

## ***The Ban on R. Yeḥiel Michal Pines in Jerusalem and his Relationship with his Brother-In-Law, Rabbi David Friedman of Karlin***

By: EITAM HENKIN\*

### **Background to the Ban on R. Yeḥiel Michal Pines<sup>+</sup>**

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ashkenazi community of Jerusalem's Old Yishuv felt itself under siege. The community had established itself in the early half of the century after disciples of the Vilna Gaon settled there and called themselves Perushim. The community grew and established synagogues, *kollelim*, *yeshivot*, and charitable institutions such as soup kitchens and orphanages. They were mainly supported by the *halukah* system of charity, in which donations from all over the world were sent to Jerusalem by their Jewish brethren to support their endeavors. The community was impoverished but prided itself on its Torah institutions and fidelity to the Jewish lifestyle and traditions of its European forbears.

By the late 1800s, however, this way of life was threatened by several developments. Waves of Jewish immigration brought a different sort of immigration to Palestine. These settlers of the "New Yishuv" were proponents of Jewish self-sufficiency and attacked the *halukah* system. The Old City of Jerusalem was overcrowded, lacking in sanitation, and poor, so several projects were initiated to develop new neighborhoods outside the city walls. Philanthropists were donating funds for these neighborhoods and for education projects to teach Jewish youth the skills they

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+ This section, providing background information, was written by Michael Appel.

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R. Eitam Henkin ד"ר, by the time of his death at age 31, had authored over 50 articles and three books. He was renowned both for his halakhic writings and for his mastery of the byways of the rabbinic world of the 19th and 20th centuries. He wrote *לכם יהיה לאכלה* on laws of insect infestation, *אש תמיד*—*biddushim* and *be'urim* on *dinei Shabbat* of the *Mishnah Berura*, and a historical work on *Arukh Ha-Shulhan*. His murder, together with his wife Naama ד"ר, on *Hol Ha-Moed, Sukkot* 5776 was a great loss to both the Torah and academic communities.

would need to get jobs. The leaders of what was now known by contrast as the “Old Yishuv” dug in their heels and refused to compromise on its way of life. This meant a traditional *heder* and yeshiva education for boys in which only the Torah was studied. There was no room for secular subjects. Any hint of a breach was dealt with quickly and harshly.

In 1878, R. Yehiel Michal Pines arrived in Jerusalem as the representative of the Montefiore Trust. He was a Polish Jew from a rabbinic family, steeped in Torah but with a secular education alongside it. While still in Europe, he became a member of the Hovevei Zion movement and was thus a perfect candidate for his mission. He set out for Jerusalem to help build new neighborhoods outside the walls and to develop vocational programs. Almost immediately upon arrival, he was viewed with suspicion by the disciples of R. Yehoshua Leib Diskin, one of Jerusalem’s leading rabbis. In 1880, the first of two bans against R. Pines was proclaimed.

Contrary to the impression conveyed by the ban and by later *haredi* books, R. Pines was far from the heretical *maskil* who intended to corrupt the youth of Jerusalem’s Old Yishuv. R. Eitam Henkin carefully documents his standing in the Lithuanian yeshiva community. He uses documents, letters, and previously unpublished manuscripts to show that R. Pines was a well-regarded *talmid hakham*, a student of R. Mordechai Gimpel Yaffa and brother-in-law of R. Dovid Karliner, a well-regarded *talmid hakham*. Furthermore, he shows that Jerusalem’s other leading rabbi, R. Shmuel Salant, as well as most of Jerusalem’s rabbis firmly sided with R. Pines against the zealots supported by R. Diskin.

R. Henkin’s articles on this subject focus on the incidents that led to the bans as well as the wider communal battle lines that were drawn between the moderate faction and the zealots of Jerusalem. He documents the phenomenon of hagiographical biographies that attempt to erase the moderate voices from the history of the Old Yishuv, leaving the impression that the entire community embraced the minority’s extremism, claiming it as the only expression of “Torah-true” Judaism to this day.

## Introduction

In the years 1880–1882, R. Yehiel Michal Pines was subjected to two bans in Jerusalem. R. Pines was a Torah scholar and a community leader who had come to Jerusalem several years earlier, representing the Moses Montefiore Testimonial Fund, which promoted Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel. This incident took place shortly after R. Yehoshua Leib [“Maharil”] Diskin arrived in Israel from Brisk and gathered a following around

himself. It constituted the first significant struggle by the zealots of Jerusalem's Old Yishuv Ashkenazic community, and had a broad impact on the ongoing relationships within Jerusalem's Jewish community.

The activities of the Jerusalem zealots from that period onward can be characterized by three features: First, they were a minority of the city's population, Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Second, they received the backing of a prominent Torah personality. And third, their activities were carried out against the will and positions of most of the city's Rabbinic leadership. The ban of R. Pines was the first time in which all three of these characteristics converged, making it an important milestone in understanding the development, conduct, and influence of the community of Jerusalemite zealots, whose activity would be expressed again and again in the ensuing years: a few years later in the *shemitta* controversy; then in their famous war against R. Kook at the end of R. Yosef Hayyim Sonnenfeld's lifetime; and ultimately, in the emergence of the modern-day *Edah Haredit* as it is constituted today. Later on, this community would produce several historians, or perhaps more aptly, revisionist writers, who in an impressive literary undertaking, would transform the history of Jerusalem's zealots into the official and sole history of the entire scrupulously religious community of Jerusalem, by sweeping under the rug any mention of multiple positions, religious outlooks, or internal disagreements.

Someone whose historical knowledge is based on books such as *Mara D-Ara Yisrael* [A biography of R. Y.H. Sonnenfeld] by R. Menachem Mendel Gerlitz might feel uncomfortable reading this article. That book, together with others like it, have considerable influence on the historical consciousness that rules the day among those who consider themselves to be the rightful heirs of the venerable Jerusalemite rabbinate. They feel compelled to follow the path of Jerusalem's zealots without knowing how vehemently the Torah giants of the time criticized them—even while feeling obligated to their path as well. The ban on R. Yehiel Michal Pines is an ultimate example of the difference between the common “knowledge” and actual history.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Menachem Mendel Gerlitz first wrote about the ban episode in *Mara D-ara Yisrael*, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 265–69, and again with some small revisions in Vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 2003), pp. 122–26. He based much of it on his father-in-law, Yosef Sheinberger's book, *Amud Esh* (Jerusalem, 1954), pp. 114–18. Shlomo Zalman Sonnenfeld followed in their wake with *Ha-ish al Ha-homa* (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 189–201, and added several details of his own. Gerlitz (as his father-in-law before him) relied on R. Yehiel Michal Pines' description of the ban incident by copying complete passages from his letter, *Shimu Harim Rivi* (See *Mara D-ara Yisrael*, Vol. 2, p. 122) while leaving out whatever was inconvenient

Let us illustrate how R. Gerlitz dealt with this story, and with historical material in general, using the following example: After the ban was placed on R. Pines' *bet midrash* (see below), R. Alexander Ziskin Shachor of Jerusalem—who knew R. Pines and befriended him in Ruzhany<sup>2</sup>—turned to his uncle, Netziv of Volozhin, asking him to intervene on behalf of the victim (“to fight his battle”). Netziv answered with a lengthy response, complex and balanced.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, he declined to impugn the decisions and direction of R. Y.L. Diskin, whom he was quick to praise, “I cannot imagine how one could reproach the *gaon* and *tzadik* R. Yehoshua Leib, *sblit*”*a*. Does a man of his stature need to be reminded how discord is abhorrent and how much we must be concerned for the desecration of the Name? And that he carefully balanced the cost of strife against the benefit?” On the other hand, he praises R. Pines and dismisses the personal charges leveled against him. With that, he goes on a lengthy criticism of R. Pines’ activities in Jerusalem, and determines that R. Pines must move from Jerusalem the institution he founded—even while defending him.

On the whole, Netziv’s letter displays support for R. Diskin’s position (and not with the ban itself). However, R. Gerlitz seems to feel that Netziv showed too much respect for R. Pines. Therefore, he systematically censored any sign of Netziv’s respect for R. Pines. For example, in the sentence “With respect to his [R. Diskin’s] making me aware of his conflict with the scholarly and pure Rabbi M. Pines, may he live and be well,” he changed the reference to, “the scholar Michal Pines.” The sentence “I have never met the upstanding gentleman R. Michal Pines, may his light shine,” is revised to, “The gentleman Michal Pines.” The sentence “They wisely chose the upstanding gentleman Rabbi Michal Pines, may he live

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for him. [A facsimile of the original is printed in Benjamin Kluger’s book *Min Ha-makor*, Vol. 5 (Jerusalem, 1987), pp. 17-18. The complete original manuscript, longer than what has been publicized, was printed by Alter Druyanov in *Ketavim L-Toldot Hibbat Zion*, Vol. 3 (Tel Aviv, 1932), columns 366-382].

<sup>2</sup> See: Eliezer Rafael Malachi, “Mishpahat Berlin V-ha-yishuv,” *Talpiot*, Year 5, Vol. 3-4 (New York, Tevet 1951), p. 399. We will add an important but little-known fact: From a letter by Mordechai Gimpel Yaffa to R. Pines on 21 Iyar 1882 (to be published in a forthcoming article, see further, note 23), we see that Pines appointed Ziskind Shachor as a *maggid shiur* (lecturer) in his study hall—the very study hall that was placed under the ban by the zealots!

<sup>3</sup> Letter dated 14 Nissan 1882, first published in *Ketavim L-Toldot Hibbat Zion*, op cit., cols. 382–386. The editor notes at the beginning of the letter that this was apparently a first draft or copy, as it lacked a signature.

and be well,” is revised to, “The gentleman Michal Pines.” And so forth.<sup>4</sup> The gist of this project of R. Gerlitz and his colleagues will become self-evident in this article, which deals with the story of the ban against R. Pines, or more exactly: with the attitude of the rabbis of Jerusalem and the Diaspora toward him in light of this episode, as a historiographical litmus test.

### **The *Emek Berakha* pamphlet**

The story of the ban has already been covered in several places.<sup>5</sup> We will focus mainly on the circumstances and revelations concerning the rabbis who were involved—particularly regarding R. Pines’ brother-in-law, R. David Friedman of Karlin, author of *Yad David*, and *Sheilat David*.

In the month of Av, 1880, several members of R. Diskin’s circle first enacted the ban on R. Pines. The cause was R. Pines’ association with the orphanage of Dr. Wilhelm Herzberg, in which foreign languages were taught—proscribed by Jerusalem’s rabbis twenty years earlier. A year and a half later, in Tevet 1882, an additional ban was imposed, this time at the behest of R. Diskin himself, after R. Pines founded a *bet midrash* for the youth of his neighborhood. The first half of the day was devoted to learning trades and the latter half to Torah study. According to R. Diskin and his followers, this would soon become a place of heresy and “Haskalah.”

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<sup>4</sup> I have many more similar examples. For the sake of brevity, I will cite just one significant one: In *Mara D-ara Yisrael* (Vol. 1, pp. 258-59, Vol 2, pp. 114-15) R. Sonnenfeld’s letter from 1886 to R. Hayyim Hirschenson, editor of *Ha-misdrona*, is published. In it, he sharply criticizes “the heretic Pines” over an anonymous article written in the previous issue of the monthly publication, later identified as R. Pines’. R. Gerlitz knows to note that the letter was published in *Ha-misdrona* with omissions (Year 1, Issue 5, Jerusalem 1888, p. 240). So he must also know that, in the same issue, R. Hirschenson published a response clarifying that the author of the article in question was not R. Pines (“he knows nothing of this article”) but R. Hirschenson himself! Therefore, when R. Gerlitz writes, “Michal Pines, albeit anonymously, had already warranted criticism from R. [Sonnenfeld] on his article and research about the word ‘*apikors*’” (*Mara D-ara Yisrael*, *ibid.*), he is deliberately misleading his readers.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Geula Bat Yehuda’s article “R. Yehiel Michal Pines” in *Notrei Moresbet* (Jerusalem 1968), pp. 211–19. It should be noted that her description is biased at times, and requires a full critical treatment. More balanced is R. Yaakov Filber’s article “Ha-hinnukh B-Mishnat Ha-Rav” in *Matatia-Sefer Ha-asor L-Yeshivat Bnei Akiva B-Netanya* (Herzliya 1971), pp. 176–186—although his description is extremely general. See also A. Malachi, “Igrot R. Y.M. Pines L-Rav Y.M. Solomon,” *Talpiot*, Year 6, Issues 3-4 (New York, Iyar 1956), pp. 753–757 (one of many articles that this prolific researcher and bibliographer wrote on the history of R. Pines).

When the first ban was declared in 1880, R. Friedman set out to defend his brother-in-law by composing a pamphlet entitled *Emek Berakha*, which contained a comprehensive halakhic explanation of excommunication bans and communal edicts, in which he assailed at length the possible arguments of the excommunicators. He finished the pamphlet in Av, 1881 (p. 15a). The first ban dealt with the question of teaching foreign languages in Jerusalem. Therefore, R. Friedman addressed this issue directly, concluding that the ban was no longer in force (p. 14a). After R. Friedman sent the manuscript to his brother-in-law, R. Pines prepared it for publication, along with *Karnei Re'em*, a responsum regarding the ban in general from the responsa of R. Eliyahu Mizrahi. He had prepared the title page with the date of 1881 (using the numerically equivalent phrase, “the year of ‘no ban or excommunication will arise in your camp’.”) However, the final editing was delayed for several months, and by then, in Tevet 1882, the second ban was imposed, referred to in the publisher’s endnotes on the last page of the pamphlet. The delay in publication allowed R. Friedman to compose an additional letter concerning the *bet midrash* founded by his brother-in-law, in which he concluded that the excommunicators were committing such an egregious judicial error that there was no validity to the ban instituted upon the *bet midrash* (“Responsum of the Author,” p. 15b).

Why was publication of the pamphlet delayed by half a year? R. Friedman’s notes on the responsum *Karnei Re'em* in the pamphlet were originally written in the margins.<sup>6</sup> This shows that after R. Pines prepared the manuscript of *Emek Berakha* for publication together with *Karnei Re'em*, he sent them to his brother-in-law<sup>7</sup> and waited for a response before publishing. After several months, he received them back with comments on *Karnei Re'em* and many additions to *Emek Berakha*<sup>8</sup> that he incorporated

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<sup>6</sup> Because most of the notes begin with “N.B.” or *Nikhtav B-Tzido*, “Written in the margin,” or similar. In the second note it says, “See what I annotated above,” i.e., on the page.

<sup>7</sup> With regard to *Karnei Re'em* this is explicit, as R. Friedman notes up front, “Author’s note: This is the first time in my life that I have seen the pamphlet *Karnei Re'em* since its publication, and I decided to elucidate it with a few comments.” Regarding *Emek Berakha*, see the following note.

<sup>8</sup> These additions appear across the entire pamphlet, entitled “Author’s Comments”—and prove that R. Pines certainly sent him a copy of *Emek Berakha* prior to final publication, and received it back with comments. One must realize that many of the “Editor’s Objections” appear within the “Author’s Comments.” In other words, R. Pines wrote his comments only after his brother-in-law returned the original copy of the pamphlet.

into the final version. R. Pines added his own content to this version: comments on *Karnei Re'em* (published on the final page), comments and edits on the entire *Emek Berakha*, and most importantly, a comprehensive article of the topic of bans in Judaism, published as an Introduction to the pamphlet.<sup>9</sup>

In 1906, “The Objections of the *Gaon* R. David Friedman of Karlin to the Introduction of the Pamphlet ‘Emek Berakha’” was published from a manuscript in the journal *Bet Aharon V-Yisrael*<sup>10</sup> by R. Bezalel Deblitzky. The reason R. Deblitzky saw fit to publish R. Friedman’s comments, and the issue that he raised, was not just because he wished to disseminate the Torah thoughts of a great rabbi. It was also, perhaps solely, because in his mind, these comments could reveal something about the relationship between R. Friedman and the author of the Introduction—his brother-in-law, R. Pines.<sup>11</sup>

Until now, the only known example in which R. Friedman was critical of his brother-in-law was in a letter from 15 Shevat 1894 concerning the upcoming *shemitta* year. At the end of the letter, he expresses his displeasure at his brother-in-law’s words regarding regulations established by the

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<sup>9</sup> The Introduction appeared anonymously. But Druyanov revealed the author’s identity based on Alexander Ziskind Rabinowitz’s note on one of the pamphlet’s copyists (*Ktavim L-Toldot H Hibbat Zion*, Vol. 3, col. 367), as did Geula Bat Yehuda in her article (supra. note 5) p. 214. They both missed the testimony of R. Pines himself in a letter to R. S.Y. Fin (Printed in *Ktavim L-Toldot H Hibbat Zion*, Vol. 1 (Odessa 1919), Letter 37): “I hope that you have already read the book, *Emek Berakha*, and the Introduction appended to it that came from my pen. Please tell me your thoughts on it.” This source was verified by Yosef Klausner (*Historia Shel Ha-safrut Ha-ivrit Ha-hadasba*, Vol. 6, Jerusalem 1959, p. 86), and later by R. Bezalel Deblitzky (see ahead). But they both missed the fact that by 1912, the author’s identity had been revealed by R. Shmuel Noah Gottlieb, secretary of R. David Friedman. In an entry he wrote about R. Friedman in his book, *Ohalei Shem* (Pinsk 1912, p. 179), he mentions *Emek Berakha* and notes that “a long Introduction was added, with good taste and knowledge, by his brother-in-law, the Rav, Gaon, Sage of the Kollel, R. Yehiel Michal Pines, *sblit”a*.” (Parenthetically, R. Gottlieb sent a letter to R. Pines on 15 Kislev 1911, asking him to send biographical material on R. Friedman in preparation for the entry in *Ohalei Shem*! See the Central Zionist Archives (henceforth: CZA), loc. A109/117, and an additional letter there from 1 Tevet 1911).

<sup>10</sup> Year 21, Issue 2 (Jerusalem, Kislev-Tevet 2006), pp. 20-28.

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, he toiled to emphasize any possible sentences that could—by his judgment—display a negative relationship. For example, “The author wrote this without looking into the Talmud and Responsa,” (end of the note on p. 5b); “The author did not understand all this,” (end of the note on p. 7a); “Here too, the author has erred,” (beginning of note on p. 7b); etc.

Sages: “That you liken the Sages to the elders of the State, who impose regulations and edicts at their own whim, and you have found them to err in this (G-d forbid),” and concluding, “It pains me to see that the bitter waters you imbibed in your youth from reading numerous heretical books have penetrated you like snake venom.”<sup>12</sup> This was written in 1894, twelve years after the ban. However, from the comments to the Introduction of *Emek Berakha*, R. Deblitzky wishes to establish that not only had “R. Friedman... opposed the character of his brother-in-law for years,” but also that “R. Friedman’s personal relationship to R. Pines, even at the time *Emek Berakha* was published, was one devoid of respect and even critical and derogatory.” This because, “As the reader will note, these comments are sharp and biting, and besides the many novellae contained within them reveal much about the manner in which R. Friedman regarded this brother-in-law of his.”

In truth, the reader will find that all the comments are written in typical rabbinic style, perhaps strident at times. But they are the typical style found in most arguments and comments of Torah scholars. Only one sentence is directed personally to the author, at the end of the first comment, “And the writer, for the most part, is not blameless.” However, in the broader context of his comments, one would have to reach the conclusion that even this sentence is yet another expression, albeit biting, of ‘religious zeal’ under which R. Friedman wrote his comments.

In fact, one could conclude that R. Friedman had a positive relationship with his brother-in-law R. Pines during the ban episode. *Emek Berakha* was a comprehensive, sometimes strident, defense of R. Pines from the onslaught of Jerusalemite zealots. Would it have made sense for R. Friedman to expend this much effort on defending his brother-in-law if

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<sup>12</sup> *Sinai*, Vol. 28 (Jerusalem 1966) p. 148. The background for these words is supplied by R. Pines in his autobiography, where he tells the story of how, at age nine, he picked up books of literature and *Haskalah*, reading them in secret [*Kitvei Yehiel Michal Pines*, Vol. 2, Book 1 (Tel Aviv 1939), p. 10]. How did R. Friedman know about this? R. Pines tells about how, when he was twelve, several community leaders came to evaluate his suitability for marriage prospects. One of the evaluators was “A young man, not yet thirty, an intelligent and deep thinker, who paced back and forth across the room with hands clasped behind his back, humming a pleasant tune. He was the famous *ilui* R. Dovid’l Kaminitzer... Today a well-known *gaon*, elder statesman of the Rabbis in the Diaspora, Our Master R. David Friedman, *sblit*”a...” (ibid. p. 12). In later years, R. Pines would live in his father-in-law’s house in Mohilev, where R. Friedman also resided, which deepened their familiarity with each other. It stands to reason that R. Friedman would have known about R. Pines’ interest in non-Torah literature.

his relationship was one of “criticism and disparagement” and lacking respect? Moreover, R. Pines is described in *Emek Berakha* in respectful terms: “As I have already explained (in a letter to my brother-in-law, the honored R. Y.M. Pines, may his light shine) from the [Talmud] Yerushalmi...”<sup>13</sup> The ones who suffer the brunt of sharp rebuke in *Emek Berakha*, ten times over, are the excommunicators of Jerusalem. One can feel the sting in the following example:

In these days, due to our many sins, the Torah sages of the Diaspora have diminished in number, until there remain only a scattered handful, like lonely grapes in a ruined vineyard. But in Jerusalem, I have heard that, thank G-d, they continue to multiply so much that, in one evening, one hundred and fifty great sages were born(?).<sup>14</sup> However, even today, I am not mistaken in saying that they are nothing compared to the great sages of the Diaspora. And their [Jerusalem’s] great sages are truly, in their full glory, relegated to their place alone. The Sages of Israel do not turn to them with their questions, do not ask for their advice, and those who crown themselves as ‘Rabbi of all Diaspora Jewry’ are impugning the honor of the real Diaspora rabbis and will have to answer for this in the next world.<sup>15</sup>

The allusion to the sage who stood at the head of the excommunicators is abundantly clear. The body of the pamphlet contains an additional sharp expression:

However, to fine, to administer lashes, or to excommunicate someone for his sins is not within the sole power of the one appointed only by the city leaders, unless the sage chosen for this role is one of the outstanding ones of his generation... Therefore, in my opinion, if the sage is not one of the outstanding ones, i.e., that he is a great authority in Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi and in the medieval authorities, and his fear of Heaven precedes his scholarship in all respects, then he has no right to initiate these actions, even though the

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<sup>13</sup> P. 4b, in the note.

<sup>14</sup> The parenthetical question mark is printed in the original, apparently added by R. Pines. It seems that R. Friedman is hinting to rumors from Jerusalem that the ban on R. Pines’ study hall was supported by “175 rabbis of Jerusalem” (according to R. Eliezer Mordechai Altshuler in his notes, published by Druyanov in his monthly, *M-Yamim Risbonim* Vol. 1, Issue 6 (Tel Aviv, November 1934), pp. 164–168). The reference appears to be about the number of rabbis certifying the ban.

<sup>15</sup> *Teshuvat Ha-mehaber*, p. 15b:1. See also p. 9a: “And specifically in the Holy Land...” etc.

masses appointed him [due to reasons and schemes that are well known, that I do not wish to specify in writing because my heart is in anguish when I contemplate the great sins that have befallen our generation in these areas and the resulting desecration of G-d's name].<sup>16</sup>

A side point: From the fact that R. Friedman's comments were written only on the Introduction and not the rest of the pamphlet, R. Deblitzky wishes to conclude that R. Pines withheld the Introduction from his brother-in-law prior to publication (*Bet Abaron V-Yisrael*, p. 20). However, this analysis does not fit with the facts. First, R. Friedman also did not see the "Objections of the Editor" to his words in *Emek Berakha* prior to publication. Even so, we do not have a single comment on these objections even though one would expect that he would respond to questions and objections to his own writings more than he would to an independent article in the Introduction. Second, and most importantly, R. Pines sent the draft copies of *Emek Berakha* and *Karnei Re'em* to his brother-in-law at the end of the summer of 1881 (according to the date on the title page). But he did not finish the Introduction until later, in Tishrei 1881,<sup>17</sup> indicating a lack of any deliberate "withholding."

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<sup>16</sup> "Author's Notes," p. 4a. This harsh statement requires further study, as it certainly does not represent the approach of the other great rabbis involved in this affair towards R. Diskin (see ahead). Against the approach of R. David Friedman, we will note here an interesting but little-known fact: His elder brother, R. Yosef Yisrael Friedman of Kaminitz, whom R. Friedman learned with as a young boy (cited in his entry in *Ohalei Shem*, p. 178), moved to Jerusalem as an elderly man and served as a judge in the religious court of R. Diskin! This circumstance was identified by R. Yosef-Yoel Rivlin (*Meah Shearim*, Jerusalem 1947, p. 165), who turned to the aforementioned rabbi for an approbation for a book by R. Zevulun Harlap, *Meor Haggym* on the Book of Proverbs (Jerusalem 1891), and by the epitaph on his grave copied by Asher Leib Brisk (*Helkat Mehokek*, Issue 7, Jerusalem 1902, p. 34b). Unfortunately, the family name copied from the epitaph is "Bergevin" (and this is also mentioned by Yaakov Gliss in *Encyclopedia L-Toldot Hakhmei Eretz Yisrael*, Vol. 2, Jerusalem 1977, col. 67), even though it also notes that he was a rabbi in Kamenitz, and the father's name matches, Shmuel. The name "Bergevin" is unknown, but the identification of this rabbi as the brother of R. David Friedman is unequivocally attested to by R. Yaakov Moshe Harlap (*Bet Zvul*, Vol. 1, Jerusalem 1942, p. 7), who was married to his granddaughter, and whose father served alongside him as a judge.

<sup>17</sup> The end of the Introduction is signed, "Here in the realm of peace, in the month when Orion sets during the day, in the year 'There are no screams and no breaches in our borders'" (p. 12a), The "month in which Orion sets during the day" is Tishrei (see Rashi, Proverbs 26:10. Its opposite is the Pleiades [=Iyar] —

### The *Luhot Ha-edut* Letters

There is more meaningful and direct evidence of R. Friedman's relationship with his brother-in-law during this time. Around the time of the ban, R. Pines published a pamphlet entitled *Luhot Ha-edut*, a pamphlet small in both dimension (10 x 20 cm.) and length (20 pages), published without a title page or publisher's details, in Jerusalem mid-1882.<sup>18</sup> The pamphlet comprises fifteen letters all relating to the episode of the ban,<sup>19</sup> whose

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see *Rosh Hashana* 11b). However, I have been unable to derive any reasonable numeric calculation, *gematria*, from the year "There are no screams and no breaches in our borders" (even if we alternately drop each of the words). Apparently, some of the letters were meant to be written in a smaller typeface and not included in the calculation, but it is reasonable that the year was 1882 (5642), during the waiting period prior to the final publication, and not in Tishrei of 1880 (5641), just two months after the first ban. A proof to this is that the title page of the pamphlet (edited in 1881, 5641) has no mention of the Introduction at all.

<sup>18</sup> P. 1 mentions the letter *Shimu Harim Rivi*, published in the year "Zeh Lo Kabir"—the letter was published in the winter of 5642 (1881-82). This letter, along with *Luhot Ha-edut* and *Emek Berakha*, was almost certainly published in the Jerusalem printing house of his friend R. Yoel Moshe Solomon.

<sup>19</sup> They are: **Letter 1:** From R. Pines to R. Diskin, inviting him to adjudicate the ban in the Sephardic religious court of Jerusalem. Several witnesses and judges from the Sephardic court signed in the margins to validate its content. **Letter 2:** From R. Yaffa to R. Shmuel Salant. **Letter 3:** Answer from R. Salant to R. Yaffa. **Letter 4:** From R. Friedman to R. Salant. **Letter 5:** R. Salant's answer to R. Friedman. **Letter 6:** From the rabbis of Jerusalem to R. Diskin. **Letter 7:** Text of the ban's release, from the Jerusalem rabbis. **Letter 8:** Additional letter from R. Yaffa to R. Salant. **Letter 9:** Addition of R. Refael Meir Panigel and R. Yakov Elyashar to the release of the ban on R. Pines. **Letter 10:** From an anonymous rabbi (according to the publisher, a well-known and respected great rabbi of Jerusalem). **Letter 11:** From R. Hillel of Shklov. **Letter 12:** From the trustees of the Minsk-Pinsk-Karlin Kollel in Jerusalem to R. Friedman. **Letter 13:** From the notables of Mohilev to R. Moshe Nehemiah Kahanov (providing stellar character testimony on behalf of R. Pines). **Letter 14:** Letter to R. Pines from 37 family members of Kollel Reisen, except for R. Eliezer Dan Ralba"g (who stood by the side of his relative R. Diskin, according to the publisher, *ibid.* and in *Shimu Harim Rivi*, "The *gaon* R. Shmuel Salant and the trustees of the kollels of Vilna, Zamut, Minsk, Pinsk, Grodno, and most of the Kollel Reisen stand by me. The trustees of the kollels of Warsaw, Hungary, Austria, and R. Eliezer Dan Ralba"g—close relative of R. Diskin—are with the zealots against me. And the rest of the people are undecided.") R. M.N. Kahanov is added in the margins. **Letter 15:** R. Friedman's joining with those who repealed the ban. Citations and surveys of most of the letters will be brought later.

credibility is not in doubt,<sup>20</sup> containing important findings for any serious research into this incident.<sup>21</sup>

We will begin with the second letter in *Lubot Ha-edut*, sent by R. Mordechai Gimpel Yaffa of Rozhny to R. Shmuel Salant on 22 Tevet 1882—two weeks after the second ban was imposed. R. Yaffa is surprised that R. Salant permitted the ban to happen; and suggest that perhaps R. Salant believed that the followers of R. Diskin knew R. Pines better than R. Yaffa did; and therefore, they must be correct in whatever faults they found with R. Pines. However, this was not so. R. Yaffa continues, heaping praise upon R. Pines, his history and activities,<sup>22</sup> and opines on how R. Diskin must have reached the opposite conclusion:

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<sup>20</sup> First, because the pamphlet was published during the lifetimes and in the place where most of the correspondents lived (and those who were far away were the brother-in-law and mentor of the publisher, the latter of whom explicitly referenced the pamphlet in one of his own letters), and there is no greater “matter that is revealed in the public eye” than this. Second, R. Pines has never been accused of any forgery. Even in this affair, he conducted himself honorably (see Note 37). Even R. Gerlitz and company relied on his words (See Note 1). Third, and most important, there is no evidence (in language, style, content, or facts) that would suggest a forgery. Fourth, there is plenty of corroboration in contemporary newspapers and writings (see notes 28, 33, etc.) that reinforce the contents of most of the letters. Finally, several manuscripts of the letters have been found in various archives (some originals, some copies). Not surprisingly, their contents match exactly the text found in *Lubot Ha-Edut*. This all goes without saying.

<sup>21</sup> The pamphlet was so rare that Druyanov notes that he was unable to find it (*Ketavim L-Toldot Hibbat Zion*, Vol. 3, note to col. 367). However, those who researched the incident later on were familiar with it and mentioned it briefly (Klausner, Kressel, et al), but none of them dedicated appropriate space besides Geula Bat Yehuda (see her article referenced in Note 5, pp. 218-19). A single original copy is housed at the National University Library in Givat Ram.

<sup>22</sup> He refers to R. Pines’ years in Rozhny, where he grew in his Torah studies. He then married and lived in his father-in-law’s house where he continued to advance in both Torah and secular studies, following “the path of the famous *gaon* R. Menashe Eilier *ob”m*, who was beloved by R. Shemaryahu Luria *ob”m* (Pines’ father-in-law)” (p. 3), who was a righteous man, “and he [R. Menashe Eilier] held freewheeling beliefs in several Kabbalistic practices” (p. 4). R. Yaffa continues to say that, although he did not always agree with this approach, “R. Pines was always dear to me because he was straight and always focused on Torah...” (ibid.) He continues to heap praise upon R. Pines, his Torah knowledge, piety, and character, “even though I sometimes disagreed with certain beliefs, and my personal practice is to follow the sages of Volozhin, whose customs have the force of Torah law and it is forbidden to freely doubt them. Still, I never stopped

When I received a letter yesterday from my friend, the sharp and well-known rabbi, the sage R. Michal Pines, may his light shine, that this decree had been issued by the *Gaon* and saintly rabbi from Brisk, may his light shine... I am expressing my love for him [i.e., R. Pines] as I have known him since his youth, and I have never met the sage from Brisk, even though I have heard of his reputation, good name, righteousness, and holy countenance. I also know that he undoubtedly acts for the sake of Heaven. So I must conclude because he is immersed in isolation in his Torah studies, that those who surround him must have slandered R. Pines in front of him... (p. 3). Therefore, I am surprised that his Honor [i.e., R. Salant] sees iniquity and did not look to dispute the matter, that they tarnished the reputation of R. Pines in the name of the sage of Brisk... (p. 5)

In an additional letter sent by R. Yaffa to R. Salant, on 25 Shevat 1882 (Letter 8), he adds an admonishment about “the travesty perpetrated against our friend, the precious and well-known rabbi, R. Michal Pines.” He writes that he was happy to read in R. Salant’s response (see below) what he had suspected from the beginning, that R. Salant had no part in the ban (p. 12). Similarly, he writes, “For many years now, I have considered my friend [R. Salant] to be the leading rabbi of Jerusalem, and he should be the decisor.”<sup>23</sup>

R. Yaffa’s hypothesis, that R. Diskin’s followers took advantage of his isolation from worldly affairs to sway his opinion against R. Pines, was validated by R. Salant’s response on 11 Shevat 1882 (Letter 3), which unequivocally and sharply declared:

That this entire incident with R. Pines happened without me and against my opinion... due to our many sins, among the men who come and go from the Rabbi of Brisk’s house, there are men of...<sup>24</sup> those who quarrel and cause strife, who invent lies and seek out sin amongst men who are righteous... I told this to the sage from Brisk

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loving R. Pines, then and now, seeing his honest practices...” (p. 4). Finally, he asks R. Salant to show the letter to R. Pines.

<sup>23</sup> Two letters from R. Yaffa to R. Salant and R. Salant’s response were re-published by Benjamin Yaffa in his book *Ha-Rav Mordechai Gimpel Yaffa—Minḥar Mikhtavim* (Jerusalem, 1978) pp. 88–92. I have written at greater length about the close personal friendship between R. Yaffa and R. Pines that lasted many years, which also expressed itself during the episode of the ban. I hope to dedicate a future article to this topic, please G-d.

<sup>24</sup> The ellipses replacing a deleted name appear in the original.

so that he would know to be careful and not to listen to them. However, to my great dismay, and to the distress of all who fear G-d, this man<sup>25</sup> still comes and goes with his friends to the great sage's house. The great righteous sage refuses to see iniquity in them because they put on a pure disguise. For this reason, my friend R. Pines has been ensnared by their wickedness, as they have made up lies about him every day...<sup>26</sup>

Further on in the letter, R. Salant describes how the zealots tried to involve him in the ban's proceedings, but he rebuffed them.<sup>27</sup> Still, he did not wish to publicly confront R. Diskin for fear that those gathered at the proceeding would not understand that both had pure intentions. And,

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<sup>25</sup> Referring to someone close to R. Diskin, whom R. Salant chastised earlier without mentioning his name. In his letter in *Ha'tzifira* (see ahead, note 34), R. Salant mentions this person again, adding several details: 25 years prior, he had distributed *pashkevlim* against "Ha-Rav Ha-Gaon Ha-Tzadik R. Yeshaya (Bardaki) *ob"m* with lies and falsehoods, as is his practice. Then, several years later, he did the same to Ha-Rav Ha-Gaon Ha-Tzadik, the well-known R. Meir Auerbach *ob"m*, R. of Kalish. And this is what he always does..."

<sup>26</sup> Pp. 5-6. At the time, this letter was copied and distributed widely: R. Salant also sent it to R. Friedman (see below, note 38); R. Yaffa sent it to R. Hayyim Berlin (mentioned in his letters which will be published separately, see Note 23); R. Pines sent it to R. Ze'ev Yavetz—a brother-in-law from another side of the family (see his letter from 21 Shevat 1882, CZA A109/120), and also to R. Yaffa's son-in-law, R. Yosef Zekharia Stern from Shavel, adding in the margins: "To his honor, my friend, the well-known *gaon*, R. Yosef Zechariah Stern, head of the religious court of Shavel! Please take note of these published writings. I implore you out of our long-standing friendship, for the honor of G-d and His Torah, for the love of His Land and His People, please join the battle to save me from my oppressors, who have embittered my life endlessly. Peace be with you, from your friend, Yehiel Michal Pines." (This letter had circulated among the descendants of R. Stern. It is currently held by R. Hayyim Stepansky, who graciously allowed me to copy it. It will be reprinted at the close of this article, Appendix 3, p. 38. Many thanks to him.) A sixth copy sits in the National University Library. (It is still not catalogued, but I have a photocopy. Thanks to Mrs. Rivkah Plesser for her help in locating it.)

<sup>27</sup> His words match R. Yaffa's description in his letter *Shimu Harim Riviv*: "And the great sage Shmuel Salant also encouraged me, as did R. Akiva Yosef Shlesinger, known by his book *Lev Ha-ivri*, who prayed in my study hall. However, this was a thorn in the sides of the evil destroyers... who convened a group in Jerusalem... without inviting those steadfast men who would remain unswayed, except for R. Salant, whom they hoped would join the masses—yet he was wise and foresaw the outcome, so he declined to participate..."

“ever since the great sage R. Diskin arrived in Jerusalem, I have acknowledged him as a sage and I defer to his honor.” However, “the great sage unwittingly trusts the liars who surround him, who have convinced him that he is fighting a holy war...” (p. 6). Later, he writes in a note to Letter 7 (p. 11), “... And the great R. Diskin was not accepted by the city elders as a rabbi and community leader. Since his arrival, he does not leave his house or the four cubits of halakha” (p. 11).<sup>28</sup>

R. Salant even joined with R. Yaffa as a character witness on behalf of R. Pines, writing: “In truth, since our friend R. Pines arrived in Jerusalem, I have spent much time with him on many matters, and have never observed any strange or heretical beliefs...” (p. 7). He adds that if anyone has questions or concerns regarding R. Pines’ writings, he should ask R. Pines directly.<sup>29</sup>

The pamphlet contains a letter sent by several of Jerusalem’s leading Ashkenazi rabbis to R. Diskin, among them R. Salant and his court, on 4 Adar 1882 (Letter 6). They ask him “to regard with his pure heart and respond with a clear answer, written and signed by his hand”<sup>30</sup> (p. 9). They write that the ban on praying and studying “in the *bet midrash* founded by R. Pines was not accepted by the masses, and the prayer quorum has con-

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<sup>28</sup> Regarding this, see the letter published at that time by R. Zvi Hirsch Salant, grandson of R. Shmuel Salant (who lived in Jerusalem then), in which he contradicted some rumors in an earlier article, writing: All that he wrote concerning a split, G-d forbid, between the Sage of Brisk (R. Diskin) and my grandfather (R. Salant) was drawn from a well of falsehood that contains no truth at all.” He adds that both men were equally opposed to the teaching of foreign languages in Jerusalem, except that “they differ slightly in the methods to achieve this goal. This is because there are young men who frequent the house of R. Diskin who have attracted other young men from the Kollel Chabad Ungarin Warsaw. They demonstrate at night with loud noise and terrify the people with their cursing and screaming against people they believe to be tolerant of secular studies in Jerusalem... They lie about them and make up stories to smear them in periodicals—thinking that this will stem the tide. They justify their actions by claiming that the great sage of Brisk is with them and agrees to their actions...” [*Halavanon*, 13 Ellul 1841 (Mainz, Yr. 18, Issue 7) p. 55].

<sup>29</sup> Regarding this: On p. 16 R. Pines mentions that R. Yehoshua of Kutna told his son-in-law R. Hāyyim Elazar Waks, in public, that there is no heresy in the book *Yaldi Ruḥi*. On the contrary, “it contains many good and pleasant things,” but one must have attained a high proficiency in Hebrew to understand them.

<sup>30</sup> Apparently to avoid charges of forgery. However, their request went unfulfilled. The publisher notes that the letter was sent to R. Diskin, who responded on the same day, via messenger, saying that “there is no reason to release the ban.”

tinued there every day, and many G-d-fearing men enter there. Many outstanding men are bitterly protesting this ban,” even among those who participated in the ban’s proceedings. “Also, we have received many letters from great sages of Israel and from community leaders in the Diaspora, screaming like a crane (p. 10). Subsequently, they describe how ten rabbis joined to nullify the ban on behalf of anyone who had not accepted it upon himself, and they ask R. Diskin to join them as well. The letter is signed by: R. Shmuel Salant, R. Moshe Neḥemia Kahanov, R. Avraham Eisenstein, R. Binyamin Wolf of Kavidian, and R. Mordechai son of R. Aryeh Leib.<sup>31</sup> The following Sephardic rabbis joined the aforementioned nullification: R. R.M. Panigel and R. Y. Elyashar (Letter 9).<sup>32</sup> Even R. David Friedman joined the nullification (Letter 15) and wrote that “there is no place for this type of ban on individuals, promulgated by a sage such as R. Diskin...” (p. 20).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> As the publisher notes (p. 11), the latter was one of the three original signers of the ban, who now retracted his opinion. A few details of his life are in *Encyclopedia L-Toldot Hakhmei Eretz Yisrael*, Vol. 2, col. 277. Biographical details on R. Binyamin Wolf of Kavidian are also scant [*ibid*, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1975), col. 243]. More information exists on R. Avraham Eisenstein, one of the elder judges in Jerusalem (*ibid*. col. 24-25, and see Gliss, *Mi-Gedolei Yerushalayim*, Jerusalem, 1967, pp. 65–70). A copy of the letter sent to R. Diskin by the rabbis is appended to this article, Appendix 1 (p. 36).

<sup>32</sup> The text of the ban’s nullification by the rabbis, headed by R. Salant, is brought in Letter 7. This text, along with the letters of R. Panigel and R. Elyashar, was published at the time as a public announcement that was apparently circulated prior to the publication of *Lubot Ha-edut*. A single copy survives in the Pines archive and will be appended to this article in Appendix 2 (p. 37). Similarly, there is a handwritten copy in the archive on Montefiore Testimonial letterhead, along with a copy of the letter from the rabbis asking R. Diskin to join them in nullifying the ban).

<sup>33</sup> Knowledge of the letters from R. Yaffa and R. Friedman to R. Salant was publicized at the time in *Ha-levanon*, 22 Adar, 1882 [Mainz, Yr. 19, Issue 10], pp. 76-77. It included a section from R. Friedman’s letter (even before its publication in *Lubot Ha-edut*). It also reported on the gathering of ten rabbis to nullify the ban, and on the messenger sent to R. Diskin asking him to join along with his negative response (including the name of the messenger, Avraham Telzer). These last details had been previously reported in brief, in *Havazelet*, 12 Adar, 1882 (Jerusalem, Yr. 12, Issue 20) pp. 154-55. The same details are corroborated in *Emek Berakha* itself, in R. Friedman’s description of the second ban: “... some of the Ashkenazi rabbis of Jerusalem got together and banned him... but the leading sage of the city [R. Salant] along with ten distinguished Torah scholars reversed the ban, and the Sephardic leaders and their rabbis went along, as did most of the population” (Author’s Response, p. 15b).

To conclude this section, let us cite one more letter from R. Salant, from Iyar 1882, published in one of the newspapers of the day, and similar in content to the other letters previously cited:<sup>34</sup>

Our friend R. Pines has shown us defamatory writings that evildoers sent from here to several destinations... When I saw these writings and the lies they contained, I was not surprised, as these men are well known to us, and they are famous for inventing lies that never happened and disseminating them through posters... G-d-fearing men did not push him away [R. Pines], only the evildoer and those like him have stung him with thorns and maligned him in front of R. Diskin. And he, in his pure innocence, believed their lies because they appear before him as G-d-fearing, which our sages have warned us against...

In truth, it was difficult for me to get involved in this matter against the great R. Diskin, and I was worried that this would create a schism between me and R. Diskin, whose honor is extremely important to me, as he is a great sage and Torah scholar who acts for the sake of Heaven. In my opinion, his only mistake is in listening to deceitful and quarrelsome men, whom he holds to be G-d-fearing. However, I could no longer stand idly by and see R. Pines' blood spilled on the ground. I had to uphold the commandment not to stand by while one's brother's blood is spilled. So when many Torah scholars who are listed, along with R. Moshe Nehemia, the rabbi of Haslovich, declared that this ban is not enforceable for those who do not voluntarily accept it, as explained in all the writings that were published with my signature and signatures of the other rabbis, thank G-d the fire has been quenched.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> The letter was published in *Ha'tzifira*, 12 Sivan, 1882 [Warsaw, Yr. 9, Issue 19] pp. 147-48. It is cited by Geula Bat Yehuda in her article (see Note 5), p. 219. A copy is preserved in the Pines archive, CZA A109/74. There is an interesting testimony corroborating the description in these letters—that R. Salant, even while greatly respecting R. Diskin, felt that he had been swayed by evil slander. Yehuda Aharon Weiss, as a child, attended R. Diskin's funeral with his father. He relates how, before the funeral procession, R. Salant “said a few parting, conciliatory words, in order to dispel the notion that he and R. Diskin had an argument not for the sake of Heaven.” He adds, “I heard that R. Salant said something like this: ‘Now that the honored Rabbi of Brisk is in the World to Come, he will know how many times gossip and slander were brought before him’” (*B-Sha'arayikh Yerushalayim*, Jerusalem, 1949, p. 90).

<sup>35</sup> “The writings that were published” are, apparently, the public nullification of the ban that was circulated in Jerusalem (see note 32) and/or the entirety of *Lubot Ha-edut*. In the rest of letter, R. Salant refutes each claim against R. Pines,

### The Viewpoint of R. David Friedman

As noted, Rabbis Yaffa and Salant were united in their opinion that R. Diskin's saintly and aloof personality caused him to trust the zealots who surrounded him. Just like Netziv before them, they chose to honor R. Diskin although they considered him to be gravely mistaken. R. David Friedman, on the other hand, had quite a different attitude towards R. Diskin, as we have seen. He expressed this in a letter to R. Salant on 25 Tevet 1882 (Letter 4), in which he bluntly admonishes R. Diskin and the "evil group" that surrounded him. He even called for a counter-ban(!) in response:

How can he turn a blind eye to the evil and oppression taking place in the holy city [Jerusalem], perpetrated by one of its leaders, who garbs himself as if he were a Heavenly angel with a club in his hand, as if guarding the Tree of Life. And with the Angel of Death who is with him—nightly<sup>36</sup>—they hurt all that is good, and will bring, G-d forbid, destruction upon the residents of Jerusalem, reveling in their shame as they watch my brother-in-law wallowing in his own righteous blood. The honorable Torah scholar Yehiel Michal Pines is a good and upright man, representing the righteous Sir Moses Montefiore, may he live a long life... (p. 7).

When I bring this matter to our rabbis, the Sages of the Diaspora, may G-d protect them, I will certainly not stand by while innocent blood is spilled. I call upon all the rabbis who still have some fear of G-d remaining within them to rise up and protect the victim, who is entitled to a defense, even at the cost of his pursuers' lives. Excommunicate them, as is appropriate for those who excommunicate the

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point by point: The claim that he associated with 'empty' men upon his arrival in Jerusalem "is a falsehood without evidence. In fact, upon his arrival here, he attached himself to G-d-fearing men, wise and intelligent..."; The claim that he was spreading *Yaldei Ruah* amongst the youth is also false, even though "I am not familiar with the essence of this book and I have not read it (since I have no knowledge of or experience with the language of logic and research methodologies)." In any event, I am sure that the book was not widespread in Jerusalem, and the zealots had to search diligently to acquire one. "Perhaps they did not understand what was in it, while I have expressed my honest opinion that perhaps they asked R. Pines himself about some details that they had difficulty with..." and so on.

<sup>36</sup> This harsh expression seems to be directed at Rabbanit Sarah (Sonia) Diskin, wife of R. Diskin, known as the "Brisker Rebbetzin." Many, including R. Friedman, blamed her for various disputes and controversies surrounding R. Diskin in Shklov, Brisk, and Jerusalem.

innocent... Let his honor reflect upon how much damage this will cause to the needy souls of Zion and Jerusalem who will be burned by the coals of the one responsible for the city... Theft and bribery infest the walls of Jerusalem from this accursed gang! (p. 8).

Through the harsh rhetoric of R. Friedman, written during the stormy era of the ban,<sup>37</sup> we learn of his positive feelings for his brother-in-law R. Pines, praised as “righteous in his conflict” and “an upright person” who was persecuted for no reason. R. Friedman fought with all his might to restore R. Pines’ trampled reputation.<sup>38</sup>

### **Conclusion**

What happened next? Perhaps R. Deblitzky wishes to believe that after R. Friedman “discovered the true nature” of his brother-in-law in the 1894 critical letter, he then turned his back on him and ceased to respect him

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<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that R. Pines himself shied away from the accusations directed at R. Diskin. With extraordinary integrity, he published a stinging rebuke against a specific critic: “I must say that it is a terrible thing in my eyes that he chose such language to heap scorn and disgrace upon a great man, distinguished above all sages of Israel in his Torah and his character. While I have suffered greatly at his hand, and I continue to suffer, as he does not cease his pursuit of me, and at his behest they hire men to slander me and hang posters... with all that, I am pained to see his honor and name tarnished to this degree. Because all that has befallen me through his hand has not blinded me, and I would never suspect him of duplicity, G-d forbid. I know that he believes himself to be acting for the sake of Heaven, even though he is mistaken, his zealousness for G-d has weakened his eyes. When we see all this, we can only feel the pain of the Torah, but Heaven forbid that we hear vilification of a Torah scholar and remain silent!” [*Ha-melitz*, 19 Sivan, 1882 (Petersburg, Yr. 18, Issue 20)], p. 388. This letter was also cited by Geula Bat Yehuda (see note 5), p. 219. In her words, “This letter is a badge of honor to Pines the man, and demonstrates his exemplary character.” We should also mention Pines’ letter to Alexander Cederbaum (Erez), editor of *Ha-melitz*, protesting his call to cease contributions to the *halukah* in order to deter the zealots: *Ha-melitz*, 29 Nisan, Issue 13, p. 241.

<sup>38</sup> The pamphlet goes on to cite a response from R. Salant to R. Friedman dated 10 Adar 1882 (Letter 5). His words are brief, with no mention of the complaints, implicit and explicit, against R. Diskin. But he reiterates his support for R. Pines, and summarizes what he had written at length to R. Yaffa (about how the zealots had tried to include him, but he refused). A copy of his letter to R. Yaffa is appended to this letter, along with the text of the ban’s nullification. He also writes that it was untrue that the ban was placed on R. Pines personally, but only on his study hall (p. 9). This is corroborated by a notice in *Ha-levanon*, 21 Tevet 1882 (Mainz, Yr. 19, Issue 2), pp. 15-16.

as before. But the facts prove otherwise. Despite the critique leveled at his brother-in-law for some of his opinions, the two men continued to maintain a close, respectful relationship and to keep in touch through their letters.<sup>39</sup> To illustrate, we present here for the first time a letter sent by R. Friedman to his brother-in-law in 1901. The content is interesting in its own right, but it also testifies to the continued involvement of R. Pines with his brother-in-law's affairs in Israel and to their close friendship.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> For example, The R. Pines archive preserves a copy of a letter he sent to R. Friedman on 1 Nisan, 1895, about a halakhic matter. It begins by mentioning a letter he received from R. Friedman on 26 Shevat (CZA A109/153). R. Pines sent another undated letter, found in CZA A109/118, regarding the Bikkur Ḥolim hospital. Also, see the letters referenced in the following footnote. Similarly, the letters of R. S.N. Gottlieb to R. Pines mention the letters he exchanged with his brother-in-law. For example, in a letter from 15 Kislev 1910, R. Gottlieb mentions a letter that R. Pines sent to R. Friedman on 29 Ḥeshvan, "and his honorable brother-in-law, our rabbi, was greatly pleased to receive his honor's letter," and requested more frequent letters because he worried about his health (CZA A109/118). Additionally, in the entry on R. Friedman in *Obalei Shem*, R. Pines is referred to respectfully (see Note 9)—a notable fact because this book was composed under the watchful eye of R. Friedman (the author, R. Gottlieb, was his secretary, confidante, and publisher), and some of it was written in his house. [In the publicity notices upon publication, the heading "Our address for sending funds and correspondence" refers to R. Gottlieb's address—alongside the address of R. Friedman himself; see, for example, *Ha-mitzpeh*, Issue 6 (New York, Sivan 1911), p. 16]. No doubt, R. Gottlieb assumed that R. Friedman would read his own entry, and therefore, this positive reference must reflect in some fashion his feelings for his brother-in-law.

<sup>40</sup> CZA A109/153. Words whose meanings are unclear are marked with an asterisk (\*), and completely unintelligible words are marked with lines (---). A photocopy of the beginning and end of the letter appear in Appendix 4 (p. 38; in the passages appearing in the photocopy, acronyms have been expanded. A portion of the letter, poorly deciphered, appeared in *Yeshurun*, Vol. 9, 2001, pp. 794-95). A similar impression of the relationship between the two men is evident from another letter sent by R. Friedman to his brother-in-law on Rosh Ḥodesh Nissan 1909, 15 years after the criticism in 1894. It is a personal letter concerning the health of R. Friedman in light of his desire to move to Israel: "To my honored brother-in-law, the pure R. Yeḥiel Michal Pines, may he always find blessing and happiness. With this, let all his descendants be blessed, as well as my sister-in-law, Ḥaya Zipa. Nothing is new with me. The winter was extremely tough on me, my health and my soul... I fervently hope that G-d will help me ascend to the Holy Land this coming summer. Accept my blessings that G-d bless you with all the happiness you desire in body and spirit, with the blessing of your brother-in-law, from my heart and soul..." (*Shnot Dor V-dor*, Vol. 1, Jerusalem, 2000, p. 301).

Wednesday, 13 Ellul, 1901, Karlin.

To his honor, my brother-in-law, the brilliant, learned and pious man, G-d-fearing above the rest, R. Michal Pines, may his light shine, may blessings and good fortune reside in his house and among all who are with him, may he live a long life.

My friend, with regard to the hospital in Jerusalem,<sup>41</sup> I went to visit my son around six weeks ago. When I returned from my trip I was unable to find our friend Rabbi Gottlieb, as he is in Dublin, returning home for Rosh Hashanah. Therefore, I do not know the particulars of the matter.

However, in general, charitable contributions here are decreasing, for several reasons: First, the tyrannical Zionist sinners are filling their sacks with money to spend on dances and parties, lies and deceitful debauchery. These false prophets have permitted themselves forbidden sexual relationships and public Sabbath desecration in the name of nationalism, etc. They are miserly with respect to other charities, and have destroyed them all. They bow only to their golden calves with no inhibitions. May G-d have mercy on his nation and open their eyes to see their transgressions. Second, the many *keriz-essen*,\* who have ruined all the honest businessmen. Only the thieves and robbers are successful. Third, the accounts must be printed, so that each donor can find his name. When R. Gottlieb returns, I shall send him the particulars.

Also, 25 copies of my books of halakhic decisions [*Piskei Halakhot*] and *Yad David*, Volume 2 are with me. I need to send them to Jerusalem, but I have no one here to deal with this, so I await R. Gottlieb. He has sold very few copies of Volume 2 of my work, but even that small sum has not yet reached me. This pains me, because had I received the correct amount of money, I could have sent Volume 3 to the printer, and now I must wait for a miracle. I owe a great deal to the printing house, for which G-d must help me.

My friend, as --- wrote to me regarding *Valera*,\* that the area of my plot has decreased, but is still considered substantial. Therefore, I gave my deed to the plot to your son-in-law R. David Yellin, who promised me that he would swap it for another deed in his name whose area and boundaries are specified. For this, I ask from him,

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<sup>41</sup> Reference is to the Bikkur Ḥolim hospital, where R. Pines served as secretary in those years. R. Friedman, and his secretary, R. Gottlieb, were big supporters of this institution and organized its fundraising in Russia. To illustrate, we will quote from a letter sent by R. Gottlieb that year, on 14 Tishrei 1900: "I hereby write on behalf of your brother-in-law, who is pressing me to write and urge you to send us the hospital's annual statements quickly, as he wishes to know all the details pertaining to this charitable cause..." (CZA A109/117)

or for --- to send me, a good deed in my name, marked with its boundaries and area. And if he can fence in the property, I request that he do so as well. Let him spend what he needs on the deed or the fence, and I will reimburse him. At least, let him secure the new, good deed and send it to me. Or, if he can easily sell it for cash, for which I would quickly net 500 rubles after expenses, then, even though it would pain me to sell my stake, I will do anything to clear my debts and publish the forthcoming volumes of my work.

I await his earliest reply, either with a new deed, marked with boundaries and signed by the Consul (or, if that's too difficult, without the Consul's signature), or 500 Rubles in cash.

Other than that, nothing is new with me. I wish you a Happy New Year, in which all your household is inscribed and sealed for a good year, along with my sister-in-law, Haya Zipa. May you and she live a long, happy life in all ways. From your dear brother-in-law, who wishes you all the goodness and happiness in life, David Friedman.

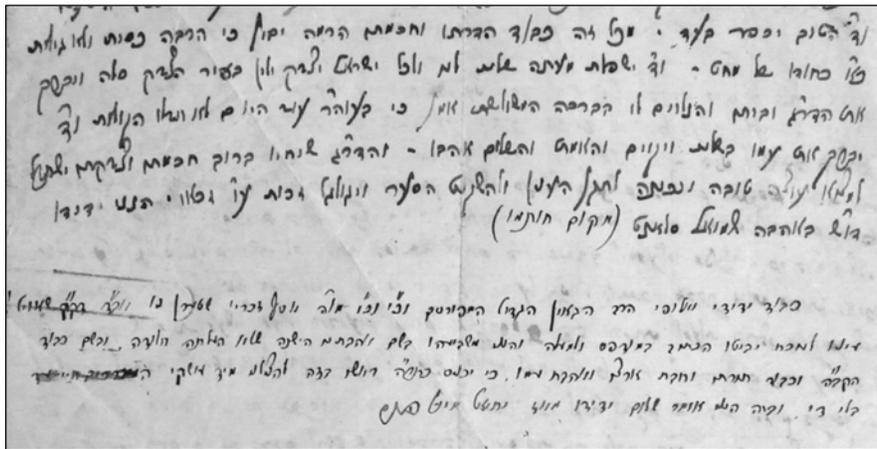
My friend, please keep me informed about all that is new in the Holy Land. The false prophets are trumpeting on behalf of Herzl, prophesying in the false spirit of Shabtai Zevi. In the month of October, the Turkish government will announce a vassal treaty giving the lands of P'lesehet and Syria to Israel, a State within the State of Turkey, and its evildoers, --- and Nordau. Or, they will give them a charter to capture other states, such as Cypress, or similar. Other such nonsense springs from them, all without receiving any good news. I pray to G-d that He open the eyes of our Jewish brethren and plant Torah in their hearts, so that they cease following nonsense. Let Him remove their hearts of stone and set them upon the correct path. --- did not prophesy the prophecies that were foreseen. Let us hope to hear news of comfort for the Torah and Israel." [The margins of the letter contain greetings in Yiddish from his wife Sarah.] ❧





### Appendix 3

Conclusion of a copy of R. Shmuel Salant's letter, sent by R. Yeḥiel Michal Pines to R. Yosef Zeḥariah Stern, adding several lines in the margins. From the handwriting, the copyist is not R. Pines, but is the same person who wrote the letter from the Jerusalem rabbis to R. Diskin (see Appendix 1)—in other words, the scribe of R. Salant's court. From a private collection (see Note 26).



### Appendix 4

Photocopy of the beginning and end of R. David Friedman's letter to R. Pines, from 1901. CZA A109/153.

