A Touch of Grace

Studies in Ashkenazi Culture, Women's History, and the Languages of the Jews Presented to Chava Turniansky

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Preface

The present collection of studies is dedicated, with much gratitude, admiration and love, to Professor Chava Turniansky by her numerous students, colleagues and friends in Israel and abroad. Marking her seventy-fifth birthday, and celebrating her long and productive career, it reflects the four major fields of research to which her contribution has been path-breaking: Ashkenazi Jewish culture, Old Yiddish Literature, the languages of the Jews, and the position of women in Jewish society.

Born in Mexico to immigrant parents from Lithuania and Poland, Chava, née Punsky, was brought up in a Zionist household steeped in East European Jewish culture, and was educated in both Yiddish and Hebrew. In 1957 she immigrated to Israel, where, having already qualified as a teacher – a vocation that was to define her academic practice and mark her as an exceptionally devoted mentor to her students – she enrolled in the Hebrew University to study Jewish history and Yiddish literature with the leading exponents of these subjects at the time, among them Israel Halpern, Haim-Hillel Ben-Sasson, Shmuel Ettinger, Dov Sadan, Chone Shmeruk, and Shmuel Werses. Her doctoral dissertation, written under the supervision of Chone Shmeruk, was devoted to the bilingual – Hebrew and Old Yiddish – literature of Ashkeanzi Jewry in the early-modern period. From 1963 until her retirement in 2005, she taught at the Hebrew University's Yiddish Department, of which she served as Head for several terms of office, while periodically being hosted as Visiting Scholar by academic institutions abroad, including Oxford University's Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, University College London, Università degli Studi di Milano, the University of California Berkeley, and the University of Pennsylvania. Her scholarly achievements have earned recognition in the form of several prestigious awards, including the Emma Schaver Prize (1987), the Itzik Manger Prize (1988), and the Bialik Prize (2006). In 2007 she was elected

Fellow of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and in 2013 was awarded the State of Israel's highest hounour, the Israel Prize.

Chava Turniansky's scholarship encompasses the full scope of the Ashkenazi diaspora's literary production in Yiddish, from the earliest extant sources, through the writings of the Haskalah period, to modern Yiddish literature. Much of her work has focused on bilingual Yiddish-Hebrew writings in a variety of literary and historical contexts. She has shown how Yiddish translations and adaptations that mediated the Hebrew canonical literature of Judaism to a wide public, including women, played a crucial role in the transmission of religious values and norms of conduct that gave distinctive shape to Ashkenazi society and culture. Her pioneering studies are devoted to such topics as the Yiddish translations of the Hebrew Bible and the epic poetry written in Yiddish on biblical themes, Yiddish songs commemorating historical events, the characteristics of Yiddish literature in Italy, the didactic works written in Yiddish in early-modern Amsterdam, and the contribution of women to the development of Ashkenazi book culture. Perhaps her greatest single achievement is the bilingual edition of Glikl's 'memoirs' – a unique late-seventeenth to early-eighteenth-century 'ego document' written by a woman. Glikl's original Yiddish text is accompanied by Chava's ingenious Hebrew translation and illuminated by her magisterial Introduction as well as copious notes on both the Yiddish and the Hebrew version.

According to Glikl's own testimony, she was driven to write her 'memoirs' by the bitter experience of widowhood following the premature death of her beloved first husband. It is, perhaps, not by accident that Chava was drawn to her Glikl project in the wake of the sudden and premature death of her own beloved husband, Uri, to whose memory she dedicated the Glikl volume. She produced the bulk of the work during many years of bitter widowhood, but eventually found solace and a new happiness with her partner Berti (Zvi) Salzman.

In the name of all the contributors, we are delighted to present this volume to our beloved Chava, and to wish her many more years of productive work and domestic fulfilment.

FROM "LADIES' AUXILIARY" TO "*SHLUHOT* NETWORK": WOMEN'S ACTIVISIM IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY HABAD

Naftali Loewenthal

Tradition and Empowerment

As illuminated by Chava Turniansky, Glikl of Hameln provides a famous paradigm of a woman who balances different roles: pious and loving wife and mother, and at the same time, energetic businesswoman empowered by a considerable degree of knowledge, in an early modern German-Jewish setting. In a post-Holocaust western context, the Habad-Lubavitch activist woman also provides an example of the balancing of roles, or even the combination of contrasts, which this paper seeks to explore.

Given that twentieth-century Habad-Lubavitch begins in Eastern-Europe, with its spiritual leadership centered first in Russia, then briefly in Latvia, then Poland, there is no surprise that in the move to the west in the mid twentieth century there is indeed change, possibly radical, combined with deliberate attempts at continuity and traditionalism. Indeed, the same can be said of any Orthodox or Haredi society in the modern period, as regards both men and women. The noteworthy innovation in the case of the women of Habad-Lubavitch is the union of two disparate and seemingly contrasting roles: on the one hand, the creation of an empowered, Jewishly-learned and often charismatic activist, and on the other, the retention of the idealized "traditional" concept of the Jewish woman: mother of a large family, modest wife and welcoming hostess. We will try to focus on a few points in the history and workings of this process. The overall impression, we suggest, is that through a sense of a very direct and close relationship with the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson (1992–1994), the Habad-Lubavitch activist woman, the *shluhah*, feels that she can claim – at least in public – that she is able to combine these contrasting roles, despite the strains they are likely to impose on the day-to-day patterns of her life. This combination of opposites suggests seeing her not only as a pious woman,

like Glikl in a contemporary setting, but as a post-modern, feminine form of pietist.

This study follows the work of Ada Rapoport-Albert. Her well-known discussion of the role of women in early and nineteenth-century Hasidism concludes with two lengthy footnotes which discuss the emergence of the activist woman in twentieth-century Habad.[1] She describes important steps in this direction taken by the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Shalom Dovber (1860–1920), and, to a far greater extent, by his son and successor, Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak (1880–1950), the sixth Rebbe. Our present discussion partly overlaps with her brief outline, and attempts to take the story further, particularly in the context of Habad-Lubavitch in the United States and in post-Holocaust westernized society.

Jewish Women in the United States

Let us begin by considering the American backdrop to any changes which might be taking place for Jewish women. Anne Boylan has defined the beginning of a long American tradition of female activism.[2] Its mid-nineteenth-century agent was the "True Woman" defined by Barbara Welter as a person who fulfilled four basic requirements: she was religiously pious, morally pure, was submissive to her husband and also highly domesticated.[3] At the same time she was benevolent and active in good causes, sometimes supremely so. To a considerable extent this model had been appropriated by the American Jewish community. In 1819 Rebecca Gratz (1781–1869), from a wealthy and high-placed family, founded the first Jewish women's benevolent society in the United States of America ("The Female Hebrew

1 Ada Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism, S.A. Horodecky and The Maid of Ludmir Tradition," in Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds., *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky* (London: Peter Halban, 1988), 495–525.

2 Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797–1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

3 Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151–74, esp. 152.

Benevolent Aid Society of Philadelphia"). Then in 1893, inspired by the Congress of Women at the Chicago International Fair, Hannah Greenbaum Solomon, backed by ninety-three delegates from around the United States, set up what was to become the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), with the goal of uniting women in the work of "Religion, Philanthropy and Education."[4] For the founder, although not for all the delegates, "Religion" meant Reform Judaism. When challenged for her lack of traditional Sabbath observance she responded, "I consecrate every day."[5] Some twenty years later, Henrietta Szold set up Hadassah, the American Women's Zionist organization. Both these organizations were highly successful and linked Jewish women all over the United States. The NCJW also developed an international arm, the International Council for Jewish Women, founded in Rome in 1912.[6]

Moving a few decades into the twentieth century, we encounter a typical local Jewish communal women's organization in the 1930s in Ewa Morawska's study of the Eastern European Jewish community of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. She traces the development of the Rodef Sholom congregation, which was gradually moving from Orthodox to Conservative. At the suggestion of the rabbi, in 1931 the women reorganized the Hebrew Ladies Aid-Society: some new social functions were added, and it was renamed the Ladies Auxiliary. "It sounded better," Morawska was told by her elderly respondents, which meant "updated" or "modern." But she adds that "in more decidedly Conservative congregations of that time, the properly 'modern' name was Sisterhood, to suggest gender partnership in synagogue matters."[7]

4 See Nelly Las, *Jewish Women in a Changing World, A History of the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW) 1899–1995* (Jerusalem: Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1996), 17–19.

5 Ibid., 20.

6 Ibid., 32.

7 Ewa Morawska, *Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America 1890–1940* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 150.

Habad Women in the United States: First Stage

With this outline of the American context we can now consider the early development of Habad-Lubavitch organizations for women in the United States. We are now considering Jews from Belorus who were part of the massive movement of population from Eastern Europe after the Russian pogroms of 1881 which brought some two million Jews to America. Among these were individuals and families who, in their Belorussian context, had been part of the Habad Hasidic community, followers of Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch, the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe (1834–1882) or perhaps of one of his brothers or nephews who were themselves Habad-style Hasidic leaders in Kopys, Lyady, Nizhyn, Ovruch, Babruysk or Rechytsa.

While the Orthodox leadership in Eastern Europe in general was critical of the urge to move to the West, regarding this – accurately – as the path to secularization and loss of Jewish values, this did not prevent a considerable number of people from making the move. Coming to the United States, many continued to identify as "Habad" as regards the synagogue they founded, or attended, or supported (but did not always attend). The linking factor was "*Nusah Ari*," the specific Lurianic liturgical rite based on the Lurianic prayer book published in 1803 by the founder of Habad, Rabbi Shneur Zalman (d. 1812). The synagogues had names such as "Nusach Ari," "Habad," or "Tsemach Tsedek," after the third generation Habad leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel the "Tsemah Tsedek," (d. 1866). Some synagogues were named for more specific allegiances, based on later Habad leaders, such as Lubavitch or one of the other Habad Hasidic groups mentioned above. Between 1900 and 1930 there were some fifty such synagogues in New York and two dozen other locations in the United States and Canada.[8]

In 1924, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak Schneersohn, writing from his headquarters in Rostov, set up the Agudas Hasidei Habad

8 See Shalom Dovber Levine, *Toldot Habad be-Artzot ha-Brit be-Shanim 5660–5710* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 5748 [1988]), 125, giving details of the locations and names of the synagogues. However, on page 124 he mentions a more general testimony that in New York alone there were forty *Nusah ha-Ari* synagogues.

of the United States and Canada. This aimed to link together the loose membership of these synagogues on the basis of their personal family history: the fact that they were themselves, originally, or were descendants of Habad Hasidim, inheritors to what he saw as the wealth of the Habad Hasidic heritage.

At this point, there is no special mention of the women in the community. This changed however in 1929–1930, when Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak came to visit the United States.

The basic structure of his trip was provided by the existent branches of Agudas Hasidei Habad. At the same time he made a point of meeting with the leading figures in the Jewish community. One of his chief goals was the setting up of local women's groups to further the observance of the laws of "family purity," which is the term he used (in Hebrew) for the laws of *mikveh*. The aim of these groups, as described by Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak (but not necessarily as actually achieved), was to unite the women who observe family purity, and to campaign among other young women to convince them to start keeping these laws. This, he said, should be through articles, booklets, circulars, and personally addressed letters. For this purpose, he said, names and addresses of individual women should be collected, creating local mailing lists.[9] At the same time, he asked that rabbis should speak in the synagogues on the need for the observance of the *mikveh* law.

For this family purity campaign Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak succeeded in gaining the support of Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung (1892–1987), a central figure in American Orthodoxy.[10] Jung wrote an English article on the theme of *mikveh*, for promotion by the activist women's groups,[11] together with an article in popular style by a supportive medical doctor.[12]

9 See *Iggerot Kodesh… Admor R. Yosef Yitzhak* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1982), vol. 2, 252–3; see introduction, 20–22. See also Ada Rapoport-Albert, "On Women in Hasidism" (above n. 1), 524 n. 82.

10 See Monty Noam Penkower, "From Jewish Catastrophe to Restoration. The Response of Leo Jung," in Jacob J. Schacter, ed., *Reverence, Righteousness and "Rahamanut". Essays in Memory of Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1992), 201–227.

11 A letter by Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak mentions "a thousand copies of the article by Dr.

This attempt to strengthen observance of the laws of cyclic abstention from intimacy followed by purification in the *mikveh* was part of a wider goal to strengthen the traditional mores of Judaism as defined in the Talmud and the *Shulhan Arukh* in the new territory of twentieth-century America. But at the same time it was an attempt to create linked groups of women with a sense of personal responsibility for a specific domain of Jewish law. Later Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak spoke of women as being "at the forefront" of the attempt to strengthen all aspects of Judaism, as well as family purity.[13] It is not clear to what extent this remained an ideal which he projected in his extensive correspondence, rather than a reality which was actually achieved. However a number of groups were set up in the United States, called with the then fashionable name "Ladies Auxiliary," and their most successful role was financial support of the existing Habad organizations. There were fund-raising groups in Brownsville and East New York, West New York, Newark, St. Louis, Chicago and elsewhere.[14] Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak corresponded with them and encouraged them.

Jewish Women in Europe, 1917–1940

Although our focus is on a process most visible in the United States, we must take note of some key developments regarding the Orthodox women and girls in Europe. In 1917 in Kraków, Sarah Schenierer began what was to become the Beis Yaakov movement.[15] Initially, she received a blessing (literally) for her work in providing Orthodox Jewish education to girls from Rabbi Issakhar Dov (1854–1927), the Belzer Rebbe, and her educational

Smettlein and a hundred of the article by Rabbi Dr. Jung" (*Iggerot Kodesh… Admor R. Yosef Yitzhak*, vol. 2, 254), introduction, 20–22).

12 Ibid., 21.

13 *Iggerot Kodesh… Admor R. Yosef Yitzhak* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1983), vol. 4, 13.

14 Levine, *Toldot Habad beArtzot haBrit* (above, n. 8), 134.

15 See Deborah Weissman, "Bais Yaakov: A Historical Model for Jewish Feminists," in Elizabeth Koltun, ed., *The Jewish Woman, New Perspectives* (New York: Shocken Books, 1976), 139–148; idem, "Bais Ya'akov, A Women's Educational Movement in the Polish Jewish Community: A Case Study in Tradition and Modernity," unpublished MA thesis, New York University, n.d.

work gained the support of other key figures in Orthodoxy: Rabbi Avraham Mordekhai Alter (1866–1948), the Gerer Rebbe; Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (1838–1933), known as the Hafetz Haim, and Rabbi Meir Shapiro (1887–1933), founder of *Daf Yomi.* Our focus here is not just education, but empowerment and the creation of activists. During the 1920s and 1930s an extraordinary process took place in which generally unmarried girls of sixteen and upwards, graduates of the Beis Yaakov teachers' seminary in Kraków, would be "planted" in a Polish shtetl in order to run a Beis Yaakov school for the girls in the local community. They themselves felt empowered by their teacher and guide, Sarah Schenierer, and they in turn inspired those whom they taught. By 1939 an army of such girls were running many of the 250 Beis Yaakov schools around Poland, Lithuania, Romania, Hungary and Austria.[16] These activist girls were trained for this task, not only by the concrete knowledge they had gained in the course of their Beis Yaakov education, but also by the ethos of dedication to Judaism ("*Yidishkayt*") transmitted by Sarah Schenierer. A hint of this is seen in the Yiddish dialogue presented in a guide for teachers she compiled at an early stage of her movement as an example to the girls of how to communicate with their young students. A few lines of this are recorded by Judith Grunfeld, who describes it as "simple, primitive and old-fashioned," yet nonetheless able to "serve as the key to the first gates of knowledge, love and loyalty":

> Teacher: "*Wus bist du* (What are you)?"
>
> Pupil: "*Ich bin a Yiddish kind* (I am a Jewish child)."
>
> Teacher: "*Mit wus bist du a Yiddish kind* (What makes you a Jewish child)?"
>
> Pupil: "*Ich bin a Yiddish kind, weil ich hob die heilige Toire wus hot gegeben der heiliger Bescheffer* (I am a Jewish child, because I have the holy Torah, given by the Holy Creator)."[17]

16 Some of the Beis Yaakov schools and other new schools for girls were run by men. A statement by the leading rabbinic figure Rabbi Elhanan Wasserman of Baronovitch (1874–1941) cited in the Beis Yaakov Bulletin no. 9, winter 1924–5, permits men to run the schools and to teach in them. This is quoted in Weissman "Bais Ya'akov, A Women's Educational Movement" (above, n. 15), 59–60.

17 Miriam Dansky, *Rebbetzin Grunfeld: The Life of Judith Grunfeld, Courageous*

Later, with the influence of the strong personalities who came from Germany in order to help in the organization of Beis Yaakov, particularly Dr. Judith Rosenbaum, later Grunfeld (c. 1902–1998), and Dr. Leo Deutschlander (1888–1935), the writings of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and his son-in-law Rabbi Isaac Breuer (1883–1946), became the texts to provide a singularly "Jewish" perspective on the world.[18]

Concomitantly, during the 1930s in Latvia and Poland, Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak Schneersohn was increasing his own focus on women. He set up a women's group standing for family purity in Rokiskis ("Rakshik"), Lithuania on his American model.[19] However, most of his attempts to set up this kind of women's group had little success.[20] In America, his efforts to harness women were working *with* the current trend in the Americanized Jewish community, in a context of more than a century of activism by Christian American women, and also the "feminization" of religion. In Eastern Europe, he was working *against* the conventional paradigm that the promoters of religion were men.[21]

However, there was one important step which Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak did succeed in making during the 1930s in Eastern Europe. As mentioned above, the Beis Yaakov schools were highly successful in teaching girls

Pioneer of the Bais Yaakov Movement and Jewish Rebirth (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1994), 116. This popular work is based on a series of interviews with Judith Grunfeld and discussion with her of items in her collection of photographs and documents, many of which pertain to the history of Beis Yaakov.

18 See Weissman, "Bais Ya'akov, A Women's Educational Movement" (above n. 15), 71.

19 See *Iggerot Kodesh… Admor R. Yosef Yitzhak*, vol. 2, 332, a letter of 1931 announcing the formation of this group – "Frauen Verein" – and expressing the hope that other similar groups would be set up. The editor's note explains that the group was set up as a formal institution, with a "Pinkas" listing members, immediately following a stirring speech by Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak to a group of Jewish women of the city. However, I have not seen further mention of this group in Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak's published correspondence.

20 See *Iggerot Kodesh… Admor R. Yosef Yitzhak* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1983), vol. 3, 8, a note from 1933 to his secretary Rabbi Yehezkel Faigin, lamenting the fact that his plans for the founding of women's groups "in every place possible" have not come to fruition.

21 However, in 1936 in Lodz there took place the first Bnot Agudat Yisroel Convention, an offshoot of Beis Yaakov.

Scripture and its commentaries and Jewish law, and in creating a strong ethos of "Yidishkeyt." There was also a strongly spiritual focus, expressed in activities like visiting the graves of *Tzaddikim* and ecstatic dancing after the conclusion of the fast on Yom Kippur.[22] However, Deborah Weissman has pointed out that the Beis Yaakov school and teaching seminary curriculum did not actually include Hasidic texts.[23] Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak sought ways to teach girls and women about the "inner," spiritual and Hasidic dimension of Jewish thought. His talks elaborating spiritual themes were published in Yiddish, so that they would be accessible to women, and in 1937 he set up a study circle called *Ahot ha-Temimim* in Riga in which girls and young women studied more intensive spiritual texts, sometimes employing kabbalistic terminology, with some of the leading Habad Hasidic scholars in Riga, including particularly Rabbi Mordechai Hefetz.[24]

In addition to their study, the members of this study circle took part in disseminating literature about Jewish practice, including the laws of *mikveh*. They also translated suitable Hebrew works into Yiddish or (possibly) Latvian. Some of the members of the group corresponded privately with Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak. One of them, Hayah Sima Michaelover, wrote asking what she could do "to fill the emptiness of action." He responded with a remarkable letter outlining a system of mystical meditation, in which one takes a spiritual theme and tries to reach more and more abstract dimensions of it, beyond all definitions, reaching towards a luminous spiritual dimension beyond.[25] This opening of the portals of the depths of spiritual Torah study for women was to have considerable effect in the future.

22 See my "Women and the Dialectic of Spirituality in Hasidism," in Immanuel Etkes, David Assaf, Israel Bartal, Elchanan Reiner, eds., *Within Hasidic Circles: Studies in Hasidism in Memory of Mordecai Wilensky* (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1999), *32–*35 (English section).

23 See Weissman, "Bais Ya'akov, A Women's Educational Movement" (above, n. 15), 71.

24 See my "Women and the Dialectic of Spirituality in Hasidism (above, n. 22), *44–*49.

25 See ibid., *47. Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak's letter to Hayah Sima is in *Iggerot Kodesh… Admor R. Yosef Yitzhak*, vol. 4, 470–472.

In 1940, in the course of a journey of escape from Europe,[26] Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak spent some months in Riga. He met with the members of his *Ahot ha-Temimim* study circle, together with one or more of their scholarly teachers. Two girls recited by heart a summary of a Hasidic discourse. The Rebbe then spoke with the girls and young women and what he said was transcribed. His words include an interesting paragraph:

> Every field of knowledge grants a certain strength. The study of Hasidic teachings also imparts a certain strength of will (*tokef*). Hasidic strength of will is true virtue. However, there is no good without bad. Sometimes this results in a lack of obedience to the teacher, or a sense of dismissal towards one's parents. But this opposes the main principles of Hasidic teaching.[27]

The implication is that study of Hasidic teaching, concerning spiritual worlds, and souls, and aspects of the Divine (the *Sefirot*) grants a sense of authority and power. In terms of the relationships in the life of a young woman, this sense of strength could have an unbalancing effect, and hence the Rebbe was issuing a warning. The paragraph is instructive, for it helps us to understand future developments in Habad.

During the immediate pre-war period an *Ahot ha-Temimim* group was also set up in New York. In 1938 Rabbi Mordechai Hefetz, who had begun the Riga group, was on a visit to the United States. It is noteworthy that a letter from Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak instructs him to visit the Brownsville Ladies' Auxiliary.[28] Apart from this, while conducting a male Hasidic gathering, with melodies, stories and Hasidic insights in a Brooklyn synagogue, he noticed a figure behind the curtain of the women's section. The rabbi approached the curtain and saw there was a teenage girl standing behind it, trying to listen to the Hasidic gathering. "*Du vilst lernen khsides*?" he asked, her, in Yiddish: "Do you want

26 See Bryan Mark Rigg, *Rescued from the Reich: How One of Hitler's Soldiers Saved the Lubavitcher Rebbe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

27 *Di yidishe heym*, Summer 5741 (1981): 18–19.

28 See *Iggerot Kodesh… Admor R. Yosef Yitzhak* (above n. 13), vol. 4, 309.

to study [the mystical] Hasidic teachings?". "*Avadei!"* she responded: "certainly!"[29]

Rabbi Hefetz told her to gather a group of friends and to write to Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak, who was then still in Otwock, Poland. The Rebbe sent an English letter of approval for the new venture,[30] and a study group began, focusing on Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi's *Tanya*, the basic Habad Hasidic text, and Hasidic discourses. An intriguing letter from Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak from Otwock asks to be informed of the times when the Ahot HaTemimim and its male counterpart, the *Ahei ha-Temimim* groups were studying "for it will be a great delight to have in mind the hours when the *Ahei ha-Temimim* and the *Ahot ha-Temimim* are studying Hasidic teachings."[31] In 1940, still in Riga, Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak sent a second English letter of warm encouragement to the girls of the New York *Ahot ha-Temimim* group.[32]

Habad Women in the United States: Second Stage

We now move back to the United States, together with Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak in his escape from Europe. As soon as he arrived in the spring of 1940 he made the challenging statement that "*Amerike iz nit andersh*" ("America is not different"). His intention was to import Torah study, including the spiritual aspects of Torah and the observance of Jewish law which had prevailed in Europe. This was also the goal of other Eastern European Torah scholars who managed to escape from Europe to America, and thus a new chapter began in the history of the Jews of America. During the 1940s and after the war traditional scholarly yeshivot on the European model would be set up, whether of the Lubavitch-Hasidic or rival Satmar Hasidic brands in Brooklyn, or the Lithuanian Mitnaggedic style in Lakewood. In this process,

29 The girl in question was Rachel (Simpson) Feldman of Baltimore. Author's telephone conversation with her, 10 December, 1994.

30 *Iggerot Kodesh… Admor R. Yosef Yitzhak* (above n. 13), vol. 4, 362–63. See also Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak's letter to three Habad Rabbis in New York, asking them to be the mentors of the girls (*ibid.*, 361).

31 *Ibid*., 399.

32 *Iggerot Kodesh… Admor R. Yosef Yitzhak* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1983), vol. 5, 13.

a form of Beis Yaakov was transplanted to America, as was the Lubavitch *Ahot ha-Temimim* study group, as we have seen, distinguished by its singular view that girls should be given access to study of the mystical dimension of Torah.

During the 1940s, Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak wrote encouraging letters to the various Ladies Auxiliary groups, which were raising funds for the *yeshivot* he set up and also for the growing Lubavitch structure of Jewish education for girls, comprising about ten elementary schools for girls[33] in different cities and districts.[34] Also in this period the first emissaries, *shluhim*, were sent by Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak to various locations in the United States, including Chicago and later California. They went as activist rabbis, with strong, supportive wives (a point which will be discussed later).

Redefining Lubavitch Women

In 1950 Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak passed away and was succeeded by his son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994). The latter, the seventh Rebbe of Habad-Lubavitch, began to focus on the women of the Habad movement in a new way. The ideals of his predecessor, which seemed far from the reality of what could actually be achieved, now seemed to be realized. An important step was the founding of an international women's organization.

While this might seem a simple move towards globalization of local women's groups, "Women's Auxiliary" on a broader scale, in line with the post-war revival of the International Council of Jewish Women, it is seen differently by Bonnie Morris.[35] She writes: "The formation of Agudas Neshei Ubnos Chabad ("Council of the Women and Daughters of Chabad")

33 The first schools were afternoon only. See Levine, *Toldot Habad be-Artzot ha-Brit* (above, n. 8), 289.

34 A fully established Lubavitch Girl's High School in the USA did not begin till 1955, probably because of the existence of a Beis Yaakov school in Boro Park, Brooklyn, founded circa 1942.

35 See her *Lubavitcher Women in America, Identity and Action in the Post-War Era* (New York: SUNY, 1998).

in 1955 redefined all Lubavitcher women as an educational action group…. And so far from lagging behind secular American women, Lubavitcher women experienced a rebirth of agency in the mid 1950s, a full decade before most other American women picked up *The Feminine Mystique* or joined the second wave of the feminist movement."[36]

In 1956, a four-day convention of *Neshei ubnos Chabad* was launched, attended by women from all over the United States and also from other countries. This became an annual event. Morris, who attended the 1987 convention, speaks of participation by 3500 women.[37] The high point in each women's convention was when the women would go "downstairs" in 770 Eastern Parkway, the Lubavitch headquarters in Brooklyn, into a space usually occupied by the men, and be addressed by Rabbi Menachem Mendel. The men would crowd into the women's gallery.

A letter by Rabbi Menachem Mendel addressed to the first convention presents the woman as the person with a particular power to strengthen Judaism. In the case of the Exodus, it was by the merit of righteous women that the Jewish people left their exile in Egypt.[38] At the Giving of the Torah, the Sages say that G-d instructed Moses to teach the women first, before the men, based on Exodus 19:3: "So you should say to the House of Jacob and tell the Children of Israel." This apparent repetition is explained by Rashi, based on *Mekhilta*, as a separate reference to the women, the House of Jacob (*Beis Yaakov*), who are mentioned first. By means of teaching the women first, stated Rabbi Menachem Mendel, "The acceptance of the Torah [by the Jewish people as a whole] would be both firm and eternal."[39] The woman is presented as the key to the religious wellbeing of the nation as a whole. This became the central theme in Rabbi Menachem Mendel's letters to the various women's groups. Fund raising is never mentioned. Instead the emphasis is on spiritual significance of a woman's own religious observance and her power to change others.

36 Ibid., 55.
37 Ibid., 57.
38 BT Sotah 11b.
39 *Iggerot Kodesh… Admor R. Menachem Mendel* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1989), vol. 13, 86.

Knowledge and Power

At the same time, further changes in the role of the Lubavitch woman were taking place, particularly as regards the kind of Jewish knowledge imparted to girls in the Lubavitch school system. In 1954 the principal of the Lubavitch girls' school in Yerres, near Paris, wrote to Rabbi Menachem Mendel asking whether girls should study Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi's *Tanya*. The answer was strongly in the affirmative, and provided a halakhic basis for this study. It had long been established that a woman has the duty to study the Torah-teachings needed in order for her to fulfill those *mitzvot* which apply to her. According to the thirteenth-century *Sefer ha-Hinukh*, there are six "constant mitzvot" which apply continuously and equally to both men and women, such as the commands to believe in G-d, not to believe in any other power, to believe in the unity of G-d, to love G-d, to fear G-d, and not to go astray after one's heart and eyes. According to Rabbi Menachem Mendel, study of Hasidic spiritual teachings will help a person fulfill these six commands, and therefore it is halakhically correct for a girl or woman to study them.[40] However, note that we have also seen Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak's view, that these teachings give a sense of power and authority.

The idea that girls may or even should study the Hasidic dimension of Torah became a distinguishing feature of the Lubavitch girls' school system. In 1955, a Lubavitch girls' high school was set up in Brooklyn, meaning that the girls from Lubavitch families would no longer attend the Beis Yaakov school in Boro Park. In their own high school there would be a more pronounced Hasidic flavor. As a natural progression in 1960 a Teachers' Seminary was founded for the high school graduates. Another step was the creation of Machon Chana in 1974 for older girls and women who were "returning to Judaism," who themselves were to give an input into the fields of discourse in Lubavitch.

For all of these girls and women, Hasidic and mystical teachings became

40 *Iggerot Kodesh… Admor R. Menachem Mendel* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1988), vol. 8, 133.

a significant element in their education, in addition to the conventional *Humash* with commentaries, *Tanakh* and popular compilations of halakhah, as in Beis Yaakov. Hence *Tanya* and discourses by Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak and "*sihot*" and discourses by Rabbi Menachem Mendel are taught in most Lubavitch girls' high schools. In the New York teacher's seminary, there is a course on Hasidic explanations of the *Zohar*.[41] Following a directive by Rabbi Menachem Mendel, there are sometimes classes in Talmud as well. In addition most girls' schools study the complex halakhic teachings of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's Code of Law, which provides a digest of the different opinions which lead to the practical application of Jewish law. As regards Hasidic teachings, a very popular text is *Ha-Yom Yom*, a diary compiled by Rabbi Menachem Mendel in 1943, based on extracts from letters, talks and discourses of Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak. In many girls' schools, and for adult men and women, the daily "teaching" from this work is part of one's daily ration of Torah study.

Di yidishe heym

A further important step in fashioning the informed activist Habad woman was the creation of *Di yidishe heym* ("The Jewish Home"), beginning in 1958, a quarterly magazine for women in both English and Yiddish, in two separate sections, published by the Council of "Neshei Ubnos Chabad." It carried scholarly articles on Hasidic history and news about national and international Lubavitch activities. The magazine also provided a forum for Lubavitch women to express their ideas.

The initial editor was a dynamic young Russian Lubavitcher woman, Mrs. Tema Gurary (née Karasik).[42] Later she was joined as editor by Mrs. Rachel

41 This is based on the three volumes of *Torat Menachem, Tiferet Levi Yitzhak* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1990–93) which provides discussions by Rabbi Menachem Mendel of the *Zohar* commentary of his father: Rabbi Levi Yitzhak Schneerson, *Likkutei Levi Yitzhak, He'arot le-Sefer ha-Zohar,* 2 vols. (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1970, 1972).

42 Her father, Lezer Karasik, had escaped from the USSR with his family in the 1930s and had become a synagogue rabbi in Tel Aviv. When a *shidduh* was being sought

Altein. For most of the life of the magazine, which still appears sporadically, Gurary edited the Yiddish half and Altein the English.

The magazine was published with close attention by Rabbi Menachem Mendel. The women would give the articles for publication to the Rebbe and he would read them, making written comments and editing. He gave particular input to the English section,[43] while it is said that he delegated the editing of the Yiddish section to his close aide Rabbi Hodakow.[44]

In the first number of *Di yidishe heym* there is a Yiddish editorial, signed by Tema Gurary, which is translated for the English section. This editorial presents the challenge facing the Lubavitch woman, which the magazine will seek to address. Simultaneously, the Lubavitch woman must be someone who strengthens her own home as a model of traditional Judaism, and also she must "go out" in order to help the community at large.

Gurary goes on to say that each moment of history makes its own particular demands upon the people of the time and today, Jewish life, is struggling for its survival against those outside forces that intrude themselves into the citadel of Judaism, into the Jewish home. The Jewish wife is there to meet this challenge. But, how can she meet this challenge?

At various periods in our history, she continues, we have been known to answer this question in either of two ways. The basic role of the Jewish woman, "*bat melekh*,"[45] in her devotion to her household, and her creativity in this inner sanctuary, has been to nurture with care the flower of Jewish

for Tema, it was said that one of the conditions was that her intended groom should have learnt by heart, before the wedding, the thick volume of teachings by the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe (the RaShaB), the discourses of 5666, then in mimeograph, later published as *Yom Tov shel Rosh ha-Shanah (5)666* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1971); information from Rabbi Nachman Sudak of London, December 2005). This suggests something of her own intellectual and "Hasidic" prowess which, it was felt, her groom would have to match.

43 Examples of this are given in Susan Handelman's "Putting Women in the Picture, A Personal Account of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's Attitude Towards Feminism," in Yitzhak Kraus and Moshe Hallamish, eds., *The Chabad Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, forthcoming).

44 Information from Rabbi Shmuel Lew, London, December 2005.

45 In Hebrew in the text.

youth. But, at moments of dire need and stress, the *eshet hayil*[46] has gone out of her four walls, to give of herself, for the strengthening of the structure of the Jewish community. Now at this moment, we have need for both qualities simultaneously. The ways of strangers have insinuated themselves into the Jewish stronghold. The *bat melekh* must also be an *eshet hayil* so that she may more firmly instill the traditions of Torah into the seed of Abraham.[47]

The content of the magazine consciously sought to combine both these dimensions, together with a scholarly-historical aspect and a sense of direct connection with Rabbi Menachem Mendel, the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The first issue thus included letters in both Yiddish and English by the latter and popular historical articles in both languages (such as launching the first installment of Uriel Zimmer's "Jewish Women in History," and another article about the arrest and liberation of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi), feeding the Hasidic-scholarly aspects of the reader, written by both women and men.

In the Yiddish section we see an article on family purity aimed, we could say, at the bat melekh while another Yiddish article reporting the activities of Lubavitch emissaries in Europe and Morocco, with a picture of the Lubavitch girls' school in Casablanca, clearly seeks to emphasize the eshet hayil. The English section likewise emphasizes both dimensions of womanhood, as seen by Lubavitch. There is an article ridiculing the quest for fashion, favoring instead the three traditional women's *mitzvot*,[48] but also ending with a plug for "outreach": "The Jewish women, to be true to their heritage, must be more than just housewives, they cannot depend on the world to take care of itself."[49] There is also a report about a farewell party for Bessie Gorelik, setting off with her husband to become emissaries in Milan, and a page entitled "From Our Outposts," requesting news reports from "out of town" branches of Neshei Ubnos Habad, with a picture of a

46 In Hebrew in the text.

47 *Di yidishe heym*, vol.1, no.1, Tishrei-Teives 5719, 1 (English section).

48 Setting aside a portion of *hallah*, *mikveh*, and lighting Sabbath candles.

49 *Di yidishe heym,* vol. 1, no. 1, 21, an article by Mrs. Devorah Groner. The second issue of the journal carries a feature about her and her husband leaving Brooklyn to become Lubavitch emissaries in Melbourne.

meeting of the members of the Lubavitch women's organization of Cleveland, Ohio.[50]

Subsequent numbers of the magazine continued this pattern, combining popular presentations of Jewish/Hasidic history with the two dimensions of womanhood defined in the editorial of the first number: on the one hand, emphasis on "women's mitzvot," for the *bat melekh*, and on the other, articles and features lauding the *shluhot*, for the *eshet hayil*. The quarterly magazine *Di yidishe heym* can thus be seen as a tool in the creation of the ethos of the Lubavitch *shluhah*, who combines both traditional piety and the ability to "go out."

The Concept of the *Shliah* and *Shluhah*

The combining of these two dimensions of womanhood was, of course, fuelled by Rabbi Menachem Mendel, who encouraged both the traditionalism, the modesty and the caring for the children at home, as well as time to have an effect in the wider community.

In 1943, preparing what was to become the modern Lubavitch classic *ha-Yom Yom,* Rabbi Menachem Mendel included the following statement, like most of the entries in *ha-Yom Yom*, culled from the teachings and writings of Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak:

> One Hasid or one disciple, when he focuses his heart, mind and soul on the Torah and on strengthening the Torah, positively transforms a large city, in all aspects of the city, in a supernatural way, based on the merit of the ancestors [of the Jewish people].[51]

The "city" here means the Jewish life in the city, and the text is suggesting that one person can transform this. In general practice, the "one person"

50 In both the Yiddish and English sections there is a page of recipes (different in each language) and also reports on the activities of the Council of Neshei Ubnos Habad. There was also a letter page, with letters which had been addressed to the Council.

51 Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, ed., *ha-Yom Yom* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1943), 67, entry for 4 Tammuz, quoting a letter which was later published in *Iggerot Kodesh… Admor R. Yosef Yitzhak* (above n. 9), vol. 2, 11.

means a Hasidic *shliah* and his wife, the *shluhah*. One question we might ask is how the wife relates to the task of "transforming the city." We may consider three models: The first is the supportive wife of the empowered and possibly charismatic husband. The second is an empowered, activist and charismatic wife who is fully complementing her husband and is a partner in their joint effort to transform the city. The third model is that the wife is the leading figure, as international lecturer, for example, and her husband is (hopefully) supportive but otherwise unknown. In today's Lubavitch world there are a number of such couples. (However, due to the strong marriage ethos in Lubavitch, single communicators of Lubavitch thought, whether male or female, are rare.)

Let us consider the difference between the first and second model: the supportive wife and the emissary in her own right. An article by a Lubavitch *shluhah*, Fay Kranz,[52] suggests that this distinction relates to two different stages in Lubavitch history. According to Kranz, in the 1950s and '60s the wife of the *shliah* was above all a wife to her husband and mother to their children. As regards their *shlihut* (the attempt to transform the city) she was "a help to him." She was a warm hostess to the people her husband invited to their home,[53] and otherwise she was a kind of secretary. She would answer the telephone and write letters. Her husband was grateful that she agreed to leave the comfort of a strong Orthodox community and venture far from family and friends. But, claims Fay Kranz, the *shluhah* of the 1970s and '80s onwards is different. She feels empowered as an individual and has many roles, as well as wife and mother: "… teacher, hostess, [school] principal, pre-school director, editor, lecturer, mikvah lady, fund-raiser… camp director, marriage counselor, businesswoman, decorator, dean, rebbetzin, librarian, program director…"

What brought about this change? It would seem that it was the repeated emphasis by Rabbi Menachem Mendel on the significance and power of the

52 Chana Piekarski, ed., *Shlichus: Meeting the Outreach Challenge, A Resource Book for Shluchim* (Brooklyn: Nshei Chabad Publications, 1990), vol. 1, 19.

53 Kranz does not mention this point.

woman, of her potential effect in society, and even of her advantage over the man.

Thus we see Rabbi Menachem Mendel's talks late in 1985 an interesting exercise in Biblical interpretation. This was often the medium whereby Rabbi Menachem Mendel communicated his ideas, by presenting novel perspectives on well-known themes.[54]

The subject is Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, of whom the Torah states, "And Dinah went out… to see the daughters of the land" (Gen. 34:1). Following this Dinah was seduced by Shehem the Hivite. Rabbi Menachem Mendel asks: what is the significance of the statement that "Dinah went out"? Is it implying something negative about her, something immodest?

No, not at all, declared Rabbi Menachem Mendel. She "went out" to the "daughters of the land" in order to have a positive effect on them, "to draw them to good behavior."[55] The question then becomes, if her going out was positive, why was there the unhappy encounter with Shehem the Hivite? Rabbi Menachem Mendel points out that this has been explained earlier by Rashi: Jacob did not want Esau to see Dinah, so he hid her away before his encounter with his brother. Rashi quotes Midrash Rabbah to the effect that had Dinah married Esau, she would have had a good effect on him, and would have made him improve spiritually. Jacob did not allow this to happen, and therefore he was punished by the fact that she was seduced by Shehem.[56]

Homiletic interpretations of this kind, delivered by a rebbe, have considerable force in the Hasidic world. In this instance Rabbi Menachem Mendel spelled out clearly what this interpretation means in practice for the Lubavitch Hasidic movement:

> Although "all the glory of the princess is within,"[57] and women are called

54 Many of Rabbi Menachem Mendel's teachings of this nature are collected in the 39 volumes of his "edited" *Likkutei Sihot* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1962–2001).

55 *Likkutei Sihot* (above n. 54), vol. 35, 151.

56 *Ibid*., 154. See Rashi to Genesis 32:23.

57 Ps. 45:14, a phrase taken as denoting the idea that a woman's place is modestly within the home.

> "the fundament of the home,"[58] since their main task is to build a Jewish home, and on account of this they have to remain "within," right "inside" – nonetheless, those women who have been graced with special talents, who have the power to influence also outside, they should utilize this talent, with modesty *for the sake of Heaven*, in order to draw hearts close to service of G-d and to bring back to the fold those Jewish women who are "outside."[59]

Thus they should follow the example of the Biblical Dinah, reaching to the outside, without fear: following Rashi's logic, as cited in the Rebbe's talk, if Dinah would only have been permitted to try to transform Esau, she would not have come to harm.

At this point, the woman might be seen as equal to the man. However, in a talk in 1991 Rabbi Menachem Mendel spoke of the task of *tikkun olam,* repairing the world. In this task, said Rabbi Menachem Mendel, the feminine approach is superior to that of the male. The male thrust is to try to "conquer" and suppress opposition. By contrast the female has a more "inward" approach which gains willing acceptance peacefully. Hence, he continued "the service of Jewish women and daughters [should] become a guide to the men… showing how they should approach their service… in an inward way."[60]

Bat Melekh and *Eshet Hayil*

Teachings and letters on the importance of womanhood combined with the establishment during the 1980s of conventions for the male *shluhim*, and at a separate time in the year, for the female *shluhot*. Here hundreds of women were and are able to come together to discuss a range of different topics.

58 The original is "*akeret ha-bayit,"* a phrase rabbinically adapted from Ps.113:9, virtually reversing its meaning. See Rashi to Gen. 31:4.

59 *Likkutei Sihot*, vol. 35, 154. The phrase "for the sake of Heaven" is in italics in the original.

60 Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Sefer ha-Sihot 5751* (Brooklyn: Kehot, 1992), vol. 1, 86, adapted in Uri Kaploun, ed., *A Partner in the Dynamic of Creation, Womanhood in the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson* (Brooklyn: Sichos in English, 1994), 7.

The program of the January 2003 Shluhot Conference includes the following themes in its various talks and workshops: working with students on campus, running a Hebrew school, providing an intensive level of Hasidic-Orthodox education for one's own children, innovative programming for the women of the community, similar for teenagers, novel ways of celebrating joyous family events [so that the community feels involved], building up a library-resource for adult education, advanced use of computers, fund raising techniques, hints for positive marriage relationships including one's own, knowing how to draw the line between compassionate counseling and professional therapy, "an exploration of existential issues surrounding belief in G-d," sessions on practical Jewish law and also on mystical Hasidic texts, demonstrations of subtleties of cooking and lectures on time-management.[61]

We see here the drawing together and interweaving of disparate aspects of life. The woman's power as an activist, meaning as a religious spokesperson, a figure of knowledge and authority, an organizer, school-director and guide, the *eshet hayil*, to use Tema Gurary's terms, and at the same time the fact of being a "traditional" Jewish woman, *bat melekh*: a wife, cook, hostess and mother of a large family. This joining of contrasting roles is seen also in the Habad House, the center of outreach activity for most Lubavitch *shluhim*. The Habad House combines a religious institution, a synagogue, which is an activist Jewish center also organizing a variety of activities, with a home.

How does this kind of multiple activity fit together? Bonnie Morris comments on the way more and more responsibilities and tasks were being added to the Lubavitch woman.[62] She cites a letter to *Di yidishe heym* by a young woman who complains about her domestic work-load with a large family of young children.[63] The magazine printed the letter together with a response by a rabbi advising her to do *more*! Invite non-observant guests,

61 From the 80 page (English and Hebrew) *International Conference of Shluchos, 19–24 Shevat, 5763 – January 22–27, 2003*, Lubavitch World Headquarters, Crown Heights, New York.

62 Bonnie Morris, *Lubavitcher Women in America* (above, n. 35), 105.

63 *Di yidishe heym*, vol. 12, no. 4, Spring 1971, 17–19.

offer to look after your friend's children so that *she* could have a rest! Bonnie Morris writes "This response was typical of the advice that male community authorities offered to exhausted young mothers… Add more plates to the Shabbos table, house more guests, cook more, bring the world in… Changing the nature of woman's work to incorporate more responsibilities became the rallying cry of the Habad movement…"

Shluhot Forum

One of the resources for the Lubavitch shluhot today is the "Shluhot Forum," an internet forum where woman can air issues that they feel need addressing, or raise questions.[64] It carries requests for advice and suggestions on a range of topics similar to those listed above from the 2003 Shluhot Conference, with the addition of a facility to post a question or suggestion anonymously, due to its delicate nature.

Through a compliant shluhah, the above-mentioned page of Bonnie Morris's book was posted on the Shluhot Forum with the question of how the reader relates to the original letter in *Di yidishe heym*, to the original answer, and to Bonnie Morris's discussion of them. This venture elicited some interesting replies. Some were in the mode of the passage by Fay Krantz quoted earlier, expressing a sense of exuberance at the whirl of life. Another admitted that she felt great sympathy with the expression of the dilemma. Yes, the pressure is enormous. "But when I do something for someone else and get out of the house and am able to connect to others and help them [or]… have people at my Shabbos table, I feel that much closer to my ideals and goals and feel more like a person." According to her, it is hard, but making more effort, adding another plate, does work.

Another went a step further: "most shluhos are post feminists…" She explains that the dilemma of "career" and "family" faces many women, who

64 It was set up in 2001 through the initiative of Dini Greenberg, *shluhah* in Shanghai, working together with Rabbi Meir Geisinsky who, earlier that year, had set up a network for the male shluhim. The Shluhot Network is now managed by the Shluhot Department of the Lubavitch Shluhim Office, operating from Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

therefore "put their career on hold while their kids are young," or of course, vice versa. However "for the shluhah… nothing is ever placed on hold, whilst she births, nurses and raises kids" while, of course, also doing everything else. She goes on to say "moreover… most of us, [the] vast majority of us are married to men who do more than fifty percent of the childcare and housekeeping…" In addition, most shluhot try to have plenty of home help. Further, adds this respondent "the shluhah-shaliah unit is so interconnected, different to other models, interdependent twenty-four seven ...any discussion of just the shluhah without examining the role… of the shaliah doesn't tell the whole story at all…"

Another respondent tells a story she heard from Adin Steinsaltz: "…he was talking about the Rebbe. He…was feeling very overwhelmed at a certain point in his life. He had taken on much more than he could handle. I think he had taken on three whole projects and [he] said he could only do one of them – and even that was hard with all the other things he was involved in. So he wrote a letter to the Rebbe asking which project would be the best one to drop and the Rebbe answered: 'You should keep all of them, and you should take on even more!' So his point was that the Rebbe was training us/showing us that we can be more than we think we are. And he is giving us *koichos* [energy] so that we could reach superhuman potential. And he was never satisfied with what we did, but always encouraged (and always in a loving way)… us to do more."

Balebos or Pietist

An interesting theme in Jewish history is the identification of two modes of life: a "normal" mode, and another which is more intense. In the late medieval and early modern European Jewish communities one can speak of the *balebos* and the pietist. The *balebos* is the house-owner, the responsible and comfortable member of Jewish bourgeois society. The pietist is the kabbalist or other kind of mystic for whom life is a dynamic spiritual adventure, reaching for the heights or falling to the depths, but certainly not standing still. Hasidism, especially in its Habad form, partly translated the dynamic of the pietist into activist social terms. The question here is the role

of the woman. What is the wife of a pietist? Is she patiently waiting for her husband to come home from his long hours of solitary contemplation, (*hitbonenut*), in the synagogue, or to return from his long months at the court of the rebbe, or from his solitary Talmudic study? Can a woman be a pietist and in what form?

When the mode of pietist is that of a Habad Hasid, seeking to "transform a city" in a post-Holocaust world, we seem to be making a step beyond gender. The Hasid may be a male or a female, or a male-female unit. Rabbi Menachem Mendel wanted to change the city, and – in terms of their own perception – found ways to unleash the energy needed for the attempt within some of his followers. Yet what is being presented is "tradition": the traditional Jewish home, the wife and mother, the *mikveh*. It is the joining of apparent contrasts which is the innovation of the contemporary *shluhah*. She has a "traditional" feminine role, the *bat melekh*, which joins and is part of the individuality and empowerment of a Hasidic pietist, what Tema Gurary called an *eshet hayil*, seeking to "transform a city," if not the whole world.