I.

In the year of 1731, an extensive, two volume work was printed in Smyrna. This anonymous kabbalistic-halakhic work of an ethical nature, titled Hemdat Yamim (hereinafter: HY), was published, and at least to some extent edited, by Israel Jacob Algazi. It very soon became one of the most influential and controversial books of the 18th century. The structure of the daily ritual life that the author attempted to form had a profound impact on the Ottoman Jewish world and beyond. The customs and rituals that the author treated became widespread, and the kabbalistic prayers he authored were adopted by many communities and reprinted often. The book itself was soon reissued in several notable editions. Moreover, the number of pamphlets and *tikkunim* booklets – kabbalistic texts use for reciting and practicing certain rituals – that were printed, based upon HY, was unprecedented; these also included the practices of the Shabbat and the holidays. The importance of this work is summarized in the words of Gershom Scholem: “the most significant account of the life of a pious practitioner of kabbalistic ritual is to be found in the compendious Hemdath Yamim.” Yet the work was also controversial: not long after its publication, it was attacked as consisting of Sabbatean elements in a debate that would last for decades. The fact that the author of the book remained anonymous added to the mystery behind the dispute and to its vociferousness.

The attitudes towards HY within the rabbinic world during the last three centuries varied considerably. Among the many stances taken with regards to the book, the position espoused by Rabbi Hayyim Yosef David Azula (Hida; Jerusalem, 1724 – Livorno, 1806) is of particular interest. The Hida’s approach – a well-known scholar, writer, bibliophile and traveler – is worthy of attention not only thanks to his unparalleled bibliographical and biographical sensibility and curiosity, that led him to make numerous original observations and conclusions. But the Hida’s position is of interest because it is related to his more general approach to Sabbatean literature, a problem that has troubled many scholars. In this regard, the Hida’s work may shed light on a more fundamental question: the nature of the Sabbatean “heresy” more than one-hundred years after Sabbatai Tsevi’s conversion and death. In other words, the basic question dealt with in this article will is not the Hida’s attitude toward HY, but rather the magnitude of the Sabbatean heresy in the second half of the 18th century according to the Hida.

To sharpen this point, in the years immediately following Sabbata Tsevi’s conversion, the Jewish world was in turmoil, and no clear-cut, universally accepted response was evident. Different individuals and groups held various positions, some of them rather ambiguous, but the undisputable fact is that Sabbatianism shook the foundations of the Jewish society in the immediate period after his death. But what was the threatening facet of the Sabbatean movement - if indeed it was still considered a threat - in the eyes of the rabbinic stratum, more than one hundred years after the dramatic events of the 1660’s? By this time, the exegetical dust had already settled on his works, and the (crypto-)Sabbateans were well contained within institutionalized Jewish Life. More than a century after its origination, both Sabbateanism’s Messianic beliefs, and the antinomoian fears their thought evoked – if these were ever the main issue in the Sabbatean dispute – were already well known, and do not suit the concrete socio-cultural context. Although the Hida never delt directly with the work, nor with the question of the Sabbatean accusations, his response to HY can serve as a key to fathom this affair. Hida’s perspective on the Sabbatean “heresy” allows us to define Sabbatanism more accurately, and to better place it within its historical context.

I argue that the prism through which the Hida’s attitude toward HY should be approached is his project of shaping, classifying, and organizing the set of practices originating in the school of Rabbi Isaac Luria, the Ari. The acceptance of Luria’s teachings - and the emergence of the genre known as *Arizal* - was rapid, and took place both directly and indirectly, in complex and convoluted ways. But, more than the philosophical or theosophical aspects, it was the practical aspects of Lurianic thought that were accepted and developed so rapidly. These include various types of *tikkunim*, as well as other ritual practices concerning the order of the prayers, public and private worship, as well as approaches to, and rulings on, matters of halakha – particularly those related to daily life and to the cycle of the year. Interestingly, the processing, marketing, distribution, and popularization of Lurianic practices – or pseudo-Lurianic practices, whose association with Luria was merely a figment of the imagination – occurred primarily in the Ashkenazi regions and in Italy. This was the case regarding the copying and distribution of numerous manuscripts, among them: “Naggid U’metzave,”written by the kabbalist Jacob Tsemah, a work dedicated to collecting Lurianic practices; the *Shulchan Arukh Ha’Ari,* a halakhic-kabbalistic manual that appeared in several editions, and other works in this genre; the work of legal-halakhic commentators, such as Abraham Gombiner’s *Magen Avraham,* and subsequent authorities who discussed, and by so internalized, the Lurianic practices in the context of halakhic literature; and the intense publishing of numerous works of Lurianic ritual practices, prayers and *tikkunim*. These types of works were not as widely disseminated in the Ottoman Empire, certainly not as printed texts. Luria’s disciples were active in this cultural realm and, as a result, the influence of his teachings was more direct and, to an extent, more locally accepted, particularly in communities residing in the land of Israel or in geographical proximity to it, such as Damascus.

However, the gap between the dissemination of Luria’s teachings in the East and in the West was narrowed considerably in the first half of the eighteenth century, wherein Sabbateanism played a key role. Although Sabbatean thinkers’ attitude to Lurianic Kabbalah was complex, Sabbateanism led to a massive increase in popular pietistic practices, particularlyrituals and practices with Lurianic influence. Sabbateanism also increased the occupation with various types of *tikkunim*, including *Tikkunei Teshuva* – penitential rituals – whose Lurianic foundations were evident. But the true revolution in this regard was created by HY, whose importance and influence cannot be overestimated. Two aspects of this multilayered work are especially pertinent in this context: First, HY deals extensively with matters of *halakha* and *kabbalah*, and devotes a major section to Kabbalistic and Lurianic practices and *tikkunim*. Second, as noted above, the influence of HY, especially within the Ottoman Empire and in Italy, was tremendous. Aside from the direct impact of the work, the indirect influence of HY on the contemporary Zeitgeist and paradigms of thought was even greater. Consequently, HY generated a major shift in the Jewish world of Southern Europe regarding meditation, and played a key role in disseminating and popularizing Lurianic practice and conduct.

Shortly after the book's appearance, questions began to surface regarding its possible Sabbateanism. The first to level these accusations was, not surprisingly, Jacob Emden, whose attack opened a protacted scholarly debate, which persists to an extent to this day. In appraising this type of halakhic-kabbalistic compilation, the “Sabbatean” / ”non-Sabbatean” binary is not always relevant or productive; what can be said without a doubt is that Sabbatean elements are not lacking in the work, although it is uncertain whether in all cases the author was aware of this, or what was his purpose in citing the Sabbatean elements. Today, thanks to the work of Shmuel Teffilinski and Yechiel Goldhaber, it is possible to identify the author of the book, and to characterize the nature of the work and the manner in which it was composed. Basically, the better part of the text is not an original work, but rather a compilation consisting of texts from a variety of periods and cultural spaces. The author worked to conceal his sources, and blurred these different layers and sources by creating one flattened text, than functioned as a single layer. The author-compiler was none other than the editor and publisher, Israel Yakov Algazi. However, nearly all the academic discourse regarding HY, and specifically regarding the text’s Sabbateanism, has been dedicated to the question of the role of Sabbatean belief in the work. By focusing on issues of halakha and ritual practices, the prime core of the work, several points can be reclarified.

As said, Hida from his perspective of profound discomfort with the unregulated distribution of Lurianic writings and practices and with the popular application of kabbalistic texts - which he considered to be esoteric and “closed” knowledge – began a wide-ranging project of shaping the Lurianic practice (even if such project was never defined or declared as such by Hida explicitly). The components of this endeavor included an extensive discussion, unprecedented in terms of scope, of various Lurianic traditions relating to matters of Halakha and conduct; a total incorporation of Lurianic practices into the Halakhic system and discourse; and the producing of conduct booklets, which although not Lurianic strictly speaking, reflect the principles of Lurianic practice in a broad and fundamental manner. The primary result of this project was a unified standard and organized system for the otherwise disorderly array of Lurianic traditions of practice and conduct.

As one might expect, the question of Lurianic practice within the writings of Hida cannot be properly addressed without returning time and time again to HY, which, as will be shown, was confronted again and again by Hida.

II.

Before demonstrating this tension, I shall briefly refer to the – relatively little – research about the question of Hida’s attitude toward the book of HY. In short, two of the greatest scholars of the Hebrew print and of the Sabbateanism of the 18th century, Avraham Yaari and Meir Benayhu, argued that Hida’s basic approach to the book was definitely favorable. In the following paragraphs their argument will be presented and debated.

The first to attempt to present an unequivocal picture regarding Hida’s approach to HY was Avraham Yaari. In is work dedicated to the riddle of HY’s author, he added a footnote:

True, Hida does not mention the Hemdat-Yamim within his ethical works, nor he mentions it in his *Shem Hagedolim* [his biographical-bibliographical encyclopedia; ES]. Nevertheless, he certainly was very familiar with the book. In his Responsa… he defends the opinion of Hemdat-Yamim from those who challenged it on halakhic matters… likewise, within his prayers, there are some complete sections taken from Hemdat-Yamim.

Yaari based the claim that Hida had a favorable attitude towards HY upon the fact that he apparently defended the opinion of HY concerning halakhic matter (in two legal issues, to which Yaari refers), and since some of Hida’s prayers contain some paragraphs taken, although modified, from HY. As Isaiah Tishbi writes regarding this argument of Yaari, “Meir Benayahu responded ‘amen’ to him”: Benayahu pretty much cited Yaari’s claim in his monumental book about Hida, but it seems that he himself did not examine the actual quotes of Hida to which Yaari has referred.

Benayahu though did add one important point to the discussion – the mention of HY within Hida’s diary, in which he documented his practices. (Only a small amount of his diaries has been printed, while the rest remain in manuscript). It appears that Hida did read and learn HY (or works derived directly from it): in the entries for the years 5528 (1767/8), 5530 (1729/30), and 5534-38 (1773-78), he records that he examined some portions of the work dealing with a few of the holidays or with the ten days of repentance. From 5539 and onward, the work is no longer mentioned in his diary, except for an entry from 5543 (1782) recording him learning a commentary about Yom Kippur’s Temple Service. According to Benayahu, the fact that Hida does not write that he read HY from the year 5539 “does not indicate that he abandoned reading this work due to the flaw of it being Sabbatean. Hida did not read from the same works every year, so certainly works that he did read regularly would not be mentioned in every list of his practices.” Benayahu immediately concludes that “the work was considered holy in his eyes, he read it, and recited the prayers found in it.” This basic approach suggested by Yaari and supported by Benayahu was generally accepted without any dissent.

I will refer to the arguments regarding Hida’s prayers (and his diary entries) later in the article, but Yaari’s main argument – Hida’s “defense” on HY hallakhic rulings – is very far from convincing. A full elaboration on the specific examples is not possible here, but even a short analysis is sufficient to recognize the weakness of this argument.

Yaari’s first example is taken from a responsum regarding the halakhic prohibition to erase letters on Shabbat, and whether it applies in one certain case. Indeed, Hida mentions the name of HY in his discussion (and eventually rules in favor of the opinion that HY, among others, held). However, the name of HY is mentioned in Hida’s text solely because it appears within a quote from another legal work, a quote which Hida proceeds to discuss. The dispute itself, though, is unrelated to any unique position taken by HY: not HY is in Hida’s interest, but rather that other work that Hida cited (*Kol Eliyahu*, Livorno 1792). In addition, even when Hida mentions the name HY, he does so by utilizing an unfamiliar acronym, סח"י (ספר חמדת ימים, Sefer Hemdat Yamim).

A few bibliographic considerations (concerning Hida’s regular preferences regarding his works typeset, as well as the specific publisher’s manner of printing the name of HY in other publications) makes it abundantly clear that this was not a simple abbreviation for saving space or for convenience, but rather a deliberate choice in order to conceal the name of the book. It shall be noted that also in the second instance where Hida explicitly mentions the name “Hemdat-Yamim” – these two are the only, as far as I know – the work is also referred to in this same cryptic manner, concealing the name of the work.

The second example cited by Yaari as proof that Hida defended HY regarding matters of halakha and ritual practices is even less convincing. In a different responsum, Hida is attempting to issue a ruling concerning a halakhic dispute heavily debated among many kabbalistic-oriented Halakhic authorities. Although Hida does rule in favor of the opinion which was accepted also by HY, many other kabbalistic authorities also ruled in accordance with this opinion, and the issue clearly precedes and is much broader than HY’s opinion in this regard. Moreover, HY is not even mentioned in the discussion or brought into the consideration, even as Hida goes to explicitly list which of the kabbalistic sages support which opinion. For sure, it was certainly not HY’s ruling in this issue that guided, or even had any impact, on Hida’s conclusion. Taking this responsum as an example for Hida “defends the opinion of HY from those who challenged it on halakhic matters” is indeed surprising.

The continuation of that responsum indicates again that his ruling stemmed from other considerations totally unrelated to HY. Hida proceeds to briefly discuss the propriety of the custom to perform the biblical commandment of blowing the *Shofar* on New Year Festival at dawn, even prior to the morning praying (when it was regularly preformed). This unique custom was common in several Jewish areas of the Ottoman Empire, and Hida himself testifies that “many held this practice.” It is quite reasonable to speculate that this custom stemmed from the practices of Nathan of Gaza (though it was widespread as well among other Kabbalistic circles in the seventeenth century that were not directly connected to that of Nathan). HY likewise mentions this custom and supports it - a fact that presumably led to the significant popularity of this custom. In this instance, though, Hida ruled that this custom should be abolished (and by this he followed the opinion of other contemporary Kabbalists). And here too, HY is not even mentioned in Hida’s discussion, and the considerations of the issue are broader, as they pertain to the opinions of other Kabbalistic authorities. Just as Hida’s conclusion in this latter regard cannot indicate his reservations about HY on the whole, his conclusion regarding the former issue cannot indicate, in any way, his approval of the work, as Yaari (and Benayahu) suggested. Rather, Hida in both cases simply based his ruling upon the particular context and considerations and upon the opinions of other Kabbalists.

If this second respomsum that Yaari cited can indicate anything about Hida’s approach to HY, it would likely be that his omission of the opinion of HY from the two issues on debate – despite the fact that the other sources quoted by Hida do mention HY – indicates his strong reservations concerning the work. And as said - also when, very rarely, Hida did mention the “Book Which Not be Named”, he does so by using a strange, uncommon acronym.

III.

Indeed, there are several additional instances where Hida discusses practices mentioned in HY. Without exception, the name of HY cannot be found in any of these discussions of Hida, though he is clearly referring to him. In all those cases, as will be shown, his attitude toward the work it is not favorable, to say the least.

1. The first issue has to do with the correct manner of performing the Lurianic *kavanot* (detailed meditations). Beyond Hida’s general reservations about the popularization of this literature and practice, his expressions when confronting and rejecting two specific, related phenomena are especially fierce. These two are the verbalizing and vocalizing the complex names of God found in the Lurianic *kavanot* (and not just meditating these names in one’s mind); and reciting these *kavanot* “in a manner of a prayer” (כוונת דרך תפילה): i.e. instead of thinking about the theurgic processes that supposedly occur in the heavens and in the world while one is praying or performing a religious act, one *requests* that these theurgic processes will indeed take place. Several times Hida also points on a specific example to this “corrupt” custom: the authoring and recitation of detailed Kabbalistic prayers on the nights when the *Omer* is counted, as well as similar prayers for each of the Passover’s Seder *siamnin* (stages of the ritual procedure). In these prayers, based upon the Lurianic *kavanot*, both two flaws — verbalizing the *kavanot*, and utilizing them as a prayer (request), were present.

This apparently technical issue is actually profoundly related to broader and more principal questions regarding Hida’s approach to esoteric and exoteric knowledge and to the practice and study of kabbalah, questions that goes beyond the purvey of this discussion. For the current discussion it should be said that Hida deeply rejected these phenomena for a number of reasons, among them the notion that this is not the traditional, authentic Lurianic manner of the *kavanot*’s performance.

These phenomena described by Hida can be found in a few representations and contexts of the Lurianic *kavanot* literature. However, it is very clear that the “prime suspect” is indeed HY: Many of the scores of prayers that appear throughout that work are constructed in that form of “*kavanot* in a manner of a prayer” – requests that the theurgic processes will occur. Moreover, the author frequently instructs the reader to verbalize the *kavanot* with his mouth, and he details precisely why one should do so. More specifically, the author of HY included in his work specific prayers, consisting of complex Lurianic *kavanot* and kabbalistic names of the God, that he personally authored for each of the *simanim* of Passover’s *seder*, as well as for each of the nights in which the Omer is counted. Although these prayers were mainly based on teachings of Luria, they were authored and fomulated solely by the author HY who also precisely instructed how to perform them. Not surprisingly, the two especially elements that troubled Hida are present in these prayers: reciting the *kavanot* “in a form of a prayer” and a request, as well as the author’s clear instructions to verbalize them and not just to meditate them. These prayers were then reprinted numerous times and within a very short span in the years after HY was first published in 1731, both within the Ottoman Empire as well as in Italy. Even without mentioning its name, Hida’s harsh tone and expressions, appearing again and again in his writings in this regard, are definitely aimed towards one major work – HY .

2. A second case where Hida refers to HY is as he deals with the series of pietistic fasts known in as “Shovavim” (an acronym of the weekly Torah portions read in the weeks in which these fast were observed).

A series of fasts during the short winter days is of relatively early origin, appearing in writings from the fifteenth century. Various explenatios were suggested to the emergence of this custom, but here too, as in many other realms, the Lurianic teachings played a prominent role by giving novel meaning and significance to a former practice, as well as to modifying the exact practical manner in which it should be performed. Among other instructions, Luria points out one particular instruction, that although is mentioned in works slightly preceding him, he was the one who institutionalized it: forty consecutive fasts during these specific weeks. The questions how and when these fasts can possibly and exactly be observed is well discussed over the years in the literature of the Lurianic circles. Hida also gave much attention to the exact calculation of these fasts (to their proper dates and hours, for instance), as some of these questions were not addressed directly by the Luria or his immediate disciples. Following a discussion of several widespread customs that do not accurately match the Lurianic tradition, Hida notes:

That [practice] in which they were somewhat clever in counting the first “day” [of the fast] while it was still daytime for one hour, and fast for one hour on the third night and say that for the weak this is considered [fasting] three days, it is completely ineffective, as it was stated explicitly by Rabbi Haim Vital, who received as tradition from the Ari ZTL that even if one fasted like Yom Kippur [i.e., beginning the fast a short period of time before nightfall] it is considered only one fast. And who ascended to heaven or had Elijah the prophet, may his memory be a blessing, revealed to him that determined after our teacher the Ari ZTL that [one may] compromise/interpret [in this manner] about matters that stand in the highest elevations of the world, and that bring a tikkun with names [of God] and the upper worlds?

And the cessation [of eating] for three days [=three consecutive days and nights, in contrast to regular daytime-only fasts; ES] is considered like forty days. Nothing more is found in the true writings of the Ari ZTL.

Pietism and atonement are one thing, but a long consecutive day-after-day fast is exceptionally difficult. For that reason, some held that if a few are added to the fast before it technically begins at nightfall and a few minutes added after it technically concludes, it could be considered a three-day fast. Thus, fasting on Mondays and Thursdays will be considered as a full week, six days, fast. Hida, however, was not tolerant to such idea. He strongly states that the complex Lurianic calculations of these fasts are not a matter that people can decide about on their own. And since Luria explicitly rejected this calculation, the is no room for any further discussion: “… who ascended to heaven or had Elijah the prophet revealed to him… that [one may] compromise/interpret [in this manner] about matters that stand in the highest elevations of the world, and that bring a *tikkun* with names [of God] and the upper worlds?” The Lurianic penitential rituals are defined as "matters that stand in the highest elevations of the world" and thus the usual logical reasoning used in rabbinic-Talmudic study, are not relevant in the wake of these ruling.

Now who are those “who were overwise / who tried to be over-sophisticated” נתחכמו קצת@ (to use Hida’s critical term) and brought up this suggestion? The author of HY, who writes it in the name of his anonymous teacher (and as far as I know, this is the first – and until Hida’s days, perhaps the only – place where this suggestion can be found). Again, without referring to HY directly or even mentioning the work’s name, Hida accused HY of implying his own original, “human” login on such Lurianic “divine” traditions.

Hida was aware of the difficulty of these fasts, and he did indeed also offer other solutions for the weak. But this original idea for calculating the fast, explicitly deviating from Luria’s teachings and violating the “purity” of this Lurianic arena by mixing authentic and unauthentic ideas, Hida strongly rejects.

3. In one of the most noteworthy responsa regarding Lurianic practice, Hida discusses the obligation to don *teffilin* (phylacteries) of Rabbeinu Tam. As an aside, he then comes to add a short guideline concerning some issues regarding *teffilin* in general, one of these especially interesting: donning teffilin during the afternoon service (Minha) of Friday.

The custom of donning teffilin at *Minha* is rather long established and was accepted universally among Lurianic Kabbalists. By contrast, donning teffilin at Minha on Friday afternoon was not practiced for the most part among Luria’s disciples. However, in 1721 some controversy arose on the subject in Modena, when several members of the Ashkenazi synagogue began to do so. This provoked a stormy dispute involving the most prominent Kabbalists of Italy, seemingly a much greater dispute one than would have been expected concerning a very specific and undramatic question. Most of them, led by Binyamin Hacohen Vitali (Rabach), disciple of Moshe Zakut, and Yosef Irgas, attempted to abolish this new practice. Opposing them was Ephraim HaCohen of Ostroh who supported `these individuals.

It has been suggested that the reason for the excessive anger and fighting in this case, to the point that the Vitali named those who practiced this custom "little foxes demolishing the vineyards" and fiercely opposed it, was perhaps its Sabbatean roots. And, although this custom stands in contrast to the majority of the Lurianic traditions, stemming from Luria himself and his disciples, the author of HY did write in favor of this custom, lending credence to these hypotheses of Sabbatean roots. This is reinforced by the specific wording with which Hida himself chose to address this issue, in a tone that stands on contrast to the other short and pointed previous rulings:

(6) At *Minha*, one should don *teffilin* of *Rabbeinu Tam*, as our teacher Rabbi Haim Vital did.

(7) At *Minha* on Friday one should not don teffilin, as the Kabbalist Rabbi Meir Papirash writes that such was his tradition, and the famous Rabbi Yosef Irgaz wrote this as well in his work *Shomer Emunim*. And do not pay attention to the summaries and compiled pamphlets, and think that you have the power of the arbitrator [to decide the proper practice], or can stand among the group [of those who can decide these matters]. Know that you must bend your ears and listen to the voice of the teachers, as one needs great awareness of the character and nature of these works, and no more need be said.

The local, technical instruction regarding the precise Lurianic tradition regarding Friday afternoon quickly turns into a more fundamental warning to strictly rely only on authentic sources and traditions that were transmitted rigorously, and this fundamental guide leads to an admonition about the problematic and suspicious nature of this popular genre at whole. The Sabbatean context that until now stayed mainly in the background of the theater, becomes much more palpable. And although not stated explicitly, it is very likely that Hida linked this custom of teffilin on Friday afternoon with the instruction of HY on this regard. If so, here is Hida’s most critical and fierce response to HY’s enterprise regarding the Lurianic practices and meditations, and to what Hida considered to be a distortion and misuse of the “true” Lurianic traditions.

4. Hida addressed the comments of HY regarding "classic" halakhic subjects as well. An early testimony claimed that Luria himself refrained from eating meat on a day that he had eaten cheese. In HY this testimony is cited, but the author claims that it is inaccurate – he did not eat meat on a day on which he had drunk milk, but he did eat meat after having eaten cheese on that day. According to HY, there are even lofty Kabbalistic benefits from doing so. As many have noticed, the entire passage in HY is taken, slightly modified, from the teachings of Natan of Gaza, found in one of Abraham Rovigo’s notebooks. Hida comments in this regard are indeed less “dramatic” in their formulation and to the point. In short, he does reject this argument of HY (which Hida attests that had a major impact on common practice, and many changed their previous practice on its account), simply by claiming that the author of HY did not possess the "true writings of the Ari." He also adds:

And as for the tikkunim and secrets, we are poor hands and only listen to that which was written by R. Haim Vital of blessed memory that he received as tradition from the Ari ZTL. And even concerning the students of the Ari ZTL, who were fortunate enough to learn from his holy mouth, we have heard a warning from R. Haim Vital not to pay attention to their words, and R. Moshe Zacut was very strong about this, as is known.

Here too, as in other places, Hida does not mention the name of HY, but rather notes that "there is one who wrote" so and so, and to that anonymous opinion he replies. There is no slight doubt, however, that he was referring to. Hida’s directive not to pay attention to practices and customs that are not clearly found in the true writings of Luria and that were not punctiliously transmitted, is all about HY.

IV.

Among Hida’s many discussions of Lurianic practice and ritual, the fiercest and sharpest expressions of are directed towards HY. The examples above reflect well Hida’s general attitude toward the book. In each of them Hida’s criticism goes beyond the narrow response regarding a certain ruling or conclusion which Hida opposed and are formulated as fundamental criticism reflecting his approach regarding the work at whole, its motives, and its basic nature.

Indeed, it is undeniable that Hida did study HY. He clearly possessed the work in his library and he read it from time to time, and some portions of the prayers formulation that Hida authored are, to some extent, based on versions found in HY (although regarding the prayes, it should be noted that this phenomenon is much less significant than Yaari and Benayahu stated, and Hida’s very careful and selective utilization of some of HY’s prayer formulations may actually indicate his cautious approach and his reservations about the work).

The key for understanding Hida’s attitude towards HY was actually given by Hida himself, in the second instance where he mentioned HY’s name explicitly. As like as in the first instance when the work is mentioned by name – the first of Ya’ari’s two references – Hida only cited a text who explicitly quoted the name of the book, and again, Hida used the unfamiliar acronym SHY, סח"י. After moving on to discuss that text, Hida notes that “It is known that the afore-mentioned book (=HY) rose as a compilation (of) genuine sayings of the commentators and halakhic authorities, and this saying [brought in HY] was taken from the Rabbi [author of] the *Manot HaLevi* (R. Shlomo Alkabets)." In other words, Hida detected a point that has been proven just recently, namely, that HY is almost entirely compiled from earlier sources.

This understanding shaped Hida’s attitude towards the work: with certain parts of it he had now problem, while other portions he rejected fundamentally. Thus, the simple formulations of prayers in the book or the Lurianic reciting rituals and *tikkunim*, without any noticeable changes from the rigorous Lurianic transmission, are not problematic in the slightest. In fact, most of the sections of *mussar* [ethical teachings] and halakha are not problematic in of themselves. That commentary on the Yom Kippur Temple Service, for example, which Hida noted that he read on the eve of Yom Kippur 5743 is essentially a compilation of earlier writings taken from the works of 16th century scholars Moshe Cordovero and Moshe Nigrin.

By contrast, the aspects of HY that did exasperate Hida were those related to the Lurianic practice, and more accurately to the distortion and misuse of this body of knowledge and practice. HY, perhaps the best representation of –to use Hida’s own words – the despicable “summaries and compiled works” – exemplifies well what Hida has considered to be an unacceptable approach regarding the Lurianic practice and the transmission of the Lurianic teaching in general.

Stated differently, Hida certainly did not share the approach of Jacob Emden of banning HY. He himself indeed read it and distinguished between the various layers of the book. However, his overall attitude (as opposed to his attitude toward any specific matters of halakha or ethics cited therein) towards the notion of mixing authentic and non-authentic Lurianic practices, compiling and publicizing prayers in which the Lurianic *kavanot* were utilized in a manner not in accordance with the esoteric Lurianic tradition, and the like, was profoundly negative. It is not without reason that even on the few occasions when Hida did refer to HY directly he refrained from mentioning its name explicitly, and only alluded to it using initials.

In this sense, this criticism is not *directly* related to issues of Sabbateanism. Even if Hida did not consider HY to be a Sabbatean work in the “narrow” sense, he did consider it to be a *popular* work, in the negative sense of this term (mixing together both legitimate and illegitimate material, citing traditions that are unreliable and unauthentic).

But it seems that there is more than that, regarding the Sabbatean perspective. First, on the one hand, the immediate Sabbatean context of the particular practices against which Hida has written so fiercely is evident. The most obvious is the dispute regarding Teffilin in Friday afternoon, where the Sabbatean context of performing this practice is quite convincing, and Hida’s expressions in this regard, linking it to suspicious writing texts in general (“one needs great awareness of the character and nature of these works") strengthens this case. In other practices and customs the Sabbatean context is clear as well, as at least some of them either stemmed directly from Sabbatean circles or were widespread especially among these circles. HY’s argument regarding eating meat after cheese, for instance, is taken directly from teaching of Nathan of Gaza. There is no reason to assume that Hida was aware of the immediate Sabbatean context of this argument and of its source, but that is not relevant to the general picture. The argument it is not about one or another particular custom that its Sabbatean roots are evident, but about the comprehensive life framework of the Sabbatean circles and to its connection to the phenomena to which Hida points. For, it is more than a the Sabbatean context of a specific custom that is intriguing: the frequent connections between Sabbatean circles and inappropriate variations of Lurianic practices are not mere a coincidence.

In other words: perhaps Hida did not view HY as a Sabbatean work in the simple sense of the term. But the same characteristic of what Hida refers to as creating "summaries and compiled pamphlets" – (mixing reliable and unreliable traditions, deviating from the careful transmission of the Lurianic teachings, etc.) was, in his opinion, the flaw *inherent* in the Sabbatean movement, at least following Sabbatai Zevi’s death.

The Sabbatean movement (and more specifically: the followers of Nathan after the conversion) soon became deeply engaged with kabbalistic-Lurianic pious practices. In southern Europe this was the most common expression of Sabbateanism in the 18th century; the Italian character of the crypto-Sabbatean cicrles was of a pietistic-ascetic, elitist, groups, attempting to observe a pious Lurinanic daily routine. This is the context in which the tensions between the Sabbatean movement and the broader issues that were agonizing Hida – i.e. the popularization of Kabbalistic knowledge and practice, the unregulated distribution of Lurianic, semi-Lurianic or pseudo-Lurianic texts, and to the ways in which these tightly relate to unreliable, and even suspicious, figures and beliefs. The pious ascetic Lurianic domain is the one in which the crypto-Sabbatean circles in Italy were operating, and in this context – and the extent of their deviation from the strict Lurianic traditions – they shall be assessed.

In other words: Sabbateanism quickly underwent a transformation from a movement which its antimonian, revolutionary force was standing out, to a one which its most apparent characters were its kabbaksistic-Lurianic, traditional and continuous aspects (aspects that indeed were present from the movement’s birth). From a movement which contains not minor voices of reservations about the Lurianic school, it quickly became almost a sub-school within the Lurianic school of kabbalah, a pietistic and in many cases elitist sub-school. In this context Hida rises and responds, basically saying: you want to take part in the Lurianic cultural and practical sphere - be my guests; but please: play according the proper, accurate and rigorous rules.

By approaching this question from a somewhat different angle will enable to briefly address a close question, namely, of Hida’s attitude toward Sabbatean sages. As Isaiah Tishbi has shown, Hida did not refrain from praising rabbis and sages even after he learned that they had adopted certain versions of the Sabbatean belief. On the other hand, Hida also repeatedly expressed strong aversion to the Sabbatean belief itself. When he learned of those sages who adopted this belief he cried out and expressed great sorrow, and when he referred to the zealousness of Jacob Emden in his struggle against Sabbataism, he named the followers of Sabbatai "the cursed sect that violates [prohibitions rendering one guilty] of excision and death at the hands of the court."

Even without directly resolving Hida’s attitude to Sabbateanism in general, utilizing more complex parameters to distinguish between different contexts and situations of the Sabbatean movement will be extremely productive in this regard. As there was no such one “Sabbateanism” but various expresses of beliefs and practices in various cultural, social and geographical contexts, in the prism of the current discussion, the most pertinent distinction should be between the Sabbatean belief itself and the way it was expressed and its setting in life. The major theological issues might be interesting, though not they are what especially troubled Hida when #encountering a certain figure with connections to circles close to the faith of Sabbatai. Rather, the questions of religious practice and the modes of transmission of Luria's traditions were much more critical in his mind. Take, for example, Binyamin Hakohen Vitali. When Vitali maintained the rulings of his teacher (Zakut) without any deviation whatsoever, not accepting any guidelines or practices that deviated from the strictly authentic Lurianic tradition (such as in his firm opposition to donning teffilin on Friday afternoon), the question of his exact beliefs is relatively a minor one. By contrast, the same "believing rabbi who was seduced in our many sins by nonsense" and asked whether perhaps he should not fast on the 9th of Av, or the attempt to abolish part of the *Tikun Hatzot* because there is no longer any theosophical need for it, was far more disturbing. In general, given the strict pietistic orientation of the "Nathanian" circles in Italy, it seems that when no real deviations from Lurianic practices were discovered, Hida saw no need to question the status and social and religious standing of figures connected to these circles.

Hida, consequently, was not a "Sabbatean hunter," as was Jacob Emden on one hand or some contemporary Sabbatian scholars on the other, both of whom searching for Sabbatean theological residues within different layers of a particular written composition. However, he was very sensitive to deviation from custom, to instructions that were without basis, and to the mixing of different types of materials in this context. True, the repeated warnings of Hida to rely only on the true Lurianic writings are related, no less, to the main principles of the Lurianic *theosophy*, whose inaccurate editing and modifications included errors and inaccuracies according to Hida. In this context as well Hida did not accept improper mixing of material or “compiled summaries.” But when focusing specifically on the various expressions of the Sabbatean movement and faith more than a hundred years following the death of Sabbatai Zevi, Hida does not identify the main point of struggle neither as one of questions of faith nor as one of assessing the true nature of a text or a sage, but rather as the questions that arose concerning the practical expression of those ideas within personal and public religious life.

Hida’s personal diaries instruct that Hida was returning a few times to HY and reading potions of it (or booklets derived directly from it) in the 1760’s and 1770’s. After 1779, in his last twenty-six years of life, it seems that Hida ceased to do so, and that is telling. (The one exception of Yom Kippur 1782 is not quite relevant, since it has to do with studying a scholarly commentary of the temple service taken from writings of 16th century scholars, and not with any matters of Lurianic kabbalah, ritual, practice and prayer).

Did one particular event, or perhaps a concrete series of events around 1780 cause him to seemingly abandon the study of HY or the prayer books based on it? Perhaps it be attributed to the printing of certain works of Kabbalistic nature such of some of *Siddurei* *HaAri* in the last third of the 18th century, or of other works which were directly influenced by HY, a ruinous phenomenon in the eyes of Hida to which he felt bound to react by, at least personally (beyond his public#), after he has come to be more aware of this work’s harmful impact? That is possible. A much more tempting speculation is linking this to Hida’s personal biography and itinerary. After six years of travelling Hida finally settled in Livorno in 1778, where he resided until his death in 1806. Hida may have been reacting to the new local contexts which he has encountered, in which the use of HY was widespread in certain circles of the Italian Jewry.

These specific contexts and expressions could have been even the very same customs against which he had protested, such as reciting the prayers for the Seder night or for counting of the Omer (prayers which Hida attests that were quite popular), or the unacceptable novel calculation of the Shovavim fasts. The controversy regarding the nuanced issue of whether to don Tefillin on Friday afternoon has evoked more than half a century earlier – not too far from Livorno in the community of Modena – but the extent of Hida’s urgency and his unusually trubelent tone in this regardmore than indicate that the controversy and dispute has not completely subsided when he arrived. Although lacking any direct evidence linking Hida’s personal habits of reading or refraining from reading HY to his settlement in Livorno in 1778 – as some sort of reaction to the widespread of distorted Lurinaic practices among some groups of the Italian Jewry – this suggestion is indeed quite tempting.