The Hasidic Ethos and the Schisms of Jewish Society

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Abstract: The early hasidic movement was distinguished by its readiness to see the sacred in everything. As presented by Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polonnoye (d. 1782), disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, this perception was particularly to be applied to fragmented Eastern European Jewish society. The scholarly class saw themselves as "holy" but could not relate to the ignorant masses. Hasidic teachings sought to reveal the holiness in everyone and thus draw together these disparate classes, with a vision of an underlying unity of the Jewish people.

During the nineteenth century, the Enlightenment and Reformist movements provoked a strong traditionalist reaction which eventually led to the contemporary ultra-orthodox (*haredi*) enclave. The *haredi* Jew consciously seeks to live in a separate society with invisible walls protecting the holiness within and keeping at bay the profane world outside. The *hasidim* form an important section of this *haredi* enclave, deliberately suppressing the earlier inclusivist hasidic ethos.

In the mid-twentieth century, the Habad hasidic movement revived aspects of that ethos in a modern form, leading to its dominant contemporary mode of expression: outreach. At the same time, Habad seeks to remain part of the *haredi* world. This post-modern combination of opposites may eventually influence other *haredi* groups and lead to new configurations of the schisms provoked by the confrontation of tradition and modernity.

This paper considers the interaction of two separate phenomena in the Jewish history of the past two and a half centuries. One is the development of Hasidism, focusing on certain aspects of its ethos, particularly a form of inclusivism; the other is the rise of exclusivist *haredi*[1] Orthodoxy. The latter ideology conflicts with the inclusivist aspect of Hasidism, which theoretically makes room for the sinner, *haredi* exclusivism expels the sinner and everything that might lead towards what it considers sin.[2]

[1] The term *haredi*, literally "fearing" [the word or command of the Divine] derives from Isa. 66:2,5; Ezra 9:4; 10:3. This term has come to denote contemporary eastern European-style traditionalist orthodoxy, and is the equivalent of the earlier term "ultra-orthodox."

[2] In the context of the periods discussed in this paper "sin" might mean (a) lack of Jewish religious observance due to ignorance, laxity, or passion, or (b) deliberate acculturation and secularization. Early hasidic inclusivism welcomed the sinner of type (a). In its late twentieth-century form it also embraced those of type (b).

In the twentieth century, hasidic groups were among the most forceful practical exponents of the separatist *haredi* ethos. One might think that the early hasidic inclusivist ideal, as preached in the writings of Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polonnoye [Połonne] (died c.1784), the first hasidic publicist,[3] was dead, a relic of history. However, in the mid-twentieth century after the Holocaust, the inclusivist ideal was revived and intensified by the Habad-Lubavitch school of Hasidism. This school emphasized inclusivist paradigms for looking at secularized society, such as "even though he sinned he is a Jew" (B. Sanhedrin 44a) or considering secular Jews to be like "a child taken captive among Gentiles" (B. Shabbat 68a-b). It utilized the theme of *ahavat yisra'el* (love of one's fellow Jew) to enable a positive interaction with secularized Jews, with the goal of drawing them towards Jewish practice but not dismissing the ideal of "love one's fellow," if they did not respond.

In the process of westernization and secularization, the stringencies of the halakhic Codes and their commentaries tended to be dismissed, ignored, and eventually forgotten. The preservationist, traditionalist, and generally exclusivist stance of the *haredim* was expressed and reinforced precisely by preserving and even extending the observance of halakhic details. One of the seeming innovations of Habad, which might be seen as a challenge to its ethos, was its concern to preserve the full spectrum of *haredi* halakhic stringency while expressing an inclusivist "outreach" ethos. This broad topic is worthy of further study, beyond the scope of this paper. Further, this Habad re-emergence of hasidic inclusivism which also carried it to new, unprecedented initiatives may have begun to have an effect on other branches of *haredi* society. We suggest that potentially, at least, there is a possibility that the inclusivist aspect of Hasidism, together with other factors, might gradually moderate the exclusivist stance of *haredi* Judaism, leading to the development of new kind of inclusivist *haredi*. This too would demand a precise sociological analysis, based on quantitative research, rather than the few broad lines of possible development which are indicated at the close of this paper, based on only a few local examples.

Seeing the Sacred in Everything

[3] See below. His ideas on the unification of the Jewish people through the turning of the elite scholars, the "men of form," towards the ignorant "sinful" masses, the "men of matter" are presented in Samuel H. Dresner, *The Zaddik: The Doctrine of the Zaddik According to the Writings of Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoy* (London, n.d.).

The aspect of Hasidism that most concerns me here is the thrust to see the sacred in everything, or more particularly, the social application of this, to perceive the presence of the sacred in every Jew. Themes such as the Zoharic "there is no place absent of [the Divine]"[4] or the Lurianic doctrine of the sparks of holiness which are hidden in all existence, are generally interpreted as presenting the immanence of the Divine, leading towards the acosmist perspective on existence that *G-t iz alts,* and *alts iz G-t* (God is all and all is God) as formulated in the second generation of Habad.[5] But there is also a social application of this immanentist view of the Divine, and this is what concerns us here.

Comment [r1]: I'm puzzled by the fact that English has an /o/ but the Yiddish has a hyphen. Shouldn't the Yiddish have an /o/, too?

Application to Society

As presented by the Baal Shem Tov's disciple, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polonnoye, the general perception of the immanence of the Divine was particularly to be applied to the members of fragmented Eastern European Jewish society. He claimed that the scholarly class saw itself as "holy" but could not relate to the ignorant masses. In Rabbi Yaakov Yosef's view, by applying the hasidic teachings in social terms one can perceive the holiness in everyone and thus draw together these disparate classes, through a vision of the underlying unity of the Jewish people.

> It is known that the main purpose of everything in all our service in Torah and prayer and *kavanah* (spiritual intention) in *mitsvot* (commandments) and *kavanah* in eating is to sift and elevate the sparks of holiness from the depths of the *kelipot* (forces of evil), and their parallel in human terms is to elevate the "men of matter" to the level of "form."[6]

This means that, according to Rabbi Yaakov Yosef, the mystical activity of discovering and redeeming the good – the sparks of holiness - hidden among the forces of evil in material existence, which characterized early hasidic thought,[7] should now be applied not just to physical

[4] See *Tikunei zohar*, (Jerusalem, 1965), Tikun 57, 129b.

[5] See Rachel Elior, *The Paradoxical Ascent to God: the Kabbalistic Theosophy of Habad Hasidism*, trans. Jeffrey M. Green (Albany, 1993), 49 ff.

[6] Yaakov Yosef of Polonnoye, *Toledot ya'akov yosef*, (Lemberg, 1863; reprint, New York, 1955), Yitro, 59b. See Samuel H. Dresner's presentation of this passage in his *The Zaddik: The Doctrine of the Zaddik*, 174.

[7] Earlier kabbalistic thought emphasized the effect of the spiritual *kavanah* (intent) in elevating sacred sparks through performance of the commandments, Torah study, and prayer. Hasidism extended this idea to mundane physical activities such as eating. See *Tsava'at harivash*, ed. J.I. Schochet (Brooklyn, 1975), 38, sec. 109, concerning the elevation of the sacred sparks in food, clothing, and other physical objects that a person uses. This

matter such as the object with which the Commandments are carried out or physical food, but also to contemporary Jewish society. This social application of early hasidic thought is also found, at least in theoretical terms, in Habad writings, such as in R. Shneur Zalman's *Tanya*. Here we find forcefully expressed the idea of the Divine spark within each Jew, including the "lowest of the low and sinners of Israel" which in certain circumstances prompts him or her to self-sacrifice for *kidush ha-shem* (martyrdom).[8] Further, in chapter 32 of *Tanya*, which together with a few other chapters was added by the author to the manuscript edition before the work was printed in 1796, R. Shneur Zalman presents as a central theme the concept of *ahavat yisra'el*. In the case of "those who are far from God's Torah and service," this love can have the effect of drawing them closer to religious observance. But if it does not have this effect, one's love is valid in religious terms:

> For even those who are far from God's Torah and His service… one has to draw them with cords of love, and perhaps one will be able to bring them close to the Torah and service of the Divine - and if not, one has not lost the reward of the *mitsvah* (commandment) of love of one's fellow.[9]

However the conclusion of *Tanya* chapter 32 itself alludes to "*minim* and *apikorsim*," i.e., heretics and atheists, "who have no portion in the God of Israel," of whom, says the author, King David said, "I hate them with utter hatred" (Ps. 139:22). This would seem to exclude heretics and atheists from the expressed inclusivist stance. The social significance of this caveat would be seen some generations later, as will be discussed below.

In the history of the early Habad movement, the social application of hasidic teachings of divine immanence is expressed in theoretical terms, but we do not have clear evidence of any practical expression in terms of real people. One exceptional piece of evidence might be the *Pokeah ivrim* written by Rabbi Dov Ber Shneuri, the son of R. Shneur Zalman, who became Rebbe in the town of Lubavitch [Lubawicze] sometime after the latter passed away in 1812. *Poke'ah ivrim*[10] is a work in Yiddish, addressed to the *ba'al teshuvah* (repentant). We have no

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passage is found in a number of other early hasidic works, as Schochet notes.

[8] Shneur Zalman of Liady, *Likutei amarim - tanya* (London, 1981, pagination as Vilna, 1900), part 1, chap. 18, fol. 24a.

[9] Shneur Zalman of Liady, *Tanya*, part 1, chap. 32, fol. 41b.

[10] The first known edition (Szkłów, 1832) carries the statement (in Yiddish) on the title page that the author, Rabbi

contemporary evidence concerning the identity of possible readers of the book. A second section of the work, which remained in manuscript until the late twentieth century, speaks of relationships with non-Jewish girls and other recognizable misdemeanors of the time, and the work can simply be seen as a pietistic work on repentance rather than as the expression of any recognizable social thrust.[11]

Quite different is the case of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, who in the last year of his life developed a relationship with the freethinking *maskilim* of Uman [Humań], particularly Hirsh Ber Horovitz, as was documented by R. Nathan Sternhartz and discussed by Hayim Lieberman.[12] These were "real" *apikorsim* (atheists). However, R. Nahman's goal in developing a relationship with them seems highly mystical in character. Although he told his disciple R. Nathan to continue the relationship himself, which he indeed endeavored to do – with difficulty - after R. Nahman's death, this unusual activity does not seem to have translated into any kind of general directive for the followers of Bratslav at the time.

Instead of what today we call outreach, the intense and sometimes radical spirituality of Hasidism tended to place its adherents firmly in the camp of the traditionalists in the context of the schismatic conflicts that developed in the nineteenth century. Let us consider this development in Jewish society a little more closely.

The Rise of Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Enclavism

During the late eighteenth century, aspects of the trend towards modernization had been condemned by leaders such as Rabbi Yekhezkel Landau (1713-93) of Prague and Rabbi Yaakov Emden (1698-

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Dov Ber, famous for his esoteric teachings, "was also concerned for the ordinary people, how they should conduct themselves when they want to repent."

[11] Rabbi Yosef Yitshak in a kind of pedagogic novella presents a context for the writing of the book, in terms of an individual who had left the Jewish community (and probably converted to Christianity). When he returned to Judaism, R. Dov Ber wrote this book for him as a guide for behavior as a *ba'al teshuvah*. See A.H. Glitzenstein, *Sefer hatoledot: rabi dovber shneuri milubavich, admor ha'emtsa'i* (Kfar Habad, 1968), 65-83. Concerning R. Yosef Yitshak's historical writings, see Ada Rapoport-Albert, "Hagiography with Footnotes: Edifying Tales and the Writing of History in Hasidism," in *Essays in Jewish Historiography,* ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert (Atlanta, 1991), 119-159.

[12] See Hayim Lieberman, "Rabbi Nakhman Bratslaver and the Maskilim of Uman," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 6 (1951):287-301.

1776) of Altona. But it was when the Hamburg Temple was founded in 1818 that Jewish Orthodoxy was born as a movement of resilience and reaction to the secularizing winds of change. Its main characteristic was the concern to preserve the outer appearance and inner ethos of traditional Jewish life.[13] In general terms, tradition was understood by its defenders as the old order which was being broken down by the advance of modernity. However, inherent in the process of modernization was the reactive reaffirmation or even creation of a number of varieties of tradition that fed the maintenance (or emergence) of counter-cultures.

The idea of a reactive process, complementary to that of modernity, that generates "tradition," is used to help explain why, in general, religion has not died out in the secularized modernity of the modern West.[14] Some forms of tradition recreate the past in order to cope with the present, and may be portrayed as fundamentalist standards to which the members of counter-societies must conform. Another variety of tradition, or, sometimes, another way of seeing the very same phenomenon, is as a creative inner text of society which interprets and processes change.[15] For nineteenth-century Ashkenazi[16] Judaism, the rise of Orthodoxy as a movement meant the highlighting of certain practices in daily life and in the synagogue as the key elements of the

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[13] For a brief review of the discussion about seeing Orthodoxy as a modern movement, see Adam Ferziger, *Exclusion and Hierarchy: Orthodoxy, Nonobservance, and the Emergence of Modern Jewish Identity* **(**Philadelphia, 2005), 1-2, also 27-89 for a depiction of this process. See also Moshe Samet, "The Beginnings of Orthodoxy," *Modern Judaism* 8, no. 3 (1988), 249-269. The conclusion of Jacob Katz, *The "Shabbes Goy": A Study in Halakhic Flexibility*, trans. Yoel Lerner, (Philadelphia, 1989), 238-241 describes the process whereby as fewer Jews felt themselves bound by the halakhah on account of increasing modernization, those who did feel bound by it did so in a more all-encompassing way. Hence, paradoxically, in the modern period the contemporary responsa literature has grown rather than diminished: "those remaining under the jurisdiction of halakhah accepted its yoke in shaping their lives to a greater extent than in earlier generations" (p. 239). See also Jacob Katz, *Hahalakhah bemeitsar: mikhsholim al derekh ha'ortodoksyah behitavutah* (Jerusalem, 1992); id., *A House Divided: Orthodoxy and Schism in Nineteenth Century Central European Jewry*, trans. Ziporah Brody (Hanover, 1998). Cf. in the context of the twentieth century, Hayim Soloveitchik "Rupture and Reconstruction: the transformation of contemporary Orthodoxy," *Tradition* 28, no. 4 (1994): 64-130.

[14] See Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a chain of memory*, trans. Simon Lee (Cambridge, 2000), 83-89.

[15] See Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a chain of memory*, 88-89, quoting Georges Balandier, *Le Désordre: Éloge du movement* (Paris, 1988), 37-38.

[16] For the Sefardim, see Yosef Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sefardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Cologne, 2000) concerning the seventh century, and Moshe Samet, "The Beginnings of Orthodoxy," 267 n. 4, commenting on the late nineteenth century in Baghdad.

tradition that was being preserved, despite the fact that those elements might have been much less of an issue (or even ignored) in earlier generations.

Rabbi Moshe Schreiber (1762-1836) known as the Hatam Sofer was a key figure in this process.[17] His adaptation of the phrase *hadash asur min hatorah* (new things are forbidden by the Torah)[18] became both famous and infamous as Orthodoxy's response to the march of modernity. Further, he ratified the trend to consider Rabbi Yosef Karo's *Shulhan arukh*, which had earlier been the subject of some equivocation, as "Torah given equally to the entire Jewish people."[19] His ethical will, addressed to his offspring but understood as a message to the faithful at large, which was read out at his funeral, condemned Mendelssohn's writings and warned against gentile names, language and clothing, as well as gentile literature and culture.[20]

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[17] See Jacob Katz, *Halakhah vekabalah: mehkarim betoledot dat yisra'el al medoreiha vezikatah hahevratit* (Jerusalem, 1984), 368-9, Ferziger, *Exclusion and Hierarchy*, 61-89.

[18] A slogan based on a phrase in M. Orlah 3:9 borrowed from a quite different context in rabbinic literature. *Hadash* (new) means the grain that took root after Passover. It is considered new and therefore forbidden until after Nisan 16 the following year, when the Omer offering would have been brought in the Temple. See Maimonides, *Yad*, Laws of Forbidden Foods, 10:4, explaining the application of Lev. 23:14. See Louis Jacobs, *A Tree of Life: Diversity, Flexibility and Creativity in Jewish Law* (Oxford, 1984), 255-6 regarding the evolution of this pun in the writings of the Hatam Sofer.

[19] Hatam Sofer, *Sefer teshuvot hatam sofer; helek orah hayim* (Jerusalem, 2008), sec. 197, 363a. By the mid-eighteenth century – by which time several key commentaries on it had been composed – a number of prominent figures accepted the decisions of Karo's Code as binding. See Menachem Elon, *Jewish Law*: *History, Sources, Principles*, trans. Bernard Auerbach and Melvin J. Sykes (Philadelphia, 1994), 3:1367-1422. Thus Rabbi Shmuel Edels (1555-1631) was scathing about someone deciding the law simply on the basis of the brief statement in the *Shulhan Arukh*, without going back to the sources of that statement in the Talmud (*Hidushei Agadot*, Sotah 22a "yerei et Hashem"; Elon, *Jewish Law*, 3:1384, 1423); by contrast, a century later Rabbi Yonathan Eibeshutz (1690-1764) wrote "I have a tradition… that the halakhic authorities of the generation accepted as binding everything written in the brief formulations of the *Shulhan Arukh* with the glosses of R[abbi] M[oses] I[sserles]" (*Urim vetumim*, Hoshen mishpat, following chap. 25, subpars. 123, 124) (Elon, *Jewish Law*, 3:1421 n. 173). Elon points out (p. 1420) that the acceptance of the *Shulhan arukh* was advanced by the rabbinic response to the communal chaos caused by the Chmielnicki massacres of 1648-1649.

[20] The Hebrew text of the will is in Moses Sofer, *Sefer hazikaron* (Jerusalem, 1957), 117-123. It includes the admonition: "never lay a hand on the works of R. Moses of Dessau" (*uvesifrei rama"d al tishlehu yad*). His disciple Rabbi Moses Schick described his teacher's refusal to use the Mendelssohn edition of the Pentateuch even when no other was available. See S. Z. Leiman, "Rabbi Moses Schick: The Hatam Sofer's Attitude toward Mendelssohn's Biur," *Tradition* 24, no. 3 (1989), 83-86.

A further step to the right was taken in 1865, as described by Michael Silber, Jacob Katz, and others, when a meeting of rabbis took place in Michalowitz [Michalowce], issuing a formal *psak din* (legal decision).[21] This was initiated by Rabbi Hillel Lichtenstein (1815-1891), an activist pietist who had studied in the yeshivah of the Hatam Sofer in Pressburg.[22] His son-in-law, R. Akiva Yosef Schlesinger, had published *Lev ha'ivri* (The heart of the Hebrew) in 1864 in the form of a commentary on the ethical will of the Hatam Sofer. Schlesinger's commentary can be seen as moving several more steps to the right, seeking to set a bench mark for *haredi* Judaism.[23] The conference in Michalowitz and the *psak din* that it issued, formally established the strong right-wing reaction to the trend towards Westernized, modernized orthodoxy. The *psak din* was initially signed by twenty-four rabbis but eventually the number grew to seventy-one, with echoes of the ancient Sanhedrin. Among the signatories were three hasidic leaders, all associated with Hungary, including R. Hayim Halberstam (1793-1876) of Nowy Sącz (Yiddish: Tsanz) in Galicia, founder of the prominent Sanz dynasty.

The *psak din* of Michalowitz presented a fiercely separatist ethos. It exhorts the faithful Jew not to enter a synagogue in which any of its nine articles were contravened (such as a synagogue which included male choral accompaniment in the service), even if this meant that a pious individual might have no alternative but to pray alone, even on the Day of Atonement. It cited a talmudic anecdote in which Rabbi Tarfon said it was better to take refuge in an idolatrous Temple than in a heretical synagogue of the Jews,[24] thus comparing the new trends of synagogue

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[21] Concerning this meeting and the *psak din*, see Nathanael Katzburg, "Psak beit-din shel Mikhalovtseh tav-resh-kaf-vav," in *Studies in the History of Jewish Society in the Middle Ages and in the Modern Period Presented to Professor Jacob Katz on his Seventy Fifth Birthday by Students and Friends*, ed. Immanuel Etkes and Yosef Salmon (Jerusalem, 1980), 273-86; Michael Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Invention of a Tradition," in *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era ed.* Jack Wertheimer (Jerusalem, 1992), 23-84, and Katz, *A House Divided*, 77-85.

[22] Concerning Lichtenstein's career, see Katz, *A House Divided*, 59-62. Lichtenstein had a close relationship with the *hasidim* of Sanz, and with the first Sanzer Rebbe, Rabbi Hayim Halberstam. However, Katz suggests that he should not be considered an actual hasidic follower, but rather an ascetic pietist who could take issue with R. Hayim when he saw fit.

[23] Schlesinger copied the will of the Hatam Sofer from manuscript and published it as a booklet in 1862. The following year he republished it in Yiddish translation with his Yiddish tract *Na'ar ha'ivri* (The Hebrew Youth). The first volume of *Lev ha'ivri* was published in Ungvár, 1864 (5625), the second volume in Lemberg, 1869.

[24] B. Shabbat 116a. This is probably a reference to the early Christians.

worship to outright heresy. If the Rabbi of an otherwise traditional synagogue began giving a sermon in German or any other gentile language, the pious Jew was to walk out.[25]

We thus see the conceptual establishment of a religious, cultural, and social domain, quite separate from the general trends of Westernizing, modernizing Orthodoxy. It was controversial, as can be seen from the fact that one of the leading halakhic scholars in Hungary, Rabbi Moshe Schick (known as the Maharam Schick, 1807–1879), was critical of the formulation of these ideas and did not sign the ruling.[26] But its ethos became a powerful force in the growth of *haredi* Judaism.

Hasidim and *Haredi* Exclusivism

As mentioned above, there were three hasidic leaders, in Hungary or with followers in Hungary, who were involved in this *psak din*. What about hasidic groups elsewhere? The work of Raphael Mahler[27] indicates that, in general, there was great enmity between the *hasidim* and the *maskilim*, who were often direct rivals in their respective quests to gain control of the general community. But what about their relationships with people as individuals rather than as political opponents?

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[25] The nine articles of the *psak din* prohibited: (1) giving *or being present during* a sermon in a gentile language, (2) entering a synagogue where the *bimah* is not in the center, (3) building a synagogue topped with a tower or steeple, (4) canonical clothing for the reader or other synagogue officiants, (5) having an inadequate *mehitsah* separating the women's section, so that the women are visible, (6) having a synagogue choir, (7) building a synagogue as a Choir Synagogue (this is termed a House of Atheism and compared to heresy), (8) setting up a wedding canopy inside the synagogue rather than in the open "under the heavens," (9) changing any Jewish custom or any custom relating to a synagogue. According to R. Akiva Yosef Schlesinger, who re-published the *psak din* in the second volume of his *Lev ha'ivri* in 1869, there was also a tenth point, which had not been included in the original publication of the *psak din* due to fear of the governmental authorities, but which was agreed by the participating rabbis. This was that one might let one's children be given a secular education to learn a craft or skill, but not "wisdom."

[26] See Katz, *A House Divided*, 78-82. However, although he did not sign, he felt bound by the decision of his rabbinical colleagues. Later he is seen as a supporter of the secessionist ideology of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (ibid., 268-271).

[27] Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Eugene Orenstein, Aaron Klein, Jenny Machlowitz Klein (Philadelphia, 1985). A more recent study of this topic, providing contrasting perspectives on a number of issues, is Marcin Wodziński, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland: A History of Conflict*, trans. Sarah Cozens (Oxford, 2005). See also David Assaf, *The Regal Way: The Life and Times of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin*, trans. David Louvish (Stanford, California, 2002), 98-104, 198-202; and Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*, trans. Chaya Naor and Sondra Silverton (Oxford, 2002), 91-115, 306-317.

Marcin Wodziński describes the interesting case of Pinkus Eliasz Lipszyc, who was an influential member of the Jewish community board in Opoczno. He was a modernizer, and was therefore attacked by the *Hasidim,* who in 1830 accused him of fraud and embezzlement, to try to reduce his influence over the community. On Rosh Hashanah, they subjected him and his wife to public harassment in the synagogue and as a result he withdrew his candidacy from the board. However, Wodziński notes the intriguing fact that at some stage he also had some kind of relationship with the *tsadik* of Kozienice.[28]

Michael Silber makes the point that not all the *hasidim* were drawn into the Michalowitz exclusivist stance.[29] There were also divisions on issues such as the true significance of what was seen as traditional garb, which is often regarded as an important hallmark of the *haredi* in contemporary society. When renewed governmental decrees in the 1840s sought to enforce western clothing on the Jews, first in Russia and then in Poland, many hasidic leaders presented traditional garb as an aspect of Judaism for which the faithful should be ready to sacrifice their lives.[30] However, Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Kotsk [Kock] (1787-1859) ridiculed this attitude.[31]

Despite these differences, we see in Eastern Europe the conceptual establishment of a religious, cultural, and social exclusivist paradigm which was quite different from the westernized and modernized Orthodoxy of Central Europe, which had developed a hierarchical view of general Jewish society including the less observant and Reform.[32] It is beyond the scope of this article to trace the history of the *haredi* exclusivist enclave model, expressed in the ethos of the Michalowitz *psak din*, through the nineteenth century. Suffice it to say that, despite some rabbinic critics, it continued into the twentieth century. Further, Jacob Katz believed that the ethos of the Michalowitz *psak din* and its aftermath in Hungary, and that of the roughly simultaneous bid by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch for a separatist orthodox community in

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[28] Wodziński, *Haskalah and Hasidism*, 136. See n. 9, citing Alfasi, *Toledot yehudei opotshno*, 25.

[29] See Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy," 26 n. 4.

[30] Cf. B. Sanhedrin 74a-b, which provides support for such a position.

[31] See Israel Yaakov Artan, *Emet va'emunah* (Jerusalem, 1969), 26, 39-40 and David Asaf and Israel Bartal, "Shetadlanut ve'ortodoksiyah: tsadikei polin bemifgash 'im hazemanim hahadashim," in *Hasidim ve'anshei ma'aseh: mehkarim bahasidut polin* ed. Israel Bartal, Rachel Elior, Chone Shmeruk (Jerusalem, 1994), 65-90; see p.77 n. 30.

[32] See Adam Ferziger, *Exclusion and Hierarchy*.

Frankfurt, two phenomena which Katz argues were closely linked, fuelled the foundation of Agudat Yisrael in Poland in 1916.[33]

Further evidence that at this period the enclave exclusivist ethos had become typical of Polish *haredi* Judaism is provided by the following passage by Rabbi Shmuel Bornstein of Sochaczew (1855-1926). He was the son of R. Avraham of Sochaczew, a prominent halakhic scholar and son-in-law of the Kotsker Rebbe. In Rabbi Shmuel's *Shem mishemuel,* in a passage written in 1917 and noted by Mendel Piekarz,[34] we find an interesting statement of a position mediating the two opposite tendencies of hasidic inclusivism and *haredi* exclusivism.

> [S]omeone whose desire is focused on "external things" is pushed out of the supernal Camp of the Levites, but he has not yet been pushed out of the Camp of Israel, for all Jewish souls have a hidden love for their Father in Heaven, and therefore even simple Jews sacrifice their lives for *kidush hashem* (martyrdom) as the Rav z"l [i.e., R. Shneur Zalman of Liady, of blessed memory] said in *Sefer hatanya*, and even those people whose impurity is tangible and they are sunk in "external" loves, Heaven protect us, nonetheless sometimes their Jewish soul is aroused within them… But someone whose heart has evoked claims against the fundamentals of the religion (*ikarei hadat*) and makes a pact with the gentile children, that means with external wisdoms, which turn astray one's heart and arouse within him doubts about the essentials of faith (*ikarei ha'emunah*) or about the Oral Torah, they are called Lepers who are expelled from the supernal Camp of Israel… and must dwell alone outside the camp, until he considers… how far he has gone [away], and he discards his many calculations and returns to be embraced on the lap of Torah and its *mitsvot* (commandments).[35]

Comment [r2]: Do you perhaps means "made complaints"

We thus see a combination of two contrary positions: the border protecting Jewish belief is preserved, effectively rejecting the secularizing rationalism of westernized Judaism. Within that border, however, there is a hasidic inclusivist attitude toward the transgressor. He might break

[33] See Jacob Katz, *A House Divided*, 277. Katz regards the same ethos as being exemplified by Rabbi Yosef Haim Sonnenfeld (1848-1932), spiritual leader of the Old Yishuv in the Land of Israel during the early Mandate period. Concerning the founding of Agudat Yisrael, see Gershon C. Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916-1939* (Jerusalem, 1996).

[34] Mendel Piekarz, *Hasidut polin: megamot ra'ayoniyot ben shetey hamilhamot uvigezerot 1939-1945 (hasho'ah)* (Jerusalem, 1990), 151.

[35] Shemuel Bornstein of Sochaczew, *Shem mishemuel: bemidbar* (Jerusalem, 1974), Naso, 161.

the Sabbath and have illicit relationships, yet he is within the "Jewish" enclave. Chapter 32 of *Tanya* (which speaks of loving Jewish sinners even if they continue to sin) concludes by admitting that "heretics and atheists" are beyond the pale, citing Psalms 139:22 "I hate them with utter hatred." R. Shmuel's negation of the "apikorsim" (heretics) of his time can be seen as reflecting this aspect of the text of Tanya.[36]

Comment [r3]: Addition of "these" in fn, OK?

Now, while R. Shmuel's position preserves some aspects of the ethos of hasidic inclusivism, not every twentieth-century hasidic group would accept it. For many, the exclusivism of the Hungarian ultra-orthodox enclave became paramount. Thus in the view of the Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum (1887-1979), who fought vigorously from the first decades of the twentieth century to maintain *haredi* standards in his community, particularly as regards enforcing his concepts of modesty and restricted education for women, and against all forms of Zionism, "the path of the sacred Baal Shem Tov has been completely forgotten in [this] generation."[37] This statement was made to counter the idea that the Baal Shem Tov sought to justify the wicked.[38] It implies that according to Rabbi Teitelbaum, what people generally viewed as the inclusive aspects of the Baal Shem Tov's thought are a misinterpretation of his teachings and, in general, his path can no longer be understood or followed.

Post-Holocaust Haredi Judaism

After the upheaval of the Holocaust, for *haredi* Eastern European Jews, in their new population centers, such as Jerusalem, Bnei Brak, Antwerp, London, Gateshead, and New York, the enclave model thrived, with the additional factor of a spectrum of attitudes towards Zionism and related issues. There was a clear division between those within the enclave, and those outside it. This fact was so self-evident that it did not much occupy the conscious lives of the members. They

[36] Rabbi Menahem Schneerson commented on this passage that only King David could say this, other people should always give an apparently utterly wicked (Jewish) person the benefit of the doubt, perhaps he is really acting for the sake of Heaven, which only God can discern; see J. Korf, *Likutei be'urim besefer hatanya* (Brooklyn, 1974), 196-7, and Rabbi Schneerson, *Sihot kodesh... 5724* (n.p., 1994), Noah, sec. 1, 68 (these "unedited" contemporary Habad texts are transcripts of talks by Rabbi Schneerson which he did not edit before their publication).

[37] R. Yoel Teitelbaum, *Vayoel mosheh* (Brooklyn, 1960-61), end of Discourse on the Three Oaths, p. 175, sec. 185.

[38] See ibid., 170, sec. 177.

were more concerned with differences *within* the enclave, between *hasidim* and non-*hasidim*, or between one hasidic group and another, or the conflicts within their own enclave group.

Habad Post-Modernism

My thesis is that the post-modern aspects of Habad have the effect of deconstructing the enclave for the Habad-Lubavitch movement itself, and that to a certain small but perceptible extent this is also affecting other *haredi* groups. We will focus particularly on manifestations in the *haredi* community in London.

What makes Habad post-modern? Is this a useful term? In a conference about Habad at New York University in 2005,[39] Philip Wexler,[40] the present writer, and others described Habad as having post-modern elements. However the question was raised that "Habad is a traditional, Orthodox movement. How can one call it post-modern?" Surely, post-modernism denotes relativism, and Habad-Lubavitch is a variety of orthodox religion that eschews relativism. Orthodoxy and post-modernism cannot meet in serious academic discussion. A similar point has been made by Suzanne Last Stone in her critique of attempts to claim Jewish Law, the halakhah, as a post-modern phenomenon.[41]

To answer this question, it is necessary to introduce a new element: simultaneity. Habad is able to maintain an orthodox and a post-modern approach simultaneously. We might even say that the post-modern aspect of Habad sustains its orthodox, traditional aspect.

Simultaneity might be a new concept in the study of the history of Hasidism, but it fits quite well in discussions of the post-modern turn, which began in the context of architecture. Post-modern architecture draws together different styles. A conservative traditional building might flank a modernistic central structure. The conjunction of contrasting styles is an example of the hybridization which Ihab Hassan, the American Palestinian post-modern thinker includes in his eleven definiens of what is, or was, post-modernism. Thus Hassan writes of "a new

[39] "Reaching for the Infinite: the Lubavitcher Rebbe – Life, Teachings and Impact," November, 6-8, 2005.

[40] See Philip Wexler, *The Mystical Society: Revitalization in Culture, Theory and Education* (Boulder, 2000).

[41] See Suzanne Last Stone, "In Pursuit of the Countertext: The Turn to the Jewish Legal Model in Contemporary American Legal Theory," *Harvard Law Review* 106 (1993), 813-894, and ead., "The Emergence of Jewish Law in Postmodernist Legal Theory," (1994), accessed 13/12/09 at http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/Gruss/stone.html.

relation between historical elements, without any suppression of the past in favor of the present."[42]

What are the two faces of the simultaneity in our study of Habad? On the one hand there is the halakhah interpreted, to a great extent, in its *haredi* form. The *bimah* (platform from which the Torah is read) has to be in the center of the synagogue; meat has to be *glatt kosher*;[43] milk has to be *halav yisra'el*,[44] men do not shake hands with women other than close relatives,[45] a married woman should cover her hair.[46] Consonant with this strict halakhic perspective, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson, the leader of Habad in the post-war period, vigorously campaigned concerning issues such as the desecration of the Sabbath by Israeli passenger ships, or the civil definition of Jewish identity which he argued should be determined according to a strict halakhic perspective. In these and many other matters, he represented the pole of tradition with its light and dark, permitted and forbidden, pure and impure, without compromise.

Where is the other face, which – I claim in this paper – simultaneously operates in Hasidism and, in particular, in Habad?

The kabbalistic tradition provides an interesting ambiguous perspective.[47] On the one hand it can be seen as *emphasizing* the gap between the permitted and the forbidden, the sacred

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[42] Ihab Hassaan, "Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective," in *The Postmodern Reader*, ed. Charles Jencks (London, 1992), 197.

[43] When an animal (cow or sheep) is slaughtered, the lungs have to be examined. There are adhesions to the lungs which would render the animal non-kosher according to some opinions, but which, according to R. Moshe Isserles, are permitted if they can easily be rubbed away (*Shulhan arukh,* Yoreh de'ah 39:13). There was a general Ashkenazi custom to accept this leniency of R. Moshe Isserles, but it was rejected by the *haredim*. If the lungs do not have such adhesions the animal is called not just *kosher* (fit), but *glatt* (lit. smooth) kosher.

[44] "Jewish milk," meaning milk which has been supervised for *kashrut* at the milking stage (see *Shulhan arukh*, Yoreh de'ah 115:1). The prominent twentieth century halakhic authority, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986), was lenient about the need for such supervision. See his *Igerot mosheh* (New York, 1959), Yore de'ah 1:47, which permits the unsupervised milk in the USA, where government health laws ensure it is pure cows' milk. However he states that he himself would only drink supervised milk and he recommends that the pious do the same. In general the *haredim* insist on supervised milk.

[45] See Maimonides, *Yad*, Laws of Forbidden Intercourse 21:1-2, 6. The minor tractate *Kalah* warns against "touching the little finger" of a woman.

[46] See B. Ketubot 72a-b.

[47] As an amusing vignette of intellectual history, Moshe Idel has suggested intriguing possibilities of kabbalistic

and the profane. But on the other, especially in its Habad reading as transmitted by Habad hasidic-kabbalistic teachings, it simultaneously *blurs* the border, deconstructing the polarity. Insofar as existence can be seen as expressing the duality of being and nonbeing, being and the Divine, or self and other – the divine emanations termed the *Sefirot*[48] can be read as dissolving that duality, particularly in the Habad reading, which added a psychological dimension to the interpretation of the Sefirot. Rather than see them as a ladder from the world to the distant Divine, Habad teachings emphasize the immanence of the Divine in the world. Habad hasidic teachings also reach beyond the Sefirot, to *atsmut*, the Essence. Thus Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber (1860-1920), the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, comments in a discourse, "In the Essence of the radiance of the Infinite there is no division at all and two opposites can co-exist."[49]

Comment [r4]: Is my change in the fn. OK?

Here all binary oppositions are deconstructed. Habad sees the challenge of existence as the goal of expressing this kind of unity in the physical world, which thereby becomes a dwelling for the Divine. How can the Divine dwell in our finite lowly world? Because at the level of the Divine Essence, two opposites can coexist.[50]

Another expression of the deconstruction of polarities, this time that of good and evil, is to be found in the theme of the Divine Sparks. Traditional halakhah presents a realm of the holy and the good and another realm of the forbidden and the bad. Of course, the halakhah also has many caveats, *milekhathilah* and *bediavad*,[51] *halakhah ve'eyn morin ken* "it is the law but one does not teach it"[52] and so on. Nevertheless, as Suzanne Last Stone points out, for the halakhist,

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input into the thought of Jacques Derrida via Vajda's French translation in 1957 of a lecture by Scholem discussing Recanati. Idel suggests that Derrida's famous postmodern statement "there is nothing outside the text" may be a secularized version of Recanati's "il n'est Lui-meme en dehors de la Torah." See Moshe Idel, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation* (New Haven and London, 2002), 122-3.

[48] The *sefirot* (related by the Kabbalists to the Hebrew word *sapir*, sapphire, for they express "radiance"), are the emanations from the Divine that function as the spiritual intermediary between the boundless Infinite and the created realms. See Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1974), 96-116.

[49] R. Shalom Dov Ber Schneerson, *Sefer hama'amarim 5672*, vol. 2 (Brooklyn, 1977), 728.

[50] See R. Menahem Mendel Schneerson, *Likutei sihot*, vol. 12 (Brooklyn, 1977), 74 n. 25, applying this deconstructive idea to the polarity of world and Godliness.

[51] *Milekhathilah* (from the beginning) is the optimum observance of a Command as opposed to *di'avad* (after he acted), when it has been carried out in a less than optimum way. See *Entsiklopedyah talmudit*, vol. 7, cols. 406-419.

[52] See B. Menahot 36b.

the agunah – an "enchained" woman without a Jewish divorce – cannot remarry.[53] On the other hand, the theme of the Divine Sparks opens the way to seeing the possibility of holiness in everything, even in the realm of the forbidden. What is holy has Divine Sparks, and so too does what is profane or impure or even evil.[54] In the Lurianic Kabbalah this theme was not used to deconstruct the polarity of good and evil, but rather to emphasize the spiritual drama that is the background to the cosmic processes of evil, exile and redemption. Seventeenth-century Sabbatean ideas, originally conceived to explain Sabbatai Zvi's conversion to Islam in 1666, describe the deliberate descent into evil in order to gather the fallen sparks.[55] Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer explored the idea that the early *hasidim* were drawn by a Jewish version of Quietism, in which there might be no distinction between good and evil, and yet continued to be firmly bound by the practical Commandments.[56] However the famous hasidic doctrine of "elevating" and thus redeeming the alien thoughts which fall into a person's mind during prayer, and the concomitant theme of the "descent of the *tsadik*"[57] were ways in which the darkness of evil was not just driven away by the illumination of more powerful good, but was in some way a source of hidden light.

Further, in Lurianic thought the key border between existence and the infinite is the step of *tsimtsum*, the contraction of divine radiance so as to make room for the creation of the worlds. In a literal interpretation, the term *tsimtsum* seems to suggest absence of the divine from the world of existence.[58] But the teaching of Israel Baal Shem Tov was that *tsimtsum* is like the "shell of a snail,"[59] meaning that the process of *tsimtsum* is a part of the divine thrust to create the world and be revealed in it. Rabbi Shneur Zalman too argued against "those who are wise in

Comment [r5]: Change OK?

Comment [r6]: This sentence is not clear to me. Please spell out. Is it perhaps "the effect of tsimtsum is the like the shell of a snail" or "tsimtsum is like a snail withdrawing into its shell." so that people are aware of the shell but not what is inside it?!

[53] Suzanne Last Stone, "The Emergence of Jewish Law in Postmodernist Legal Theory" (n. 41 above), sec. III, "Uncoupling Jewish Law and Postmodern Thought."

[54] For a general presentation of the themes of the Breaking of the Vessels, the divine process which is the source of the presence of the sacred sparks in mundane existence, and *tikun* (lit. repair), the mystical and eschatological process of restoration, see Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1974) 135-141.

[55] See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1967), 311.

[56] See Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism: Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth-Century Hasidic Thought*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Princeton, 1993) 194.

[57] See Dresner, *The Zaddik* (n. 3 above), 148-122, and Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, 342-382.

[58] On this concept, see Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 260-264.

[59] Bereshit Rabah 21:5; see Yaakov Yosef of Polonnoye, *Toledot ya'akov yosef*, 38d, beginning of Vayehi.

their own eyes" and interpret *tsimtsum* literally.[60] A repeated theme in the teachings of R. Menahem Mendel Schneerson was that *tsimtsum* is no more than an apparent veiling of the divine radiance, it does not *actually* divide created existence from the divine. He saw the hasidic teachings as enabling this more holistic and at the same time more paradoxical perspective on existence and on Godliness.[61]

Even before the beginning of his leadership in 1950, R. Menahem Mendel worked to emphasize the importance of studying the Habad hasidic teachings, as well as Talmud and halakhah. He regarded the Habad teachings as the contemporary expression of the *nishmata d'oraita*, the soul of the Torah, while Talmud and halakhah are *gufa d'oraita*,[62] the body of the Torah. During his leadership, hitherto unpublished manuscripts of Habad teachings by each of the six previous leaders were published in dozens of volumes, and he vigorously promoted their study.

Habad hasidic Inclusivism

What is the social effect of these Habad teachings and of the directives of R. Menahem Mendel? The idea that each Jew is significant whether or not he or she observes the commandments became the basic ethos of the movement. Thus, in an early published text, the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe said of the wicked son in the Four Sons of the Hagadah:

> The Gemara says:[63] "Even though he sinned, he is a Jew [*yisra'el*]." Every Jew, in whatever situation he might be, has within him the *nekudat hayahdut* [point of Jewishness]. As the previous Rebbe said[64] "'One is wise and one is wicked' – in each of

[60] *Tanya*, Gate of Unity and Faith, chap. 7, fol. 83a. This passage appears in the manuscript versions of this work, but was censored from the 1796 and subsequent editions by the Habad *hasidim* themselves. It was first printed in the 1900 edition of the Tanya. The self-censorship came about because the literalist approach to *tsimtsum* was attributed to Rabbi Elijah the Gaon of Vilna, and an open attack on him in the pages of *Tanya* could be expected to lead to further persecution of the *hasidim*.

[61] This perspective has now been vigorously explored in Elliot R. Wolfson, *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menahem Mendel Schneerson* (New York, 2009).

[62] Zohar III, 152a. See R. Menahem Schneerson, *Igerot kodesh* (Brooklyn, 1989), 10:114 (no. 3075).

[63] B. Sanhedrin 24a.

[64] See Rabbi Yosef Yitshak Schneersohn, *Likutei diburim*, vol. 3 (Kfar Habad, 1973), 844-5.

them there is the One [i.e., the Divine], also in the wicked [son]," except that in his case it is hidden and one has to reveal it.[65]

This idea is connected with the image of a Torah Scroll. "Even though he sinned he is a *yisra'el*" hints at the idea expressed by the word Israel [*yisra'el*], explained as an acronym for the phrase *yesh shishim ribo otiyot latorah* –(The Torah has 600,000 letters).[66] "This means: just as the entire Torah depends on each individual letter… so also the totality of Israel depends on every Jew."[67]

Comment [r7]: I did not understand "mode" in your fn, until I looked at the text itself. Then it became clear. So I changed "mode" to "ofen" and put it in italics.

R. Menahem Mendel went on to encourage people to make a point of inviting the wicked son to their Seder, and commented on the fact that, in the traditional text of the Hagadah, the wise son is placed next to the wicked son.[68] This, he claimed, is a hint both to the spiritual potential in the wicked son, and to the fact that the wise son has the task of revealing it within him.[69] The significance here is that each Jew, whether scholarly or unlearned, saint or sinner, was seen by the Rebbe as crucial to the entire people.

One could say that in pre-modernism the periphery is far from the center, in the sense of the serf being remote from the King; in modernism it has access to the center, through mechanisms such as the democratic process, and in post-modernism every point on the periphery *is* the center: the "other" is recognized and empowered. This aspect of the post-modern paradigm

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[65] R. Menahem Schneerson, *Likutei sihot*, vol. 1 (Brooklyn, 1984), 249.

[66] This idea is found in the seventeenth century: Natan Neta Shapira, *Megaleh amukot* (Krakow 1637, Zolkiew 1800), *ofen* 186. This links with the figure of 600,000 Israelites who left Egypt. The letters of the Torah are the source of the souls (see Rabbi Shneur Zalman, *Likutei torah* (Brooklyn, 1999), Bemidbar 16b). However, in fact the Torah has 304,805 letters. What the text describes as unwritten "vowel letters" make the number up to 600,000. See Shneur Zalman, *Likutei torah*, Behar, 41b, 43d.

[67] Menahem Schneerson, *Likutei sihot*, 1:249. This statement is implying that the Divine, too, is, so to speak, dependent on each Jew. The text cites in a footnote the Mishnah in Sanhedrin 6:5: "Rabbi Meir says: when a person is in pain, what does the Shekhinah say, so to speak? 'I have a pain in my head, I have a pain in my arm.'" Further reference to the Torah Scroll image is in Menahem Schneerson, *Likutei sihot*, vol. 20 (Brooklyn, 1982), 417-431. This theme connects with R. Menahem Mendel's mystical campaign, beginning in 1981, for Torah Scrolls to be written to unite and protect the entire Jewish people. See ibid., 20:505-6; vol. 24 (Brooklyn, 1984), 583-5.

[68] "The Torah speaks of four sons: one is wise, and one is wicked, and one is simple, and one does not know how to ask" (standard Hagadah text). An earlier work by Rabbi Menahem Mendel was a scholarly commentary on the Hagadah, *Hagadah shel pesah im likutey te'amim uminhagim* (Brooklyn, 1946, 2002).

[69] Menahem Schneerson, *Likutei sihot*, 1:249.

can be discerned in the idea that each individual Jew is crucial to the people as a whole. The Rebbe would frequently cite a passage in Maimonides which expresses a similar idea:

> Each person should consider himself or herself as half meritorious, and half guilty. And similarly that the whole world is half meritorious and half guilty. [therefore] ….. If one does one good deed one tips oneself and the whole world to the side of merit, and brings salvation to oneself and to the world.[70]

Through one good deed, (and, R. Menahem Mendel added, even one good *thought*,[71]) one can transform the world.

Rabbi Menahem Mendel's teachings can even be seen as deconstructing the wider boundary between the Jew and the non-Jew. Again citing Maimonides, Rabbi Schneerson taught that the Jewish people have a duty to recognize and communicate the Seven Noahide Laws to the Gentiles. At the same time, as mentioned above, he was concerned to promote the halakhic definition of Jewish identity. In the contemporary traditionally Orthodox world, his concern for the spirituality of the non-Jew has few parallels.[72]

Responses in Orthodox Society

The first responses to the Habad outreach ideal were decidedly negative in some quarters. Although R. Menahem Mendel promoted the outreach ideal from the early 1950s, the first actual campaign he instituted was the "Tefilin campaign" (*mivtsa' tefilin*) on the eve of the outbreak of the Six Day War in 1967. This provoked criticism from Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, the Satmarer Rebbe, who included an attack on the Lubavitch initiative to ask Jewish men to don Tefilin in his virulently anti-Zionist tract *Al hage'ulah ve'al hatemurah* published in 1967 in order to denigrate the Israeli victory, which he termed the work of Satan. The halakhah states that Tefilin demand a "pure body," which means also a pure mind. Surely, claimed Rabbi Teitelbaum, the irreligious

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[70] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Repentance, 3:4.

[71] Menahem Schneerson, *Likutei sihot*, vol. 29 (Brooklyn, 1990), 363.

[72] However, one notable figure in this regard was Rabbi Dr Solomon Schonfeld (1912-1984), who headed the ultra-orthodox Adath Yisrael establishment in London, in his work *The Universal Bible, being the Pentateuchal Texts at First Addressed to All Nations (Torat B'nei Noach) Teaching for the Sons of Noah*, trans. and ed. Solomon Schonfeld (London, 1955). See also Chanan Tomlin, *Protest and Prayer: Rabbi Dr Solomon Schonfeld and Orthodox Jewish Responses in Britain to the Nazi Persecution of Europe's Jews 1942-1945* (Oxford, 2006).

men who put on tefilin will be thinking impure thoughts.[73] He was particularly critical of those otherwise righteous Jews (as he termed them) who sought to "embrace and cleave to the wicked," a theme he had earlier developed in his *Vayoel moshe*.[74]

The following vignette typifies the response of *haredim* to Habad outreach. In the 1980s a hippy with a long pony tail, who had been in an ashram in India, was spending the Sabbath with a Habad-Lubavitch family in London. Wisely or not, the male host invited his guest to accompany him to the mikveh [ritual bath] on the eve of the Sabbath, following general hasidic custom. The mikveh was run by the Vizhnitz *hasidim* (following the Bnei Brak leader, rather than that of Monsey, USA) and was located near the main Habad-Lubavitch center. The hippy stripped and entered the mikveh in a meditative mood, perhaps thinking of similar experiences in the Ganges.

At this point the Vizhnitz *hasid* in charge of the mikveh saw the hippy in the pool, distinguished by his long pony tail. Realizing the Lubavitcher had brought him, he drew him aside and told him he did not want such people in the mikveh. "Why not?" "I do not want my children to see him." "But they might see him in the street." "I do not want them to see him here in the mikveh. This is a holy place."

Clearly, boundaries had been crossed, causing a clash.[75] However, even at that time, a general espousal of outreach was growing, especially among the non-hasidic *haredi* Orthodox,

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[73] *Al hage'ulah ve'al hatemurah* (Brooklyn, 1967), 102-3, sec. 57. For a response by the Lubavitcher Rebbe to this and other criticisms of the Tefilin campaign, see Menahem Schneerson, *Likutei sihot*, vol. 6 (Brooklyn, 1972), 271-5 (a talk given in the autumn of 1967).

[74] See ibid., 31 (sec.4), 118-9 (sec. 68). See also *Vayoel mosheh*, 171, sec. 178. Concerning the Satmar community and ideology, see Israel Rubin, *Satmar: An Island in the City* (Chicago, 1972) and George Kranzler, *Hasidic Williamsburg: A Contemporary American Hasidic Community* (Northvale, 1995). Some of Rabbi Teitelbaum's followers felt torn by their Rebbe's total rejection of the Tefilin campaign, especially those living not in Williamsburg but in more pluralistic hasidic communities such as London. Around 1975, a Satmar *hasid* contacted Lubavitch House in North East London shortly before Pesach and said that a Jewish man who is not religious is working in his home as a cleaner sent by an agency. He cannot ask him to put on Tefilin, since he himself is a Satmar *hasid*, but could a Lubavitcher please come to his home to do so? (Oral report by Rabbi Shmuel Lew, c. 1975). See below, n. 82.

[75] However, the story has a sequel. At that point the Vizhnitzer Rebbe, Rabbi Moshe Hager of Bnei Brak, was visiting London. The Vizhnitz *hasidim* organized a *tish*, a gathering around the Rebbe, with singing and a sense of

the *mitnagedim*. During the 1970s, after years of following a strong separatist ethos, they changed direction and began to develop powerful and effective outreach organizations. What about the *hasidim*? In 1992 Tamar El-Or published a study of hasidic women from the Ger community in Jerusalem, which provides evidence of a pronounced outreach ethos at that time.[76] She noted that it was largely due to that ethos that the hasidic women welcomed her, a secular anthropologist, into their homes. At the same time, she was a significant person in their eyes, because her grandfather had been a prominent Gerer *hasid*. This fact too, apparently, contributed to her acceptance. By contrast a certain *ba'alat teshuvah* (repentant) in the Gerer community, who lacked such illustrious forebears, and who had chosen to taunt El-Or for her secularism, was disparaged by a member of the Gerer community, who said, comforting El-Or: "she's a nothing."[77]

Let us come back to Vizhnitz in London, by considering two examples of a *ba'al teshuvah* being accepted into the community. In one case there was a Vizhnitz grandfather in Poland, whose son moved to Vienna, ceased to wear the garb of a *hasid*, and shaved off his beard, yet retained a close link with the Vizhnitz community.[78] He and his wife and young son succeeded in escaping to Britain in 1939. The son received very little Jewish education, although he could speak Yiddish. He married a Jewish woman but lived a secular life. In middle age he encountered Lubavitch and became devotedly observant of Jewish law, and even visited the Lubavitcher Rebbe. In *yehidut* [a private interview with the Rebbe] he expressed his anguish at his own son's distance from Judaism. *Rebbe, rateve mein Sohn*! (Rebbe, save my son!) he cried out in Yiddish. Encouraged by his father, the son did embark on a path of Jewish observance and now lives in a Lubavitch community in Israel. The father then went through a further transformation. He began to remember his own roots, and his Vizhnitz hasidic grandfather. He

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spiritual contact with the holy. The hippy went to participate. He stood close to the front, very near the Rebbe. Now, many Vizhnitz followers – perhaps including the mikveh man - might have expected the Rebbe to show some hint of displeasure, and the hippy would somehow have been gently moved to the back. This did not happen. The Vizhnitzer Rebbe seemingly accepted the presence of the hippy. From the Rebbe's point of view, if not that of the man in charge of the mikveh, some boundaries could be broken through.

[76] See Tamar El-Or, *Educated and Ignorant: Ultra-orthodox Jewish Women and their World* (Boulder, 1994).

[77] Ibid., 174.

[78] He was, at some point before World War II, the tailor for the Vizhnitzer Rebbe.

began to visit the Vizhnitz synagogue in London, which is close to the Lubavitch center. As the grandson of a *hasid*, who was now himself living according to ultra-Orthodox Jewish teaching, he was accepted. He became a Vizhnitzer. On the Sabbath he now wears a kaftan and a modest *shtreimel* (traditional hasidic fur headgear). He has returned to his and, despite his secular past, the door to the Vizhnitz enclave has opened to him.[79]

The second case illustrates a further step for the *haredi* Vizhnitz community: accepting a person who did *not* have a Vizhnitzer grandfather. This was a man with an Oxford degree, who crossed Africa by bicycle, taught English in Cairo and for many years, regarded Bob Dylan as his main guide in life. At some point he encountered traditional Orthodoxy and the London Lubavitch community. He married and had children. But he was still on a spiritual journey. While visiting Israel with his ten year old son, he attended a *tish* of the Bnei Brak Vizhnitzer Rebbe. His son was very impressed. The boy said later: "I want to be a Vizhnitzer *hasid*." Back in London, the family began to attend the Vizhnitz synagogue, and the son was accepted in the Vizhnitz school. Now his father too wears a *shtreimel*. At the boy's *bar mitsvah*, a prominent figure in the Vizhnitz community declared in his after-dinner speech, "We welcome this family in our *bais hamedrash* [study and prayer hall]." It was a warm statement, and, possibly, a significant moment of social history.[80]

Is this evidence of a gradual change in attitudes in *haredi* society? Obviously only a full sociological study could provide a reliable answer. However the phenomenological observations recorded here may indicate the appropriateness of such a study. The onset of modernity openly threatened the survival of traditional Judaism, with its ancient store of subtle knowledge, its spirituality, and its ideals. The result was the erection of invisible ghetto walls, in order to keep out the "transgressors," their books and their profanity. This withdrawal might be seen as contradicting the inclusivist aspect of the earlier hasidic ethos. However in our post-modern age, a pluralist society permits tradition to exist in its own right. There is less reason to fear modernity and those "transgressors" who have been swept away from their roots and traditions by the winds of contemporary life. Some hasidic groups like Habad are even able to utilize modernity to revive traditional Judaism with a global vision which includes Jews round the world and, ultimately, all humanity.

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[79] Information gathered by the author from a variety of oral sources.

[80] Information gathered by the author. The *bar mitsvah* took place in May 2003.

Habad, powered by its tradition of mystical teachings, and the exceptional leadership of R. Menahem Mendel Schneerson, who pushed the hasidic inclusivist ideal to an extreme beyond its previous formulations, is still the only ultra-Orthodox group which is able to countenance the transgressor as he or she is, and see the spiritual value of the individual beyond the question of whether or not they observe Jewish Law.[81] Nonetheless, to a certain extent this Habad dissolution of borders affects other hasidic groups as well. A reformed transgressor with noble ancestors is accepted; even a reformed transgressor who does *not* have noble ancestors is accepted. Doors are opening, times are changing.[82] Perhaps, eventually, the hippy – as hippy, not as *ba'al teshuvah* - will indeed be welcomed in the Mikveh, if he wants to try it, or at the Shabbat table. Not only in a Chabad House, but in every *haredi* home; this would suggest that a new, inclusive paradigm would replace the schismatic perceptions of modernity.

[81] Rabbi Schneerson stated in a letter published in his *Likutei sihot,* quoting Rabbi Moshe Cordovero's *Tomar Devorah* [*Palm Tree of Deborah*] (New York, 1960, edited N. Waxman), 37, near end of chap. 2: "One should accustom oneself to induce love of other people in one's heart, even towards the wicked, as if they were one's brothers, and more than this" (Menahem Schneerson, *Likutei sihot*, vol. 27 (Brooklyn, 1989), 367).

[82] Even Satmar has moved beyond its specific communal setting. Its Rav Tov organization seeks to maintain strict piety among traditional Yemenite Jews, and Bikur Cholim d'Satmar, an organization which visits and cares for the sick, founded in 1957 by the Satmar Rebbetzin Alte Feige Teitelbaum (1913-2001) has today a pluralist Jewish dimension and will extend *hesed* (kindness) to any Jew.