

Scriptural Exegesis
*The Shapes of Culture and the
Religious Imagination*
Essays in Honour of Michael Fishbane

Edited by
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and Laura S. Lieber

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Preface

Eitan Fishbane and Elisha Russ-Fishbane

It is a son's great honor to write these words of preface, to add our very personal voices to the company of scholars who offer tribute to the extraordinary accomplishments and learning of our father, Michael Fishbane. As we have each set out on the first steps of our own academic paths, the face and voice of our father and teacher is deeply present as a guide to the winding road that lies ahead and as a touchstone for a returning awareness of our beginnings and formation.

Childhood memories drift in and out of the transom of consciousness. At times they are clear and as real as the touch of a hand; at other times they lie hidden in the deepest recesses of the self, rising to awareness at unexpected moments. But they are always there just the same. Ours was a house suffused with books and learning—a seemingly endless array of volumes that lined the walls, containing within them mysteries of the tradition and the secret chambers of our father's inner world. Late into the night, after all the lights of the house had been darkened, Abba sat in his study on the second floor surrounded by tomes musty with enigma and promise, student papers laid on his oak-wood desk, the latest journals and monographs in the history of religions set neatly in piles on the carpeted floor, a black-and-white composition notebook held open by a pen, revealing pages filled with mysterious and alluring hieroglyphs, notes for a new project that Abba was excitedly pondering, brief glimpses of an inner thought process, often born in the stillness and deep quiet of the mid-night.

And there were the long Shabbat afternoons. Winter-light through broad panes of glass, two brothers together with their father, hot glasses of tea on the dining room table, the *sifrei godesh* spread open before us—*Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana*, *Zohar*, *Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*. The words were of multiform interpretive traditions, of midrash and mysticism—but most of all, they were the shared words of a father and his sons, flying letters of the tablets, the hope of things still to come, breath and love of the present.

This volume is a tribute to our father's profound and enduring contribution to the world of Jewish scholarship. But to the discerning eye it is also a loving testimony to the numerous lives permanently touched by the inspiration of a master teacher. The written legacy of our father speaks eloquently and gracefully for itself. It has had a seminal influence on two generations of

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41. What follows is based in part on the account in Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism: Gregory the Great Through the Twelfth Century* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 347–52.
42. Hildegard Elisabeth Keller, *Wort und Fleisch. Korporallegorien, mystische Spiritualität und Dichtung des St. Trudperters Hoheliedes im Horizonte der Inkarnation* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1993).
43. Hohelied 145.11–17 (ed., 286). The use of the mirror as a way of presenting a model of life was well known in medieval literature. From this perspective, the 'Hohelied' has been compared to the *Speculum Virginum*, a Latin text for nuns produced in Germany c.1140. This work, however, is more ascetic in orientation and does not comment on the Song of Songs.
44. Hans-Jörg Spitz, 'Spiegel der Braute Gottes: Das Model der vita activa und vita contemplativa als strukturierendes Prinzip in St. Trudperters Hohen Lied', in Kurt Ruh (ed.), *Abendländische Mystik im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986), 481–93.
45. For comparisons with Bernard and William of Saint Thierry, see Regine Hummel, *Mystische Modelle im 12. Jahrhundert. 'St. Trudperters Hohelied', Bernhard von Clairvaux, Wilhelm von St. Thierry* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1989).
46. Hohelied 147.28–32 (ed., 289).
47. Ibid. 1.1–5.33 (ed., 123–8). See the improved edition of the prologue by Friedrich Ohly, 'Der Prolog des St. Trudperters Hohenliedes', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 84 (1952–3), 198–232.
48. Hohelied 64.6–65.2 (ed., 195–6), interpreting S of S 5:1.
49. Ibid. 15.15–20 (ed., 139).
50. Ibid. 23.14–20 (ed., 148).
51. Ibid. 100.10–12 (ed., 235); cf. 140.6–8 (ed., 280), exegesis S of S 8:10.
52. Helmut Riedlinger, *Die Makellosigkeit der Kirche in den lateinischen Hoheliedkommentaren des Mittelalters* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1958), 226–33; Hummel, *Mystische Modelle*, 96–100.
53. Hohelied 128.29–33 (ed., 267).
54. The exegesis of S of S 1:15 is found in Hohelied 26.13–27.3 (ed., 151–2), but the *brutpette* is discussed elsewhere (e.g. ed., 278–9). William of Saint Thierry's *Expositio* made much of the *lectulus* image.
55. Hohelied 72.20–7 (ed., 204).
56. Ibid. 6.5–21 (ed., 128–9).

Part IV

The Modern Period

The human and divine in the text

Finding the radiance in the text: a Habad hasidic interpretation of the Exodus

Naftali Loewenthal

The early hasidic teachers experienced the texts of Scripture and, indeed, of all Torah study and of the liturgy, as a gateway to mystical radiance, beyond homiletics, and meaning, as conventionally understood. At the same time, they created rich further layers and modes of interpretation, following the exegesis included in Scripture itself,¹ midrash, talmudic *drush* and aggadah, Zohar and other kabbalistic uses of text, and the pre-hasidic homiletic literature of eastern Europe.² The hasidic interpretations and teachings formed a new literary and scholarly genre: 'hasidic teachings,' in Yiddish *khassidus*. Further, some hasidic leaders were prominent halakhic authorities. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812), founder of the Habad school, compiled a detailed Code of Law, seeking to reformulate the sixteenth-century Code of Rabbi Joseph Karo in the light of later commentators.

Can we see a link between these two apparently divergent approaches to texts? One is the quest for the radiance that transcends meaning, and the other, by contrast, the quest for meanings in homiletic or even halakhic modes. Are they two contrasting poles of intellectualist-spiritual experience? Can they coexist?

Let us explore these two domains, beginning with a glimpse of the perspective on letters and language that leads beyond meaning. We will then consider other varieties of hasidic Torah study, whether of the intricacies of Jewish law or the corpus of hasidic-kabbalistic thought, focusing on a hasidic treatment of a popular theme, the Exodus, seeking to assess the relationship between meaning and the radiance beyond meaning. Our claim is that, for the hasidim, or at least for some of them, all roads lead to Jerusalem, that is, to a sense of contact or even union with the Divine, reaching beyond the finite definitions and limitations of the world. The meaning of the text joins with the radiance beyond the text.

BEYOND HOMILETICS

Around 1750 Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov (1698–1760)³ wrote the following passage in a letter to his brother-in-law, Rabbi Gershon of Kutov (d. 1761):

This I will inform you... in every single letter there are worlds, and souls, and G-dliness. They rise, and connect, and are joined one with the other, and then the letters connect and join and become a word, and they achieve a true unity with the Divine. You should include your own soul with them at every step... All the worlds join together and ascend, and there is a tremendous joy and delight, without limit, as you might imagine, in miniscule and physical terms, the joy of a groom and bride: how much more at that exalted level!⁴

The Ba'al Shem Tov's letter is famous for its description of an ascent of the soul in which the author met the Messiah. When will the Messiah come? According to this visionary experience, when the Ba'al Shem Tov's teachings 'burst forth to the outside'. The passage quoted represents his attempt to encapsulate an important element of his teaching and transmit it in a clear form. It expresses a mode of encounter between the *hasid* and the text, whether a text of Scripture, 'oral' teachings such as Talmud, or the Prayer Book. The Hebrew letters and words enable the individual to enter a spiritual realm, rising higher and higher, discovering the luminous 'worlds' of the *kabbalah* and souls and, in an ecstasy of joy beyond any experience on the human plane, uniting with the Divine.⁵

It seems that the 'garments of Torah' explored so broadly and profoundly in the oeuvre of Michael Fishbane bring us, on this stage of the *hasidic* journey, to an almost literalist form of *otef* or *kassamah* of Ps 104:2 ('He wears light like a robe').⁶ The Torah text gives access to the Divine garment of worlds and souls, indeed, to 'G-dliness', the radiance of the *Ein Sof*. This theme, a version of the concept of *dvekut*, 'cleaving' to the Divine, is often seen as the central narrative of Hasidism, both by early critics of the movement and also by scholars.⁷

For the *hasidim*, as for the earlier *kabbalists*, the *halakhic* tradition, meaning careful legal analysis of the issues treated in the Talmud, presented by the 'Posekim', the chain of decisors from the eleventh century, was not seen as the sole summit of scholarly achievement. The *kabbalistic-hasidic* dimension of thought was also required, with its vocabulary of spiritual worlds, Divine Setrot and Lurianic terminology, and even the personal breakthrough to the radiance within the letters, as suggested in the Ba'al Shem Tov's letter. In addition, based on *halakhic*, *aggadic*, and mystical sources, there were ethical demands and a sense of social responsibility, which were the touchstones of the new movement. These were seen as transcending and countering the

elitism of the talmudic scholastic tradition as it was manifested in eighteenth-century eastern Europe.⁸ The sense of a gap between scholarship and ethics was a point that was of concern to many thinkers of the time, whether or not they had direct contact with the new wave that became known as Hasidism, and was also to be the basis of the later Musar movement founded in the middle of the nineteenth century.

However, as Zeev Gries has commented, the *hasidim* did not change the traditional style of education of their sons, and the town study-house, with its library of talmudic, *halakhic*, mystical, and pietistic (and sometimes even *maskilic*) literature, remained at the centre of the intellectual life of Jewish society, whether *hasidic* or *mitnaggedic*.⁹ Exposition of the subtle ideas of Hasidism was within the context of the basic texts of the Jewish scholarship of the time. The *hasidic* publications were (with a few obvious exceptions)¹⁰ aimed at the average scholar, the *yode'a sefer*, as were the *drush* compilations that preceded them, and which constitute the antecedents of the *hasidic* genre.

MYSTICAL UNITY THROUGH HALAKHIC STUDY?

Now comes the question of applying to Torah study the technique described in the Ba'al Shem Tov's letter. Its application to prayer seems straightforward, if somewhat elusive, for modern man and woman, and even in the eighteenth century there were discussions concerning to what extent the average *hasidic* follower could expect to achieve a state of *dvekut* in prayer without fooling himself.¹¹ The case of Torah study raises further questions, especially in the case of the intricate discussions of Jewish law. It is interesting that the Talmud provides a spiritual paradigm for the *halakhah*: 'the Divine word—is the *halakhah*, the Divine word—is the *eschaton*, the Divine word—is prophecy' (*b. Shabb.* 138b). Further, the *kabbalistic* tradition provides ways of seeing the details of specific laws in mystical terms.¹² However, maintaining a state of spiritual consciousness while studying *halakhah* or other intellectually demanding areas of Torah is another question.

Thus, Rabbi Dov Ber (d. 1772), the Maggid of Mezeritch, disciple of the Ba'al Shem Tov and the most significant leader in the second generation of Hasidism, commented on the problem of maintaining a state of *dvekut* while engrossed in the intellectual subtleties of normative Torah study. He concedes that this is possible only for exalted figures like Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, and suggests that when a person studies Torah, 'he¹³ should pause every hour, in order to attach himself to the blessed Divine.'¹⁴ His disciple, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, in his *Tanya*¹⁵ deals similarly with the conflict between

scholarly study and maintenance of a spiritual frame of mind, and also suggests refocusing every hour, commenting that every hour a new combination of the Tetragrammaton gives life to the world.¹⁶ However, in the same work the author presents a way of thinking of halakhic, intellectualist Torah study as *in itself* an intense form of union with the Divine.

His starting-point is the idea expressed in a famous passage concluding the introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar* which also forms part of the hasidic liturgy for the eve of the Sabbath, that 'thought does not grasp You at all'. In Hebrew, as in English, 'grasp' means both to hold and to understand. R. Shneur Zalman combines topological, intellectual, and erotic images in the following passage:

Behold when the mind deliberates on an idea, and grasps it with the intellect, then the mind is grasping the idea and surrounds it with its intellect... At the same time, the mind is enfolded within the idea, while he is thinking about it and grasping it intellectually. For example, when a person properly understands and grasps a halakha in the Mishnah or Talmud in a clear way, his mind grasps it and at the same time is grasped by it. Now, this halakha is the Wisdom and Will of the Holy One, blessed be He. For it arose in His Will that when Reuben claims such and such, for example, and Shimon such and such, then there will be a particular legal decision between them. Even if it never happened, and never will happen, that people will actually come to the law court with such claims, nonetheless, thus it arose in the Will and Wisdom of the Holy One blessed be He, that if one claims this and the other claims that, then the law will be just so. Hence, when a person knows and grasps in his mind this legal decision, as a halakha in the Mishnah or Talmud or halakhic writings, then he is grasping and surrounding with his mind the Will and Wisdom of the Holy One, blessed be He, whom thought cannot grasp at all... And at the same time, his mind is enfolded in them. Now this is a wonderful unity, and in physical terms there does not exist such a unity, to be completely unified together in every aspect.¹⁷

This provides a perspective on precise halakhic analysis whereby the thinker can sense his utter union with the Divine precisely through the precision of his understanding. R. Shneur Zalman includes all aspects of Torah in this sense of unity, not only the halakha but also 'the combinations of letters of TaNaKh, and their expositions in the aggadot and the midrashim of the Sages'.¹⁸ Study of Torah is compared to embracing the Divine, and the fact that the Torah is enfolded in practical matters, as it is in talmudic and halakhic thought, does not weaken the sense of unity. When embracing the King, it makes no difference if the King is wearing one garment or many: the King Himself is within the garments. Thus the phrase from the Song of Songs, 'his right hand embraces me', is interpreted as the right hand of the Divine King, embracing the scholar through the medium of the Torah, 'which was given with the right hand, which has the quality of love'.¹⁹

THE INNER DIMENSION OF TORAH

Contrasting with the halakhic dimension is the realm of the kabbalah, which through the mediation of the hasidic leaders was being transformed into a new hasidic genre, an original variety of *drush*, with varying admixtures of kabbalistic elements. Like others before him, Rabbi Shneur Zalman defined the spiritual distinction between these two aspects of Torah study as that between the teachings of the Tree of Knowledge (halakha, Talmud) and the Tree of Life (hasidic teachings).²⁰ The halakha enters and seemingly becomes part of the realm of concealment of the Divine, while the hasidic dimension overtly seeks to liberate the reader and draw aside the veil.

One aspect of this redemptive force is a form of teaching that literally concerns 'radiance', the Divine radiance in the Sefrot and beyond in *Ein Sof*. An example is the Habad mystical narrative that the task of the person is to draw an upper (male) level of radiance into the world, and to disclose the spiritual illumination concealed in all existence (female). The individual joins these cosmic forces together, in the detailed steps of his or her own life.²¹ This shares features with the passage quoted from the Baal Shem Tov's letter and, although couched in the intellectualist structures of Habad thought, can be seen as leading the person beyond theosophical knowledge towards their own *experience of the Divine*.

Thus, even in the twentieth century, subject to the pressures of modernization and secularization, we find examples emphasizing this personal quest, such as the following passage by Rabbi Joseph I. Schneersohn (1880–1950), the sixth Rebbe of Habad-Lubavitch:

There are three kinds of contemplation: (a) scholarly contemplation—after comprehending the topic clearly, he contemplates the depth of that topic, till its intellectual aspect shines forth for him; (b) before prayer—this means sensing the vitality (*hayut*) in the topic he has studied, not just the sense of the intellectual aspect felt in scholarly contemplation; (c) during prayer—this means feeling the G-dliness in the topic he has studied. These three are rungs on the ladder of [spiritual] feeling.²²

This seems to be referring particularly to the spiritual teachings of Hasidism, particularly those of the Habad school, in which the overt topic studied concerns dimensions of radiance and spiritual interactions. This could be studied as a form of intellectualist theosophical knowledge, yet the hasid is asked to make further steps forward to discover the Divine.

HOMILETTIC PATHWAYS

Another aspect of hasidic thought enters the narratives of Scripture and the layers of interpretative texts. While there is some overlap, this realm of discourse differs from the direct discussion of spiritual radiance. Yet here too, I suggest, there is the opportunity for a translated form of the same journey. A prime example is the hasidic treatment of the theme of the Exodus.²¹ I will focus on just one instance, found in the *Tanya* of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi.²⁴

This interpretation follows the general pattern in hasidic thought, which refocuses biblical, midrashic, and kabbalistic teaching so as to highlight the drama in the inner psychic and spiritual life of each individual.²³ In the case of the redemption from the exile in Egypt, a central concept, attributed by Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polonoye to the Ba'al Shem Tov, is that one's own soul is in exile, subject to the Evil Inclination.²⁶ This leads to the idea that there are two kinds of redemption: the general redemption, affecting the Jewish people as a whole, and a personal, individual redemption. There was a general redemption at the time of the Exodus, and there will be again with the advent of the Messiah. The personal redemption can take place for each individual, every day.²⁷

In this vein, Rabbi Shneur Zalman begins his chapter 47 of the first section of *Tanya*: 'Behold, in every generation and every day a person has the duty to see himself²⁸ as if he had left Egypt today.' The phrase is familiar from the Mishnah²⁹ and also the Passover Haggadah, but there are two important additions. The Mishnah declares, in its presentation of the order of events at the Passover Seder, 'in every generation a person has the duty to see himself as if he had left Egypt.' This ostensibly means that each man or woman, at the Seder Night on Passover, should see himself or herself as if s/he too had experienced the Exodus at some time in the past. In fact, the sages saw the memory of the Exodus as a duty every day, and this is given as a key reason for the addition of the third paragraph (Num 15:37–41) to the Shema prayer, recited twice daily.³⁰ Rabbi Shneur Zalman emphasizes that the perception of one's own deliverance from Egypt should be recognized every day, and in addition, that the perceived Exodus is taking place *today*:

While the kabbalists taught that the spiritual underlay of the Exodus as a process in the Divine was re-enacted each year at the time of Passover, and that the kabbalist had a role in the process, the hasidim turned the spotlight towards the individual, beyond history and beyond the specifics of the calendar. For the hasidim, Egypt is the exile in the power of the Evil Inclination, the very word Egypt, *Mitzrayim*, signifying *meitzarim*, 'impressions'.³¹ What is this personal, daily Exodus?

This is the Exodus of the Divine Soul from the prison of the body, the 'skin of the serpent',³² to be absorbed in the unity of the radiance of the *Ein Sof* blessed be He, through involvement with Torah and Mitzvot in general and in particular, through accepting the Kingship of Heaven in the recital of the Shema, in which one explicitly accepts and draws on oneself the Divine unity by saying 'The L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One' . . . 'Our G-d' has the same meaning as 'the G-d of Abraham'.³³

This means that the normative Jewish practices of daily life are presented as a personal Exodus, and more, as a form of unification with the radiance of the Infinite. The act of reciting the Shema is not just a mouth expressing words nor even a mind focused on the Divine. It is a moment of absorption into Divine radiance, a step of infinite freedom, an ultimate form of personal Exodus from Egypt.

Much of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's *Tanya* concerns the way the physical body, the person's animal or vital soul, indeed material existence as a whole, serves to veil the infinite radiance of the Divine. Study of Torah, observance of Mitzvot, and the process of contemplation, leading to utter self-abnegation, are all ways to pierce this veil. In our passage, the release from the shroud of concealment is depicted as one's personal daily Exodus, and an immediate opportunity for it is in the recital of the Shema in the morning (or evening) prayer service. The effect of this Exodus is 'to be absorbed in the unity of the radiance of the *Ein Sof* . . .', attaining a unity with the Divine, which the author claims is comparable, in some way, with that of Abraham.

The author explains that Abraham attained this unity with the Divine 'because he was nullified'³⁴ and absorbed in the unity of the radiance of the *Ein Sof* . . . through his actions and ascent in sanctity from level to level,' while by contrast: 'for us, this is an inheritance and a gift for us, that G-d gave us His Torah and enfolded in it His blessed Will and Wisdom, which are unified with His Divine essence in total unity. It is as if He gave Himself to us so to speak (*kiryakhof*).'³⁵ The *Zohar's* treatment of 'they shall take for Me an offering' (Exod 25:2) as meaning 'they should take Me'³⁶ (explained by Rabbi Shneur Zalman as 'take Me and an offering'), gives licence to explain several passages from the liturgy as expressing the idea that G-d gives Himself to the individual. Thus, the final blessing of the daily Amidah prayer is read as 'for in the radiance of Your countenance You give to us L-rd our G-d' The full text is: 'You give to us, O L-rd our G-d, a Torah of life. . . ' Rabbi Shneur Zalman understands this as meaning: 'You give Yourself to us and a Torah of life.'³⁷

Is it really so simple? Astonishingly, in the case of this careful and insistent scholar, known as a highly demanding leader,³⁸ the mere step of surrender seems enough: 'And nothing prevents us from the cleaving of the soul in His blessed unity and radiance but the will. For if a person does not want at all

(Heaven forbid) to cleave to Him, etc. [then he will not enjoy this unity]. But as soon as he is willing and accepts and draws on himself G-d's Divinity and says "the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One", then of itself his soul is included in the Divine unity... and this is a form of Exodus from Egypt.³⁹

The Ba'al Shem Tov's letter, with which we began, addressed pneumatic individuals, men of spirit. For them, the sight of the Hebrew letters evoked an inner spiritual response, as if their mind's eye (or their physical eye) and their heart could sense the Divine radiance within. By contrast, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, in the third generation of Hasidism, was speaking also, or primarily, to those who did not have this immediate sensitivity. Nonetheless, he declares, just by allowing one's mind to make a shift of consciousness, one enters the inner reality of being immersed in a sea of the radiance of the One. This, he says, is the Exodus in daily terms, personal Redemption.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman concludes this chapter by emphasizing the Exodus theme. He claims that because the recital of the Shema is a daily personal expression and experience of the Exodus, the third paragraph, seen by the sages as denoting the memory of the Exodus, is appended to it although it is a separate command, and not part of the commandment [to say] the Shema, as is explained in the Talmud and halakhic literature.⁴⁰ He concludes this chapter with the comment that the third paragraph of the Shema itself ends with the words "I am the L-rd your G-d" (Num 15:41), reiterating the theme of G-d giving Himself to the individual, which effects the release of the person from Egyptian bondage, a private Exodus, leaving the darkness of the Self for the radiance of the Divine.

DAILY LIBERATION INTO THE RADIANCE OF THE DIVINE

In this example Rabbi Shneur Zalman has turned the Exodus into a daily personal narrative of release into and discovery of the freedom of the Divine, through the medium of the Shema prayer and the Amidah. This differs from the Ba'al Shem Tov's message of discovering the radiance in the Hebrew letters in themselves, beyond their meaning, which seemingly demands a step of inspiration, but it can be seen as a translation of this message into a form that the *yode'a sefer*, the normative member of hasidic society, could understand and could follow. His, and later her, daily life was focused on texts of prayer, including the Shema and the Amidah; of Torah study; of halakhah; and of hasidic teachings. Seen through the lens of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's theme of the constant Exodus, these texts and the observances they generate become the gateway to spiritual freedom.

Thus, the two approaches to the text defined at the beginning of this chapter, the sense of radiance beyond meaning and the layers of halakhic and interpretive meaning and meanings, join together. A sense of contact with the Divine is seen in detailed halakhic study, in radiant hasidic teachings, replete with kabbalistic terminology, and in adaptations of scriptural themes, in this case the Exodus. More than that, each instance of discovery of the Divine radiance is itself a form of Exodus, leaving behind *Mitzrayim*, the veil of the material world, the 'skin of the serpent.'

This experience is not identical to that inspired frame of mind described by the Ba'al Shem Tov in his letter. It is rather a shift in consciousness, translating the original experience of mystic inspiration into a form in which 'any' person, the reader of *Tanya*, could discover their personal Redemption in the texts and practices of daily life.

In the wider context of hasidic thought, this process of discovery is seen as a continuous series of steps, leading from personal experience in prayer, the private Exodus and Redemption, towards the ultimate Exodus, the general Redemption and entry to the Promised Land. At this point the text, the meaning, the Law, and the radiance are joined.

NOTES

1. See Michael Fishbane, 'Inner Biblical Exegesis: Types and Strategies in Ancient Israel,' in *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1989), 3-18.
2. See Mendel Pickartz, *The Beginning of Hasidism: Ideological Trends in Derush and Musar Literature* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1978).
3. See Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), and Immanuel Etkes, *Ba'al Hashem: The Beshit—Magic, Mysticism, Leadership* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2000).
4. This letter was first printed at the end of Rabbi Yakov Yosef of Polonoye's *Ben Porat Yosef* (Koretz, 1781). The passage quoted also appears in *Zeva'at HaKivash* (Zolkiew, probably before 1793). Etkes considers the original source of the passage to be the letter of the Ba'al Shem Tov (*Ba'al Hashem*, 306).
5. See Moshe Idel, *Hasidism, Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995), 171-85, for examples of this hasidic approach to texts and for discussion of its origin.
6. As it is written, "He wears light like a robe", that the radiance of Torah is worn by the Holy One blessed be He, like a robe, for the radiance of the *Ein Sof* itself is encloded in the Torah (Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *Likkutei Torah*, Aharei, 27a).

7. See Gershom Scholem, 'Devekat, or Communion with G-d', in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971), 203-27. 'If you concentrate on the spiritual core of the Torah, on the mystic light shining through the letters... it follows that you cannot concentrate with equal fervor on the specific and concrete meaning of the words...' (p. 215), and J. G. Weiss in *Torah Study in Early Hasidism*, in D. Goldstein (ed.), *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 56-68.
8. See S. H. Dresner, *The Zaddik* (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1960), and Piekartz, *Beginning of Hasidism*.
9. See Zeev Gries, *The Book in Early Hasidism* [in Hebrew] (Israel: Hakibutz hameuchad, 1992), 61-2, 78-81, 85-9, 99-102; Chaim Getner, 'Batei Midrash in Galicia in the 19th Century as Institutes for Developing Talmud Scholars' in Immanuel Etkes (ed.), *Yeshivot and Batei Midrash* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2006), 163-86, at 174-6.
10. Hasidic works published in Yiddish addressed a wider circle than that of the scholars.
11. See Ada Rapoport-Albert, 'G-d and the Zaddik as the Two Focal Points of Hasidic Worship', *History of Religions*, 18: 4 (1979), 296-325; repr. in G. D. Hundert (ed.), *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1991), 299-329. See n. 13 below.
12. See e.g. Rabbi Haim Vital, *Sha'ar HaMitzvot* (first printed in Salonika, 1852); Rabbi Isaiah Halevi Horowitz, *Shnei Lihot HaBrit* (first printed in Amsterdam, 1648-9).
13. At this stage of the hasidic movement, most texts and teachings were addressed exclusively to men, hence only the male gender is used.
14. Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism: Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth Century Hasidic Thought*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993), 316, from a manuscript.
15. Rabbi Shneur Zalman's *Tanya*, also called *Likkutei Amarim*, was first published in Slavuta in 1796. Bilingual edition with English translation by Nisan Mindel *et al.* (London: Soncino, 1979).
16. *Tanya* I, ch. 41, 58b. The four letters of the Tetragrammaton have 24 combinations, like the 24 hours of the day.
17. *Tanya* I, ch. 5, 9a-b.
18. *Tanya* I, ch. 4, 8b.
19. *Ibid.* 9a.
20. *Tanya* 4, sec. 26, interpreting *Zohar* III.124b-125a.
21. See Rabbi Shneur Zalman's *Torah Or* 40c-d.
22. Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson, *Hayom Yom* (first published in Brooklyn: Kehot, 1943) entry for 20 Tamuz.
23. Earlier studies of the hasidic treatment of the Exodus include Louis Jacobs, 'Pesach and the Exodus in the Thought of Two Hasidic Masters', *Judaism Today*, 1 (1995), 19-24, focusing on Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye (d. c.1782) and Rabbi Zevi Elimelech of Dinov (1785-1841); Aryeh Wineman, 'The Exodus in

- the Lens of Hasidic Teaching', *Conservative Judaism*, 52: 3 (2000), 39-45, discussing teachings of six hasidic leaders: Ora Wiskind-Elper, 'Exodus and the Feminine in the Teachings of Rabbi Yakov of Izbica', in Ora Wiskind-Elper and Susan Handelman (eds.), *Torah of the Mothers: Contemporary Jewish Women Read Classical Jewish Texts* (New York: Urim, 2000), 447-70.
24. There is extensive discussion of the significance of the Exodus and the Passover Festival in Rabbi Shneur Zalman's teachings. See in particular *Torah Or* 49a-65a, *Likkutei Torah* Leviticus 13a-18b, and *Shir Ha-Shirim* 14b-16c. There are further discussions of the Exodus in later Habad literature.
25. See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends of Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1961) 340-4.
26. Rabbi Yakov Yosef of Polonnoye, *Toledot Yakov Yosef* (first published Koretz, 1780), end of *Vayechi* 35d, *Vayakhel*, 77d; beginning of *Devarim*, 166a, interpreting *Ps* 69:19.
27. See Scholem, *The Messianic Idea*, 190-6, and with particular reference to the Exodus, 361, n. 30; *Toledot Yakov Yosef*, *Shemini* 79b, *Vayelekh* 198a.
28. See n. 13 above.
29. *M. Pesachim* 10:5.
30. *B. Berahot* 12b, Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Book of Love, Laws of the Recital of the Shema, 1:3. The first two paragraphs of the Shema are Deut 6:4-9 and Deut 11:13-21.
31. See R. Shneur Zalman's *Likkutei Torah*, Bemidbar (Mas'ey), 89b.
32. See *Likkutei Zohar* 58.
33. *Tanya* I, ch. 47, 66b.
34. In the text *bareil*, meaning a nullification of the self. Since the self interposes between the person and the Divine, nullification of the self enables close connection and even 'unity' with the Divine. See Louis Jacobs, 'The Doctrine of the "Divine Spark" in Man in Jewish Sources', in Raphael Loewe (ed.), *Studies in Rationalism, Judaism and Universalism in Memory of Leon Roth* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 87-114.
35. *Tanya* I, 66b-67a. For full discussion of the key term *kiryakhol* in rabbinic thought, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 325-404.
36. See *Zohar* II.140b; III.179a.
37. Similarly in the festival Amidah: 'You give to us L-rd our G-d in love joyful festivals' is interpreted as 'You give [Yourself] to us, and joyful festivals'.
38. See I. Etkes, 'R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi as a Hasidic Leader' [in Hebrew], *Zion*, 50 (1986), 321-54.
39. *Tanya*, fol. 67a.
40. See sources in n. 30 above, and *b. Berahot* 14b, 20b (see *Tosafot baal kerit*), and the commentary of R. Abraham Gombiner (c.1633-c.1683) to R. Yosef Karo's *Shulhan Arukh Orah Haim*, sec. 67. See this section in R. Shneur Zalman's own version of the *Shulhan Arukh* (first printed, Kopyts, 1816; Brooklyn: Kehot, 2001).