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JERUSALEM STUDIES
IN JEWISH THOUGHT

VOLUME XIII

Rivkah Shatz-Uffenheimer
Memorial Volume

II

Editors

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JERUSALEM 1996

Editorial office

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The publication of this volume was made possible in part by the
Reuven and Edith Hecht Trust and the
Paula and David Ben-Gurion Fund in the Faculty of Humanities
established by the Federmann Family

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Jerusalem 1996
ISSN 0333-7081

Production Daniel J. Spitzer
Typeset by Posner & Sons Ltd, Jerusalem

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on, contained in the writings of these men and others, and continuing to shape the lives of seeking Jews who live far from that city on the Vistula, once the home of so much Jewish life and spirit.

The Neutralisation of Messianism and the Apocalypse

Naftali Loewenthal

The 'neutralisation of messianism', defined a half-century ago by Gershon Scholem,¹ describes the development in early Hasidism of the concept of the *mashiah periti*, or *geulah periti*, the personal, individual Redemption. Through attainment of *devekut* and comparable spiritual goals, the hasid can attain a state of mind as if he personally were in the messianic age. Despite the views of Dinur² and Tishby³ that early Hasidism did exhibit strong messianic elements, albeit often in a concealed form due to the suspicions of the mitnagdim, Scholem saw the 'neutralisation of messianism' as an important transformation which had taken place, which he describes as a deliberate reaction to the Shabbatian upheaval. The neutralisation process removed the 'dangerous sting' of the overt quest for the *geulah kelalit*, the general Redemption, while preserving the basic theosophy of the Lurianic kabbalah. The late Rivkah Schatz-Uffenheimer, in the concluding chapter of her *Hasidism as Mysticism*, likewise emphasised the 'interiorization' of messianism in early Hasidism and the replacement of the theme of national, historical redemption by that of hasidic spirituality.⁴

- * This paper was given at the 40th Anniversary International Conference 'Aspects of Jewish Intellectual History in Memory of Alexander Altmann', at the Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London. I am grateful to the Institute of Jewish Studies for a grant enabling this research to be carried out.
- 1 See G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Third Revised Edition), New York 1962, p. 329; idem, 'The Neutralization of the Messianic Element in Early Hasidism', *Journal of Jewish Studies*, XX (1969), pp. 20-55 (=G. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, London 1971, pp. 176-202). See also S. Dubnow, *Toledot ha-Hasidut*, Tel Aviv 1975, p. 62.
 - 2 See B. Dinur, *Bakfeneh ha-Dorot*, Jerusalem 1972, pp. 81-227.
 - 3 See I. Tishby, 'The Messianic Idea and Messianic Trends in the Growth of Hasidism', *Zion*, XXXII (1967), pp. 1-45 (Hebrew).
 - 4 R. Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hahsidut KeMistikah*, Jerusalem 1980², ch. 13, pp.

The present paper claims that this phenomenon is not a one-off transformation of the Lurianic quest for *mashiach kelali* into the hasidic goal of *mashiach perati*, but a more complex process. It is true that the theme of the *mashiach perati*, the private and personal form of messianism, is central to Hasidism and is a key to comprehending its function in society; nonetheless, at certain times an apocalyptic aspect of hasidic messianism is seen in which the *mashiach kelali* is expected with all the tangible changes that this implies. Then again this recedes into the background and is absorbed by the theme of the power of private spiritual revelation in one form or another. Further, one can sometimes observe the two forms of messianic thinking acting at the same time in Hasidism.

The focus of this study is a particular variety of hasidic messianism, that of R. Yosef Yitzhak (1880–1950), the Sixth Lubavitch Rebbe, and of his successor R. Menachem Mendel (1902–1994) during the first two decades of his leadership.

As Scholem admits,⁵ from the third generation of Hasidism, at the beginning of the 19th century, there were occasional periods of messianic tension, relating not to the 'personal messiah' but to the *mashiach kelali*, the apocalyptic Redeemer. This is seen in the intensely mystical messianism of Braslav,⁶ the response of some Polish hasidic schools to the Napoleonic Wars,⁷ in Eastern European Jewish attitudes to the significant year 1840⁸ and reactions to the Holocaust.

In the Habad movement, as elsewhere, there are indications of messianic tension around 1840. These might have been intensified by the existence of a discourse by R. Shneur Zalman which states that the Messiah will come in the year 1843 or 1848.⁹ There is an anecdote that some

168–177. In the English version, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, Jerusalem & Princeton, NJ, 1993, ch. 15: 'History and National Redemption', pp. 326–339.

5 See 'The Neutralisation of the Messianic Element in Early Hasidism', *JJS*, XX (1969), p. 29; idem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, p. 179.

6 See A. Green, *Tormented Master, A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav*, Alabama 1979, pp. 182–220.

7 See S. Dubnow, *Toledot Ha-Hasidut* (above, note 1), p. 329.

8 See A. Morgenstern, *Messianism and the Settlement of Palestine*, Jerusalem 1985. However see I. Bartal's review in *Zion*, 52 (1987), pp. 117–130.

9 See ערומי תורת מנחם מנדל ב"ר יוסף יצחק מנאחם, *Torat Shalom*, 1982, pp. 419–423; a reference to this discourse by R. Shalom Dober, the Fifth Rebbe (1860–1920) in *Torat Shalom*, Brooklyn (4th edition) 1992, p. 237; the discussion of it by Y. Mondschein in *Migdal Oz*, Kfar Habad 1980, p. 483–484. However, a comment by

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time after 1848 R. Menahem Mendel, known as the *Tzernah Tzedek*¹⁰ was asked why the Messiah had not materialised. He answered that in 1848 the major collection of Habad hasidic discourses *Likkutei Torah*¹¹ had been published.¹² The publication of these teachings – despite considerable harassment by the maskilim – constituted 'the Messiah'. We can understand his words as signalling a change of emphasis: not the apocalyptic Redeemer, but the messianic state of mind achieved through study and contemplation of the hasidic teachings.¹³

Personal and National Redemption in the early 1940s

Let us examine in more detail the events in the Lubavitch school of a century later, now set in Brooklyn, in which the apocalyptic messianic component was particularly overt. During the early 1940s, Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak Schneersohn, the Sixth Rebbe¹⁴ believed the times demanded a

the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Menahem Mendel known as the *Tzernah Tzedek* (1789–1866), indicates that he was opposed to the calculating of the *Year*. See his *Or HaTorah Neziim uKhatzim*, Brooklyn 1969, p. 183, quoted in Mondschein *Migdal Oz*, p. 483.

10 See previous note.

11 This was printed in Zhitomir, 1848. Recent editions are those of the Kehot Publication Society, Brooklyn 1972, 1984.

12 See R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Likkutei Sifot*, Vol. 6, Brooklyn 1973, p. 80, n. 70, and different versions of this anecdote in R. Yosef Yitzhak Schneersohn, *Iggrot Kodesh*, Vol. 1, p. 485, and R. Shalom Dober, *Torat Shalom*, p. 237.

13 According to one version of this anecdote, this interpretation was rejected by the questioner, R. Menahem Mendel's son R. Shmuel (1834–1882), later Admur in Lubavitch, who said: *ימינו נמשך למטה ולא למעלה*, i.e. in this world (*Likkutei Sifot*, *ibid.*). The other versions present the question as being asked by R. Yehudah Leib (d. 1865), another son of the *Tzernah Tzedek*, later Admur of Kopyts, and record no reply. However, R. Yosef Yitzhak's letter, dated 1925, amplifies the initial answer of the *Tzernah Tzedek*: 'Do you know what the Messiah is? The Messiah will reveal the depths of the inwardness of the Torah, and everyone will want to experience (יִרְאוּ) the radiance. So now there has been revealed the *Likkutei Torah*, the words of our Rebbe z. l. This is a revelation of inner light and a *segulah* for revelation [in] the soul' (*Iggrot Kodesh*, *ibid.*). This is an example of a combination of the spiritualized and national-historical aspects of messianism.

14 Regarding other aspects of the writing and activities of R. Yosef Yitzhak see Rachel Elior, 'Yiknah Minsk', *Meikerei Yeruslakayim beMaksheret Yisrael*, 4 (1982), pp. 179–235 (in Hebrew); Ada Rapoport-Albert, 'Hagiography with Footnotes: Edifying Tales and the Writing of History in Hasidism', in *Studies in*

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wave of repentance and general return to Judaism among the westernized Jews. If this would take place the Holocaust would be followed by the redemption. These ideas were promulgated in English and Yiddish in his journal *התקווה והתורה* (1940 to 1945). In a letter he explains that the name of the journal means a *keriah*, i.e. invitation, to *kedushah*, holiness, and the *kedushah* means preparation for the Messiah.¹⁵ This phenomenon has been discussed in a number of articles by Gershon Greenberg.¹⁶ At this period R. Yosef Yitzhak's letters often end *לגאולתנו*, 'Immediate Repentance immediate Redemption', and at this time so do those of his son-in-law and future successor, R. Menachem Mendel, the Seventh Rebbe.

However, the conclusion of the war and its aftermath did not follow the course envisaged in *Hakeriah vekaKedushah*. The war did not conclude with the destruction of Europe,¹⁷ there was no wave of Repentance among the Jews and the Apocalypse did not take place. After 1945 the overtly messianic mood seems to fade, indicated by the fact that Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak stops ending his letters¹⁸ with the phrase

Jewish Historiography in memory of Arnaldo Momigliano, Supplement 27 of *History and Theory* (1988), pp. 119-159; D.E. Fishman, 'Preserving Tradition in the Land of Revolution: the Religious Leadership of Soviet Jewry, 1917-1930', in Jack Wertheimer (ed.), *The Uses of Tradition, Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, New York & Jerusalem, pp. 85-118.

15 See his *Iggrot Kodesh*, Vol. 5, p. 359. He also states here that the introductory paragraph 'The day is short, short, short...' is to issue no. 8, May 1941, sums up his messianic message.

16 See G. Greenberg, 'Mahane Israel-Lubavitch 1940-1945: Actively Responding to *Khurban*', in A. Berger (ed.), *Bearing Witness to the Holocaust 1939-1989*, UK 1991, pp. 141-163; idem, 'Assimilation as *Khurban* According to Wartime American Orthodoxy (Habad Hassidism)', in M. Mor (ed.), *Proceedings of the Creighton University Conference on Jewish Assimilation, Acculturation and Accommodation 1989*, Fordham 1991, pp. 161-177; idem, 'Sect of Catastrophe, Mahane Israel-Lubavitch 1940-1945', in M. Mor (ed.), *Proceedings of the Creighton University Conference on Jewish Sects, Religious Movements and Political Parties*, Fordham 1992, pp. 165-184; idem, 'Redemption After Holocaust According to Mahane Israel-Lubavitch 1940-1945', *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 12, no. 1 (February 1992), pp. 61-84.

17 See *ibid.*, 'Redemption after Holocaust' p. 72

18 The last seems to be in his *Iggrot Kodesh*, Vol. 8, p. 621, dated 18 Sivan 5705 (1945). Rabbi Menachem Mendel continues for two years more, but he too stops in Av 5707 (1947), with a single further occurrence in Elul 1948. See his letters, *Iggrot Kodesh... Admur She'itza*, Vol. 2, Brooklyn 1987, pp. 228, 375. After R. Yosef Yitzhak died in 1950, there was an overt messianic emphasis in R. Menachem Mendel's

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התקווה והתורה (1940-1945). Further, references in his letters to the Messiah and the Redemption virtually cease.

What about his discourses during this period? There were two kinds of discourse. One kind was written by R. Yosef Yitzhak in Yiddish for publication in *Hakeriah vekaKedushah*.¹⁹ In these there is frequent mention of the messianic theme, corresponding to the other material published in that journal. The second kind of discourse comprises those that he said orally to his followers during hasidic gatherings, usually on the Sabbath. When one examines the volume of this kind of discourse said in 5701 (1940-41), the time of intense messianism as regards his journal *Hakeriah vekaKedushah*, one is struck by the lack of mention of the messianic theme. This volume²⁰ was published in 1964, and one might wonder if references to messianism had simply been edited out for the printed edition. However, at the time when these discourses were said by R. Yosef Yitzhak transcripts of them were made by the prominent hasid R. Avraham Paris (d. 1968), which were credited as being highly accurate.²¹ These transcripts were made available at the time as mimeographed pamphlets. I have been able to examine a number of these²² and they are identical to the printed text, which was no doubt based on them.

In 1941 only one of the oral discourses makes any reference to the urgent messianic thinking which is found in *Hakeriah vekaKedushah*. This was said around the time of R. Yosef Yitzhak's first *Kol Koreh*, published in the New York Yiddish newspaper *התקווה והתורה* on 26 May 1941, calling on Jews to prepare for the Redemption.²³ The discourse, said on the following Sabbath, begins²⁴ by speaking of the 'pangs of the messiah', which was the way R. Yosef Yitzhak (and some other ortho-

¹⁹ talks (*sihot*) and discourses, as will be discussed below.

¹⁹ In 1945 these were published in a single volume: *התקווה והתורה - אגרות ופירושים*, Brooklyn (4th edition) 1968.

²⁰ *התקווה והתורה* 1964.

²¹ R. Yosef Yitzhak said of the occasional typing errors in them *ענין תיקון* (oral communication in 1994 from R. Shmuel Lew of London, quoting a *sihot* by the Seventh Rebbe).

²² From the collection of R. Shmuel Lew. They are typed, mimeographed in black on both sides of heavy paper. There are seven discourses from 1940-41, and others from 1944-45 on thinner paper.

²³ It is reprinted in the June 1941 edition of *Hakeriah vekaKedushah*, no. 9, pp. 15-16.

²⁴ See *Seder HaMazmorim 5701*, Kfar Habad 1964, p. 119ff. The original mimeographed version is identical.

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dox leaders)²⁵ interpreted the war. However, after a few lines the theme reverts to the topic of contemplation in prayer which is the dominant subject in the discourses of that year. The discourse does not return to the messianic theme.

The concept of the messiah is entirely absent from most of the other discourses in the volume, or else present only in a very dilute way such as a reference to the idea that exile is compared to sleep, in a discourse advising contemplation in prayer leading to a spiritual wakefulness.²⁶ In the volume of R. Yosef Yitzhak's *sihot* (talks) of the same year, once or twice there is mention of the Messiah and the pangs of the Messiah as found in *Hakermiah v'el haKedushah*. However, this is rare.²⁷ It seems that for R. Yosef Yitzhak the 'talk', often at a festival meal, had a different function: conveying the ideals of Habad through historical anecdotes²⁸ and spiritual demands.

This suggests that two different concepts were operating at the same time: the theme of *geulah kelalit*, the general Redemption which will take place consequent to the apocalypse of the war, and that of *geulah peratit*, achieved through intensive Habad contemplation in prayer, and other aspects of Jewish life, as encouraged by the discourses²⁹ and *sihot*. It is

25 See G. Greenberg, 'Redemption after Holocaust', p. 75 and his 'Sovereignty as Catastrophe: Jakob Rosenheim's *Hirtan Wehmischauung*, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 8 (1994), pp. 202-224, particularly pp. 205-209; idem, 'American Orthodox Theological Reaction to the Holocaust, 1945-1948', in D. Michman (ed.), *International Conference at Bar Ilan University on Religious Jewry and Religious Thought During and After the Holocaust* (forthcoming) (Hebrew).

26 *Sefer HaMammarim 5701*, Kfar Habad 1964, p. 12.

27 See *ibid.*, pp. 163, 166-68, in a forceful talk about the goals of Habad-Lubavitch given to the inner circle of R. Yosef Yitzhak's activists, the 'Agnadat Hasidei Habad'. There is a brief but heartfelt reference to 'Next year in Jerusalem!' in a talk given at the Pesah seder, p. 94, which quotes also the passage *יְהִי חַדְשֵׁנוּ, obviously referring to the Holocaust*. In another talk the coming of the Messiah is linked with Repentance in the context of an exposition of the importance of adhering to the laws of the mikveh, p. 81. The volume contains a few other brief references to the Messiah and the Redemption, such as pp. 38, 116, 174. One explanation why these are so rare might be that the transcripts are not complete. On p. 101, for example, the text stops in the middle of a story. References to the coming of the Messiah which seemed commonplace to the transcriber might simply have been omitted. However, this seems unlikely, given the relaxed tone of these *sihot*. Like the discourses, these were not the medium for R. Yitzhak to communicate his messianic fervour.

28 See Ada Rapoport-Albert's 'Hagiography with Footnotes', above, n. 14.

29 Many of the discourses of 1940-41 in *Sefer Ha-Mammarim 5701* (above, note 24)

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also noteworthy that at the end of 1941 the Habad tract on contemplative prayer entitled *Kuntres Hatefilah* was republished in Brooklyn. This tract had been written around 1900 by R. Shalom Dober, the Fifth Rebbe, as part of a revival of intensive contemplative prayer among the Habad hasidim.³⁰ There were thus two different paths of endeavour: the general call to Repentance and various modes of preparing for Redemption, the *geulah kelalit* of the Jewish people as a whole, and at the same time a strong emphasis on intensive contemplative prayer, leading to the *geulah peratit* of the individual and the hasidic community.

The Battle for geulah peratit

During the last few years of his life R. Yosef Yitzhak was seriously ill. He had a stroke and was suffering from multiple sclerosis. Most people could not understand his speech. However he continued to write hasidic discourses, although his hand was so weak he could only write with a soft pencil. The discourses would be printed and studied by his followers. This hasidic leader's final work,³¹ written shortly before he

focus on contemplative prayer or similar topics. See for example, in the first few discourses, pp. 12, 20-27 (about becoming more sensitive to spirituality); pp. 27-32 (about one's thoughts before saying the Shema prayer); p. 40 ('the service of prayer is a duty of the individual... the cleaving of the soul to the Divine'); p. 42 (explanation of the contemplative meaning of the liturgy leading to the Shema); p. 47 (the 'spiritual revival of the dead' which is achieved through study of hasidic teachings and lengthy contemplation of them); p. 58 (achieving *Geulah* for one's soul through prayer, whether the recital of the Shema in the morning service or at night before going to sleep); p. 61 (the inner battle of Hanukah is won by the service of the mind during the Shema seeking to understand the unity of the Divine). Later in the 1940s a famous series of discourses on the topic of contemplative prayer is in *Sefer HaMammarim 5704* (1943-4), Kfar Habad 1956), pp. 81ff.

30 See N. Loewenthal, 'Between Mysticism and Modernity: Contemplative Prayer in 20th Century Habad' (Hebrew), in the volume in honour of M. Peckarz, ed. by E. Etkes (forthcoming).

31 Originally published in 1950 in the form of three pamphlets, *Kuntresim*, nos. 74-76, R. Yosef Yitzhak's discourse is reprinted in *Sefer HaMammarim 5710-5711* (1949-51), Brooklyn 1986, pp. 110-125, 131-137, 151-155, and in *Sefer Ha-Mammarim Batei le-Gani*, Vol. 1, Brooklyn 1977, pp. 1-26; references below will be to this edition. An English translation by E. Touger, edited by U. Kaploun, has appeared entitled *Batei le-Gani*, Brooklyn 1990, together with a translation by S.B. Wineberg of R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson's first discourse of the same name, said in 1951.

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passed away in 1950, is a tract which had considerable significance for the future history of the Habad movement.

Now known as *Bati le-Gani*, its opening chapter presents a kind of messianic history of the world, expounding Midrash Rabbah's interpretation of the verse in Song of Songs (5:6): '*Bati Le-Gani*', says G-d: 'I have come into My garden'. The Midrash links this to the building of the *Mishkan*, the Sanctuary, in which the Shekhinah dwelt in the Holy of Holies. This indwelling is the coming of the Divine into the 'Garden'. It is described as a return to the original state of Creation, when the Shekhinah dwelt in the Garden of Eden.

The Midrash states that when Adam and Eve sinned, the Shekhinah departed from the world to the first עִיר , firmament; when Cain killed Abel, it departed to the second, and so on, until it was seven firmaments distant from the world. Now it had to be brought back to the world, a process which took place in seven stages, by means of seven Tzaddikim. Abraham drew it from the seventh firmament to the sixth, Isaac from the sixth to the fifth, and so on, until Moses finally drew it back to the world, in the sense that he enabled the Shekhinah to dwell in the Sanctuary.³²

The opening paragraph of R. Yosef Yitzhak's discourse quotes this, with the significant additional phrase that Moses who completed the process 'was the seventh, and all sevenths are precious,'³³ a point to which we will return. The first chapter of the discourse treats this mid-rashic passage as presenting an eschatological perspective on existence. The messianic goal of Creation is that the Shekhinah should dwell in the world of human beings: $\text{וְהָיָה הָאָדָם לְמִשְׁכַּן הַקֹּדֶשׁ}$ ³⁴ which can only be concretized through the building of the Sanctuary or the Temple.

Given this beginning, it is quite striking that the discourse continues by focusing clearly and firmly on the Divine service of the individual *now*. It does not discuss the fact that the Temple was destroyed and that the Jewish people is waiting for it to be rebuilt. Rather, it explains the personal Divine service of the individual in terms of the attempt to create one's own personal Sanctuary and to reveal the Shekhinah in daily

32 Song Rabb. 5:1.

33 See *Lev. Rabb.* 29:9.

34 *Sefer HaMammarim Bati le-Gani*, p. 1. See *Tanya*, Pt. I, ch. 36, fol. 45b, and *Tanhuma Behukotai*, sec. 3.

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life. The author explains the verse in Exodus (25:8) 'And they shall make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell בְּתוֹכָהּ , as meaning that the Shekhinah will dwell not only in the Sanctuary, one central place, but $\text{תָּמִיד תָּרַח לְךָ בְּתוֹכָהּ}$ – within each individual.³⁵

This discourse provides a clear example of focusing on the '*gezulah peratit*' aspect of the messianic ideal. Its main theme is to depict spiritual goals relating to the Temple and the indwelling of the Shekhinah as being available now through typically Jewish endeavours which are described in further chapters of the discourse. Personal struggle with the evil desire, study of Torah and normative (rather than contemplative) prayer in the Synagogue – despite the rival demands of earning a living in the modern world – enable one to transform the quality of falsehood, *sheker* (שִׁקְרָה), into a plank of the Sanctuary, *keresh* (קֶרֶשׁ).³⁶ Through this one builds the inner Sanctuary of the heart, in which the Shekhinah can be revealed.

The second half of this twenty chapter discourse introduces a theme which at first might seem to express messianic tension, namely the concept of the Sefirah Netzah, 'Victory'. The attribute Netzah – meaning the quest to prevail – is a quality of Kingship which is only manifested when the King is opposed by a formidable obstacle.

... then, in order to secure victory [the King] will squander all the rare treasures that have been collected year after year, generation after generation, precious resources that have never been used for any other purpose, and that have been hidden and sealed from all eyes.³⁷

R. Yosef Yitzhak explains that the King is G-d, and the treasures are spiritual wealth which is squandered in order to gain victory. The

35 See *Reshit Hokhmah* (Waldman edn.), Jerusalem 1984, *Shaar ha-Ahazak* 6:19; *Shaar ha-Anavah*, 3:28.

36 *Sefer HaMammarim Bati LeGani*, chs. 6-10, particularly the end of ch. 10, p. 15. See N. Loewenthal, 'Hebrew and the Habad Communication Ethos', in L. Ghinet (ed.), *Hebrew in Ashkenaz, a Language in Exile*, New York 1993, pp. 167-192, particularly pp. 176-180.

37 *Bati LeGani*, Ch. 11. An earlier expression of this theme is in a discourse of 1929, said in Warsaw, *Sefer HaMammarim 5689*, Brooklyn 1990, p. 120ff. Here the theme of 'Victory' is expressed in terms of dealing with harsh oppression of Jewish observance, as was the contemporary reality in Russia (from which R. Yosef Yitzhak had been exiled in 1927). See D. Fishman's 'Preserving Tradition in the Land of Revolution', above, n. 14.

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wealth is entrusted to commanding officers – such as the Rebbe, one assumes – in order to be given to the rank-and-file soldiers, the ordinary Jews, called the *צוּר מַלְאָכִים*,³⁸ the Hosts of G-d. At first this sounds as if it might be describing a disparate, ultimate struggle, a final messianic thrust. However here too the focus of the struggle is the spiritual service of the individual. R. Yosef Yitzhak states:

... the victory described is the victory of the G-dly soul over the animal soul. When a man overcomes his animal soul through his divine service in Torah, mitzvoth and prayer, he causes a victory Above – the conquest on a cosmic scale of the forces of evil. And it is for the sake of this conquest that the treasure houses of heaven are thrown open.³⁹

It is for this battle that the individual needs the quality of *Netzah*, for it is only this quality with its overtones of self-sacrifice and utter determination, rooted in the essence of one's being, that enables him to defeat the animal soul which wishes to disturb his divine service, vexing him with alien thoughts and confusing his peace of mind with business matters at times when he should be studying Torah or immersed in prayer. It is this expression of the quality *Netzah* which draws down a revelation of the innermost essence of the infinity of the Divine here in this world.⁴⁰

In the context of the lives of R. Yosef Yitzhak's followers in post-war Brooklyn, and of the emissaries whom he had sent increasingly further afield in the United States and Canada during the 1940s⁴¹ the *Bati LeGani* discourse expressed the goal of *mashiach perati*, the revelation of the inner essence of the Divine, through the deceptively simple steps of daily Jewish life. What is striking about this in the history of Hasidism is that it is written just a few years after a period of intensely apocalyptic expectations and hopes. When these hopes did not materialise, it seems that the focus on the apocalyptic *mashiach kelali* receded and was replaced by a new version of the private Redemption through strength-

38 A term relating to the sefirot *Netzah* and *Hod*.

39 *Sefer HaMamartim Bati LeGani*, end of ch. 19, p. 26.

40 *Ibid.*, ch. 20.

41 See S.D. Levin, *Toledot Habad be-Arzoit ha-Berit* 5660-5710, Brooklyn 1988, pp. 209ff, and particularly pp. 369-373. By 1949, R. Yosef Yitzhak's emissaries were travelling as far as California (p. 373). He also planned to send emissaries to Morocco.

ening normative Judaism. However, bearing in mind that at the height of the apocalyptic mood there was hardly any reference at all in the discourses to the messianic expectations of the time, we must be very wary about reading too much into what the *Bati LeGani* discourse says or does not say about the Redemption. It is significant, however, that after the war R. Yosef Yitzhak's letters cease to speak about the Messiah or the *Gaulah*.

The Seventh Generation

Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak wrote the first discourse of this series with the intention that it would be studied on the tenth of Shevat 1950. On that day he himself passed away. From 1951 onwards, every year on that day his successor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, would deliver a discourse based on *Bati LeGani* but each year focusing particularly on one chapter of the original in order. Thus after twenty years he had created a commentary to the twenty chapters of *Bati LeGani*, in the form⁴² of twenty discourses all with the same theme. He then began again from the beginning. Our examination of these discourses will focus on the first cycle, which was published in 1977.⁴³

The immediate impression one gains is that what is presented in terms of the *mashiach perati* in the original, the personal spiritual discovery of the individual in his own inner Sanctuary of the heart, becomes in the commentary by the Seventh Rebbe a vital step towards the *mashiach kelali*, the general Messiah who will gather the Jews and rebuild the Temple. Quite unlike the original, every single one of the Seventh Rebbe's *Bati LeGani* discourses concludes with the idea that through this service the Messiah will come, the Jewish people will be redeemed, and similar expressions. This is not a mere stylistic flourish. We see this particularly from the text of the first of his discourses, that of 10 Shevat 1951.

To understand this quotation we must remember that as mentioned earlier, at the beginning of the original discourse R. Yosef Yitzhak stresses the idea that Moses, who succeeded in bringing the Shekhinah

42 In fact there are more than twenty, because in some years more than one *Bati LeGani* discourse was said around the time of 10 Shevat.

43 *Sefer Ha-Mamartim Bati le-Gani*, Vol. 1, Brooklyn 1977, Vol. 2 (Brooklyn 1991) contains discourses of the second cycle from 1971 till 1978.

back to the world, was 'the seventh. And all sevenths are precious'. The first *Bati LeGani* discourse of his successor stresses the fact that he and his hearers constituted the seventh generation of Habad. This is interpreted as imposing a special responsibility. Possibly it is this sense of responsibility, built up over seven generations, which is the driving force behind the messianic teachings of R. Menachem Mendel.

It is this that is demanded of each and every one of us of the seventh generation... Although the fact that we are in the seventh generation is not the result of our own choosing and our own service, and indeed in certain ways is perhaps contrary to our will, nevertheless 'all those who are seventh are precious'. We are now very near the approaching footsteps of Mashiah, indeed, we are at the conclusion of this period, and our spiritual task is to complete the process of drawing down the Shekhinah... into our lowly world.⁴⁴

What this seems to mean is that the spiritualised 'personal Messiah' of the original *Bati LeGani* discourse is being fused with a more urgent form of messianism. This utilises the theological perspective expressed earlier by R. Yosef Yitzhak, that *ה'אמת וה'אמת*, through repentance will come the redemption, together with the theme that this is the goal and special function of Hasidism. It also may draw on an idea to which R. Menachem Mendel often made reference: the spiritual power of Torah. By depicting the messianic goal in a discourse, it is transformed from a religious desire to a Torah teaching (in particular a teaching of *peninut ha-Torah*), which in turn brings it closer to reality.⁴⁵

The combination of the themes of personal and general Messiah is seen in further expositions by the Seventh Rebbe of the *Bati LeGani* dis-

44 'Bati LeGani 5711', ch. 3, *Sefer HaMamartin Bati LeGani*, Vol. 1, p. 31.

45 R. Menachem Mendel refers a number of times to a story in Zohar III 59b: 'R. Yose said - once the world needed rain, so they came to R. Shimon...'. R. Shimon said a Torah teaching which had the effect of turning the supernal spiritual forces ('male' and 'female') towards each other - which, it is understood, would cause the needed rain to fall. See R. Menachem Mendel's *Likkutei Sifot*, Vol. 12, pp. 239; Vol. 20, p. 93 n. 22; Vol. 27, p. 299 n. 23. Earlier Habad references to this story are in R. Shneur Zalman's *Maamarot Admur HaZaken Eihalekh Liozna*, Brooklyn 1957, p. 210; R. Shalom Dober's *Sefer HaMamartin 5679* (1918-19), Brooklyn 1979, p. 130ff.

course. In 1961, the discourse expanded on the eleventh chapter of the original, in which the intense theme of Netzah was introduced. Here this is given the messianic import we might expect: the sense of urgency is because it is the close of the period of the Lurianic *berurin*, the sifting of sparks in the messianic process.⁴⁶ An earlier talk by the Rebbe gave an introduction to this eleventh chapter. The 'treasures' which are being 'squandered' are described in terms indicating that these treasures are the hasidic teachings. They are being given to the soldiers, the Habad hasidim, in order that they should use them in the battle to strengthen Torah study and observance, and to spread the study of *peninut haTorah*.⁴⁷ This means that in his version of the *Bati LeGani* discourse the Seventh Rebbe was linking his highly energetic outreach activities, of which there is clear evidence in his letters of this period, with the messianic process.

This link is also seen in the final discourse in the cycle, said in 1970. Here there is also a strong focus on personal spiritual attainments, achieved through contemplation in prayer. Unlike the original discourse, the Seventh Rebbe speaks here of the need for the 'detailed' mode of contemplation, an intense variety of the Habad contemplative technique, the effect of which is depicted at length.⁴⁸

One would generally associate this genre of text with the *geulah perait* mode of thinking. However, the next paragraph of the discourse speaks of *geulah kelalit*. Through a homiletic device it begins to speak of the Temple

which will be built and will be revealed by Mashiah... swiftly in our days, and that will be when there will arise a man from the house of David studying Torah and involved in Mitzvot... who will compell all Israel to walk in the path [of Torah] and to strengthen its breaches... and he will build the Temple in its place

46 *Ibid.*, p. 151.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 319-320.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 232. This states that contemplation in the 'general' mode, i.e. thinking generally about the Divine nature of existence, affects only the Divine soul of the contemplative. By contrast, the 'detailed' mode, in which one considers the details of the downchaining of the kabbalistic worlds and the way in which they manifest at every stage, including in this practical world, an expression of the Infinite beyond, has also an affect on the Animal Soul. In other words the more intense and esoteric form of contemplation leads to a greater level of internalisation of spirituality.

and gather the scattered ones of Israel... and G-d will take the hand of each person... G-d will not rely on anyone, He Himself will take each one by the hand and lead him out of exile, and then there will be the completion of *Bati leGani*, on a higher level even than before the sin [of the Tree of Knowledge].⁴⁹

In order to achieve this, says the Seventh Rebbe, the supernal treasure house is opened and there is the spreading of the fountains of the inner teachings of the Torah to the 'outside'.⁵⁰ *הַיְדוּת הַבְּחוּץ* וְהַיְדוּת הַבְּיָסוּד, a reference to the famous letter of the Baal Shem Tov. Precisely the work of the Habad movement of that time, working both to 'compel all Israel' to walk in the path of the Torah as regards normative observance of basic Mitzvot, and also the goal of teaching ideas in Tanya and other Habad texts, are here defined as having immediate messianic import, with an apocalyptic potential which is defined in the terminology of Maimonides' conclusion of *Mishneh Torah*.

We thus see in the same discourse concepts relating both to the *gevulah peraiti* and to the *gevulah kelalit*. The balance between these two aspects of his teachings is seen in two talks by the Seventh Rebbe, given on consecutive Sabbaths in the summer of 1962. Translating the homily, in the first teaching the Rebbe criticised those who preferred to enjoy their intimations of spirituality through contemplative prayer, rather than engage in the vital outreach activism which was the demand of the hour – which was, as we have seen, a demand which relates to the quest for the *gevulah kelalit*.⁵¹ However, the following week, the Rebbe gave renewed emphasis to the need for personal spirituality ('radiance') in carrying out that activist task. At the conclusion of his talk he referred back to the homily of the week before and stated clearly that there has to be a combination of both endeavours, taking the work of the Previous Rebbe as an example.⁵² This statement indicates how easy it was to misunderstand the subtle directive, balancing the personal redemption through prayer with its apparent opposite, the activist quest for the Messiah.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 232.

50 *Ibid.*

51 *Likkutei Sifot*, Vol. 4, Brooklyn 1968, pp. 1041-1047. The homily is expressed in terms of defining the sin of the Spies. They did not want to enter the Land (=activism), preferring to remain in the spiritual atmosphere of the wilderness, together with the sacred Mishkan and the Manna from Heaven.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 1055.

We thus see that in the teachings of the Seventh Rebbe, one aspect of redemption is a preparation for the other. As he put it in a talk in 1963:

...(the) *gevulah peraiti* which is achieved for each individual is also the preparation and vessel for the *gevulah kelalit* through the Messiah.⁵³

Thus the messianic process of Lurianic kabbalism, and the hasidic theme of personal spiritual attainment of a form of messianic consciousness, are drawn together.

This leads us to the conclusion that in this case of mid 20th century Habad, the relationship between the 'neutralisation of Messianism' and the traditional apocalypse is not that one simply replaces the other, but a subtle coexistence. Whether or not this applies to other hasidic schools or to other epochs of Habad Hasidism is a matter for further research.

53 *Likkutei Sifot*, Vol. 18, Brooklyn 1982, p. 299.