

JEWISH HISTORY

Essays in Honour of
Chimen Abramsky

Edited by
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Foreword by
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Self-sacrifice of the Zaddik in the Teachings of R. Dov Ber, the *Mitteler Rebbe*

Naftali Loewenthal

In his article 'The Crisis of Authority within European Jewry in the Eighteenth Century',¹ Professor Abramsky makes it clear that one of the key elements in the dynamic of Jewish history in that epoch was the question of the nature of leadership. In that age of controversy, incipient fragmentation and crisis, new forms of authority, of social structure and of hero emerged.

The traditional bearers of power and influence in Eastern Europe had been the official rabbis, preachers, talmudic-cum-kabbalistic scholars, magnates and, using the term in its widest sense, the *shadlanim*. Combinations of these figures made up the official communal structure which set the pattern of life for most Jews. They also, in varying degrees, provided role models for men of original spirit and set standards of endeavour for the ordinary members of the community.

During the eighteenth century two very different new sources of authority evolved: on the one hand the *Haskalah* movement, and on the other Hasidism. While the sources of both can be discerned in the past,² and in the contemporary balance of communal power, it is probably not surprising that both challenged and were challenged by the existing structures of Jewish leadership. Both new movements survived these challenges and it is noteworthy that when they became cognizant of each other, as rival forces in the Jewish community, bitter hostility ensued.

Like all movements of whatever kind, both produced men of fame and of influence, leader figures.³ In the case of Hasidism, this aspect of the movement became especially and exceptionally significant.

Hasidism provided not only ideals and direction, it also created a unique form of leadership, in which several powerful streams of traditional Jewish imagery were combined. The Hasidic Zaddik manifested for his followers the qualities of prophecy and of kingship, of esoteric wisdom and of knowledge of the hearts of men. These aspects have to varying degrees been described and discussed by previous

writers.⁴ The present paper introduces a further dimension of the Zaddik—self-sacrifice, an aspect seen particularly clearly in the writings of a Hasidic leader of the fourth generation of the movement: Rabbi Dov Ber of Lubavitch, known as the *Mitteler Rebbe* (1773–1827).⁵ Drawing on a deep fount of Jewish tradition reaching back to remote antiquity, R. Dov Ber describes the Zaddik as a paradigm of *mesirat nefesh*, self-sacrifice and martyrdom.⁶ Our aim in the following pages is to define and clarify this aspect of R. Dov Ber's teachings. In order to do this, we must first consider the concept of the Zaddik as taught by R. Dov Ber's father, R. Shneur Zalman of Lyadi (d. 1813), founder of the Habad school of Hasidism.⁷

THE HABAD CONCEPT OF THE ZADDIK

How did R. Shneur Zalman's views on the Zaddik compare with those of his contemporaries?

In the teachings of his mentor, the Maggid of Mezhirech (d. 1772), the key to the concept of the Zaddik is the theme of self-nullification, *hitul*. The idea is found in the fragmented scraps we possess of the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov: *ani*, 'Self', is to be changed into *al[i]n*, 'Nought'.⁸ In the thought of the Maggid the concept of *hitul* becomes paramount. Through it the individual ascends beyond the limitation implicit in existence. He reaches beyond the *Shevirah*, the Lurianic 'Breaking of the Vessels', the source of the grossness of the material world and of all evil.⁹ Through *hitul* the individual attains a state of consciousness 'above time . . . where all is equal: life and death, the sea and dry land'.¹⁰ He is transformed into a man of exceptional power and responsibility in both upper and lower worlds. Characteristic of Hasidism, as distinct from earlier Kabbalism, is the way this power is exercised in society.

In the teachings of the second and third generations of Hasidism, a clearly defined theory of the interrelation between the Zaddik and the world around him was expounded. The relationship concerns material existence, encompassing and transforming everyday activities such as eating; it also concerns people. The mystical link between the Zaddik and the Jewish people, and especially his bond with and inner effect on his followers and those who turn to him, is described by several writers, most notably R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye (d. c. 1784) and R. Elimelech of Lyzhansk (d. 1786).¹¹

In the case of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyadi, sparse reference is found to this aspect of Hasidic thought. The Zaddik is described, but only rarely is there mention of his effect on his followers. Instead, the emphasis in R. Shneur Zalman's teachings is on the attempt to develop

in his followers their own potential for spiritual consciousness. He does this not by inviting them to become Zaddikim (which seems to be the import of the recorded teachings of the Maggid),¹² but by communicating to them methods of reaching *hitul* through contemplation, prayer and the normative processes of Jewish religious life: Torah study and the performance of the *mitzvoth*.¹³ This emphasis on the spiritual possibility of the Hasidic follower was a point of controversy in the third generation of Hasidism. R. Avraham of Kalisk (d. 1810), who became the main opponent of the Habad path, claimed that all that needed to be demanded of the members of the Hasidic fraternity was 'faith in the Zaddik' and basic ethical values.¹⁴

R. Shneur Zalman's focus on transforming the inner life of the Hasid has given some writers the impression that the concept of the Zaddik is muted in early Habad Hasidism.¹⁵ In fact he and his followers believed fully in the mystical structure linking the Zaddik with the Jewish world in general and with his followers in particular.

We see this from R. Shneur Zalman's own rules for the organization of his fraternity, and also from his theoretical teachings. The rules, called *Takkanot Liozna*¹⁶ and dating from the 1790s, indicate large numbers of followers flocking to R. Shneur Zalman. A letter by him dated 1791–2 mentions forty or fifty visitors every week, and sometimes two hundred. A special free communal kitchen was established to feed the visitors.¹⁷ The Liozna rules ensure that order is maintained, and that new followers are given precedence in having private audience (*Yehidut*) with the Hasidic leader, so that he can impart to each of them a path in Divine Service. It is noteworthy that Avigdor of Pinsk, the enemy of Hasidism who laid the accusations against R. Shneur Zalman which led to the latter's second arrest in 1800, included reference to this first *Yehidut* in his petition to the Tsar. While his account was distorted, it is likely there was truth in the significance he attributed to this event and the bond he described between the Hasidic following and R. Shneur Zalman. The soul of the latter, he said, 'includes all the souls that cleave to him'.¹⁸

On the theoretical level, the beginning of R. Shneur Zalman's basic tract, *Sefer shel Benonim* (the first section of *Likutei Amarim* or *Tanya*), portrays a vast anthropomorphic union of all Jewish souls. Those of the Zaddikim, both of the past and of one's own time, play a key role in drawing a Divine flow into this corporate being, and hence, states R. Shneur Zalman, citing a talmudic text, attachment to the Zaddik is of prime importance in the religious life of the individual.¹⁹ He elaborates further on the significance of the Zaddik–Hasid relationship in a letter written to members of the fraternity after the death of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk in 1788. This emphasizes the importance of

hikashemut (bonding) and love between Hasid and Zaddik.²⁰ In R. Shneur Zalman's discourses we also find occasional references to the way the Zaddik, by means of his exalted 'Unifications' in Divine Service, heals the souls of those who are of his 'root'.²¹ He imparts 'understanding of the Divine' and arouses the depths of the heart of those in his generation.²² R. Shneur Zalman also explains the nature of a 'General' soul, i.e. that of the Zaddik, who includes in himself many other souls and therefore 'feels' the souls of others, 'even the lowest in level'.²³ In R. Shneur Zalman's early, brief teachings, which have recently been collected and published,²⁴ we find themes such as the 'descent' of the Zaddik to the people²⁵ or, through thoughts of sin, to *Gehinom* to raise the evil-doers.²⁶ Here too we find emphasis on the need of the Hasid to cleave to the Zaddikim 'for they are above the world and through their mind can raise everything to its root'²⁷ and also to give charity to them so as to elevate and purify one's own religious emotions.²⁸ Further elaboration on the significance of giving material support to the Zaddik is found in a letter by R. Aaron Halevi Horowitz (d. 1828), a major Hasid who later became leader in his own right of a section of the *Habad* following. His letter, probably from the early 1800s, addresses the fraternity in an appeal for funds for R. Shneur Zalman. This support is described as 'an intermediary' which enables the individual to draw life-force from the soul of the Zaddik.²⁹ Such funding was institutionalized under the name *maamad* (support) and is so referred to in a letter by R. Dov Ber shortly after the death of his father R. Shneur Zalman.³⁰

These references in early *Habad* sources to the role of the Zaddik in society are few and far between. None the less, it is clear that in *Habad* the underlying structure linking Zaddik and Hasid was conceived in rather similar terms to those taught by R. Jacob Joseph and R. Elimelech of Lyzhansk. The overt emphasis, however, was on the Hasid himself gaining a higher level of religious service and of 'understanding of the Divine'. Hence R. Shneur Zalman's well-known letter which in effect condemns the basing of a relationship with the Zaddik on the need for material blessing.³¹ The central theme in *Habad* was and remains the Hasidic teachings imparted by the Zaddik. These, studied by the Hasid and used as an aid in contemplation and life, enable him to attain his own level of inner transformation and self-transcendence.

A further dimension of this relationship is that the Zaddik himself acts as an example for the Hasid to revere and, as far as possible, to emulate, in his quest for the spiritual in life. The key values embodied by the Zaddik in *Habad* are, on the one hand, esoteric *bitul*, self-abnegation which, in its upper reaches, is inimitable; on the other, the somewhat more accessible value of *mesirat nefesh*, self-sacrifice.

AN ACTIVIST CONCEPT OF THE ZADDIK

The careful depiction in *Tanya*, particularly in its first ten chapters, of the spiritual self-transformation achieved by the Zaddik is in fact a detailed elaboration of the Maggidic theme of *bitul*. As a background, the Lurianic cosmology and taxonomy of the soul is employed.³² The normal self of the individual, with its desires and passions, is termed the Animal Soul or Vital Soul. In addition, a Divine force, called the Divine Soul, nestles within the person but is concealed by his everyday self.³³ For most people the struggle of life is to control this self: the one who achieves constant control is the *benoni*, the 'intermediate Man', a figure with clearly described pneumatic qualities.³⁴ The Zaddik goes immeasurably further: he achieves not mere control, but *transformation* of his everyday self, the Animal Soul. That aspect of the self which makes it opaque to the Divine dissolves away, and the Animal Soul is transformed into a pure expression of the Divine force and will which transcend self and all existence. R. Shneur Zalman employs the term *bitul* for this dissolution of the opacity ('dirty garments') of the self, explaining that there are different levels of *bitul* and that only the 'perfect Zaddik' achieves total nullification of the opacity within.³⁵

We can perceive, standing behind the reasoned description in the pages of the *Tanya*, the brief epigram of the Baal Shem Tov mentioned earlier concerning the *ani* (Self) which must be transformed into the *alyin* (Nought) of the Divine.

There are, however, two very distinct ways of understanding the effect of Hasidic self-transformation: passive or active. The teachings of the Maggid on the theme of *bitul* can be interpreted as tending towards quietism.³⁶ R. Shneur Zalman makes quite clear that the 'perfect Zaddik' does not simply indulge in delight in *unio mystica*. He partakes of this individual union with the Divine for the sake of a yet more exalted purpose: to achieve the Divine self-expression in the lower world which is the purpose of Creation.

[The 'perfect Zaddikim'] are called 'exalted' because their service . . . is for an extremely exalted purpose, exalted to the highest level and not just to cleave to the Divine alone, to quench the thirst of their souls thirsting for the Divine . . . but instead it is in order to . . . unify the Holy One and His *Shekinah* in the lower world . . . [which means] to draw down the flow of Divine holiness from above to below, to be enclosed in the lower world.³⁷

This implies energetic activity, perhaps employing spiritual instruments, as we see in the case of the Baal Shem Tov³⁸ and also in the teachings of the Maggid concerning the elevation of evil. The tenor of *Tanya*, however, is to direct the individual towards active, *practical*

encounter with the world, and the image of the Zaddik imparted is likewise of one who deals with the world face to face, the practical commandments of the Torah being the vehicle for this activity. For the most part it is through them that ultimate *bitul* is achieved. They transcend, too, the intriguing 'spiritual ego', which itself takes form as a subtle concealment of the Divine. Beyond the barrier of all selfhood lie the practical commandments of Judaism, in which 'there is no concealment of the Countenance at all.'³⁹ R. Shneur Zalman laid great stress on the significance of the commandment of charity,⁴⁰ and personally put his ideas into practice in his energetic collection of funds for the Hasidic leaders in the Holy Land, and also later for the villagers dispossessed by the implementation of the 1804 Statute Concerning the Jews.⁴¹

It was in connection with this latter endeavour that R. Shneur Zalman met R. Barukh of Medziboz, grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, in 1810. In this encounter, the practical activity of the leader of Habad was criticized. According to R. Shneur Zalman's letter describing the meeting, R. Barukh asked him 'Why do you need to do all this? Couldn't you "sweeten the harsh forces" by passing your hand over your forehead and face?' R. Shneur Zalman countered by citing the practical efforts of Jacob, who sent a material gift to appease Esau. 'I said to him, surely Jacob the Patriarch knew how to "sweeten the harsh forces", and none the less said "I will appease him with a present"' (Gen. 32:20). In an aside to his followers reading the letter, R. Shneur Zalman comments 'The truth is you need the [spiritual] "sweetening of the harsh forces" and also the gift sent to Esau'—a valuable statement on the Habad view of the relationship between spirit and matter in the activity of the Zaddik. The account of R. Barukh's attack continues: 'Then he asked me: "Is it dignified for you to travel around these distant towns?" I answered: "Am I greater than R. Pinhas ben Yair who spent all his life travelling [collecting for] the redemption of captives?"'⁴³ Asked again 'Why did you come to my territory?', R. Shneur Zalman answered: 'I could not bear the pain and suffering of the villagers who have been driven from their homes into the towns and are lying in the streets dying of hunger.' These words gained only a scornful reply.⁴⁴

R. Shneur Zalman's personal example, together with the teachings in *Tanya*, present an activist concept of the Zaddik. His inner *bitul* and transcendence of self might not be imitable by the Hasid, but the effect of that *bitul* in the daily world—dedication to Torah, its practical directives and its values—could be taken as an example to be followed.

In the second generation of Habad another element comes to the fore in the self-depiction of the Hasidic leader: *mesirat nefesh*, self-sacrifice. In the teachings of R. Dov Ber, this concept is used to express

the exalted attainment of the Zaddik, leading to some rather esoteric pathways. However, there is also a universal dimension to the concept of *mesirat nefesh*. This made it particularly suitable in providing a perspective on a mystic leader so that he could clearly be seen by the men and women of the Hasidic fraternity as an inspiring example in the struggle for spirituality in daily life.

THE CONCEPT OF SELF-SACRIFICE

The powerful theme of *mesirat nefesh* for *Kidush ha-Shem* (self-sacrifice for the Sanctification of the Divine Name) has a long and important history in early and mediaeval Jewish thought.⁴⁵ Apart from straightforward martyrology, which eulogizes the martyr in his or her historical context, the ideal of self-sacrifice was also 'spiritualized' so as to have direct bearing on the daily life of the contemporary individual.⁴⁶ This is found particularly in kabbalistic literature, but also in halakhic texts. Thus R. Yoel Sirkis (d. 1640) included in his commentary on R. Jacob ben Asher's *Arba'ah Turim* the idea that when saying the *Shema*, one should take on the readiness to die for *Kidush ha-Shem*.⁴⁷ A comparable idea is found in the Hasidic *hanhagot* (rules of conduct) literature 150 years later.⁴⁸ R. Elimelech of Lyzhansk declares that at any free moment one should picture a great fire burning and imagine throwing oneself into it for the sake of the Sanctification of the Divine Name.⁴⁹ Similar ideas should be maintained in one's mind during prayer and while eating and enjoying physical pleasures.⁵⁰ Clearly this is a translation of the esoteric theme of *devekut* into the more concrete concept of self-sacrifice so as to make it accessible to the Hasid. Another disciple of the Maggid who employs the theme of self-sacrifice is R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, the associate and teacher of R. Shneur Zalman. In his teachings, the concept of self-sacrifice for *Kidush ha-Shem* becomes a means to express the Hasidic-mystical ideal on a level of great intensity:

To sum up the matter: a person should be like someone *who is not*, with utter abandon of his body and soul, to be eradicated for Sanctification of His Blessed Name, from this world and from the World to Come, in whatever way it might be; and wherever he is he yearns and is concerned with nothing but the Divine... Even from Hell he turns to the Divine, for what does he care for himself? Whether... he was not born, or being born, is wiped out like an animal... he is already completely annihilated, because of his gazing at the greatness of the Creator.⁵¹

Although it appears relatively infrequently in their teachings, these quotations indicate that the theme of self-sacrifice had a place in the thought of the disciples of the Maggid.⁵² The historical reality of dying

for *Kiddush ha-Shem* was close at hand.⁵³ Indeed, the famous letter of the Baal Shem Tov describing a spiritual ascent of the soul includes both a vision and also a factual account of a number of people sacrificing their lives in this way.⁵⁴ The powerful concept of *mesirat nefesh*, already utilized to some extent by his colleagues for transmitting the Hasidic ethos, was given an important role by R. Shneur Zalman and became even more prominent in the teachings of his son R. Dov Ber.

An important cornerstone of the system of thought expounded by the *Tanya* is the idea that every Jew has within him or her the propensity for self-sacrificial martyrdom. Taken as a self-evident fact of history, this propensity is cited as an indication of the existence of the Divine Spark within the Jewish soul: when faced with a clear choice ('baptism or death') this Divine force gives the individual the power of self-sacrifice even if hitherto he has conducted himself as 'the lowest of the low'.⁵⁵ In addition, R. Shneur Zalman makes this theme the basis of a number of contemplative strategies in order to gain self-mastery: for example, the individual thinks of the readiness for martyrdom he and all other Jews possess, and thereby summons the force to restrain his passion for something forbidden or to inspire himself to devotion to positive goals such as Torah study or prayer.⁵⁶

The idea that every Jew has the inner power to give up his or her life for Judaism is likewise emphasized by R. Dov Ber, in the second generation of Habad. It is referred to several times in his *Kuntres ha-Hitpa'ali*,⁵⁷ a tract giving a subtle classification of different stages of enthusiasm, inspiration, ecstasy or utter *bi'ul* in prayer.⁵⁸ The highest level, a state of self-abandon to the Divine in which 'there is nothing left of him at all'⁵⁹ and all consciousness of self is lost, is described as being very rare.⁶⁰ It is noteworthy that this exalted state, which is openly apparent as a positive force only in the case of 'perfect Zaddikim', is compared with the moment of death for *Kiddush ha-Shem*.⁶¹ This brief association of the concept of the Zaddik with the powerful theme of self-sacrifice in what is probably R. Dov Ber's earliest tract, received amplification in his later work 'Gate of Repentance and Prayer', *Shaar ha-Teshuvah ve-ha-Tefilah*.⁶² Here the concept of self-sacrifice in general is brought to the fore and the *mesirat nefesh* of the Zaddik is clearly defined.

An interesting aspect of this work is that it provides a kabbalistic perspective on the historical phenomenon of *Kiddush ha-Shem*.⁶³ R. Dov Ber focuses on the period from 1096—the time of the incidents of mass martyrdom in the Rhine consequent on the People's Crusade—to 1573, the death of R. Isaac Luria. During these 500 years, he states,

there were many incidents of *Kiddush ha-Shem*. He refers to Solomon ibn Verga's martyrological chronicle *Shevet Yehudah*, and mentions specifically 1096 and the Spanish Expulsion of 1492. (Elsewhere R. Dov Ber refers to the Chmelnicki massacres of 1648–9).⁶⁴ The kabbalistic background to this intensive period of Jewish self-sacrifice lies in the concept of transmigration of souls and the theme of *Tikkun*, 'Repair'. The Jews who died for *Kiddush ha-Shem* in that 500-year epoch were incarnations of souls of people who had lived in the time of the First Temple, when they had served idols. Their *Tikkun* and 'ascent' were effected through their return to the world and subsequent death for *Kiddush ha-Shem*.⁶⁵ The Jewish philosophy of that epoch, declares R. Dov Ber, was itself a partial atonement for idolatry, for the philosopher 'will only believe the investigation of his intellect and will mock all idolatry and loathe it'. However, complete *Tikkun* was achieved by the philosopher himself going beyond reason and sacrificing his life with *mesirat nefesh* for *Kiddush ha-Shem*, with simple faith transcending all intellect.⁶⁶

The idea that the incidents of death for *Kiddush ha-Shem* were in atonement for past sins of the Jewish people is found in *Emek ha-Melekh* by R. Nafali Bacharach, a work which seems to have had some influence on Habad.⁶⁷ The significant point, within the framework of our present study, is that R. Dov Ber had a conception of *Kiddush ha-Shem* as a historical phenomenon and that, as such, it had a definite place in his view of Jewish history as a whole. This underlines the significance of the concept of the *mesirat nefesh* of the Zaddik in his teachings.

NEFILAT APAYYIM

To help us understand R. Dov Ber's ideas, let us first consider their background in kabbalistic thought. In the *Zohar* and later kabbalistic writings the link is made between *Kiddush ha-Shem* and *Nefilat Apayyim*, the *Tahannun* supplicatory prayer recited after the *Amidah* on non-festive days. Tishby has discussed the different ways in which this theme is expressed in the *Zohar*; the common denominator is that the act of *Nefilat Apayyim* (in which, in normal synagogue practice, the head is bowed and the face is hidden),⁶⁸ is interpreted as 'symbolic death'.⁶⁹

This theme is found also in the teachings of R. Moshe Cordovero, who states concerning one's attitude during *Nefilat Apayyim* that: 'he should consider himself dead for the Sanctification of His great Name, and that he is giving over his soul in that unity'.⁷⁰ This idea has prominence in R. Haim Vital's discussion of *Nefilat Apayyim* in *Shaar ha-Kavanot*, and becomes part of a scheme of analysis of 'actual' and

'potential' *Kiddush ha-Shem*. 'Actual' *Kiddush ha-Shem* means literally dying, 'like the Ten Martyrs', while 'potential' *Kiddush ha-Shem* takes place in prayer. In prayer, states R. Haim Vital, there are two kinds of *mesirat nefesh*: one in the recital of the *Shema*, the other in *Nefilat Apayyim*.⁷¹ The general significance of the latter prayer is that then the soul, after its total inclusion with the *Shekhinah* during the *Amidah*, throws itself down from *Astivat* 'like a man throwing himself from a roof down to the ground' in order to raise up the 'sparks' from the *kelipah*.⁷² This is compared to the descent of the Zaddikim after their death to *Gehinom* ('the domain of the *kelipot*') in order to rescue the evildoers from there.⁷³ In the same way the person in prayer

gives himself over to death, and has the intention that his soul should descend to the realm of death . . . in order to extract from there, with the power of his prayer, the 'sparks' [lit. 'siftings'] which are there.⁷⁴

These 'siftings' are identified as 'the souls who have fallen there'.⁷⁵ R. Haim Vital emphasizes that the one who undertakes this should be a Zaddik, otherwise not only will he fail to raise up any souls, but he might remain there himself.⁷⁶ This *mesirat nefesh* causes an exalted Unification above, and also is of great benefit to his own soul which thereby 'renews itself and is totally perfected'.⁷⁷ Further, one who has committed the grievous sin of profanation of the Divine Name (*Hillul ha-Shem*), for which the Sages say there is no atonement until death,⁷⁸ can achieve such atonement 'by giving over his soul to death during *Nefilat Apayyim*'.⁷⁹

It is to be noted that a number of these ideas are central to Hasidism, in which they are translated into social terms. Central of course is the role of the Zaddik.⁸⁰ With this background we are able to approach R. Dov Ber's schematization of *mesirat nefesh*, through which the nature of the Zaddik is communicated to his followers.

PERMANENT DEVEKUT

In the *Seder Tefilot* published by R. Dov Ber, comprising mainly discourses of his father arranged as a commentary on the liturgy, we find *Nefilat Apayyim* characterized as the expression of total *bitul*.⁸¹ This idea is developed in the later *Shaar ha-Teshuvah ve-ha-Tefilah*.

Here R. Dov Ber distinguishes between the *bitul* of the *Amidah* and that of *Nefilat Apayyim*. In that of the *Amidah* the person is in a state of abnegation, yet he has not achieved union with the Essence (*ma'ut ve-atzmut*). In the 'second *bitul*' of *Nefilat Apayyim*, the person achieves a higher level of *bitul* and no longer has a separate existence of his own. The first level is described as a passive state, which is compared to that

of a villager who is stunned on seeing the glory of the king. He is confused and unable to stand; he is completely abnegated. He has not actually grasped anything of the greatness of the king, however. To achieve this there must be the 'second *bitul*' which, at least cerebrally, is an active state in which the villager 'returns to his reason in order to grasp the essence of the exaltation and greatness of the wealth, glory and splendour of Majesty in all its details'. Through this he achieves total union.⁸²

Another way in which R. Dov Ber distinguishes between these two varieties of *bitul* (or *devekut*) concerns the question of permanence. The ideal of achieving a permanent state of union with the Divine is an important issue in Habad.⁸³ R. Shneur Zalman makes clear in *Tanya* that permanence of *devekut* is one of the differences distinguishing the Zaddik from the *benoni*. Although the 'intermediate man' can attain ecstatic states of enthusiasm during prayer, after the prayer has ended the inspired mood ebbs away and the person again 'desires the pleasures of this world'.⁸⁴ and must return to his more usual stance of self-control. Rather severely, R. Shneur Zalman states that an intermittent mood of inspiration 'is not termed true service at all, since it disappears after prayer, and it is written "the lip of truth stands for ever, but the tongue of falsehood is only for a moment"' (Prov. 12:19).⁸⁵ Subsequently R. Shneur Zalman does accord a certain level of 'truth' to the service of the *benoni*, since at least he is able in a constant way to summon up the state of pneumatic inspiration whenever he immerses himself in prayer.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, the direction is clear: the attainment of the Zaddik is of an order entirely different from that of the inspired enthusiast, even the one who has achieved total self-mastery, the *benoni*.

This distinction is enlarged on by R. Dov Ber in the context of the *bitul* of the *Amidah*, which is impermanent, and, far higher, the constant *devekut* achieved through the *mesirat nefesh* of *Nefilat Apayyim*.

The utter *bitul* of the *Amidah*, despite its impermanence, is itself described in exalted terms by R. Dov Ber. The individual in such a state 'becomes a true vessel for the Divine *ayin* at that moment'.

However, not only is this impermanent, leaving only an 'afterglow' (*reshimu*) of Divine radiance after the prayer: even during this state of *bitul*, the person does not attain total 'absorption' in the Divine. Spiritually he remains 'a created thing', separate from the Divine even if temporarily abnegated before the Infinite and a vessel to its radiance.⁸⁷

By contrast, through the higher state which R. Dov Ber terms 'the *mesirat nefesh* which is in *Nefilat Apayyim*', the person attains *devekut* and 'absorption' in the Divine to such an extent that he is no longer termed a 'vessel' and loses the quality of separate existence. Together with the concept of total *unio mystica* goes the theme of the permanence of this

state. *Devekut*, says R. Dov Ber, is called that because like glue (*devek*) it joins two things into a permanent bond in which they are one. Through *mesirat nefesh* of *Nefilat Apyayim* the person attains a unity and bond with the Divine which 'lasts continually and eternally, without ever being loosened for any reason in the world.'⁸⁸ This is not the passive, quietistic state of the motionless *Amidah* prayer. *Nefilat Apyayim* represents active involvement with the practical world.

... even if he occupies himself with business, deeply preoccupied and involving all his energy, with very close relationship to the external forces [of the *kehipah*], they do not separate him at all, not even a hairbreadth, because of his utter cleaving to the Divine . . . 'Even though he walks here and there'—in the realms of [*Kehipah*] *Mogah*—'My Divine Visage remains with you'; truly, with utter cleaving . . . This is the superiority of *Nefilat Apyayim* above the Eighteen Benedictions and the *Shema*. Concerning this it says 'and to Him shall you cleave' (Deut. 13:5)—literally to Him.⁸⁹

Thus, in the state of *mesirat nefesh* of *Nefilat Apyayim*, according to R. Dov Ber, the ideal of permanent *devekut* is achieved, even in the profane realms of daily life lived in an intensely active way. This is a state of *devekut*, of *mesirat nefesh*, consistent not only with the performance of essential human functions but also with intense involvement in worldly affairs.

As an example of this descent into worldly activities R. Dov Ber refers to 'Joseph, who carried out his work of writing accounts and was a chariot to *Atsilot* itself, and was not separated at all [from the Divine] even when he was totally involved in writing'.⁹⁰

This presents a further stage in the concept of the *Zaddik*. In the case of R. Shneur Zalman we encountered the example of the mystical R. Pinhas ben Yair, actively involved in raising money for the redemption of captives. R. Dov Ber gives us here the picture of the biblical Joseph, a 'chariot' (i.e. total expression)⁹¹ of the Divine realm of *Atsilot* yet simultaneously controlling the distribution of grain during the years of the famine. This leads to a remarkable typology of *mesirat nefesh*, through which the *Habad* ideal of the *Zaddik* is yet further defined.

A TYPOLOGY OF MESIRAT NEFESH

In *Kuntres ha-Hitpalut*, R. Dov Ber presents us with a typology of *hitpalut*, ecstatic feeling in prayer. In a somewhat similar way we find in *Shaar ha-Teshuvah ve-ha-Tefilah* a typology of *mesirat nefesh*, culminating in the most exalted level, the *mesirat nefesh* of *Nefilat Apyayim* which is higher than the 'death of a kiss' of Moses and is described in near-messianic terms. The central purpose of this typology

is, we feel, the communication of the stature of the *Zaddik*. (The same may, indeed, be so in the case of *Kuntres ha-Hitpalut*). This purpose is emphasized by the fact that the *hiner bet* (trance-like state)⁹² of the Baal Shem Tov is presented as an example of the most exalted form of *mesirat nefesh*. *Shivhei ha-Besh*, in the introduction to which the state of *hiner bet* is described, was published in Kopyst in 1815 by the *Habad* printer R. Yisrael Jaffe,⁹³ obviously with the agreement of, if not direct instruction from, R. Dov Ber. The reference to this state in *Shaar ha-Teshuvah ve-ha-Tefilah*, published in 1817, was therefore addressed to an audience which was familiar with the concept as the attribute of the exalted *Zaddik*, the Baal Shem Tov. Further, as we will see below, R. Dov Ber himself was described by a contemporary as undergoing similar states. To some extent we can therefore interpret R. Dov Ber's typology of *mesirat nefesh* as an attempt at self-communication.⁹⁴

The typology is based on the distinction between 'potential' and 'actual' *mesirat nefesh* which, as we have seen, is found in the writings of R. Haim Vital. R. Dov Ber develops this further. In potential *mesirat nefesh* he describes two levels. The first is one of *hitpalut*, intense emotion or ecstasy, which is expressed particularly by the Divine Soul. In this state the Natural Soul too yearns to leave the physical sheath of the body. Nonetheless, this is only the first level of potential *mesirat nefesh*, for

It might be that if at that very moment they were demanding of him that he apostatize, or similar, and they said to him 'a sword to [your] throat at once!', it is possible he would fall into uncertainty and give in.⁹⁵

The second level is a deeper ecstasy:

However there can be a second level in potential *mesirat nefesh*, namely that he has achieved such a strong and deep ecstasy of the Natural Soul to leave the materiality of the body, that he is really ready actually to be killed for *Kiddush ha-Shem* if they would demand this of him at that moment.⁹⁶

This is still only potential, states R. Dov Ber, for although it might be true at the time when he felt it, if the demand for *Kiddush ha-Shem* were made at another time, the strength of his resolve might evaporate.⁹⁷ Both levels are aspects of what Katz terms 'spiritualized' *mesirat nefesh*, i.e. preparedness for death in a situation which is but in the imagination, taking place on an internal level during prayer.⁹⁸ R. Dov Ber now turns his attention to 'actual' *mesirat nefesh*. This too has different levels. The first of these is found in a situation when the person has made the final step in giving himself up to death, even though he has not yet actually been killed. R. Dov Ber cites the example of

Hananiah, Mishael and Azaria (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) who declared: 'Our G-d can save us . . . and if not, you should know, O King, that we will not serve your god, and we will not bow to the golden idol you have set up' (Dan. 3:17-18). This is considered actual fulfilment of the commandment of *Kiddush ha-Shem*, for as far as they were concerned they had given themselves over to death. Whether or not the decree is carried out is not up to them.

This is a genuine resolve of the soul for actual *mesirat nefesh*, and this is really as if they had actually sacrificed their lives; if the decree had been cancelled and they had not been thrown into the furnace, through this firm resolve they would [nonetheless] actually have fulfilled the commandment of *Kiddush ha-Shem*, since only the practical action was lacking. As far as they were concerned there was no hindrance.⁹⁹

A further level of actual *mesirat nefesh* is expressed in a case where not only has the soul been prepared for death but also the body itself. An example of this is the case of Isaac; although the final action was not carried out, this is none the less a fulfilment of the commandment of *Kiddush ha-Shem*:

... their bodies are actually prepared, such as by their hands and feet being bound with cords, and being put on top of the woodpile as in the *Akedah* of Isaac. This is like actual *mesirat nefesh*, even though they were taken down immediately they fulfilled the commandment of *Kiddush ha-Shem* with this practical preparation of their bodies, as in the *Akedah* of Isaac when only the final action was lacking.¹⁰⁰

It has long been noted that *Akedah* imagery has a significant role in the mediaeval *Kiddush ha-Shem* literature.¹⁰¹ R. Dov Ber employs this theme in different ways. Here we find the concept of the fulfilment of the ideal of *Kiddush ha-Shem* together with the continuation of life. For R. Dov Ber it is not the act of dying for *Kiddush ha-Shem* that is of highest significance, but the life which continues with the quality of *mesirat nefesh*. This life is the life of the *Zaddik*, yet it also embodies an ideal not beyond the comprehension of the Hasid.

In order to establish and communicate this ideal, R. Dov Ber continues his typology, delineating an ever more 'actual' expression of *Kiddush ha-Shem*. The highest form of this, as in the case of the Ten Martyrs, is when the body 'is actually burnt and slaughtered'. It is this highest stage which has a direct parallel in life—the *mesirat nefesh* of *Neflat Apayyim*, the *mesirat nefesh* of the *Zaddik*.

Thus, emphasizing the need for actuality, R. Dov Ber stresses that the case in which the body was bound on the woodpile yet not actually slaughtered, was not the *mesirat nefesh* for which Rabbi Akiva yearned: 'the main thing' was lacking.

Rabbi Akiva, however, who used to yearn [for martyrdom] and would say 'when will I be able to carry it out'¹⁰²—his desire was specifically to carry it out in actuality, which is the burning or slaughter of the body in actual fact, and not just the preparation of the body alone. This is the plain sense of his saying 'carry it out'. The preparation without actually being killed, that he remains alive in his body, means that his body has not actually been sacrificed for *Kiddush ha-Shem*, and the fact that the act of slaughter is lacking is a lack of the main thing.¹⁰³

Elaborating on this R. Dov Ber cites the *Zohar* and *Eis Hanyin*, which depict the greatness of the attainment of the Ten Martyrs; this attainment is specifically because they were actually killed, states R. Dov Ber, 'for the sacrifice of the body is more exalted than the sacrifice of the soul'.¹⁰⁴

Based on this conclusion he divides the subject of *mesirat nefesh* into two categories: the sacrifice of the soul (*Mesirat ha-Nefesh*) and the sacrifice of the body (*Mesirat ha-Guf*). Each has a potential and an actual state. The potential sacrifice of the soul is the yearning for the Divine experienced during the *Shema*; the actuality of the sacrifice of the soul is the 'death by a kiss'¹⁰⁵ of Moses and Aaron, whose souls expired through their intense yearning for the pure Unity of the Divine. The potential sacrifice of the body is, as depicted above, when the person is absolutely prepared to be killed—'his judgement is concluded, and he is going out to be killed and they throw him down'—but he is not killed because the decree is annulled. The actual sacrifice of the body is when he is actually burnt and slaughtered; 'the sacrifice of the body together with the soul'. Only through this can the purely spiritual *mesirat nefesh* of the soul alone be verified.

When he is actually burnt and slaughtered, this is the real sacrifice of the body together with the soul. Only then is the sacrifice of the soul itself verified, despite its actualization through the expiring of the soul from yearning.¹⁰⁶

This statement might well be interpreted as expressing an anti-quietist position. R. Dov Ber constructs an image which embodies the quietist ideal; the sacrifice of the soul in prayer, culminating in dissolution—the 'death by a kiss'; yet this in itself requires 'verification', through the sacrifice of the body. Behind this, one discerns the shadow of the controversy with R. Aaron,¹⁰⁷ the pneumatic spiritualist who perhaps was seen as representing the sacrifice of the soul alone, while R. Dov Ber claims as his attainment and teaching the sacrifice of the body as well: not in death, but in life.¹⁰⁸ The bridge connecting the case of burning and slaughter with continued life in this world is the *mesirat nefesh* of *Neflat Apayyim*, and the trance-like states of the *Baal Shem Tov*.

NEFLAT APAYYIM AND HINER BET

Having described the exaltation of actual death for *Kiddush ha-Shem*—the gruesome death, 'with iron combs' for which R. Akiva yearned—R. Dov Ber makes the striking statement that 'This is the real significance of *Neflat Apayyim* . . . for it says in the *Zohar* concerning *Neflat Apayyim* that it should seem to him as if he really has departed from this world.'¹⁰⁹ In R. Dov Ber's typology, mystical *Neflat Apayyim* is thus equated with actual death for *Kiddush ha-Shem*. He asks how *Neflat Apayyim* can be the equivalent of 'real *mesirat nefesh*' in actual fact with slaughter and burning; perhaps the statement in the *Zohar* implies only a state of readiness for *mesirat nefesh* in the imagination of the person, not at all the actual fact of death. He answers that, on the contrary, what is meant is that the person does not simply imagine himself ready for *mesirat nefesh*, but actually enters a state which is the equivalent of death; only a small spark of life remains in him. Returning to the *Akedah* image, now in another mode, R. Dov Ber compares this to the situation of Isaac lying bound on the woodpile. All life has fled from him owing to 'dread of death'; the spark of life which remains is only so that he should be able to revive when taken down. This state is contrasted with more conventional ecstasy in which the person yearns for 'expiry' in the radiance of the Divine. In this more conventional state 'one cannot say that he has really died, nor that it is as if he has died.' By contrast:

But when there falls on him actual dread of death, as in the *Akedah* of Isaac and similar, when he was bound, lying on the wood, and his soul really fled¹¹⁰ and was not within him at all, just a residual spark of life so that he could revive when taken down . . . It is as if he had really died, and there remains in him only a residual spark of life. This is not imagination, with the power of imagination alone, but it is genuine.¹¹¹

Here the *Akedah* is a symbol not merely of practical preparation for self-sacrifice, but of the mystical equivalent of death itself. It is the paradigm of *Neflat Apayyim*. R. Dov Ber does not leave this ideal as pertaining only to the Patriarchs in the remote past.¹¹² Thus, expanding on this state of 'actualized' *mesirat nefesh*, he writes:

He is not actually thought to be dead, but slumbering in a deep sleep, as is told of the greatest *Zaddikim* of the generation, like the *Baal Shem Tov* . . . that when he had an ascent of the soul he was stripped of all the physicality of the material life of his body . . .¹¹³

This is compared to the sleep of Adam in which one of his ribs was taken; for in this state 'he feels no pain.'¹¹⁴ R. Dov Ber describes this state as more exalted than that of the prophets at the moment of

prophesying, for in their case the body has not expired but has merely become insensible. This underlines the extent to which R. Dov Ber equated the trance-like state of the *Baal Shem Tov* with actual death, and also gives some indication of the place he ascribes to it in the scale of religious attainment.

HINER BET OF THE BAAL SHEM TOV AND OF R. DOV BER

In the *Baal Shem Tov*'s famous letter recounting to his brother-in-law R. Gershon of Kury his spiritual ascent on the night of Rosh Hashana, there is no indication as to how at that moment he appeared to others. However, in *Shivhei ha-Besht* we find an account of an 'ascent' of the *Baal Shem Tov* during the *Neilah* prayer on the Day of Atonement. This includes a physical description. The *Baal Shem Tov* 'leaned backwards till his head came near his legs . . . and his eyes were bulging and with his voice he was making sounds like a slaughtered ox. He was like that for about two hours.'¹¹⁵ Even though the passage concludes with an account by the *Baal Shem Tov* of his journey through upper realms during his trance, the description of the frightening physical appearance of this state seems beyond the conventions of hagiography. It is striking that the importance of this trance-like state is emphasized by the original redactor¹¹⁶ of *Shivhei ha-Besht*:

In previous times it sometimes happened that they would lie comatose, which is called *hiner bet*, and when they got up they would tell of the wondrous things they had seen in the upper world.¹¹⁷

As mentioned above, *Shivhei ha-Besht* was published by the *Habad Hasidim*, followers of R. Dov Ber.¹¹⁸ A contemporary figure named *Yakov Cadaner*¹¹⁹ gives an eye-witness description of R. Dov Ber himself undergoing a trance-like state, in which he stood 'like a stick, without any movement or feeling' for several hours. Descriptions of this kind are very rare in Jewish mystical literature, and it merits quotation at length. The event described took place in the village of *Kridave*, where R. Dov Ber and a group of *Hasidim* including *Cadaner* were staying while on a journey. On the second evening there R. Dov Ber delivered a discourse which greatly impressed his hearers. 'Even the exceptional, famous, original *Hasidim* said they had never heard anything like that from him, nor from his father . . . ' The *Hasidim* went to eat their evening meal.

Soon after the meal the serving man came to me very excitedly and said to me: 'If you want to look at the face of the *Rebbe*, this is a good time.' I said to him, 'I do not want to, for I know he greatly objects to such things because of his reticent nature.' The serving man promised that 'at

the moment he will not notice you at all.' I decided it would be right to have a look, and went with the serving man. He opened the door of his room and I saw the *Rebbe* standing in the middle of the room without any movement. His face was glowing as with flames, and his eyes were open. I said to myself he could certainly see me, and I was afraid of his anger so I jumped backwards. The serving man took hold of my coat and said loudly: 'Do not be afraid at all, for now he cannot see and cannot hear for he is in upper worlds, even though you see his body in this world.' I said, 'How do you know such things? You are just an ordinary person.' He said, 'It is not my idea, but from experience. For several times I have seen him like this.' After that I gazed at his face and I too realized that then he could not see nor hear, even though his eyes were open; he had no sensation from any physical senses at all. I stood at the entrance of the room gazing very intently at his face; perhaps I would detect some animation in it. Simply his eyes were open and his face glowed like a Seraph. I stood like that from the tenth hour till the third hour. The servants were coming and going in the room and the *Rebbe* was standing like a stick, without any movement or feeling. At the end of the third hour the serving man said to my cart-driver, 'Lay the table, for it is time he ate a little, for he has not eaten all day.' He did this, laid the table and took the ewer in his hand and stood in front of him so that he should wash his hands. He stood some time by the *Rebbe* and understood that he could not see him at all, although his eyes were open. The serving man said to him, 'Why do you not wake up the *Rebbe* so he should wash his hands. He has not eaten warm food all day.' He said, 'I am afraid to touch him.' The serving man said, 'If so, whatever happens to me I have to wake him up.' The serving man went and took hold of the sleeve of his coat and said, 'I am asking the *Rebbe* to wash his hands.' He did not answer him at all, but walked from the middle of the room to the wall and stood there as before.¹²⁰

At this point Cadaner was no longer able to see R. Dov Ber's face, so he retired to his room. Later the serving man told him that after another hour of immobility R. Dov Ber had suddenly come out of his trance and sat down at the table where he ate normally 'with great joy'.

According to Cadaner's account of what the serving man later told him, R. Dov Ber then revealed to this faithful attendant that during his Hasidic discourse earlier in the evening he had had a spiritual visitation from the souls of his late father R. Shneur Zalman, the Maggid and the Baal Shem Tov. After the discourse the sense of contact with R. Shneur Zalman continued. Then, R. Dov Ber told the serving man: 'The fact that I stood a long time in the middle of the room was because I was repeating the discourse again before my father, and he revealed to me wonderful secrets concerning it.'¹²¹

There is no doubt that Cadaner was a Hasidic raconteur and loved a good story, as his book *Sipurim Noraim* attests. Unlike most of the

stories in this work, however, his accounts of R. Dov Ber are based on what he claims to be events he saw himself. It is quite plausible that Cadaner should be among the encourage of Hasidim accompanying R. Dov Ber on a journey. Further, it seems unlikely that an account of this kind should be completely fabricated. The trance state in itself embodies no obvious miracle. Indeed, it might well not be considered very meaningful to the ordinary reader. These points lead us to feel that R. Dov Ber himself indeed underwent such states and his reference to them in the context of the *mesirat nefesh* of *Nefilat Apayyim* is to some extent an example of the self-communication which is sometimes a characteristic of Hasidic leadership. The very fact that *Shirhei ha-Besht* was published by R. Dov Ber's followers might have a bearing on this, especially in the light of the struggle with R. Aaron for leadership of Habad. For implicit in R. Dov Ber's teaching concerning the *hiner bet* of the Zaddikim is the idea that the most exalted attainments of the enthusiast—such as those we associate with R. Aaron—do not compare with the step beyond life within life of the Baal Shem Tov and—by implication—of R. Dov Ber himself. The comatose state of *hiner bet* is the bridge, so to speak, between death for *Kiddush ha-Shem* and continued life in this world. This is the attainment of the ultimate Zaddik; his silent self-abnegation in *Nefilat Apayyim* is an expression of total, permanent *devekut*, with messianic overtones, which, like actual death for *Kiddush ha-Shem* is described as being more exalted than all other spiritual attainment.¹²²

R. Dov Ber concludes his typology of *mesirat nefesh* with the depiction of the way *mesirat nefesh* of *Nefilat Apayyim* raises the Lurianic sparks from even the lowest level of existence. This is the achievement of the true Zaddik by virtue of his very being, whether he is in a pneumatic trance, or active in the world. For him the veil of physicality no longer has the power to conceal.¹²³

THE REALITY OF THE SELF-SACRIFICE OF THE ZADDIK

The presentation of the Zaddik in terms of the ultimate expression of *mesirat nefesh* is repeated in another discourse in R. Dov Ber's *Shnar ha-Teshuvah ve-ha-Tyfila*.¹²⁴ This enlarges on the verse 'He redeemed in peace my soul' (Ps. 55:19), a scriptural quotation which had special meaning for R. Dov Ber's followers. At the height of the conflict with the *Mitnagginim*, R. Shneur Zalman's release in 1798 on 19 Kislev from his first arrest had been at the moment when he was reading this verse. He made this fact known in letters to R. Levi Yizhak of Berdichev and R. Barukh of Medziboz.¹²⁵ For the Habad followers this verse therefore represented self-sacrifice in practical reality—the plight of R.

Shneur Zalman in prison, under threat of death, for the cause of Hasidism. In the discourse on this verse R. Dov Ber describes different levels of spiritualized *mesirat nefesh* which in effect are different stages of self-abnegation, described in terms of the struggle between the Divine Soul and the Animal Soul, as in *Tanya*. The level of total *mesirat nefesh*, i.e. total self-abnegation, is an expression of the esoteric fifth and highest aspect of the Divine soul, termed *Yehidah*.¹²⁶ This is found in every Jew, and can never be defiled.¹²⁷ In the ordinary person the power of *Yehidah* is seen but rarely; by contrast, the Zaddik serves the Divine from this ultimate aspect of his being. On the one hand this leads to depiction of the realization of total *devekut*,¹²⁸ similar to that discussed above. On the other it leads to a discussion of suffering. In this actualized form of self-sacrifice there is again a typology, leading towards a further definition of the Zaddik.

R. Dov Ber employs the image of close friendship. The intense love of the faithful friend 'is only recognized in a time of trouble, when he really sacrifices himself for the sake of the beloved. The faithful friend 'does not care about his possessions, nor his life. He goes into danger and accepts physical suffering to the last extreme.'¹²⁹

The typology introduced by R. Dov Ber concerns the extent to which the 'friend' feels this physical suffering. On one level he does feel it, yet accepts it because of his love for his friend. On a higher level, his love is so intense that the feeling of pain is muted. On yet a higher level, due to his total bonding (*hitkashrut*) to the soul of his friend, he does not feel the pain at all.¹³⁰

It is clear that the final stage is a description of the relationship of the Zaddik to the Divine. For R. Dov Ber's hearers, this is a statement about R. Shneur Zalman, the previous *Rebbe*, who suffered in prison because of his role as Hasidic leader. However, R. Dov Ber assures his followers, for him this was not felt as suffering, due to his total bond with the Divine. As expressed by the verse from Psalms, his soul was redeemed 'in peace'.

This leads to the formulation of an unusual distinction among those who actually die for *Kiddush ha-Shem*. Some feel the suffering; but no pain is felt by those who are on the highest level of Zaddik, who attain the ultimate level of *mesirat nefesh*. The exemplars of this are the Ten Martyrs, such as Rabbi Akiva. Even while the Romans were tearing his flesh with iron combs 'he did not feel the pain at all' because of his total self-abnegation.¹³¹ R. Dov Ber states that the fact that the Ten Martyrs did not feel pain distinguished them from other righteous men who died for *Kiddush ha-Shem*. The Ten Martyrs attained a higher spiritual achievement, expressed physically by their redemption 'in peace', without pain. Why did they have to enter the situation of suffering at

all? 'Because of the root of the connection of the *kelipah* to the realm of holiness.'¹³² In other words, because of the dialectic of the nature of evil, the Zaddik sometimes enters a situation of apparent suffering. However, his bond (*hitkashrut*) to the Divine is so great, and his *bitul* is so total, that this experience is 'in peace'.

R. Dov Ber emphasizes that the quality *Yehidah* which expresses this total bond, exists in every Jew. However its open radiance is in the leadership of the Jewish people throughout the generations.

The general radiance of *yehidah* (which includes all Jewish souls . . .) shines in the outstanding individuals (*yehidei segulah*) who are in each generation, who are called leaders, each having a 'general' quality in relation to the individual Jews. Hence this exalted level of utter *mesirat nefesh* is only found in the leaders, such as the Ten Martyrs.¹³³

Due to the link of the concept of *bitul*, the basis of this total level of self-sacrifice, with the *Sefirah Hokhmah* (Wisdom), the leader who attains this level of *mesirat nefesh* is also distinguished by his wisdom. Hence it is this kind of leader, such as the 'thirty-six Zaddikim in every generation, who see the face of the *Shekhinah* every day' who is able to give guidance and function as 'the eyes of the community'.¹³⁴

In this discourse the nature of the leadership of the Zaddik as conceived by R. Dov Ber has been yet further defined. His utter *bitul* is a total level of *mesirat nefesh* which here is not only an inner, spiritual movement but also relates to grappling in practical fact with the harshness of reality. The Zaddik retains his exalted stature, even when arrested or exposed to other suffering. Inwardly his struggle relates to his task to transform the source of evil, the point at which the impure realm draws life from the realm of holiness; outwardly the dedicated self-sacrifice of a Jewish leader is seen.

The depiction of the Zaddik as a model of actual self-sacrifice for Judaism continues in a later work by R. Dov Ber, *Sharei Orah*.¹³⁵ This book was published in 1822, when the relationship between the Tsar and the Jewish community was rapidly deteriorating,¹³⁶ and functions to a considerable extent as a call to the Jewish community to express self-sacrifice for Judaism—not, it was hoped, to die, but to be firm in their dedication to the Jewish religion in the face of harsh treatment from the government. Tsar Alexander I, in his later years, influenced by the English missionary Lewis Way, was filled with zeal to convert the Jews to Christianity, and *Sharei Orah* contains powerful statements about the glory of the Jew who has *mesirat nefesh* for Judaism and refuses to convert. While the bulk of the book is about the self-sacrifice of the Hasid, or the ordinary Jew,¹³⁷ the introduction makes clear that the Jewish leader, the 'Prince of Torah', is the ultimate paradigm of the

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theme of self-sacrifice. The two sections of *Shaarei Orah* (one on Hanukkah, the other on Purim) extol two subtly different kinds of *mesirat nefesh*. The introduction states that both are combined in the leaders who disseminate Torah to the Jewish people.¹³⁸ In their power of self-sacrifice, these leaders are compared to the Ten Martyrs of Roman times. The image of the Zaddik as the one who is capable of self-sacrifice in his struggle to preserve Judaism, as well as on an esoteric metaphysical plane, is thus complete.

From R. Dov Ber's time to the present, the conception of the Zaddik in terms of self-sacrifice has remained a constant feature of Habad.¹³⁹ The *mesirat nefesh* of the Zaddik can be interpreted literally, as supreme effort in the face of opposition or danger; it also has a mystical dimension culminating in trance-like states which reach beyond the confines of the ordinary world. At the same time the theme of *mesirat nefesh* of *Nefilat Apyayim* includes the energetic activism of R. Shneur Zalman's depiction of the Zaddik, with heavy emphasis on the point that this activism is an expression of the highest and most permanent level of *devekut*.

The power of this mode of depiction of the Zaddik in terms of *mesirat nefesh* (rather than solely in terms of *bitul* and *devekut*) lies in the possibility it affords of presenting the Zaddik as an example to be emulated. Every moment of the life of the Zaddik is seen as virtual *mesirat nefesh* for *Kiddush ha-Shem*, whether his adversaries have the concrete form of Russian officials or that of the spiritual *kelfipot* embodied in the everyday world. Seen from this perspective, the concept of the Zaddik is able to act as a role model in the lives of ordinary people. Their own struggle might be in prayer, and in finding spirituality in daily life. Or it might lie in facing persecution of Judaism and of Jews. Complementary to R. Dov Ber's teachings of the self-sacrifice of the Zaddik, are those which describe that of the Hasid, and present it as the ultimate in spiritual attainment. In the writings of the *Mitteler Rebbe*, through the ancient ideal of *mesirat nefesh*, the otherwise quite different paths of Hasidic leader and Hasidic follower are joined.

This article is based on a section of my doctoral thesis *The Concept of Mesirat Nefesh (Self-Sacrifice) in the Teachings of R. Dov Ber of Lubavitch (1773-1827)* (University of London, 1981). Professor Chimen Abramsky was the supervisor of this thesis, as well as having been a generous teacher and adviser during my undergraduate studies of Jewish History at University College London.

- 1 In *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History*, ed. S. Stein and R. Loewe (Alabama, 1979), pp. 13-28.
- 2 Concerning the sources of the *Haskalah*, see J. Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1961); id., *Out of the Ghetto* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973); A. Shohet, *Im Hilufei Tekufot* (Jerusalem, 1961). As for Hasidism, discussion of the origin of this movement in relation to the social and intellectual milieu in which it emerged is to be found in J. G. Weiss, 'Reshit Tsmehat shel ha-Derekh ha-Hasidit', *Zion*, vol. 16 (1951), collected in A. Rubinstein, *Perakim be-Toledot ha-Hasidut* (Jerusalem, 1978); a critique of the latter: S. Etinger, 'Ha-Hanhagah ha-Hasidit be-Isvavah', *Dat va-Hevrah be-Toledot Yisrael u-ve-Toledot ha-Amim* (Jerusalem, 1965) (English version: 'The Hasidic Movement—Reality and Ideals', *Journal of World History*, vol. 11, 1968, pp. 251-66); M. Piekartz, *Bi-Yemei Tsmehat ha-Hasidut* (Jerusalem, 1978). See also G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1961), p. 325ff.; B. Dinur, 'Reshit shel ha-Hasidut vi-Yesodoteha ha-Sotsialim ve-ha-Meshivim', in *Be-Miflaha ha-Dorot* (Jerusalem, 1955), and the introduction to S. Dubnow's *Toledot ha-Hasidim* (Tel Aviv, 1944). A recent critique of the latter's explanation for the rise of Hasidism is to be found in an unpublished doctoral thesis, R. Foxbruner, 'Habad: the Ethical thought of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyadi' (Harvard University, 1984), pp. 2-12.
- 3 In the *Haskalah* the outstanding example of such a figure was, of course, Moses Mendelssohn. See A. Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn, A Biographical Study* (Alabama and London, 1973).
- 4 See H. Dresner, *The Zaddik* (London—New York—Toronto, 1960); G. Scholem, 'Demuto ha-Historit shel R. Yisrael Baal Shem Tov', *Molad*, nos. 144-5 (1960); R. Schatz, 'Le-Mahuto shel ha-Zaddik ha-Hasidut', op. cit.; G. Nigal, *Manhig ve-Edah* (Jerusalem, 1962); id., introduction to *No'am Elimelech* (Jerusalem, 1978); S. Etinger (note 2 above); A. Rapoport-Albert, 'God and the Zaddik, etc.', *History of Religion*, vol. 18 (Chicago 1979); I. Etkes, 'Reshit shel ha-Hasidut ki-Tenuah: ha-Shalav ha-Rishon' (forthcoming). Piekartz (note 2 above) has pointed out the extent to which the concept of the Zaddik is found in the kabbalistic and homiletical literature which preceded Hasidism (*passim*, particularly pp. 280-8, 300-2). The following single example in which R. Haim Vital speaks of his teacher R. Isaac Luria, will suffice here: 'My teacher discerned the source of each individual Jew in the Torah. He would teach each person the interpretations of Torah which related to his soul. Sometimes he would reveal the interpretation of one verse, sometimes of other verses. According to the need of the moment . . . he would teach that person the interpretation of the verse that was then revealed . . .'. R. Haim Vital, *Shidat Ruah ha-Kodesh* (Tel Aviv, 1963), pp. 108-9. This passage describes the relationship between a teacher and his disciples in the intense atmosphere of an intimate mystic circle. The Hasidic Zaddik, by contrast, was in many ways the same teacher but now active in a far broader range of society.
- 5 Concerning R. Dov Ber see L. Jacobs's translation of his *Tziat on Ecstasy* (London, 1963); R. Effor, *The Theory of Divinity of Hasidim Habad, Second Generation* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1982); 'Kuntres ha-Hitpa'ut le-R. Dov Ber Schneerson', *Kiryat Sefer*, vol.