors are said to have composed Yiddish *tkhines*, including Dubno, Krzemieniec, Klewan, and Oleksiniec. Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representations of Women* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1995), 61–65, discusses Yiddish memoirs written by Eastern European Jewish women from a few decades later. Mention should also be made of Glückel of

Hameln, a seventeenth-century German Jewish woman who wrote a remarkable autobiography.

- 10. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1954), 15. The Maiden's lack of literary production runs counter to another stereotype asserted by Scholem on 38, namely, that female mystics tend toward "mystical autobiography and subjectivism in expressing religious experience," whereas the "tendency towards the objectivization of mystical vision . . . appear[s] to be connected with the masculine character of the movement."
- 11. The Baal Shem Tov's attitude is captured in the tale "Writing Down the Besht's Torah," in *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, ed. and trans. Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 179.
- 12. Elisabeth Avilda Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 43–44.
  - 13. Petroff, Medieval Women's Visionary Literature, 4.
- 14. See the comments of Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism," 502. Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs*, 90, affirms the position of Rapoport-Albert. For a counterargument, see Nehemia Polen, "Miriam's Dance: Radical Egalitarianism in Hasidic Thought," *Modern Judaism* 12 (1992): 12.
- 15. Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism," has written, "The important historical question, however, is not so much whether or not these prominent women existed, which is probable, but rather whether or not the phenomenon of independent female leaders was integrated into the ideology and organization of Hasidism and considered to be fully legitimate. The answer to this question is unequivocally negative. Hasidism did not evolve an ideology of female leadership, any more than it improved the position of women within the family or set out to educate them in Yiddish" (501–2).
- 16. David Mekler, Fun rebbins hoyf: Fun Chernobyl biz Talne (New York: Jewish Book Publishing Company, 1931), 1: 282–83.
- 17. The identification between the zaddik and Yesod is based on a kabbalistic reading of Proverbs 10, "zaddik yesod olam" ("the righteous is the foundation of the world").
  - 18. Chava Weissler, "Woman as High Priest," Jewish History 5 (1991): 11.
  - 19. Scholem, Major Trends, 37.
- 20. Polen, "Miriam's Dance," 19 n. 37, notes that the Maiden's career as a zaddik would have been impossible were it not for Hasidism's valorization of charismatic leadership. He adds that the opposition to the Maiden may actually have been influenced by her independent charismatic status, since after the first few generations of the movement, very few "independent charismatic personalities" (men included) existed in Hasidism, with the vast majority linked to one of the dynasties.
- 21. Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs*, 44, has argued that simply relegating Jewish women's experiences to the realm of popular religion does nothing to challenge standard views of normative Judaism or "our received assumptions about either 'elite' or 'popular' Judaism."

- 22. Samuel A. Horodezky, "Ludmirskaia Deva (Di Ludmirer Moid)," Evreiskaia Starina 1 (1909): 220.
- 23. Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism," 508. For other formulations, see Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 167, and most recently, Naftali Loewenthal, "Women and the Dialectic of Spirituality in Hasidism," in *Within Hasidic Circles: Studies in Hasidism in Memory of Mordecai Wilensky*, ed. Immanuel Etkes et al. (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1999), 14, 39–40.
- 24. Caroline Walker Bynum, Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 37.
- 25. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 24.

## Afterword. Journey to Ludmir

- I. Isaac Babel, 1920 Diary, ed. Carol J. Avins, trans. H. T. Willetts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 94–95.
  - 2. Babel, 1920 Diary, 94-95.
- 3. S. Ansky, Khurbn Galitsye: Der yidisher khurbn fun Poyln, Galitsye, un Bokovine, fun togbukh 1914–1917, vol. 5 of Gezamlte shrift (Vilna, Warsaw, and New York: Ferlag "An-Ski," 1920–1925), 136.
  - 4. Babel, 1920 Diary, 94-95.
- 5. On April 13, 1942, the Germans herded the Jews of Ludmir into two ghettos: the "living ghetto" for artisans and the "dead ghetto" for the majority who lacked a useful trade.
- 6. Writing after the war, Eliezer Gitklig recalled the "cursed German women who came to Ludmir to participate in the destruction of the Jews. These snakes took Jewish children, tore them in two by their legs before the eyes of their mothers and threw them into the pits." See Eliezer Gitklig, "Ha Tevakh be Ludmir" (The slaughter in Ludmir), *Yalkut Volin* 4 (1947): 30. See also Eliezer Gitklig's memories of the ghetto in the *Pinkas Ludmir* (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotse Ludmir be Yisrael, 1962), 523–26.
  - 7. Pinkas Ludmir, 527.
  - 8. Pinkas Ludmir, 495.

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- —. "Mi Volin li Tsfat: Deyokano shel R. Avraham Dov me Ovruch ke Manhig Hasidi ba Mahatsit ha Rishonah shel ha Meah ha Tesha'esreh"

- (From Volhynia to Safed: Rabbi Abraham Dov of Ovruch as a Hasidic leader in the first half of the nineteenth century). *Shalem* 6 (1992).
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