

## CHAPTER VIII

# THE RITUAL VISUALIZATION OF THE SAINT IN JEWISH AND MUSLIM MYSTICISM\*

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A recent article dealing with saint veneration in Lurianic Kabbalah in 16<sup>th</sup> century Galilee undertook the comparison of certain devotional themes with later practices present in 18<sup>th</sup> century European Ḥasidism.<sup>1</sup> Although the author briefly touched on the subject of “ritual visualization” in its Lurianic context, its re-emergence in ḥasidic circles was not discussed at any length. The present article intends to provide a more detailed description of this usage among Eastern Kabbalists as well as its continuance in later Ḥasidism. That the Jewish version of this ritual was elaborated in the Muslim East, leaves room to suggest that certain of its aspects may have been influenced by the Islamic environment. In order to explore such a possibility, we propose to describe similar practices in Muslim Sufi circles for purposes of comparative study. We are well aware that analogous observances also appear in other religions, such as the devotional use of icons in Eastern Christianity and even contemplation of the master in Tao Yoga, but the chronological and geographical proximity of the two Middle Eastern traditions of Sufism and Kabbalah, lends a certain credence to the assumption that there may have been some Jewish emulation of Muslim custom. Furthermore, the religious beliefs and rituals relative to this practice held in common by these two traditions are mutually instructive. Indeed, as we shall see anon, it is our conviction that

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Garb, “The Cult of the Saints in Lurianic Kabbalah,” *JQR* 98 (2008): 203–229. Josef Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), says nothing about the phenomenon under discussion. Some elementary remarks on this subject were provided in my Hebrew article ‘Sufi Influences on the Qabbalah in Safed’, *Mahanayim* 6 (1993), 170-179.

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one particular aspect of the Muslim notion of the “bond with the master” throws an illuminating light on the understanding of the obscure and often misconstrued concept of *‘ibbūr* or “impregnation” appearing in Lurianic Qabbalistic texts.

Connecting with the soul of a saint,<sup>2</sup> invariably through visualization of his face or form, as a mystical technique was particularly developed in Central Asian Sufism among the Kubrāwis in the 13<sup>th</sup> century before becoming widespread among the Naqšbandīs, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The technique is attested among the Sufis in Damascus from the 14<sup>th</sup> century and among the Qabbalists in the Holy Land from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

As with all types of esoteric practice, the sources remain rather discreet about its performance since it was subject to strict rules and usually reserved for initiates. Its purpose was to enable its practitioner, once connected with a saint’s soul, to communicate with the latter and obtain occult knowledge or mystical guidance conducive to spiritual progress.

Connection was of two types, either with the soul of a living mentor or with that of a deceased master. Both entailed a ritual involving concentration, which, in the latter type, was most often carried out at the saint’s tomb.

## The Bond with the Saint in Islamic Mysticism

Although Judaism chronologically precedes Islam, it is necessary to begin with the Islamic case in order to substantiate our argument that ritual visualization originated in Sufi circles, where it is referred to as *taṣawwūr* “depiction” or *taḥayyul* “imagination”. Its practice in the Naqšbandī order has been the subject of a comprehensive study by Fritz Maier who distinguished a reciprocal attitude: “the orientation of the heart of the master towards that of the disciple”, and “the orientation of the disciple’s heart towards the *ṣayh*”.<sup>3</sup> In both cases, the heart spoken of is not, of course, the

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<sup>2</sup> Neither the Arabic *walī* nor the Hebrew *zaddīq* share the same connotation as the English “saint”. They designate a spiritual mentor or, in the case of Ḥasidism, a charismatic master, who was meticulously observant of the precepts and an initiate of the esoteric tradition.

<sup>3</sup> Fritz Meier, *Zwei Abhandlungen über die Naqshbandiyya*, Beirut Texts and Studien, 58 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994), 17–241: Die Herzenbindung an den Meister; in part. ch. 4, Das Bild des Meisters, 111–153. See also Michel Chodkiewicz, “Quelques aspects des techniques spirituelles dans la tariqa naqshbandiyya,” in *Naqshbandis, Historical Developments and Present Situation of a Muslim Mystical Order* (Varia Turcica 18), ed. Marc Gaborieau (Istanbul: Isis, 1990): 69–82 and B.

anatomical organ but one of the centres of spiritual energy governed by the soul.

The first, known as *muqābala* or *tawaḡḡuh*, entails master and disciple facing each other with closed eyes, while each conjures up a mental image of the other's countenance. Its performance constitutes an essential component of the initiation pact upon acceptance into a Sufi brotherhood.<sup>4</sup>

No doubt this practice has a remote connection with the Classical discipline of physiognomy, which in Sufism, evolved into a divine and a divinatory physiognomy (*fīrāsa*) and a tool for discerning the inward state of an individual from his outward form. Since saints were believed to be able to perceive such states through the 'eye of their heart', they could therefore monitor their disciples' spiritual progress.<sup>5</sup>

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Abu-Manneh, "Khalwa and *rābīta* in the Khālīdī suborder," in *Naqshbandis*, *op. cit.*, 289–302. See also A. F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Shaykh* (Columbia: SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> A 20<sup>th</sup> c. Naqshbandī author, Muḥammad Amīn al-Kurdī (ob. 1914), *Kitāb tanwīr al-qulūb fī mu'āmalat 'allām al-ḡuyūb* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Naḡāh, 1964), 494, states that the eighth of the twenty conditions of *ḥalwa* consists in visualizing the image (*ṣūra*) of one's *ṣayḥ*. He enumerates eleven conditions necessary for the performance of *dīkr*, the eighth of which is the *rābīta* (510–516). The latter is defined as: "the 'face to face' (*muqābala*) of the hearts of disciple and master and the disciple's mental retention of the master's image (*ḥifẓ ṣūratihī fī ḥayālihi*), even in his absence. It also entails the perception of the master's soul as a conduit (*mīzāb*) through which the flux from his encompassing ocean may descend to the heart of his devotee, and from which blessing may be drawn. Indeed, [the *ṣayḥ*] is the channel to spiritual achievement (*tawaṣṣul*) [...] and the gnostics say effacement (*fanā*) in the *ṣayḥ* is the preliminary to effacement in Allah" (512). The Qādirī practice of this posture is vividly described by Thomas P. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam* (London: Allen, 1885), 121–122.

<sup>5</sup> See R. Hoyland, "The Islamic Background to Polemon's Treatise," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul, Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*, ed. S. Swain (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 257–261.

The second attitude is known as the *rābiṭa bil-ṣayḥ*, or “the spiritual bond with the master”.<sup>6</sup> This bond is achieved through concentrating on the mental image of the *ṣayḥ*, in particular during the solitary retreat (*ḥalwa*) often as a preliminary to Sufism’s central ritual, the *dīkr*, or “repetitive evocation of Divine names”.

Since the practice of *tawaḡḡuh* was fraught with moral dangers, its execution was limited to authorized participants who had mastered its complicated technique. The verse: “Believers, fear God and stand with the saints (*sādiqīn*)” (Qur’an 9, 120) was adduced as a scriptural justification of this practice,<sup>7</sup> often qualified as idolatrous by opponents of Sufism.<sup>8</sup>

As far as can be ascertained, the first master to have established the *rābiṭa* as a fundamental requirement in a Sufi’s apprenticeship was Naḡm al-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. 1221). He seems to be the ultimate source of this practice in the Naqṣbandī order,<sup>9</sup> where it forms an addition to the eight fundamental rules formulated by ‘Abd al-Ḥālīq Ġuḡdawānī (d. 1220).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> An alternative term is *murāqaba*, which originally signified “contemplation of the divine work” and constituted one of the preliminary stages of the mystical way. Indeed, there is hardly a manual of Sufism that does not devote a specific chapter to its practice. Subsequently, this term was extended to the meditative modes themselves. See, for example, al-Sarrāḡ, *Kitāb al-luma*’, ed. Reynold Nicholson (London-Leiden: Brill, 1914), 54–55

<sup>7</sup> Husayn b. ‘Alī al-Kāšifī (1463–1532) in his famous collection of Naqṣbandī hagiographies *Raṣaḥāt ‘ayn al-ḥayāt fī manāqib maṣāyih al-naqṣbandiyya*, ed. Aḥmad al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 2008), 316, offers the following interpretation of this verse: “By cleaving to the Way of the *rābiṭa* according to its inner meaning, one merits mediation (*wasāta*). Companionship should become constant and not just limited to formal sessions and visual apprehension. It should transcend form and embrace inner meaning so that mediation becomes permanently envisioned. If this mode is continuously maintained the seeker’s soul will achieve spiritual affinity (*munāsaba*) and union with that of the master, whereupon the seeker’s foremost goal will be to attain realization through the master’s mediation.”

<sup>8</sup> See Meier, *Zwei Abhandlungen*, 214–230 and Abu-Manneh, “*Khalwa* and *rābiṭa* in the Khālidi suborder,” 297–302, who specifies that it was considered as an illicit innovation (*bida*’) in certain quarters. See for example Abū ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Idrīs Maḥmūd Idrīs, *Mazāhir al-inḥirāfāt al-‘aqdiyya ‘ind al-ṣufiyya*, vol. 1 (Riyād: Maktabat al-Ruṣd, 2005), 731 and the collective volume edited by Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke, eds., *Islamic Mysticism Contested* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> See Meier, *Zwei Abhandlungen*, 17–21.

<sup>10</sup> See Nuruddin Isfarāyini, *Le Révélateur des mystères*, transl. Hermann Landholt (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1986), 51–52. Likewise, Naḡm-i Rāzi attaches much importance to the “observation of the *ṣayḥ*’s heart” (*murāqibat-i dil-i ṣayḥ*) “for the openings

## The *rūḥāniyya*

In the case of the soul of a departed mentor, the latter's *rūḥāniyya*, or "spiritual entity", plays an important part in the function of the *rābiṭa*. Since this notion and its Hebrew equivalent *rūḥāniyyūt* are crucial to the Sufi and Jewish beliefs surrounding the "bond with the saint", it is essential to clarify their meaning.<sup>11</sup>

Apparently, the term originated in astrological circles and Hermetic theurgical writings that teach that through invocations or talismans beneficent spirits can be induced into the body (*haykal*) of an idol or a saint.<sup>12</sup> For the *Iḥwān al-ṣafā'*, for example, the term designates the angel that governs (*mudabbir*) each of the heavenly spheres.<sup>13</sup> Pseudo-Maḡrīṭī reports that "the Hindus believe that the spiritual entity (*rūḥāniyya*) sometimes appears to the supernal sage in the form of a person who converses with him and teaches him all the matters he desires to know."<sup>14</sup> The same author claims that according to Aristotle each sage possesses an energy derived from a spiritual entity (*rūḥāniyya*). The latter bestows upon him extra force, provides him with inspiration and opens for him the portals of wisdom. It is joined to the supernal star, which governs him; it grows with him and sustains him.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Pseudo-Maḡrīṭī explains the techniques whereby the *rūḥāniyya* of the astral bodies can be drawn down (*istiḡlāb*).<sup>16</sup> He also states in the name of Plato that "through the

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of mystery come to the novice through the window of the *ṣayḥ*'s heart". See Isfarāyini, *Le Révélateur des mystères*, §80, Persian text, 47; Fr. transl., 171–172.

<sup>11</sup> See, in the first instance, art. 'rūḥāniyya' *EP*<sup>2</sup>, vol. VII, 612–613 [M. Chodkiewicz]. As long ago as 1860, M. Steinschneider already pointed out the importance and polysemic signification of this term. See his *Zur Pseudepigraphischen Literatur* (Berlin: Veitel Heine Ephraim'schen Lehranstalt, 1862), 69–70. The use of this concept in Qabbalistic texts will be discussed *infra*, n. 74.

<sup>12</sup> In colloquial usage *rūḥānī* is synonymous with 'magical'.

<sup>13</sup> *Rasā'il Iḥwān al-ṣafā'* vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1957), 218 and vol. 11, 215.

<sup>14</sup> Ps.-al-Maḡrīṭī, *Gāyat al-ḥakīm*, ed. H. Ritter (Leipzig: Warburg, 1933), 85.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem*, 190 and 194. See also Pinès, "Le Sefer Tamar et les Maggidim," in *Hommage à Georges Vajda*, ed. G. Nahon and Ch. Touati, (Louvain: Peeters, 1980), 336-337, 353-357.

<sup>16</sup> *Gāyat al-ḥakīm*, 177 and 182. See also D. Pingree, 'al-Tabari on the prayers to the planets', *BEO* 44 (1992), 105-117, and, in addition, *Risālat Abī Qāsim ben Aḥmad al-Kirmānī*, Oxford, Bodleian, Ms Neubauer 1237, fol. 202: *yā rūḥāniyya mutṭaṣila bi-nūr* ('O *rūḥāniyya* attached to light').

action of images and use of the *rūḥāniyyāt*'s faculties it is possible to make the dead talk".<sup>17</sup>

The Judeo-Arabic tradition also refers to this usage which it considers to be an idolatrous practice. Besides Sa'adyah Ga'ōn,<sup>18</sup> Isaac Israeli,<sup>19</sup> Judah ha-Levī,<sup>20</sup> Judah Ibn Bal'am,<sup>21</sup> Joseph Ibn Saddīq,<sup>22</sup> Moses Ibn 'Ezra,<sup>23</sup> pseudo-Abraham Ibn 'Ezra,<sup>24</sup> authors such as Moses Maimonides,<sup>25</sup> his associate Ḥanan'el b. Samuel,<sup>26</sup> David Maimonides,<sup>27</sup> Tanḥūm Yerušalmī,<sup>28</sup> and the Yemenite Sa'adya b. David al-Damārī<sup>29</sup> (active 1441) all speak of the attraction (*istinzāl*) or "drawing down" of the *rūḥāniyyāt* practiced by star worshippers.

In Sufi writings the astral theory cohabits with the conception of the *rūḥāniyya* as a "disincarnate spiritual entity of a deceased prophet or saint from whom the initiate can receive supernatural assistance". Thus in his *Kitāb al-tağalliyyāt*, the great Andalusī mystic Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240) equates the *rūḥāniyyāt al-mufāraqa* with the spirits (*arwāḥ*) of the

<sup>17</sup> *Ġāyat al-ḥakīm*, 147.

<sup>18</sup> Sa'adyah Ga'ōn, *Kitāb al-amānāt*, ed. S. Landauer, Leiden: Brill, 1880, p. 42, l. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Isaac Israeli, *Sefer ha-yesōdōt*, ed. S. Fried, Drohobyc, 1900, p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> Shlomo. Pinès, 'On the term Ruḥaniyyot and its Origin and on Judah Halevi's Doctrine', *Tarbiz* 57 (1988), 511-540 (Heb.). See also Paul Fenton, "Judeo-Arabic fragments by Rabbi Abraham he-Hasid," *JSS* (1981), 61 and 65.

<sup>21</sup> Judah Ibn Bal'am, *Commentary on Isaiah*, ed. M. Goshen-Gottstein, Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan Press, 1992, 61-62.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Ibn Saddīq, *'Ūlām qātān*, ed. S. Horowitz, Breslau, 1903, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Moses Ibn 'Ezra, *Kitāb al-muḥāḍara wal-muḍākara*, ed. A. Halkin, Jerusalem: Mekizey nirdamim, 1976, 34.

<sup>24</sup> Pseudo-Abraham Ibn 'Ezra, *Sefer ha-'ašāmīm*, ed. M. Grosserg, Londres, 1901, 15. This passage is also quoted in Samuel Ibn Motot, *Margaliyyūt tōbāh*, (Amsterdam, 1722), fol. 72a-b.

<sup>25</sup> Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, I: 63 [Arabic text, ed. S. Munk, I, (Paris: A. Franck, 1856), fol. 81b; French p. 281, n. 1] and III: 29 (ed. Munk, III, fol. 63b).

<sup>26</sup> In his commentary on the *haḥfārōt*, ms. British Library Or. 2583, fol. 37a, and Or. 2584, fols. 9a, 93a: *rūḥāniyyat al-kawkab*. On this author, see our article "A Judeo-Arabic Commentary on the *haḥfārōt* by Ḥanan'el ben Šemū'el (?), Abraham Maimonides' Father-in-Law," *Maimonidean Studies* 1 (1990), 27-56.

<sup>27</sup> David II Maimonides (14<sup>th</sup> c.) condemns the idolatrous practice of *istinzālāt al-rūḥāniyyāt* in his *Tağrīd al-ḥaqā'iq*, Ms Bodl. Hunt. 489, fol. 99b-100a.

<sup>28</sup> Tanḥūm Yerušalmī, *Commentarium arabicum ad Librorum Samuelis*, ed. Haarbrücker, (Leipzig, 1844), on I Sam. 28, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Sa'adya b. David al-Damārī, *Midraš ha-be'ūr*, I (Qiryat Ono: Makhon le-ḥeqer mišnat ha-Rambam, 1998), 288: '*abōdāh zārāh wa-istinzāl al-rūḥāniyyāt*.

heavenly spheres,<sup>30</sup> whereas in his *Futuḥāt* he attributes to each angel and prophet a *rūḥāniyya* who affords assistance to the aspiring *murīd*.<sup>31</sup> The latter interpretation is connected with the belief, widely upheld in Naqṣbandī circles, that the transmission of spiritual grace (*baraka*) does not necessarily require the physical presence of a living saint. As will be seen, this belief is the basis for the rituals carried out at the grave of a defunct saint whose purpose is to commune with the *rūḥāniyya* of the occupant of the tomb.

Interestingly, awareness of the astrological antecedents of the *rūḥāniyya* in connection with saint worship is demonstrated by an adversary of Sufism—none other than Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya (1292–1350), the famous pupil of the strict Ḥanbali theologian Ibn Taymiyya. Though himself strongly influenced by Sufism, like his master, he was a staunch opponent of saint veneration and the rituals performed at their tombs, which he condemned as idolatrous. He goes as far as to state that worship at gravesites actually derives from astrolatrous practices. Ibn Qayyim’s description provides interesting details concerning the medieval practice of these rituals—no doubt primarily in Syria. Although he discusses the “bond”, mention is not made of visualization:

As for the polytheistic [type of] pilgrimage, it originated with idol-worshippers. [Its partisans] believe that the venerated deceased person, whose spirit enjoys nearness and special distinction, continues to receive grace from Allah, his soul being inundated with blessings. If the visitor draws near to him and connects (*‘allaqa*) his own spirit with his, a share in the divine beneficence will flow from the soul of the departed saint through the mediation of his soul exactly in the same way as rays of light are

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<sup>30</sup> *Kitāb al-taḡalliyāt*, ed. Othman Yahya (Teheran: Markaz-i Naṣr-i Dāniṣgāhī, 1988), 317. This text was known to Jews for a copy exists in Hebrew characters. See my article “Deux écrits akbariens en transmission juive,” in *Mystique musulmane; parcours en compagnie d’un chercheur Roger Deladrière*, ed. Geneviève Gobillot (Paris: Cariscript, 2002), 155–169. Likewise, in ch. 62 of his *K. al-insān al-kāmil* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḥalabi, 1981), ‘Abd al-Karīm Ġīlī (d. 1424) explains that each of the seven heavens is governed by an angel created out of the *rūḥāniyya* of the constellation of that particular heaven.

<sup>31</sup> *Al-Futuḥāt al-Makkiyya*, II ed. O. Yahya (Cairo: al-Hay’ al-miṣriyya al-‘amma lil-kitāb, 1972), ch. 16, 401 (angels); ch. 10, 293 (prophets, where mention is made of the relationship of Elisha to Elijah), and vol. 12 (1988), ch. 73, 347–348, where Ibn ‘Arabī claims that it is impossible for a prophet’s disciple to inherit his master’s state in its entirety: “from the spirit that flows upon that prophet there emanates an angelic ray combined with his exteriority in the form of that angel. This *rūḥāniyya* bears the name of that very angel”. See also al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidī, *Ḥatm al-awlīyā’*, ed. O. Yahya, Beirut: Librairie orientale, 1965, 225.

reflected from a clear mirror or water onto a facing surface. They claim that such visits are fully achieved when the pilgrim concentrates (*yatawaḡḡah*) with his spirit and heart, and applies himself with his total spiritual energy (*himma*) and turns his attention and receptiveness exclusively towards the departed person in such a way that he becomes oblivious of all else. The more intensely his attention and heart focus (*ḡam*) on the deceased, the more likely he is to derive benefit from him. This is the sort of pilgrimage described by Ibn Sīna, al-Farābī, and other [philosophers], and the star-worshippers have admitted such a cult. If the rational soul connects (*ta'allaqat*) with the supernal spirits (*al-arwāḥ al-'ulwiyya*),<sup>32</sup> they argue, light emanating from the latter flows forth upon the soul of the visitor and the soul of the departed saint, and the pilgrim shares in some portion of the blessing Allah bestows upon the saint. On account of this mystery they worship the stars, to whom they dedicate sanctuaries (*hayākil*) in which prayers are addressed [to the stars], and in which they install material idols. This very practice has brought those who venerate tombs to appoint festivals [for them], to drape them with covers, to kindle lamps upon them and build sanctuaries over them.<sup>33</sup>

### *tahayyul*

As will be seen, much of our information concerning the “bond” with the master’s soul comes to us from Central Asian sources. However, we should not be misled into believing that such practices were limited to that region for the references adduced in the following pages demonstrate their widespread use in various Sufi orders. A passage from a text attributed to the Egyptian Sufi of the *ṣāḍilī* school Ibn al-‘Aṭā’ Allah al-Iskandarī (d. 1309), deals with the preliminary dispositions required by evocation (*ādāb al-dīkr*) and shows that visualization of the *ṣayḥ* was performed by the devotee during *dīkr* in his spiritual retreat (*ḥalwa*):

It behoves the practitioner to don clean, sweet-smelling clothes, [...] he must be internally purified [...] his chamber must be perfumed with scent [...]. He will be seated cross-legged, facing the *qibla* [...] his palms placed upon his thighs, his eyes closed, keeping in mind his concentration (*tawaḡḡuhuh*). If he is under the supervision of a *ṣayḥ*, he must visualize (*tahayyala*) the latter in his mind, for he is his companion and guide along

<sup>32</sup> These are probably the equivalent of the *rūḥāniyyāt*.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya, *Iḡāṭat al-laḥfwān min maṣā'ib al-ṣayṭān* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 1999), 201–202. See also Christopher S. Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), ch. 5 “The Legal Attack on Ziyārat al-qubūr”, 189–190.

the Path. Then, by means of his heart, he will draw his initial evocation from the spiritual energy (*himma*) of his master, with the conviction that he is drawing from the very essence of the Prophet,<sup>34</sup> of whom the *ṣayḥ* is a representative.<sup>35</sup>

The Rifāʿīs too practiced visualization during *dīkr* as attested by the prolific 19<sup>th</sup> century Syrian author Muḥammad Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī (1879–1909):

The aspirant (*murīd*) should “re-present” (*yastahḍir*) the person of his *ṣayḥ* in his heart during *dīkr* and worship and place him before his eyes prior to undertaking *dīkr*. For his *ṣayḥ* is the portal of the entrance unto Allah and from him he draws his spiritual energy (*yastamidd al-himma*). The *ṣayḥ* should be unto him like the *qibla* (direction of prayer).<sup>36</sup> This will enable him to draw light from the tomb of the Rifāʿī *ṣayḥ*.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> As a projection of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), the *ṣayḥ* is often depicted in Sufism as the *locus tenans* of the Prophet. Cf. R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 87. One is reminded that the Jewish mystical tradition similarly confers a Mosaic dimension on the *zaddīq*. Indeed Dōb Ber of Mezeric (1704–1772), the disciple of the Baʿal Šem Ṭōb, taught in his *ʿOr tōrāh* (ed. J. Shochat [Brooklyn, 2006], pericope *nōah*, 19–20): “No generation is devoid of a *zaddīq* similar to Moses who includes the total number of the souls of his generation [...]. Similarly, the earthly *zaddīq* constitutes the channel (*zinnōr*, the Hebrew word has the same numerical value as Moses) through which the spiritual flux emanates upon the whole of his generation [...] and likewise he is compared to a ladder for, just as he possesses the capacity to draw downwards the spiritual flux, so too he is capable of elevating the entire generation upwards.” See Arthur Green, “The *Zaddīq* as *Axis Mundi* in Later Judaism,” in *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, ed. Lawrence Fine (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 291–314 esp. 303–305. See also our study “La Hiérarchie des saints dans la mystique juive et dans la mystique islamique,” in *ʿAleī Shefer, Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought presented to Rabbi Dr. Alexandre Safran*, ed. Mosheh Hallamish (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), 49–73, in part. 65. Such references to Moses are not limited to ḥasidic sources; Moses Sofer (1762–1839) in the glorification of Moses in his *Tōrat Mōšeh* I, (Brooklyn, 1984, fol. 71a) writes: “A powerful expedient in order to consolidate one’s study is to attach (*le-dabbeq*) oneself and one’s mind to our teacher Moses, as is intimated in the tractate *Seqālīm*.”

<sup>35</sup> (Pseudo-) Ibn ʿAtāʾ Allah, *Miftāḥ al-falāḥ wa-miṣbāḥ al-arwāḥ*, ed. Muḥammad. Aḥmad Ibrahim (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1998), 21–22.

<sup>36</sup> In Jewish mysticism too the *zaddīq* is considered to be the portal of the Way, while his court is the “Temple of Jerusalem”. See Isaiah Horowitz (d. 1630), *Šeney lūḥōt ha-berūt*, vol. 2 (Josefov, 1889), *Masseket taʿanūt*, §6, fol. 66a: “the *zaddīqīm* are the Temples”; Barūḳ of Meziboz (1753–1811), who wrote in the name of his

The Qādirī author, Isma‘īl b. Muḥammad Sa‘īd, goes as far as to consider the virtues of the *rābiṭa* to be superior to *dīkr*:

The *rābiṭa*, which consists in visualizing the image of the *ṣayḥ*, is superior to *dīkr*. This practice is more profitable to the aspirant than evocation since the *ṣayḥ* is the intermediary through which he has access to higher existence. The more numerous the bonds with which he is attached to the *ṣayḥ*, the more the spiritual effusion increases within him, and the more speedily he will reach his goal. This is why it behoves the disciple to penetrate his master prior to his penetrating Allah.<sup>38</sup>

This practice is also known to the Tiġānīs, as we are informed by the modern author Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Tiġānī, thus showing that the phenomenon of visualization is attested in the Maghreb, at least in later times:

One of the conditions of the Tiġānī way is to represent the form (*sūra*) of the *ṣayḥ* during recitation of the *wird* in order to be able to draw assistance from him.<sup>39</sup>

### *tawaġġuh*

Though current in several brotherhoods, *tawaġġuh*, or “orientation of the master’s heart towards that of the disciple”, was particularly widespread amongst the Naqṣbandīs. The centrality of this practice in their

grandfather the Bešt in his *Bōṣīnā’ de-nehōrā’* (Lemberg, 1879), fol. 25a : “the *ẓaddiqīm* are the portal to God”. See also Fenton, “La Hiérarchie des saints dans la mystique juive et dans la mystique islamique,” in: M. Hallamish (Ed.), *‘Aleī Shefer, Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought presented to Rabbi Dr. Alexandre Safran*, (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), 66, 71 n. 64. Compare this with the *didar* (contemplation) ceremony in modern Nizari Ismailism, where “seeing the *imām*” is equivalent to accomplishing the *ḥaġġ* in traditional Islam.

<sup>37</sup> Muḥammad Abū l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī, *Qilādat al-ġawāhir fī dīkr al-ġawṭ al-rifā’ī wa-atbā’ih al-akābir* (Beirut: al-Maṭba’a al-adabiyya, 1883), 177. On the author, see Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, Suppl.-Band 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1938), 868-869. See also ‘Abd al-Ġani al-Nābulusī, *Miftāḥ al-ma’iyya fī dustūr al-ṭarīqa al-naqṣbandiyya* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 2008), 147.

<sup>38</sup> Isma‘īl b. Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-Qādirī, *al-Fuyūḏāt al-rabbāniyya fī l-ma’ātir wal-awrād al-qādiriyya* (Cairo, 1934), 26, now translated in English by Muhtar Holland, *The Emanations of Lordly Grace, A Treasury of Qadiri Prayers and Wisdom* (Fort Lauderdale: Al Baz Publishing Inc, 2000).

<sup>39</sup> Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Tiġānī, *al-Durar al-saniyya fī l-arba’in ḥadīṭ al-tiġāniyya*, (Cairo: Dār al-ġawdiya, 2008), 8.

tradition becomes clear in the light of the important credence they lend to the possibility of the transmission of *baraka* through a non-living guide of the 'uwaysi type.<sup>40</sup> According to their tradition this was the case of their very founder, Bahā' al-Dīn (d. 1389), whom they believe received his initiation at the hands of 'Abd al-Ḥāliq al-Guḡdawānī (d. 1220), though the latter predeceased him by a century!<sup>41</sup>

An early discussion of the practice is to be found in the *Maktūbāt-i Sadī*, a collection of a hundred epistles on specific subjects, which the Indian Naqšbandī Šaraf al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Manīrī (d. 1380) addressed to his disciple Qāḍī Šams al-Dīn in 1346. Al-Manīrī compares the *šayḥ*'s heart to a mirror through which the disciple is enabled to perceive God:

The second kind of inner knowledge reaches the heart of a righteous individual through the agency of a prophet or the breast of a disciple, or through the agency of a spiritual master. This is the meaning of the Tradition: "The Sheikh in his group is like the prophet in his community".<sup>42</sup> This means that just as righteous men see God in the mirror of the souls of the prophets, so too disciples see God in the mirror of the hearts of their spiritual master.<sup>43</sup> In other words, they recognize and know; that is what "seeing" means! And those things found in the writings of the sheikhs are in the same tenor, namely, that the disciple sees God in the heart of his spiritual master. Of course, that seeing is of the type already mentioned; it does not refer to seeing with one's bodily eyes!<sup>44</sup>

A particular technique connected with *nisba*, a term interchangeable with *tawaḡḡuh*, or "the effect of the relationship between master and

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<sup>40</sup> The modalities of this transmission by the *rūḥāniyyāt*, who communicate amongst themselves in the realm of the spirit, are explained by 'Abd al-Ġani al-Nābulusī (1641-1731) in his commentary on the Naqšbandī way, *Miftāḥ al-ma'īyya*, 58–60 (above n. 37).

<sup>41</sup> Al-Kāšifī, *Rašāḥāt*, 93. The doctrinal justification of such chronological incongruities is discussed by 'Abd al-Maḡīd al-Ḥānī (ob. 1862), *Al-Ḥadā'iq al-wardiyya* (Damascus: Ġāmi' al-darwišiyya, 1306H [1890]), 9. On the 'uwaysi-s, see Ahmad Husaini, "Uways al-Qarani and the 'Uwaysi Sufis," *Muslim World* 57 (1967), 103–113, as well as al-Sanūsī, *al-Salsabil al-mu'īn*, (see below n. 50), 49–55 who provides several examples of post-mortem manifestations of *šayḥ*-s.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūfī, *Ġāmi' al-'aḥādīṭ*, IV, part 2, (Cairo: Maktabat Ḥiṭāb, 1984), no 13420.

<sup>43</sup> Compare this belief to the similar notion taught by R. Solomon Al-Qabez and R. Moses Cordovero, below, n. 83.

<sup>44</sup> *Letters of a Sufi Master*, transl. by Paul Jackson (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 222, n° 55.

disciple”, was introduced by ‘Alā’ l-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (d. 1399), a disciple of Bahā’ l-Dīn:

Whoever desires to ply this Path must first represent (*yuhḍir*) in his mind the image (*sūra*) of the *ṣayḥ* from whom he received the “connection” (*nisba*) until he is overcome with the effect of insensitivity. He must persevere in this connection whereupon, with this form in his imagination i.e. the mirror of the Absolute Spirit, he must direct his concentration towards the “nucleus (litt. ‘point’) of his heart” (*nuqṭat al-qalb*)<sup>45</sup> while surrendering his soul to [the effect] of this connection. The more the latter waxes strong, the more his awareness of this world decreases.<sup>46</sup>

A specific aspect of the Naqṣbandiyya is the silent performance of *dīkr*, hence the importance of mental communion between master and disciple. An early description of the latter as a means of imparting *dīkr* is given by ‘Aṭṭār’s pupil Sa’d al-Dīn al-Kāšgārī (d. 1462), who had introduced the order into Herat:

A means of teaching *dīkr* is through the master’s first repeating in his heart “there is no god save Allah” (Qur. 47, 19). The disciple will then represent [it/him] in his own heart, while positioning it opposite (*muqābala*) the heart of his master. He will then shut his eyes, close his lips, let his tongue cleave to his palate, grit his teeth, control his breathing, and begin fervently his glorification in harmony with his master, mentally not verbally. He is not to retake his breath until he has completed thrice the formula in a single expiration so that the sweetness of the evocation reaches his heart.<sup>47</sup>

A far more elaborate description is provided by the Syrian theologian and mystic ‘Abd al-Ġanī al-Nābulusī (1641-1731), by whose time this ritual had become more or less stereotyped. Insistence is laid on the preliminary state of “annihilation”:

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<sup>45</sup> This denomination, also known as the “heart’s kernel” (*al-qalb al-ṣanawbarī*), penetrated into Qabbalistic terminology as *neqūdat ha-leḥ*, or the “nucleus of the soul”. For a more technical meaning referring to the *sefirah malkūt*, see the developments by Israel Dōb Ber of Wilednik (ob. 1850), *She’erūt Yisrā’el* (Königsberg, 1877), ch. 1, *ša’ar hitqaššerūt la-zaddiqīm*, 8a. A 19<sup>th</sup> century Turkish Naqṣbandī, Muḥammad Bahā’uddīn says that the novice’s heart is comparable to a “branch of light”, whereas that of the *ṣayḥ* is the “root (*aṣliyya*) of light”. See Meier, *Zwei Abhandlungen*, 128. See also al-Dawsarī, *Kitāb al-raḥma* (below, n.50), 267-268.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Kāšifī, *Raṣaḥāt*, 135.

<sup>47</sup> *Idem*, 60. Interestingly, the same source (p. 137) specifies in the name of Bahā’ l-Dīn al-Naqṣbandī that breathing control was a technique of the Hindu Yogis.

O aspirant (*murīd*) you should retain the image you obtained and fix it in your imagination (*ḥiyāl*) with continuous concentration. You should then proceed with it to the kernel of your heart (*al-qalb al-ṣanawbarī*) within your breast until, by dint of concentration (*tawaḡḡuh*), you reach the state of “absence” in relation to the intellect and senses, and “annihilation” in relation to the realm of the soul,<sup>48</sup> to the point where neither intellect, nor sensation nor soul no longer subsist in you. The Ultimate Reality will then appear to you in a theophany (*taḡallī*) in a state of absolute transcendence (*tanzīh*). However, if your ascension (*taraqqī*) is interrupted, you should [...] place the image of the *ṣayḥ* in whose company you are wayfaring towards Allah upon your right shoulder, for that is the side of the soul, the side upon which the disruption occurred. Thereafter, you will draw from your right shoulder to your heart, situated on the left side, a line i.e. a manifest spiritual energy, extending from your soul to your heart. Then, along this extended line transfer the *ṣayḥ* from your right shoulder to your heart in which the *ṣayḥ* is to be fixed. The purpose of this act is to attain the state of absence and annihilation as a result of the concentration provided by the energy of your *ṣayḥ*’s *rūḥāniyya*, which your soul has accompanied until it reached your heart. Thereupon the sun of the heart will be eclipsed (*kuwwirat*) so as to unite with the moon of the soul. At that instant, the earth of your nature and the heavens of your intellect will be transported to your quest’s goal. Thereupon, you will drink of the pool of your own *rūḥāniyya* and be transfigured in the cycle of vision.<sup>49</sup>

In his *Kitāb al-raḥma al-hābiṭa fī ḍikr ism al-dāt war-rābiṭa*, written about a century later in 1821, the Naqṣbandī master Ḥusayn al-Dawsarī provides a summary of the order’s doctrine.<sup>50</sup> He devotes several pages to the subject of the *rābiṭa* based on the teachings of Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 1309), ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ša‘rānī (d. 1565), Tāḡ al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī and Ibrāhīm al-Mallā al-Iḥsā’ī. The following account by Tāḡ al-Dīn of the mental translocation of the *ṣayḥ*’s image as an expedient

<sup>48</sup> This is the equivalent of the state of *biṭṭūl* or self-annihilation occurring in ḥasidic texts. See below, n. 99.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Nābulusī, *Miftāḥ al-ma‘iyya*, 94–95. It is noteworthy that al-Nābulusī establishes here a cognitive hierarchy entailing the “soul”, the “heart” and the “heart-root”. Elsewhere in the same work (p. 41), while discussing the disciple-master relationship, described as “symbolic impregnation” and “spiritual matrimony” (*tawālud ma‘nawī wa-nikāḥ ruḥānī*), he distinguishes between the body, the spirit, and the intellect, each of which has, metaphorically, a male-female relationship. Consider the similitude of these Arabic terms with the Hebrew *‘ibūr* discussed below n. 93. See also end of n. 53.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Dawsarī, *Kitāb al-raḥma al-hābiṭa fī ḍikr ism al-dāt war-rābiṭa*, published on the margin of Aḥmad al-Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, vol. I (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, [n.d.]), 184–280.

preliminary to the state of absence and annihilation is almost identical to that of al- Nābulusī:

[The *rābiṭa*] consists in establishing a bond with a master who has already attained the mystic state of vision (*mušāhada*) and has realized [the state] of essential manifestation [...]. You should mentally visualize his image, thereafter concentrating (*tatawaḡḡah*) upon the kernel of your heart to the point of reaching the state of absence and annihilation (*ḡayba wal-fanā*) in relation to your self. If your ascension is interrupted, then proceed to represent in your imagination your *ṣayḥ*'s image above your right shoulder. Next, imagine that a line extends from your shoulder in the direction of your heart by means of which you will transfer the *ṣayḥ* into your heart. Thereupon, he will enable you to attain the state of absence and annihilation.<sup>51</sup>

‘Abd al-Maḡīd Muḥammad al-Ḥānī (1798-1862), the son of the chief Naqṣbandī *ṣayḥ* in Damascus and a friend of the Emīr ‘Abd al-Qādir, explains in his *Sa‘āda al-abadiyya* that the state brought on by the *rābiṭa* is not a permanent one but must be repeatedly renewed until the state of “absence” (*ḡayba*) is reached. We presume that the latter is also transient. Although this is a relatively late, popular manual, it reflects the doctrines of previous centuries:

Know my fellow believer that *rābiṭa* designates the binding of the heart with the perfect *ṣayḥ* and memorizing his form (*ṣūra*) in one’s imagination

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<sup>51</sup> *Kitāb al-raḥma*, 267-268. An interesting witness to the continuance of these mental gymnastics right down to pre-modern times is provided by the *Salsabīl al-mu‘īn fi l-tarā‘iq al-arba‘īn* (“The Flowing Stream relating to the Forty Paths”, printed on the margin of his *al-Masā’il al-‘aṣar* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-ma‘āhid, 1353H [1935]), composed in 1843 by Muḥammad al-Sanūsī (1787–1859), himself the founder of a Sufī order. This work describes the various *ḏikr* modalities as practiced by the forty principal Sufī brotherhoods. His description of the Naqṣbandī practice confirms what has been adduced above:

Attachment to the *ṣayḥ* is only useful to the individual who is possessed of a subtle nature. In order to reach him, it behoves the adept to mentally visualize his *ṣayḥ*, placing his image above his right shoulder. From here to his heart, a line should be traced along which the *ṣayḥ* will penetrate into his heart. He should persist in this meditation until such time as he achieves ecstasy through the *ṣayḥ* (al-Sanūsī, *al-Salsabīl al-mu‘īn*, 117).

It is noteworthy that the visualization cult did not enjoy unanimity among Sufīs. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it gave rise to a lively debate between the Indian Naqṣbandī Šāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (1746–1824) and the Sufī saint Aḥmad Šahīd al-Barilwī (1786–1831). See the article “Nakshbandiyya,” *EI*<sup>2</sup> VII, 939 [K. Nizami].

(*ḥayāl*), even though he be absent or deceased. This can be achieved in various ways but the easiest is for the devotee to represent (*yataṣawwar*) the image of his perfect *ṣayḥ* before his eyes. Thereafter, he will concentrate (*yatawaḡḡah*) on the [*ṣayḥ*'s] subtle spirit (*rūḥāniyya*) within this image, continuing to concentrate with his total being until he reaches the state of “absence” (*ḡayba*) or spiritual rapture (*ḡadba*). Upon obtaining one of these two states, he should relinquish the *rābiṭa* and indulge in the phenomenon brought on by rapture or the state of absence. Each time this state ceases, he should resume the *rābiṭa* until the state resumes. He should pursue the *rābiṭa* in this manner until, absorbed within the image of the *ṣayḥ*, he becomes oblivious of his own self and his attributes.<sup>52</sup> At that moment he will perceive the *rūḥāniyya* of the *ṣayḥ* with his perfections in the form of his own soul, for perfections do not quit the *rūḥāniyya* [after death]. The *ṣayḥ*'s *rūḥāniyya* will subsequently uplift him until he attains Allah, even though he be in the East and his *ṣayḥ* in the West.<sup>53</sup>

### Post-mortem practices

As already mentioned, Naqṣbandis practiced *tawaḡḡuh* even after the demise of their *ṣayḥ*, performing its rituals at his tomb in an attempt to connect with his *rūḥāniyya*. The Sufī maintains that the latter remains attached to his gravesite insofar as the body of a saint, according to popular belief, remains intact in the tomb and never perishes.<sup>54</sup> Alternatively, the *rūḥāniyya* inhabits places associated with episodes of the earthly existence of the saint. Communion with the *ṣayḥ*'s image is

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<sup>52</sup> See note 48.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Abd al-Maḡīd b. Muḥammad al-Ḥānī, *Kitāb as-sa‘āda al-abadiyya fī mā ḡā‘a bih al-naqṣbandiyya*, (Istanbul: Baytan Kitabe)(vi, 1979), 22–23. Al-Ḥānī specifies that from his time forth the *rābiṭa* can only be realized through the image of *ṣayḥ* Hālid. Cf. Meier, *Zwei Abhandlungen*, 120, 129–130, and 143. Compare this with the description given by the Kubrawī master Nūr al-Dīn Isfarāyīnī (1242–1317), *Le Révélateur des mystères*, 52, who also speaks of the disciple’s substitution by the master. See also Hermann J. Landholt, *Correspondance spirituelle* (Paris-Teheran: Maisonneuve, 1972), 19. We argue below that this mental substitution of the self by the *ṣayḥ* is tantamount to “impregnation” (*‘ibbūr*) referred to in Jewish mysticism.

<sup>54</sup> Thus in his *Kaṣf al-nūr ‘an aṣḥāb al-qubūr* (Cairo, 2007), p. 24, al-Nābuluṣī specifies that the *rūḥāniyya* of the deceased *ṣayḥ* remains attached (*muttaṣila*) to his body in the grave. It should be pointed out in passing that this belief is shared by Judaism as is attested by numerous hagiographical legends. See Elias Gibb, *History of Ottoman Poetry I* (London: E.J. Brill, 1900), 180, n. 2 and F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the sultans*, I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), vol. 1, 256–257.

supposed to induce blessedness (*baraka*),<sup>55</sup> and lead to ecstasy (*wağd*) and the spiritual states of annihilation (*fanā'*) or illumination. It is also possible to draw from the *ṣayh's rūḥāniyya* knowledge, inspiration, spiritual assistance or replies to questions. The ritual intended to induce this communion is described in detail by the above mentioned 'Abd al-Mağīd b. Muḥammad al-Ḥānī:

If the Sufi desires to visit the saint's grave in order to request assistance from his holy *rūḥāniyya*, it is first necessary to salute its occupant. Thereafter, he should stand near his feet at the extreme right of the tomb. Placing his right hand upon his left above his navel, and inclining his head upon his chest, he should recite once the opening Surah [I] of the Qur'ān, followed by an eleven-fold repetition of the Surah of Unity [CXII], and then a single recital of the Throne verse [II, 255].<sup>56</sup> After repenting of his sins, he should sit beside the saint and detach his soul from absolutely all, transforming it into a clean tablet. Thereupon, he will visualize the *rūḥāniyya* of the saint as a light devoid of physical phenomena. He will maintain this light in his heart until he reaches an appropriate degree of illumination or a state of spiritual rapture (*hāl*).<sup>57</sup>

Naqšbandī hagiographies relate numerous tales about the “unveilings” performed at tombs (*kašf al-qubūr*), which remind one of Luryanic legends concerning mystical excursions (*gerūšim*) to cemeteries in the company of the master in order to commune with the dead.<sup>58</sup> One of the

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<sup>55</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān Chistī (ob. 1683) affirmed that he received the assistance of the *rūḥāniyya* of Šāh Madār (ob. 1436), a Jewish Sufi of Aleppan origin, in compiling the biography of this saint, *Mir'āt-i madārī*, composed at his tomb in Makanpūr.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Miftah al-ma'iyya*, 188.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Ḥānī, *Kitāb as-sa'āda*, 27. An even more precise account of the ritual observed by gravesides can be found in Aḥmad al-Gümüşhānlī, *Ġāmi' al-'uṣūl fī l-awliyā'* (Cairo, 1325H [1910]), 289–291 (written in 1859). An interesting detail: the pilgrim approaches the tomb with seven paces, reciting with each pace the *fātiḥa*, binding (*yurbiṭu*) his heart to that of the tomb's occupant, then, standing at his feet, would visualize the image of his own *ṣayh*, whom he uses as intercessor (*ṣafi'*) in order to communicate with the deceased saint. Sometimes a sevenfold circumambulation is carried out, which is similarly attested in Jewish circles. See my article “Le symbolisme du rite de la circumambulation dans le judaïsme et l'islam,” *RHR* 213 (1996), 172, n. 30, to which can be added Yosef Ḥayyim, *Birkhat 'Omer* (Jerusalem, 1981), 371–372, n° 520. Certain graveside practices in Judaism go way back to Talmudic times. See *infra* n. 88.

<sup>58</sup> For example, this narrative by *Ṣayh* Muḥammad Murād, in the margin of al-Kāšifī, *Rašāḥāt 'ayn al-ḥayāt*, (Cairo, 1307H [1889]), 60, concerning the spiritual training afforded by a deceased *ṣayh* to Mirzā Ġān Ġānān: “For six years after the

first masters of the Naqšbandī chain defines visitation of tombs in the following passage, the second half of which resembles a Qabbalistic tale:

‘Ubayd Allah al-Ḥarār (d. 1490) said that spiritual unveilings (*kašf*) at a tomb consist in mentally visualizing a semblance corresponding to the subtle image (*miṭālī*) of its occupant. Upon being gratified with a revelation, the [disciple] perceives the *šayḥ* by means of his internal vision. However, since the evil spirits possess the capacity of adopting diverse forms, the great [masters] amongst the Naqšbandis had the habit of thoroughly scrutinizing [the issue of] such unveilings. This is how they would proceed when visiting tombs in order to examine their state: upon approaching the tomb of an important individual, they divested themselves of every state and spiritual virtue, and while seated, they awaited an unveiling effected through spiritual communion. According to the nature of this communion, they could gauge the spiritual level of the tomb’s occupant.

Thereafter, he elucidates the meaning of this assertion by providing an example:

One day, our master, Niẓām al-Dīn Ḥāmūš having announced to us: “Let us visit today the cemetery of Šāš”, I joined him in order to serve him. After being briefly seated by a tomb, he arose in a state of great emotion, declaring: “The occupant of this tomb possessed the state of spiritual rapture (*ğadba*)”. The tomb was actually found to be that of Ḥwāja Ibrāhīm Kīmyākīr, in his time one of God’s lovers.<sup>59</sup>

Post-mortem communion with the souls of departed *šayḥs* was by no means the monopoly of the Naqšbandi order. In his *Fawā’ih al-ğamāl*, Nağm al-Dīn Kubrā (ob. 1220) employs the term *rābiṭa* to explain how, alone in his retreat (*ḥalwa*), he was able to question his deceased *šayḥ* and receive his reply.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, in his *Ğawāhir*, the Egyptian Sufi

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death of his master, [Ğanān] drew from the lights of his tomb until, thanks to the guidance of the spirit (*ruḥāniyya*)[of the *šayḥ*], his spiritual state considerably improved [...]. Once he beheld his master in a dream telling him: “the true disciple is to spend his ephemeral life in quest of the infinite and the benefits accruing from [the visitation to] tombs.” On the phenomenon of *gerūsīn*, see *infra*, n. 95.

<sup>59</sup> Al-Kāšifi, *Rašāḥāt*, 337.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Fritz Meier, *Die Fawā’ih al-Ğamāl* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1957), 15. Nağm al-Dīn Kubrā’s spiritual disciple ‘Alā’ l-Dawla al-Samnānī (d. 1336) reports that, confronted with the impossibility of seeing his deceased master in human form, he succeeded in obtaining telepathic explanations of his personal visions by turning to his master’s spiritual entity (*ruḥāniyya*). See *Fawā’ih al-Ğamāl*, §36.

Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī (1235–1277), founder of the Burhāniyya brotherhood, promised his disciples, that he would come to them, presumably after death, if they practiced visualization, as expressed in the following testament:

Oh my children, if your alliance with me is sincere, I will always be near to you. If you observe my vow, accomplish my testament and obey my word, no matter if you are to be found in the East and I in the West, you will perceive the image (*ṣabah*) of my person. Whatever difficulty you experience in your soul, ask of God a favourable outcome, then turn aside your face, close your physical vision and open the vision of your heart. You will then see me clearly and you will ask my counsel concerning all your affairs. Whatever the reply, accept it and comply. Moreover, this property is not exclusively mine, but is vouchsafed to any master to whom you have pledged a sincere love.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, the following passage from the *Risāla al-dahabiyya fī tarīq mašā'ih al-naqšbandiyya* by Ibrāhīm b. 'Umar al-Mallā al-Iḥsā'ī (Arabia, 19<sup>th</sup> c.?), describes how the image of the envisioned *šayḥ* is eventually effaced, giving way to a sensation of the presence of the Ultimate Reality:

If distance prevents the devotee from attending his *šayḥ*, he should conjure up his person in his imagination and consider that he is in his presence and company, contemplating him. Then, while maintaining this image in his mind, he will become entirely effaced in the reality of the *šayḥ*. Thereupon, he will proceed from the reality of the *šayḥ* towards that of God. He will persevere in this pursuit, rehearsing it several times until the divine light shines upon the subtle part [of his soul] with such brilliance that it dispels the veil of phenomenal mysteries. Thereupon, he will be within God and no other, not even within himself.<sup>62</sup>

## Ritual Visualization in Jewish Mysticism

### The Scriptural basis

It is now time to compare the techniques so far discussed with similar ones present in Jewish mysticism that may have been modelled on Muslim

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<sup>61</sup> Quoted by al-Dawsarī, *Kitāb al-rahma*, 264. See Meier, *Zwei Abhandlungen*, 130.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted by al-Dawsarī, *op. cit.*, 268. Here also reference is to the “substitution of the disciple’s spiritual entity (*ruhāniyya*) with that of the *šayḥ* and ultimately that of the Absolute Master”. See *supra*, n. 51.

practices. Even short of uncovering any direct influence, such comparisons necessarily throw light on the phenomena under investigation and, as will be observed, contribute to their understanding.

Despite their brevity, the foregoing Sufi texts suffice to demonstrate the close affinity of the Muslim and Jewish techniques of visualization, not only from the theoretical and practical point of view, but also from the point of view of their respective terminology. Firstly, if only from a linguistic angle, the Arabic for visualization *taṣawwūr* is mirrored by the cognate Hebrew *ziyyūr* and its reflexive derivatives, such as *hiṣṭayyerūt*. In medieval Hebrew, this term derives from the use of *taṣawwūr* in Arabic philosophical texts, and means to form a mental image or concept.<sup>63</sup> As for the alternative Hebrew term *histakelūt*, though commonly employed for “to look”, sight was never lost of its root *sekel* “intellect” in philosophical texts of a Neoplatonic bent who lent it a cognitive meaning designating an intellectual operation or conceptualization.

Furthermore, the *rābiṭa* will be seen to constitute a remarkable parallel to the Hebrew notion of *hitqaššerūt ba-zaddīq* (“the bond with the saint”),<sup>64</sup> in addition to the Arabic terms *rūḥāniyya* (“soul”), and *nuqṭat al-qalb* (“nucleus of the heart”) which also have their conceptual equivalents in the Hebrew *rūḥāniyyūt* and *neqūdat ha-leḥ*.

As far as we know, ritual visualization of the mentor is first referred to in Jewish sources by 16<sup>th</sup> century commentators on the *Zohar* who were active in the Land of Israel. According to these authors, its practice is already alluded to in a Zoharic explanation of two particular biblical passages that illustrate respectively a master-disciple and a father-son relationship. The first describes the final moments the prophet Elisha spent with his master Elijah before the latter was transported to heaven, as related in the book of Kings. As is known, in the mystical tradition, Elijah is the divulger of hidden knowledge.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See Fabrizio Lelli, “Osservazioni sull’uso del termine *siyyur* in alcuni trattati cabbalistic dell’Italia rinascimentale,” *Materia giudaica* 15–16 (2011), 331–338.

<sup>64</sup> One also finds the terms *debēqūt* (“cleaving”) and *hithabberūt* (“connecting”), but these can have a more general connotation of “discipleship”.

<sup>65</sup> It is noteworthy that in Sufism too Ḥiḍr, Elijah’s Koranic counterpart, is the dispenser of esoteric knowledge. See Muḥammad Pārsā Buḥārī (d. 1420), an outstanding disciple of Bahā’ al-ḍīn Naqšbandī, in the latter’s *Risāla qudsiyya*, ed. Aḥmad Ṭāhirī-i ‘Irāqī (Teheran: Kitāb-khanah-i Ṭahūrī, 1354H [1975], 52: “God’s Elect have a share in innate knowledge which proceeds from the esoteric wisdom of Ḥiḍr and they benefit from the internal support of his spiritual entity (*rūḥāniyya*)[...] obtained intuitively and without the intermediary of a human (master).”

Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?”

“Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,” Elisha replied.

“You have asked a difficult thing,” said Elijah, “yet if you *see* me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not.” (2 Kings, 2:9)

The *Zohar* proposes an intriguing interpretation of this passage in which the main constituents of the later ritual of visualization already seem to be present. These include the transmission of esoteric knowledge through a visionary technique connecting the disciple to the master’s “root-soul”:

If you can comprehend the root-soul that I bequeath to you at the hour I am taken from you, it will be so for you. Indeed, if [Elisha] were to wholly contemplate the root-soul upon beholding Elijah, then he would properly grasp it (*deḥēqūta*).<sup>66</sup> Verily, whosoever reflects upon his master’s teaching and envisions him through that knowledge, becomes liable to an abundant increase of that spirit.<sup>67</sup>

The *Zohar* then proceeds to suggestively draw a parallel between the Elijah episode and the story of Joseph, explaining that Joseph’s particular aptitude at interpreting dreams was due to his recalling to mind his father’s face:

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<sup>66</sup> Abraham Azulay (d. Hebron, 1643), discussing this passage in his *Zōharey ḥammāh* (Venice, 1655), fol. 195a, which is an abridgement of the *Zohar* commentary by Cordovero’s disciple Abraham Galante (active in Safed ca. 1550), explains: “If you desire to engage in any wisdom in your study chamber and are capable of meditating that issue with as much “cleaving” (*deḥēqūt*) as that you experienced at the time I was taken from you, and you are able to perceive me and visualize me (*le-zayyer*) in the eye of your intelligence the state I occupied at that moment, this will be possible [...] i.e. if [Elisha] could envision [Elijah] as he was at the moment of his departure from him when he shed his splendour upon him [...] then his soul and spirit would truly cleave (*mitdabbeq*) to him and he would be capable of accomplishing whatever request.”

<sup>67</sup> *Zohar* I (Vilnius: Brothers Romm, 1895), fols. 191b–192a. This idea is supposed to be present in the Talmudic statement: ‘Rabbi declared: The only reason why I am keener than my colleagues is that I saw the back of R. Meir; however, had I had a front view of him I would have been keener still, for it is written in Scripture: “But thine eyes shall see thy teacher” (Is. 30, 20)’ (BT *‘Erubīn*, fol. 13b). According to Rašī, from his seat at the academy when he studied under R. Meir, Rabbī had a back view of him.

Thus through the spirit of wisdom, Joseph beheld his father's countenance (*diyōqan*) in all the actions he undertook. On this account, his deeds were successful and he gained a supplementary spirit<sup>68</sup> through a higher light.<sup>69</sup>

## The Eastern Qabbalists

Though still rather obscure, the *Zohar's* insight seems to suggest that a particular form of visualization of a hallowed countenance can bring about an increase in supernal knowledge. These essentials enabled the Safed Qabbalist R. Moses Cordovero (1522-1570) to read into the context of the episode additional features which, in our opinion, were probably observed by him in his Sufi environment. In his commentary on this passage, Cordovero emphasizes the fact that transmission of knowledge can only take place if the disciple *visualizes* his master. Visualization has a theurgical function empowering the devotee, through his imaginative faculty, to ascend to a higher ontological level and thence to attract downwards the supernal efflux. To this Cordovero then significantly introduces two novel elements, *viz.* concentration (*kawwānāh*), and "union with the master's soul" (*hitqaššerūt*):<sup>70</sup>

At the moment Elijah infused Elisha with his spirit, the latter had to remain in a state of "cleaving" with Elijah in order to receive the entire extent of the *spirit* so that no part of it would be lost during its transfer from master to disciple. Therefore, Elisha needed to bind his thought to [to his master]

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<sup>68</sup> The "supplementary spirit" or "double portion" may be the origin of what is later called "impregnation".

<sup>69</sup> *Zohar* I, fol. 192a. Incidentally, Elisha's double portion has left an echo in the liturgy. In a poem attributed to El'azar Qalir (7<sup>th</sup> c.; I. Davidson, *Thesaurus*, I, 86 no 1857 it is stated: "For the sake of his having served his master truthfully, he received a double portion of his spirit".

<sup>70</sup> It should be noted that an example of ritual visualization is also to be found in pre-Qabbalistic literature. While discussing in his *Kifāyat al-'ābidīn* (ed. Nissim Dana (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1989), 96) the appropriate posture to be adopted when seated in the synagogue, Abraham Maimonides (d. 1237) comments upon the words of *Tosefta Megillāh* 4, 21 to the effect that, contrary to the congregants who face the Holy Ark during prayer, the community elders face the congregants with their back to the Ark "so that the congregation be instilled with their fear. It is possible that the elders referred to were those of the generation of the Tannaim, whose faces, when envisioned by the congregation, entailed a blessing and instilled them with increased concentration. However, none in our generation occupies their [spiritual] rank." The influence of Muslim practice of ritual visualization may be discerned here, given Abraham Maimonides' leaning towards Sufism.

to the point where they became a single entity<sup>71</sup> in order to draw the spirit literally from within Elijah in accordance with its localisation within Elijah. Only then would he have the entire extent [...]. Just as his master had increased the flow from that knowledge through profound speculation (*'iyyūn*), so too the disciple can act likewise by meditating through his own energy the knowledge acquired from his master. He must conjure up the latter's image (*zūrāh*) and attach his *soul* (*nefeš*),<sup>72</sup> to that of [his master]. In this way, he can increase [this knowledge], since two elements are here combined. Firstly, knowledge, which in itself constitutes a spiritual cleaving (*debēqūt*),<sup>73</sup> and, secondly, the intellectual soul (*nešāmāh*). Now knowledge has proximity to *image/form* (*zūrāh*) and that transcendent reality (*mezī'ūt*). So, when the [disciple] meditates knowledge while binding himself through his thought to [his master's] image, he will actually be able, like his master, to arouse knowledge from its *source* (*maqōr*).<sup>74</sup> It will surge forth within him and increase in his *matter* a

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<sup>71</sup> As has been seen above, the Naqšbandīs too consider that the concentration (*tawaḡḡuh*) of the disciple's heart on that of the master leads to their unification (*ittiḥād*). See al-Kāšifī, *Raṣāḥāt*, 463–464. One cannot help perceiving in the expression employed here a distant echo of the formula, repeatedly quoted by the Muslim mystics, describing the union of the soul and intellect, originating in the *Theology of Aristotle* (ed. Friedrich Dieterici, *Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles*, (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1882), 21). For other occurrences of this expression, see Georges Vajda, *Recherches sur la philosophie et la kabbale dans la pensée juive du Moyen Age* (Paris-La Haye: Mouton, 1964), 26–28.

<sup>72</sup> Cordovero and later Jewish sources, like Sufi authors, establish a cognitive hierarchy in the stages of connection and transmission of knowledge between master and disciple, distinguishing between the psychological levels of the vital soul (*nefeš*), spirit (*ru'ah*) and intellectual soul (*nešāmāh*). Cf. *supra*, n. 49.

<sup>73</sup> The term is not intended here in the sense of “mystical communion” as outlined by Gershom Scholem in his article “Devekut, or Communion with God,” *Review of Religion* 14 (1950), 115–139, but rather the bond with the master, as is clear from the continuation of the passage.

<sup>74</sup> I believe that *mezī'ūt* here refers to the transcendent “root-soul”, which is synonymous with *diyōqan* (“image”, apparently from the Greek *eikōn*) as explained by Cordovero in his commentary on *Zohar, terūmāh, 'Or Yaqar* 9 (Jerusalem: Aḥzāt Yisrā'el, 1974), 22: “These ‘images’ do not refer to the souls themselves, for the latter adhere to the saints’ bodies during their terrestrial existence. They are, however, the transcendent reality (*mezī'ūt*) of the saint's soul, which remains on high when the latter descends below. That reality abides above and it is called ‘image’ (*diyōqan*)(cf. BT *Hullīn* 1b: *diyōqnō šel ma'alāh*), for this image performs all that the soul enacts below and shines forth according to the [soul's] deeds. It is like a root for the soul, for blessings are bestowed on the latter in accordance to the manner in which the root is infused.” Drawing from the root of the master's soul is also mentioned in Naqšbandī sources. See 'Abd al-Maḡīd al-Ḥānī, *al-Ḥadā'iq al-wardiyya*, 295: “[*rābiṭa*] involves the disciple's representing

supplementary flow of knowledge similar to his master. This phenomenon was an acquired technique among the permanent practitioners of spiritual retreat (*mitbōdedūt*),<sup>75</sup> and among the companions of R. Šim'ōn bar Yoḥay, by reason of their extreme holiness, as explained by R. Abba<sup>76</sup> in the pericope *mishpaṭim*.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, when this master visualized the image of R. Šim'ōn bar Yoḥay in the course of his reflexion, he was vouchsafed the solution to certain halachic problems that had preoccupied him. This phenomenon proceeds from the communion of the two souls. Now, imagination cannot be apprehended in the soul except through the form/image impressed upon physical matter. This is the reason why one must meditate upon form and from the latter arouse both soul and knowledge. Upon cleaving to the latter, he will perceive that of which he was previously incapable through an internal flow of knowledge in the manner in which it had flowed upon his master.<sup>78</sup>

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(*istiḥḍar*) the image (*šūra*) of his perfect *šayḥ* [...] and drawing from the *source* of his spiritual form (*rūḥāniyya*) [...] with the effect of achieving the initiate's ascension towards the degrees of perfection.”

<sup>75</sup> On the implications of this term, see our studies “La ‘hitbōdedūt’ chez les premiers Qabbalistes en Orient et chez les Soufis,” in *Prière, mystique et judaïsme*, ed. Roland Goetschel (Paris: PUF, 1987), 133–157 and “La Pratique de la retraite spirituelle (*khalwa*) chez les judéo-soufis d’Égypte,” in *Les mystiques juives, chrétiennes et musulmanes dans l’Égypte médiévale*, eds. Giuseppe Cecere, Mireille Loubet and Samuela Pagani (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2013), 211–252. One can indeed detect here direct Sufi influence, for, as was seen above, it was during the spiritual retreat (*ḥalwa*) that the Sufis would resort to visualization of their *šayḥ*. In addition, Cordovero seems to imply that the companions of R. Šim'ōn bar Yoḥay, the traditional author of the *Zohar*, were practitioners of *hitbōdedūt*, the equivalent of the Sufic *ḥalwa*.

<sup>76</sup> A late 3<sup>rd</sup> century Amora who lived in the Holy Land.

<sup>77</sup> *Zohar*, II, fol. 123b. The passage referred to is in the *Idra de-Maškana*, where R. Abba receives an esoteric teaching from R. Šim'ōn perceived in a dream. “I cried because I was not judged worthy to see him a second time [in a dream]. Even so, I remained constantly attached (*itqaššarna*) to [R. Šim'ōn], for when a teaching becomes clear to me, I perceive his countenance before me. Happy is the portion of the saints in this world and the next!”

<sup>78</sup> Moses Cordovero, *’Or yāqār*, VI, § 8, fol. 91a–b. For a ḥasidic exposition of the Elijah episode, see Naḥman of Braslav, *Liqqūṭey muḥaran*, I (Brooklyn: Gross Bros., 1980), § 66, fol. 94a–97b, and Zvi Elimelekh Shapira of Dinow (1783–1841), *Igra de-pirqa* (Jerusalem, 1973), fol. 3d, § 13: “When one experiences difficulty in grasping a Torah concept or entertains doubts about a desired mode of true worship or is pursued by [negative] thoughts, let him visualize before him the form of his teacher i.e. a mental image of his teacher’s rational spirit (*da’at*) represented before him, enveloping him with his intellect. Thereupon, his teacher’s rational spirit will infuse him even though his teacher had already ascended to Heaven. This is the meaning of Elijah’s words to Elisha ‘if

A second passage appearing in Cordovero's *Ši'ūr qōmāh*, which discusses the fact that the members of the Sanhedrin were disposed in a semi-circle so that each could have a full view of his peers, he provides a fascinating interpretation of TJ *'Erūbīn*, ch. 5:1, fol. 31a, which comes close to what we have seen concerning the *šayh* as Perfect Man (*supra*, n. 25). Cordovero evokes for the first time the notion of 'collective visualization' or the 'reciprocal reflexion of souls' whose *locus probans* he adduces from the duty enjoined by the Talmud for a disciple "to pay respects to his teacher on festivals" (*BT Sukkāh*, 27b). He understands the expression "to pay respects" (*le-haQBīL peney rabbō*) in the literal sense of "receiving the face of one's master" and interprets it to mean the inclusion of the disciple in his master's eyes. It is not impossible that Cordovero had in mind the Arabic term from a cognate Semitic root *muQāBaLa* ("face to face"), which, as we have seen previously, is synonymous in Sufi texts with the technique of *tawaḡḡuh*.<sup>79</sup>

Whosoever receives the face of his master, it were as if he receives the face of the Divine presence". He explains: "Since the saint's soul clings (*deḥēqūt*) firmly to its supernal root and since all his companions are encompassed in his mind, due to his abundant affection, thus through the [saint's] mediacy all are envisioned before the face of the Lord, since the [saint] is envisioned by [God] and the [companions] are envisioned by him. Hence all are envisioned by each and every one. It is in this sense that Elijah's claim is to be understood: "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stood" (I Kings 17, 1).<sup>80</sup> It refers to [Elijah's] standing before his master

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you behold me taken from you'. For after his demise the *zaddīq* ascends from one world to the next until he reaches the source whence his soul was hewn [...] for his soul-root does not quit the location of its source; only its residue (*rōšēm*) situated in the lower levels descends to this world to assist the righteous and instruct them in the mysteries of the Torah. [...] When he meditates on specific Divine names and evokes his teacher's name while envisioning his form, the residue of the latter's soul is aroused and transmits to him secrets of the Torah with the fullness of the rational spirit. This can also be practiced at the grave of his teacher." On the repetition of Divine names combined with the *rābiṭa* during meditation, see Meier, *Zwei Abhandlungen*, 192–198. The residual soul (*rōšēm*) is a synonym for *ruhāniyyūt*. On the latter in Qabbalistic usage, see *infra*, n. 89.

<sup>79</sup> See *supra*, n. 4. Cf. the words by al-Munīrī mentioned above n. 43: "so too disciples see God in the mirror of the hearts of their spiritual master", whereas according to Cordovero the disciple "is envisioned by God" through the intermediary of his own image being visualized in his master's mind.

<sup>80</sup> TJ adds: "whosoever receives the face of his teacher, it is as if he receives the face of the Divine Presence [...]. "And Elijah the prophet said, etc." and yet Elijah

Ahijah and, on account of the latter's attachment on high and [Elijah's] being envisioned (*meḏuyyar*) in his mind, it was as if he also actually stood before God. This is the mystery of the disciple's obligation to visit his master (lit. "to receive his master's countenance") on festivals (BT *Sukkāh*, 27b), for on festivals we are enjoined to "see the face of the Lord" (Exod. 23, 17). Now through his master's standing in worship before the "face of the Lord", and his communion, the [disciple] is envisioned in a sublime degree (*meḏi'ūt*) through the agency of his master's soul, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts from whose mouth they should seek the law (cf. Mal. 2, 7).<sup>81</sup>

R. Moses Cordovero develops the concept of the 'envisioning of the disciple in the master's mind' in a passage from his Torah commentary on Deut. 1, 35, printed together with 'Ōr *yāqār*, dealing with the spiritual benefit derived from beholding holy forms. In this passage, Cordovero elucidates the mystical dimension of visualization which leads to the imprint in the mind of the form in which intellect is apprehended. By visualizing a holy form in his mind, the individual can attain the perfection of his soul. In addition, the envisioning of the disciple in the mind of his master can cause him to be uplifted through the mediation of his master. Once again he quotes the Talmudic injunction requiring a disciple "to pay respects to his teacher on festivals", which, as we have seen, he takes in a literal sense close to the Sufi notion of *muqābala*:<sup>82</sup>

Now when the individual conjures up in his mind a holy form, the latter consummates his intellect, as R. Abba claimed in the pericope *mišpāṭim*,<sup>83</sup> that through the visualization of R. Šim'ōn's image, he was able to grasp sublime knowledge. This is the meaning of the verse: "Thine own eyes shall behold thy teacher" (Is. 30, 20) [...].<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, through envisioning the image of a man superior to oneself, one is enabled to attain an exalted and sublime level. This is the reason why one is required to pay a visit to one's master on festivals (cf. BT *Sukkāh*, 27b), for in this way one's own person is visualized in the mind of one's master. This is the meaning of the Rabbis' interpretation of the verse: "As the Lord liveth,

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was still only a novice!" This is to teach us that all every time he stood before Ahijah the Shilonite, it was as if he stood before the Divine Presence!"

<sup>81</sup> R. Moses Cordovero, *Ši'ur qōmāh* ch. 85, fol. 86a. On Ahijah the Shilonite as Elijah's master and one of the seven universal mystical sages, see L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. VI, Philadelphia: JPSA, 1968, p. 305 and 317. See also R. Solomon Al-Qabiz, *Berūt ha-Lewī*, Lemberg, 1863, fol. 7a.

<sup>82</sup> See *supra*, n. 4.

<sup>83</sup> For the reference, see *supra*, n. 77.

<sup>84</sup> I.e. contemplative vision is a means of obtaining knowledge.

before whom I stood” (II Kings 5, 16) i.e. it refers to [Elisha’s] standing before Elijah.<sup>85</sup> As he stood before Elijah, his image was most certainly envisioned in the latter’s mind, and since Elijah was serving in the presence of his Maker, on account of his conjunction through prophecy, as a result, it was as if [Elisha] had also stood continuously before God.<sup>86</sup> There are numerous examples of this. This is also the reason, amongst others, for the commandment that “all thy males appear see the face of the Lord” (Deut. 16, 16). For, although Divine providence is ubiquitous, one cannot attain the spiritual detachment [necessary] to inscribe one’s image within the Divine presence as in the place of holiness when each male’s image and presence is envisioned (*yezayyer*) in the Divine presence there. This is the mystery of the [second part of the] verse: ‘and they shall not appear before the Lord empty’ (ib.).<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Note that this passage refers to the relationship of Elijah and Elisha, whereas the preceding extract referred to Elijah and Ahijah.

<sup>86</sup> A similar notion is already to be found in *Pirqey ḥākām* by R. Solomon Al-Qabeẓ (1605-1684), Cordevero’s teacher and brother-in-law, as shown by B. Zack, “The Doctrine of the visionary of Lublin,” in *Zaddīqim we-’anšey ma’aseh - mehqarīm be-ḥasīdūt Polīn* (Jerusalem, 1994), 227: “R. Solomon Al-Qabeẓ explains the reason of the commandment “Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord”(Ex. 23, 17) as the possibility given to the individual to become, as it were, immaterial, or separated from matter, and actually divine. Whenever an individual performs a religious act, such as pilgrimage, his image is inscribed and imprinted in the Divine intellect. According to him a unique unity is to be found in the Divine intellect which contains all forms and thus the pilgrim’s form can be included in this unity. Al-Qabeẓ’s claims that the possibility is afforded to ordinary people to attain the desired union through the intermediary of superior individuals. Ordinary individuals who listen to the teachings of the wise are granted the possibility of cleaving to them, whereas the wise cleave to their Maker” (in Hebrew).

<sup>87</sup> R. Moses Cordovero, *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, printed in *’Ōr yāqār*, XVI, 123-124. This passage is partially quoted by Abraham b. Mordechai Azulay, *Ḥesed le-Abrāhām, ma’ayan II, nahar* 33 (Amsterdam, 1685), fol. 18c. Born in Fez, Azulay (1570–1643) emigrated to the Holy Land in c.1673 after having studied the writings of Cordovero. He settled in Hebron, where he completed his study of Cordovero and Lurya’s teachings, and contributed to their dissemination. His *Ḥesed le-Abrāhām* is a sort of Qabbalistic anthology based primarily on *’Ōr yāqār*, and Cordovero’s *Commentary on the Pentateuch*. Unlike the latter, his *Ḥesed le-Abrāhām* was printed several times and was a channel through which Cordovero’s teachings reached the Hasidic masters. The above passage was likewise quoted by his descendant Ḥayyim Yosef Azulay (1724–1806), *Midbar qadmūt, Kitbey ha-Hida* (Jerusalem: Yahadūt, 1986), § *ziyyūr*, pp. 146–147, who adds: “Likewise Isaac Lurya (1534–1572) wrote that when a difficulty arises in the understanding of the Torah, one should conjure up the image of one’s teacher which will prove expedient in the understanding of the matter.” The context and

In the texts hitherto quoted this technique is evoked to clarify an event projected into the past. However, in his commentary on an important passage of the *Zohar*, which describes the rituals performed at a graveside in order to obtain the intercession of departed souls, Cordovero attests that this ritual was actually practiced in Spain. However, here again Sufi influences are perceptible.<sup>88</sup>

“I believe there is none more capable than us of alerting the dead of our sorrows” (*Zohar* III, fol. 70b). What skill is needed to go and weep and pray on a tomb? The meaning is that it is not on account of an individual

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doctrinal content of this passage are explained by B. Zack, ‘Erez-Israel in the doctrine of R. Moses Cordovero’, in: M. Hallamish and A. Ravitzky (Eds.), *Erez Israel in Medieval Jewish Thought*, Jerusalem, 1991, pp. 320-341, esp. pp. 336-338 (in Heb.). On Cordovero’s influence on Azulay, see Y. Tishby, ‘R. Abraham Azulay’s Relationship to the Qabbalah of Cordovero and Lurya’, *Sefunoth*, N.S. 16 (1980), pp. 191-203 (in Heb.).

<sup>88</sup> Perhaps Cordovero’s account is based on the testimony of R. Moses de Leon who declares in his *Miškan ha-’edūt* (Ms. Berlin, Or. 4<sup>o</sup>833, fol. 70a): “For even today we have the tradition from our holy sages, servants of the Most High, that upon the occurrence of any calamity we go to the cemetery, to the tombs of the wise and saintly, to implore and entreat them to ask mercy on our account before the Holy One blessed be He. The lower soul in the grave informs the spirit in the Garden of Eden, and the spirit informs the supernal soul.” The *Zohar* goes on to describe (III, fols. 70b-71b) the magical ceremonies using images performed by the pagans in cemeteries in order to enquire of the dead which it compares to Jewish practices. It is not impossible that the author of the *Zohar* was describing a cult that existed in Spain around his period. Indeed, communication with the dead is documented in Muslim Spain in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century in Ps.-al-Mağrīfī, *Ġāyat al-hakīm* which was translated into Hebrew and even Spanish in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. See David Pingree, ‘Between the Ghāya and Picatrix. I: The Spanish Version’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 44, (1981), p. 27. The “mouth” inserted in a tomb as a “communication door” is attested in the Muslim world. See F. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, I, Oxford, 1929, p. 251. An intriguing Talmudic passage (BT *Baba Meṣī’a*, fol. 107b) also shows that in ancient times certain esoteric practices were carried out at graves in Babylonia. Rab (d. 247), founder of the Sura academy, desirous to know how many people had met their death as a result of the “evil eye”, obtained an answer by performing a [mystical] act (*abad*) at tombs. Obviously drawing on ancient tradition, in his *Arūkh* (Pesaro, 1517), Nathan b. Yeḥiel of Rome (fl. 11<sup>th</sup> c.) s.v. *abad* (2) explains that: “he performed an act similar to an oniric inquiry. He was answered in his dream that 99 people out of 100 had perished as a result of the ‘evil eye’, and only one had met a natural death.” The other examples given there by Nathan show that this use of the verb *abad* has a mystical connotation. In his notes on the *Zohar*, G. Scholem makes the following interesting observation: ‘s notes on the Z

going to weep upon the tombs of the saints (*ẓaddīqīm*), that the soul [of the deceased] would be aroused. Indeed, the soul is not in the grave but it cleaves to the subtle form of a holy angel and divine *rūḥāniyyūt*<sup>89</sup> which had been enshrouded in the physical world. [From this subtle form] it was hewn and unto it the soul will revert [...].<sup>90</sup> Despite the fact that this phenomenon is physical, do not think that it occurs in cemeteries, in houses of study and worship, or in the wilderness as assumed by the vulgar and the ignorant. It is only perceived through the mystery of man's primordial garment (*lebūš*).<sup>91</sup> Hence this phenomenon is solely vouchsafed to those of pure intelligence whose spiritual soul has triumphed over matter and has subdued the corporeal faculties. Only then can they penetrate the veil, pass through the portal of the physical world and enter the realm of the souls. In

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<sup>89</sup> This term, which, I believe, is first met with in its present meaning in Cordovero's writings, is obviously borrowed from the Sufi technical term defined above n. 11. Although attested in pre-Qabbalistic Judeo-Arabic mystical literature, as we have seen above (notes 18-29), *rūḥāniyya* then had a different connotation. On the use of *rūḥānī* and *rūḥāniyyūt* in Jewish magical sources, see Moshe Idel, "The Study Program of R. Yohanan Alemanno," *Tarbiz* 48 (1979), 310–311, n. 69, 319–320 (in Hebrew). In early Qabbalistic texts the word more or less retains its magical meaning of a "supernal energy", as shown by Moshe Idel, "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of the Kabbalah in the Renaissance," in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Bernard D. Cooperman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 336–337, 353–357, and *Idem*, "Perceptions of Kabbalah in the Second Half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* I (1991), 55–114, especially 75, n. 87; 83–84, nos. 126–127; 87, n. 145; 91, n. 163; 95, n. 176 and 100, n. 198. Cordovero himself employs it with different shades of meaning, at times just as "spirituality" and "luminaries" (*Pardes rimmōnīm*, (Munkacs, 1906) ch. 11, §2) and the *rūḥāniyyūt ha-penīmī* of the *sefirōt* (ch. 32, §2), and, at others, as a "spiritual energy", such as the *rūḥāniyyūt* of letters, vowels and cantillation signs (*Pardes*, ch. 29, §5); or the *rūḥāniyyūt* produced by human breath (*Pardes*, ch. 32, §2). See also in this sense Idel, *art. cit.*, p. 96 where a reference is given to R. Dōb Ber Schneersohn's use of the term to designate the "spiritual forces" induced by vocal prayer. See also Moshe Idel, *Hasidism, between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany: SUNY, 1995), 156–157, 179–180 and index s.v. It is noteworthy that Ibn 'Arabī (*Futūḥāt*, I, pp. 342-343) also speaks of the *rūḥāniyya* of the letters which bring inspiration to the prophet.

<sup>90</sup> Thus the *rūḥāniyyūt* is here tantamount to the "residual spirit" (*rōšem*) or the "bodily breath" (*habla' de-garmā'*) mentioned in the *Zohar* (I, fol. 69a and III, fol. 222a), which Isaac Lurya, (*Mebō' še'arīm* [Jerusalem, 1988] ch. 2, §9) defines as: "an energy emanating from the vital soul, which hovers eternally over the mortal remains until the hour of resurrection".

<sup>91</sup> Concerning the 'primordial garment', see D. Cohen-Alloro, *The Secret of the Garmen* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1987), especially 68-75: 'The Garment as a Means of Mystical Perception'.

accordance to their degree of purity, they might hear [the souls] or even actually perceive them. [...] This is the mystery of ‘the binding (*qešer*) of one’s soul’, which is vouchsafed to one remaining in this world, capable of binding his soul to that of the saint while yet within the body. This takes place while he prostrates himself upon the saint’s tomb, attaching (*mitdabbeq*) his soul to the soul [of the saint] and conversing and communicating with it. Thereupon that soul arouses others [...]. This practice is still known. In Spain there were competent individuals who had knowledge of it. They would dig a hole in the grave at the spot where the deceased’s head was situated. Here, while they were offering a collective prayer, [one of them?] would attach his soul to that [of the deceased] in a state of extreme rapture (*hitbōdedūt*).<sup>92</sup>

It is noteworthy that prostration on the saint’s tomb in the course of connecting with his soul, in fact reproduces the “face to face” posture of the *muqābala*.

In a *responsum* concerning community prayer, Cordovero’s contemporary R. David Ibn Zimra (1479 Spain –1573 Safed). alludes quite incidentally to the bond with the master’s soul in the name of the “Books of Wisdom”. It is highly significant that Ibn Zimra designates the ‘heart’ as the instrument which creates the bond. He introduces a further novel element—that of impregnation (*‘ibbūr*), a term later employed by Lurya which may denote the fusion of the souls of master and disciple. This clearly reflects the influence of the Sufi theory of the *rābiṭa*, suggesting the possibility that the “Books of Wisdom” referred to may be a Muslim source. It will be recalled that though he was born in Spain, Ibn Zimra, also called Radbaz, grew up in Safed before spending many years in Egypt, where he led a mystical circle of which Isaac Lurya was an adherent:

When one gazes upon a person of whom one approves, full concentration is aroused within the soul. One’s mind is set at ease, the heart is content and a spirit then rests upon the individual in a manner analogous to that described in regard to prophecy. The books of [esoteric] wisdom further relate that when the individual directs his attention (*mitkawwen*) to his master and concentrates his heart upon him, his soul connects (*titqaššer*) with the master’s soul. Thereupon, the spiritual influx (*šefa’*) inherent in the master flows upon the disciple, endowing him with a supplementary soul. This phenomenon is known among the [mystics] as “the mystery of

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<sup>92</sup> *’Or yāqār* XIII on *Zohar* III, fol. 70b, pericope *’aharey mōt* §16, 64. This passage is quoted from Cordovero by Abraham Azulay, *’Or ḥammāh*, vol. 3 (Przemsyl, 1897), fol. 56b.

impregnation ('*ibbūr*')<sup>93</sup> while both are still living, as it is said: “thine own eyes will behold thy teacher” (Is. 30, 20), as it is written: “And I will come down and speak with thee there; and I will take of the spirit that is upon thee and put it upon them” (Num. 11, 17). Similarly, R. Judah the Prince claimed that through the contemplation of the face of his master, he was capable of reaching lofty spiritual levels. How much more is this the case when the master also concentrates and each prepares himself in reciprocity, the one to influence and the other, to receive [...]. This too is the reason why during prayer, if the individual contemplates his companions, his relatives, his teacher, or a person who sets his mind at ease, his soul is aroused in full concentration, and he joined by a supernal spirit.<sup>94</sup>

As far as is known, in the teachings reported in the name of the foremost figure of the Safed school, R. Isaac Lurya (1534–1572), no specific mention is made of visualization. On the other hand, according to his disciple R. Ḥayyim Vital (1542–1620), Lurya employed the concept of “impregnation” and apparently connected it to the necessity of establishing of a mental connection between master and disciple. Indeed, while describing his relationship with his master, Vital relates that:

One day [Lurya] told me that all I was to grasp was on account of my affection for him and that his soul had greatly assisted me to a point that he had almost impregnated me. He informed me that I had closeness (*qurbāh*) to him, especially as in former times in a previous incarnation I had also been his disciple just like at present. He advised me that it would be singularly efficacious to continuously cleave (*le-hiddabeq*) to him in my thought.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> In Qabbalistic writings this term usually refers to “metempsychosis”, that is why Ibn Zimra adds “while both are still living”. Here, however, there is no implication that the master’s soul takes possession of that of the disciple, but rather that it enables him to accede to a superior level of consciousness. This is analogous to what the Sufis describe as the mental substitution of self by awareness of the *ṣayh*, which eventually gives way to the total awareness of True Being, through “perceiving God in the mirror of the *ṣayh*’s heart”. See Landholt, *Correspondance spirituelle*, 19. See *supra*, n. 43.

<sup>94</sup> RaDBaZ, *Responsa*, III, ed. A. Walden (Warsaw, 1882), § 910 (= Venice, 1749, § 472). The last sentence alludes to the practice of “mutual visualization”, referred to above n. 4. See also the quote from Abaham Maimonides, above n. 70.

<sup>95</sup> Ḥayyim Vital, *Ša’ar ha-gilgūlīm*, Introduction §38 (Jerusalem, 1988), 131. As Vital subsequently explains on the same page “impregnation” with the saint’s soul can take place through the invocation of his name, whereas he defines ‘*ibbūr*’ itself in his Introduction §5, 23–24. See also pseudo-Isaac Lurya, *Zōhar ha-raqī’a*, Sighet, 1875, fol. 48b. Lawrence Fine, *Techniques of Mystical Meditation for achieving Prophecy and the Holy Spirit in the Teachings of Isaac Luria and*

It is however known that Lurya engaged in tomb visitation and the uncovering of unknown tombs in Galilee, which later became pilgrim sites.<sup>96</sup> R. Hayyim Vital's son Samuel (c. 1698-1738) revealed does mention the binding of the soul with that of a saint while on the subject of the ritual performed by a visitor to a grave in order to revivify the soul of its occupant:

If you perform any of these unifications (*yihūdīm*) while actually prostrating yourself upon the tomb of a saint, you bring about the prostration of the saint himself. He will invest the mortal remains in the grave and return to life. His bones become a body for his soul which spreads and is diffused in his remains. This soul is that which, as is known, endures in the tomb, according to the mystical meaning of the verse 'his soul mourns over him' (Job 14, 22). Hence, the saint at that moment is, so to speak, resuscitated body and soul. If these unifications are performed at home, without entailing prostration, there is no need of the foregoing meditation. However, whether it be with prostration or [without] at home, it is necessary to constantly bear in mind during the unification ritual to elevate your soul and the soul of that saint bound (*qešūrīm*) together, with your soul being included in his. Furthermore, one should have in mind the root in Adam's [body] from which depend your soul and that of the saint. You should concentrate on arousing that place of the member upon which the saint's soul depends in relation to Adam's [body]. It is from the direction of that member that you elevate his soul according to the mystery of the 'feminine waters'.<sup>97</sup>

This is all we have been able to gather on the subject of the visualization of the master in the writings of the early Safed Qabbalists. Undoubtedly it was via Safedian channels that this practice permeated into

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*Hayyim Vital*, (PhD Diss., Brandeis University, 1975), 148 studies a modality whereby the student of the *Mišnāh* attaches (*le-hadbīq*) his soul during solitary meditation (*hitbodedūt*) to that of a Tanna resulting in his soul's being invested (*yitlabbeš*) with that of the Tanna.

<sup>96</sup> He was actually preceded in this by R. Solomon Al-Qabez, who, in the company of his disciples, including Cordovero, would accomplish *gerūšm* (lit. 'excursions'). These were visits to cemeteries to pray and prostrate themselves on the tombs of saintly persons in order to induce mystical states and obtain esoteric knowledge, either through automatic speech or 'gifts from the departed'. See Moses Cordovero, *Sefer ha-gerūšm*, ed. M. Zuriel, (Jerusalem, 2006), pp. 4 and 9. R. Hayyim Vital also practiced these exercises. See his mystical diary "Book of Visions", translated in M. Faierstein *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 188-189, where he gives a very vivid description of such a visit.

<sup>97</sup> Hayyim Vital, *Ša'ar rūaḥ ha-qōdeš* (Jerusalem, 1988), 109 a-b.

European Ḥasidism either through literary channels, such as the writings of R. Abraham Azulay, or through ḥasidic pilgrims to the Holy Land.

## Ḥasidism

As a result of the centrality of the charismatic mentor in Ḥasidism, in the writings of this current a shift occurs from the “master” to the *zaddīq*. Emphasis is henceforth laid on the necessity to connect with the latter. Thus we read in the early teachings of the school by Ḥayyim Ḥayke b. Samuel of Amdur (d. 1787), one of the most prominent disciples of Dōb Ber (d. 1772), the Maggīd of Mezeric:

As a general rule, the individual must of necessity possess a permanent bond (*hitqaššerūt*) with the *zaddīq*, i.e. he must include himself with any person whom he knows to be bound up with the Divine Will, i.e. whose will inclines steadfastly to that of the Creator. He should always bind himself to them at prayer-times<sup>98</sup> for this constitutes the ‘inclusion of the worlds, *this* within the other’. For the word ‘*this*’ signifies unification and designates the *zaddīq*, as it is said “for *this* is man in his entirety” (Eccl. 12, 13).<sup>99</sup>

Most of the foregoing elements, and especially visualization combined with the ritual known as *hištaṭehūt* or “corporeal prostration” performed at the grave of a *zaddīq*, are to be encountered in the writings of the ḥasidic master Dōb Ber Schneersohn of Lubavic (1773–1827).<sup>100</sup> As far as we are aware, he was the first to have written a systematic and detailed exposition

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<sup>98</sup> On the basis of Naḥman of Braslav’s injunction “one must bind oneself at prayer times with the *zaddīqīm* of the generation who are the equivalent of Moses” (Naḥman of Braslav, *Liqqūtey Mōharan* (Jerusalem, 2008), I §2, 6; §9, 4), this notion was taken very seriously by Braslaver Ḥasidim who, prior to daily worship, would utter a prayer to bind their souls to those of the saints. Special lists of saints’ names were even printed, such as the *Sefer šemōt ha-zaddīqīm* (Jerusalem, 1958). See also Israel Dōb Ber of Wilednik, *She’erit Yisra’el*, ch. 1, *ša’ar hitqaššerūt la-zaddīqīm*, 7a (*supra*, n. 45).

<sup>99</sup> Ḥayyim Ḥayke b. Samuel of Amdur (d. 1787), *Ḥayyim va-ḥesed* (Warsaw, 1891), fol. 70a. The Hebrew demonstrative *zeh* has a numerical value of 13 which is the numeral of “essential unity” since it is also the numerical value of the word *’ehad* (one).

<sup>100</sup> On this theme, see our article “Influences soufies sur le développement de la Qabbale à Safed: le cas de la visitation des tombeaux,” in *Etudes sur les terres saintes et les pèlerinages dans les religions monotheistes*, ed. Daniel Tollet (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2012), 201-230.

of the *hištaṭeḥūt* ritual. Basing himself on the psychological system of R. Menaḥem Azariah da Fano (1548-1620), the foremost exponent of Cordovero's teachings in the West, he taught that it comprises five degrees, each with its respective spiritual effect, according to whether the devotee communes with the master's lower soul, spirit, intellectual soul, vital soul or supernal soul (*yeḥīdāh*). R. Dōb Ber emphasizes that the fourth level, which is close to the "union of spirits", is vouchsafed only to the disciple who had followed the saint's teachings and "had received the light of his master's face" during the latter's lifetime. Pilgrimage to his tomb yields a twofold benefit. Firstly, the journey itself arouses a spiritual longing; secondly, the arrival at the grave produces a sentiment of self-effacement (*biṭṭūl*)<sup>101</sup> and therefore a state of spiritual receptivity in relation to the saint's image:

A saint's gravesite is where his innermost soul continues to reside, which is a part of his "supernal image" (*zelem*).<sup>102</sup> The tomb over his grave represents his spiritual envelopes (*maqīfīm*) as explained at length in [R. Menaḥem Azariah's] *Ten Discourses* [II, 12]. And seeing that this place is surely a holy site, it will be possible for the practitioner to stir the saint's soul (*nefēs*) by means of his own exaltation [brought on] with love and awe. Indeed, through the intensity of his attachment (*hitqaššerūt*) he will certainly be able to arouse the soul of the saintly *zaddīq*. It will only be possible to connect (*le-hadbīq*) his soul to that of the *zaddīq* and experience exaltation, on condition that he truly applies his *heart* full-heartedly. He should first repent before God and earnestly desire to draw upon himself a spirit of holiness from his master's spirit. Through the intensification of the bond (*'emūnāh*)<sup>103</sup> and his attachment to the saint's soul together with the faculty which imagines the [*zaddīq*'s] semblance through the intermediary of the latter's *rūḥāniyyūt*,<sup>104</sup> his soul be enabled, of sorts, to commune with the [saint]'s spirit (*rūah*), since the [saint's]

<sup>101</sup> The Naqšbandīs too speak of the *rābiṭa* as a means of obtaining "annihilation in the *šayḥ* [*al-fanā' fī l-šayḥ*] as a prelude to annihilation in God". See al-Ḥānī, *Ḥadā'iq*, 295 and Meier, *Zwei Abhandlungen*, 90–91 and Abu-Manneh, "Khalwa and *rābiṭa* in the Khālīdī suborder," 295. See above, n.4.

<sup>102</sup> The author is using the Hebrew synonym of *deyōqna* which, as we have seen above, is the term employed by the *Zohar* and Cordovero to designate the root-soul. I believe these terms are interchangeable in certain contexts with that of *rūḥāniyyūt*.

<sup>103</sup> The author subsequently explains [Dōb Ber b. Šene'ūr Zalman, *Ma'amar ha-hištaṭeḥūt*, in *Sefer ha-hištaṭeḥūt*, (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1996), 25] that *'emūnāh*, usually taken to mean "faith", designates the "act of connecting one's soul with its root".

<sup>104</sup> I.e. the *rūḥāniyyūt* remains present at the grave. See *supra*, note 54.

innermost soul and his spiritual envelopes are present at the [grave]. Consequently he will be able to draw down upon himself from his master's resuscitated spirit his share of the light of his teaching and practice<sup>105</sup> just as he was bound to him in the latter's lifetime through the light of his face. In fact even more so, for formerly he used to [receive this light] clothed in thought and speech. Presently, he receives it solely from his master's very spirit.<sup>106</sup>

Visualization of the saint occupies an important place in the doctrine of the Ba'al Šem Ṭōb's great-grandson, R. Naḥman b. Simḥāh of Braslav (1772–1810). In his *Liqqūṭey halākōt*, R. Naḥman teaches that the contemplation of the saint's face generates holy thoughts and expels sinful ones. Though such contemplation can be accomplished through the study of the *zaddīq*'s works, full holiness is derived from the visualization of his countenance:

The true saint, who is superior in terms of holiness, [is one] whose mind is continuously at ease since he no longer has to struggle against evil thoughts, as it is said "the mind of an elder is tranquil" (*Idra rabba*, fol. 128b). Every individual needs to draw upon himself holiness of thought from the [saint] in order to withstand and refrain from all evil thoughts, for whosoever envisions (*mistakkel*) the true saint, even if he solely has the merit of meditating his holy books with the "eye of truthfulness", will be capable of bringing into his heart true contemplation and of drawing down upon himself holiness of thought through his saintly counsel [...]. However, his entire holiness is emanated solely through the visualization of the saint's countenance.<sup>107</sup>

In the *Liqqūṭey Mōharan*, Rabbi Naḥman again propounds the possibility of visualization of a saint through the meditation of his writings:

Whoever hears a discourse from the mouth of the true *zaddīq*, which is true discourse, especially when he sees him at that moment in fulfilment of "Your eyes will behold your teacher" (Is. 30, 20), he receives the aspects of the *zaddīq*'s face, his intellect and his soul, since the *zaddīq* places his intellect in the discourse he produces. When the [disciple] perceives the

<sup>105</sup> According to a second version (reproduced p. 29 of the source mentioned in the following note) "he could elevate his soul to the level where the saint's soul is rooted in the Adamic body. [...] Thereupon, he would be enabled to draw down [the saint's] soul into his corpse and converse with him and thereby apprehend great and sublime mysteries."

<sup>106</sup> Dōb Ber b. Šene'ūr Zalman, *Ma'amar ha-hiṣṭaṭeḥūt*, 23.

<sup>107</sup> Naḥman of Braslav, *Liqqūṭey Halākōt*, I:1:4 (Jerusalem: Ḥasīdey Braşlav, 1975), fols. 96b-c.

discourse, he receives the intellect which is also in the mode of the breath, for the latter is in the mode of the intellect, as it is written : ‘But it is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty, that gives them understanding’ (Job 32, 8). Likewise he receives his face, for the discourse he pronounces is truth and truth is the internal aspect of all the facets of holiness [...]. As a result, whoever receives the discourse from the *ẓaddīq*, receives his face, intellect and breath. In addition, the transcendent image of the likeness (*diyōqnō*) of the *ẓaddīq*—which is his face, intellect and soul—is graven and impressed (*niẓṭayyer*) upon his mind. However, one must be wary of forgetfulness for on account of the latter all is forgotten of him, i.e. his words that were impressed in his mind. Even if he commends his words to writing for memory’s sake, forgetfulness prevails when that sage passes away. However, there is a remedy for this and that is to visualize the sage’s face upon studying his words, as is written in the Jerusalem Talmud that at study time one should visualize the Tanna standing before him.<sup>108</sup> For in the book by that sage the latter’s image is inscribed and formed for the words and consonants inscribed and impressed in the book are the sage’s intellect and soul [...]. It thus follows that in every book is to be found the likeness of the sage. Consequently, if he succeeds in remembering the words of the sage just as he had pronounced them then whenever he repeats the utterance in the sage’s name, the image of his likeness is represented before him, as if the sage his very self were saying it. However, he must recall it exactly through the faculty of remembrance, for then his likeness is truly inscribed in his mind.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> TJ *Šeqālīm*, fol. 11a: “R. Giddal said, Whoever cites a tradition in the name of its original author should envision him as if he were standing before him, as it is said, “Surely man progresses through a semblance” (Ps. 39, 7).” This is a classical Talmudic *locus probans* for the phenomenon under discussion.

<sup>109</sup> Naḥman of Braslav, *Liqqūṭey Mōharan*, I, § 192, fol. 127b. See also *idem*, I, § 153, fol. 121a, and I, § 230, fol. 132c. Visualization is likewise useful in prayer, as is related by a disciple of the Maggīd of Mezeric, Mešullam Pheobus Heller of Zbaraz (1742-1794), *Derek ’emet*, ed. M. Walden (Zhitomir, 1855), fols. 12–13: “Words of prayer ascend when the individual attaches [...] and includes himself in total love, with the holy souls of the saints of the generation with whose countenance he is familiar. He should visualize (*yezayyer*) them before him at that very moment [...]. [fol. 13] This mental image represents the form and spiritual substance (*rūḥāniyyūt*) of the envisioned person who is absent. When he arouses love for him that sentiment connects and unites him with the image within his mind. Indeed the numerical value [of 13] of the [Hebrew] word for ‘love’ *ahābāh* is the same as the word ‘unity’ *’ehad*.” For another instance of 13 as the numeral of essential unity, see above n.?

This teaching was valid for those who had had the merit of beholding the living *zaddīq*. Visualization of the founding saint held special significance in the Braslav school because of its non-dynastical structure. Braslav Ḥasidism were often called *di toyte ḥasīdīm* (“the defunct Ḥasidim”) on account of their not having a living spiritual master. Consequently, the practice of visualization took on a particular form in their doctrine.<sup>110</sup> In his *Parpar’ōt le-ḥōkmāh*, which is the first systematic commentary on R. Naḥman of Braslav’s *Liqqūṭey Mōharan*, R. Naḥman b. Zvi Aryeh Goldstein of Czehryn (1825–1894) explains how spiritual amendment (*tiqqūnim*) can be achieved through visualization of the saint’s countenance during the visitation of saintly tombs and, in particular, that of R. Naḥman of Braslav himself. The regular pilgrimage which took place to his grave known as the *qibbūz*, or “annual assembly”, was subsequently to become an institution. Almost eradicated in the Soviet era, it has been renewed and taken on impressive proportions in recent years. We have discussed above the practice of *hitqaššerūt* (soul communion) at the graveside of a saint and its Muslim counterpart, however the prominence of the visual component is particularly noteworthy in the following extract:

As reported by his holy disciples, it is well-known that all of [R. Naḥman’s] teachings in all their details concerning the marvellous amendments that can be enacted by drawing near to the *zaddīq* are eternally valid. Even now, after his demise, all this can be achieved by drawing near to his holiness, by participating in the *qibbūz*, by being called after his name, by applying oneself to the study of his works, by following his counsel, visiting his tomb and praying there for repentance, especially if this takes place during the annual assembly at the New Year [...]. It behoves one to believe that even nowadays this takes place. For whoever attends his holy *qibbūz*, witnesses the [participants’] holy virtues and the intensity of their worship, performed through their arduous desire to follow his holy paths, clearly grasps that all this results solely from the holiness of the light of his saintly soul and the light of his saintly teaching and that in this place shines the light of his face. This [realization] belongs to the contemplation of the face of the saint [...], the essence of which takes place at the time of the holy gathering. Whosoever succeeds in firmly attaching himself and experiences an illumination and the burgeoning of holiness in his heart, will have the merit thereby to make amends for his shortcomings

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<sup>110</sup> Their situation affords a striking analogy to the Sufi initiation of the *’uwaysī* type, which was practiced in the absence of a living *šayḥ*, as in the case of the Naqšbandis considered above. See *supra*, n. 41.

[...]. Thus it has been explained that the essential part of amendment is accomplished through drawing near and binding oneself (*hitqašserūt*).<sup>111</sup>

The conceptual principle of the efficaciousness of visualization stems from the idea that the saint, as opposed to ordinary beings, is endowed with a universal soul connected to the divine world; therefore by attaching himself to the saint, the disciple automatically connects with the divine realm and is automatically uplifted.

A similar idea is upheld by Solomon ha-Kōhen Rabinowich (1803–1866), founder of the Radomsk dynasty in his *Tif'eret Šelōmōh*:

In our days the most important act in Divine worship is to be attached to the *zaddīqīm*, each according to his spiritual level. This principle was spread by the Ba'al Šem Tōb. One should not separate himself from the *zaddīq* by saying: 'What need have I to travel to the *zaddīq* of our time in search of knowledge? Are the numerous holy books on ethics not available to all seekers of Torah and the fear of Heaven? In reality all this is of no account for mere contemplation of the *zaddīq*'s countenance is capable of eliminating all of the individual's shortcomings and of uplifting his prayer [...], and through this he can attain full perfection.<sup>112</sup>

Space does not allow us to expand on the enormous importance placed on the visiting of *zaddīqīm* in order to "visualize their countenance", a practice which can be widely observed even in contemporary ḥasidic courts.<sup>113</sup> A privileged moment takes place during the *zaddīq*'s symbolic repast, *Tisch* in Yiddish. Disciples and master exchange glances, especially at the time of the *le-ḥayyim* blessing, occasioned by the distribution of wine brought to the *zaddīq*'s table by the *ḥasīdīm* themselves. Amongst the followers of many dynasties this cult has given rise in modern times to a proliferation and distribution of pictures of prominent *rebbe*s, much to the disapproval of certain rabbinical authorities.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Naḥman of Czehryn, *Parpar'ot le-ḥōkmāh* (Jerusalem, 1935), fol. 5a.

<sup>112</sup> Solomon ha-Kōhen Rabinowich, *Tif'eret Šelōmōh*, I (Warsaw, 1867), fol. 153a.

<sup>113</sup> See, for example, for the Przysucha school, the important passage in Samuel of Szinowo (1785-1873), *Ramātayim šōfīm*, (Jerusalem: Lewin-Epstein, 1978), 121, §7, and, concerning Ḥabad Ḥasidim, *Torat Menaḥem*, vol. I (Brooklyn: Kehot Publications, 2008), 51.

<sup>114</sup> Similar condemnations have been voiced by Muslim clerics in regard to photographs of Sufi personalities and *fatwā*-s have been issued against their reproduction.

Before concluding our discussion of this theme in Jewish sources, it can be added that the salutary effect of the visualization of the saint not only concerns the spiritual enlightenment of the adept but extends to the spiritualisation of other areas of human activity.<sup>115</sup>

Not all ḥasidic groups approved of the practice of the visualization of the saint. The school of Kotzk, in particular, played down the cultic veneration of the *zaddīq* in favour of introspection, as illustrated by the following anecdote related in connection with R. Isaac Meir Alter (1799–1866), also known as the *Ḥiddūšey ha-RIM*, founder of the Gur dynasty.

A *ḥasīd* stood at the threshold of our Master's chamber and stared at length at his countenance. The Master asked him "Why are you standing there glaring?" The *ḥasīd* answered "I read in the pericope *Re'eh* (Deut. 11, 26) in the *'Or ha-ḥayyim*<sup>116</sup> that when the Israelites stared at Moses and contemplated him, he would pour upon them benediction. Hence, it is clear that the contemplation of the face of the *zaddīq* brings blessing!" Our Master retorted "Is it not written All your people are righteous (*zaddīqīm*)? (Is. 60, 21). Hence you also are a *zaddīq*, and therefore you would do better to contemplate what is within your own self!"<sup>117</sup>

Finally, in view of the striking parallels brought to light by the comparison of the practice of visualization in the Muslim and Jewish mystical traditions, a word is in order about the possibilities of overlapping religiosities. The co-existence of Jewish and Sufi communities in the numerous cities and villages of the Near East obviously afforded opportunities for interaction and emulation. Now the city of Safed in Upper Galilee, which was a particularly vibrant nucleus of Qabbalistic creativity between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and later the kernel of a ḥasidic community from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, was also the hub of a significant amount of Sufi activity.<sup>118</sup> Potential for exchange between Jews

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<sup>115</sup> Qabbalists as well as Ḥasīdīm considered in particular that the visualization of the saint during conjugal intimacy could favourably affect the souls of the children conceived. See B. Zaack, "The Doctrine of the visionary of Lublin," (*supra*, n. 86), 226–231 (in Hebrew), and E. Steinberger, *'Ubdā' dē-aharōn* (Jerusalem, 1986), 13.

<sup>116</sup> A mystical commentary on the Pentateuch by the Moroccan Kabbalist R. Hayyim Ibn 'Attār (1696-1743).

<sup>117</sup> Isaac Me'ir Alter-Rothenberg, *Ḥiddūšey ha-RIM 'al ha-Tôrâh* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rim Lewin, 1987), pericope *re'eh*, 241.

<sup>118</sup> In addition to the sources given in our article "Influences soufies," 207–209 (*supra*, n. 83), more light has been shed on this subject by the articles by Daniella

and Muslims was not lacking and, indeed, some degree of interaction between mystics of both faiths is documented by chronicles and autobiographical writings, such as those of Ḥayyim Vital.<sup>119</sup>

Muslim claims that multitudinous saints were buried in the precincts of Safed undoubtedly nurtured similar beliefs amongst their Jewish neighbours, since tomb veneration and its attendant rituals were among the most visible public manifestations of Sufi practice. That some of these rituals are especially associated with Central Asian Sufis of the Kubrāwī and Naqšbandī type is not a problem. Already in the wake of the Mongol invasions of the 13<sup>th</sup> century many Asian refugees fled to Syria and the Holy Land. This movement gained renewed momentum in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the Safavid forced conversion of Persia to Shi'ism and the abolishment of the Sufi orders when many Sunni Sufis too fled Westwards, some settling in the Galilee and nearby Damascus. Dervish pilgrims from Central Asia making their way to Mekka through the Holy Land could also have introduced these practices into local Sufi brotherhoods.

It is therefore not improbable that these shared hagiographical rituals were transmitted in and around Safed, especially as a certain number of saints' shrines in the surrounding region were venerated by both Jews and Muslims alike and pilgrimages to these sites may have been the occasion for contacts between the devotees of both faiths.<sup>120</sup> It is quite possible that the Safed Qabbalists having noticed these practices amongst their Muslim neighbours, and having observed their supposed spiritual efficaciousness, adapted them to their own cult. Subsequently, as with numerous other devotional rituals, these Kabbalistic practices were transmitted to the communities of the Diaspora and in particular to ḥasidic circles, ever eager to adopt the mystical customs of the Holy Land.

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Talmon-Heller, "The Cited Tales of the Wondrous Doings of the Shaykhs of the Holy Land by Diya' al-Din Abu 'Abd Allah Muḥammad b. Abd al-Wahid al-Maqdisi (569/1173-643/1245): text, translation, and commentary," *Crusades* 1 (2002), 111–113, and O. Amir, "Muslim Religious Life in the Safed Region in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries according to a New-Old Source," *Kathedra* 156 (2015), 40–70 (in Hebrew).

<sup>119</sup> For his encounters with Muslim dignitaries, see his "Book of Visions" (above n. 96), 47, 74, 113–114, and 257–258.

<sup>120</sup> See Meri, *Cult of Saints*, "Galilean Pilgrimage," 242–250.