

so there would have been no store of original virtue for their descendants (Lev. R. xxxvi.; Ex. R. xlv.). See PATRIARCHS.

Like the Patriarchs, the later saints were regarded as a source of original virtue for their descendants or for Israel, and in addition to Moses, Joshua, David, Hezekiah, and Ezra, Hillel, Johanan b. Zakai, and Meïr are especially mentioned as storing up works which shall speak for their descendants (Lev. R. ii.). On the other hand, the original virtue of the Patriarchs was regarded by some as lasting only till the time of Hosea (Shab. 55a) or until the days of Hezekiah (Lev. R. xxxvi.), though it was still operative in keeping exiled Israel in existence up to the time of redemption (Gen. R. lxx.); and in the Targum Yerushalmi to Deut. xxviii. 15 God assures "the Fathers of the world" that their merit will never cease to be efficacious.

The doctrine of original virtue is only the theological side of the principle of heredity, with the consequences and responsibilities which this involves. The community of interest between parents and children is emphasized in a special Jewish manner which at times leads to the diametrically opposite concept of the influence of descendants upon ancestors; so that the penalty of death is said to have been inflicted upon Adam because of the sins of Nebuchadnezzar and Hiram (Gen. R. ix.). The extension of the concept of God's grace even to unrighteous children of righteous parents is, moreover, an attribution to the Supreme Being of the ordinary attitude of men toward the degenerate children of distinguished or pious parents. The influence of a store of merit collected for the use of succeeding generations is the theological aspect of the concept of progress and civilization, which is practically a store of ancestral merits.

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J.

**VISIGOTHS.** See SPAIN.

**VISONTAI, SOMA:** Hungarian lawyer and deputy; born at Gyöngyös Nov. 9, 1854; educated at Budapest, where he became an attorney in 1882. While still a student he attracted much attention by his papers on political economy in the scientific journals of Hungary, and he also edited the "Vasút." He became widely known as a pleader in 1890, when he successfully defended the editor of the "Zasztava," the leader of the radical wing of the Servians in Hungary, in a trial for political murder. As a mark of gratitude, the people of Neusatz, being Servian sympathizers, elected Visontai in 1892 to the Hungarian Parliament as a supporter of Kossuth; and since 1899 he has represented his native town, Gyöngyös, in Parliament. He is an eminent authority on criminal law and a member of the board of examiners for admission to the bar; and he prepared a large portion of the preliminary drafts for the criminal code.

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L. V.

**VITA.** See HAYYIM.

**VITA DELLA VOLTA (SOLOMON HAYYIM):** Italian physician and Hebraist; born Sept. 24, 1772; died March 29, 1853; flourished in Mantua. He was the owner of a large Hebrew library, which, together with its 131 manuscripts, came into the possession of Marco Mortara. Vita della Volta was a contributor to the periodical "Kerem Hemed." A letter from I. S. Reggio to Della Volta appeared in "Ozar Nehmad" (iii. 25-27).

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Steinschneider, *Cat. Bodl.* col. 2709; *Kerem Hemed*, passim.

S. O.

**VITAL:** Italian family, including several scholars, of whom the best known are:

**Hayyim Vital:** Cabalist; son of Joseph Vital; born at Safed in 1543; died at Damascus May 6, 1620. He was educated by Moses Alshech. His biography is full of legends; at the age of twelve, it is said, he was told by a chiromancer that when he reached the age of twenty-four years he would find himself standing before two roads, and would rise or fall according to his choice. Joseph Caro is said to have paid especial attention to Hayyim's talents by requesting Alshech in 1557 to take great pains with the education of a pupil who was destined to succeed his teacher in the world of learning. In the same year Hayyim became acquainted with Lapidot Ashkenazi, a cabalist, who was to influence him for the remainder of his life. The legend runs that after Hayyim's unhappy marriage to Hannah, the daughter of a certain Moses Saadia, the prophet Elijah appeared to him in a dream and led him to a beautiful garden, where he beheld the pious of all ages in the form of birds flying through the garden and studying the Mishnah. In the center of the garden was God Himself, seated on a throne and surrounded by the pious on rich tapestries.

This vision convinced the dreamer that he was destined to become a cabalist. After devoting himself to the study of alchemy for two years and a half, he had another vision of the prophet Elijah, who told him that he would succeed in his studies and would even write a commentary on the Zohar. In 1570 he became a pupil of Isaac Luria, and before he had studied under him a year Hayyim had already become known as one of the foremost cabalists, so that when, in 1572, Luria died at the early age of thirty-eight, in an epidemic which raged in Safed, Hayyim became his successor. Luria had left nothing in manuscript, and his pupil accordingly began to commit to writing what he had learned from his teacher. In 1576 he commenced to give cabalistic lectures, declaring himself to be the Messiah ben Joseph; and while wandering through Syria and Egypt, he is said to have performed many miracles, such as summoning spirits before him by the power of magic formulas.

In 1577 Hayyim arrived in Egypt, but evidently he met with a cool reception, since he soon returned to Palestine, where he settled, first in the little town of 'Ain Zaitun, and later in Jerusalem. There he remained until the governor, Abu Saïfa, requested him to rediscover, by means of the Cabala, the aqueduct, leading from the River Gihon, which had been

built in the days of Hezekiah. This request so embarrassed Hayyim that he fled by night to Damascus, where he commenced his first cabalistic work on the patriarch Abraham, of which extracts are contained in the "Ozerot Hayyim" (p. 54b). He submitted this work to Joshua ben Nun, the wealthy principal of the yeshibah at Safed. The greater part of the book consists of an exposition of the conjuring of clouds, and of a discourse on the seven fixed stars, the seven heavens, and their corresponding metals. After this Hayyim returned to Jerusalem, where his former teacher, Moses Alshech, appointed him rabbi in 1584. After a time, however, he left Jerusalem for Safed, where he fell sick and was obliged to keep his bed for an entire year.

During this illness Joshua, his closest follower, who had accompanied him on nearly every journey, succeeded in bribing Hayyim's younger brother, Moses, with 500 gold gulden to lend him the writings of the cabalist, which were locked in a box. Moses accordingly brought Joshua a large part of the manuscripts, and 100 copyists were immediately engaged, who, in the short space of three days, reproduced more than 600 pages. Although Hayyim maintained, when he learned of this, that the papers which had been copied were not his own writings, they were rapidly disseminated under the title "Ez Hayyim." This work contains, in addition to a tribute to Isaac Luria, the bold assertion that it is one of the greatest pleasures of God to behold the promotion of the teaching of the Cabala, since this alone can assure the coming of the Messiah; that the old Cabala, however, covering the period from David to Nahmanides, was valueless, since it was based merely on human intellect, and was not aided by the higher spirits. Hayyim asserted that he had received these teachings, like his other mystic theories, from the lips of his teacher Luria. His estimate of the value of the Cabala of Moses Cordovero was equally low, although he maintained that Moses had often appeared to him in dreams. One of the most prominent of Hayyim's opponents was Menahem di Lonzano, who publicly denounced him in his "Sefer Imre Emet." On the 20th of Elul, 1590, Hayyim was awarded the rabbinical diploma by his teacher Moses Alshech, and four years later he settled permanently in Damascus, where he lectured every evening on the Cabala and on the near advent of the Messiah. Despite the large following which Hayyim had in Damascus, Jacob Abulafia succeeded, by threats of excommunication, in compelling him to discontinue his lectures. In 1604 his sight began to fail; in 1620 he had prepared to return to Safed, when his death occurred.

Hayyim was the author of numerous works, which are collected under the title "Sefer 'Ez ha-Hayyim" (Zolkiev, 1772; Korzec, 1785; Shklov, 1800; Dobrowne, 1804; Sudzilkov, 1818; Laszow, 1818). They are as follows:

Sefer ha-Kawwanot, in two parts, the first being on the subject of benedictions and rituals, and the second on the ritual for Sabbaths and festivals. Venice, 1624; Hanan, 1624; Bragadini, n.d. There are five recensions of this work: (1) by Moses Vital, grandson of Hayyim; known especially in Egypt and Palestine; (2) by Zacuto, with glosses; (3) by Nathan Spira, with a commentary entitled "Me'orot Natan"; (4) by Abraham Azulai of Morocco, with glosses; (5) by M. Popper, under the title "Peri 'Ez Hayyim."

A pilyut beginning "Dodi yarad le-ganno"; printed in "Sha'are Ziyon." Amsterdam, 1671.

Nof 'Ez Hayyim, novellæ. Frankfurt-on-the-Main, 1684; Zolkiev, 1772, 1775.

Sefer ha-Gilgulim, on the transmigration of souls. Frankfurt-on-the-Main, 1684; Zolkiev, 1772.

Sha'are Kedushah, on the rewards and punishments of the future world and on holiness. Constantinople, 1734; Sulzbach, 1758; Zolkiev, 1810.

Likkutei Torah we-Ta'ame ha-Mizwot, cabalistic exposition of the Bible according to Luria's teachings, with "hiddushim." Zolkiev, 1775.

Sha'ar ha-Yihudim we-Tikkun 'Awonot, on the Prophets, on the Holy Spirit, and on repentance. Korzec, 1783.

Sefer Ozerot Hayyim, edited by his pupil the Portuguese physician Joseph Zemah. Korzec, 1783. (Besides the printed edition there exist two manuscripts, one with glosses by Moses Zacuto ["Codex Michael," No. 23], and the other with glosses by Nathan Spiro [ib. Nos. 27, 28]).

Likkutei ha-Shas, cabalistic interpretations of Talmudic haggadot according to the teachings of Luria, with "hiddushim" by the author. Leghorn, 1785.

Arha' Me'ot Shekel Kesef, cabalistic treatise on the 400 shekels which Abraham paid for the cave of Machpelah. Korzec, 1804.

**Joseph Vital:** Writer of tefillin parchments; born in Calabria; flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. On account of his accuracy his work, which was expensive, was highly esteemed, and was known everywhere as קבראש תפילין רב קבראש. He was also the author of responsa on the art of writing tefillin, which are frequently mentioned in the responsa of Menahem Azariah da Fano (§ 38 *et passim*).

**Moses Vital:** Rabbi at Safed; younger brother of Hayyim Vital; died in the middle of the seventeenth century. Like Hayyim, he was a great cabalist, and in addition to legends associating him with his brother and the prophet Elijah, a tradition is preserved which states that he predicted the famine which raged in Safed in 1632.

**Moses Vital:** Son of Samuel ben Hayyim Vital; rabbi in Egypt during the latter part of the seventeenth and at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He was a noted Talmudist and cabalist, but the only portion of his works which has been preserved is a responsum contained in Abraham ha-Levi's collection entitled "Ginnat Weradim."

**Samuel ben Hayyim Vital:** Cabalist; born in Damascus in the latter half of the sixteenth century; died in Egypt in the middle of the seventeenth. While still young he married a daughter of Isaiah Pinto, rabbi of Damascus. Poverty compelled him to emigrate to Egypt, where, through the influence of prominent men, he was placed in charge of the cabalistic society Tikkune ha-Teshubah. After a brief residence there he went to Safed, where he instructed the physician Joseph Zemah in Cabala. Later he returned to Egypt, where he died. Samuel Vital was the author of both cabalistic and rabbinical works. Among the former may be noted the "Shemonah She'arim," an introduction to the Cabala, later embodied in the "Ez Hayyim" (Zolkiev, 1772; Korzec, 1785). Among his unpublished writings mention may be made of his "Sefer Toze'ot Hayyim," a commentary on the Bible, and his "Sefer Ta'alumot Hokmah," on the Cabala.

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D. S. O.